HOW THE STOICS SOLVE PLATO'S GREATEST DIFFICULTY
Causality and Responsibility in Plato and the Stoics

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Abstract

This thesis offers a reconstruction and analysis of a debate about responsibility, and causation initiated by Plato, and continued by the Stoics. The pivotal moment of the discussion is a problem I call 'the greatest difficulty,' found in Plato's *Parmenides*. The debate, however, involves a complex network of arguments including subordinated or parallel discussions about ontology, method, ethics, and epistemology. Instead of isolating the main topic, I highlight the structure of the debate, and the interconnection between its parts, to show the complexity and sophistication of the argumentation in both Plato and the Stoics, and the depth of the Stoics' engagement with Plato's works.

The *motivation* for doing this is to better understand many of the otherwise unexplained and odd starting points of the early Stoic philosophy. But since this requires a reconstruction of the dialectical background the Stoic texts assume, this means that the bulk of the thesis is devoted to discussing Plato. The hope is that by showing the structure of the debate in Plato's dialogues, the connections in the Stoic fragments will show with more clarity.

The thesis is divided into five chapters. The first two are dedicated to Plato's discussion of causality and responsibility in *Phaedo* 95e8-105c7, and *Republic* 6, 506d7-509c4. The third chapter discusses 'the greatest difficulty' in *Parmenides* 133a11-135c4 as an objection to the main arguments of the previous dialogues. In chapter four, I analyse how Plato revisits the greatest difficulty in *Sophist* 245e6-249d5. Finally, in chapter five, I examine surviving evidence from the early Stoics, to argue that they engaged with Plato's ongoing debate via the *Sophist*, and that their views on these topics are a careful continuation of this debate.

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Introduction

I am going to start with a disclaimer. The title of this thesis does not make reference to its main topic, but to its finale. My *general aim* is to offer a reconstruction and discussion of a philosophical debate initiated and advanced by Plato's dialogues, and continued by the early Stoa. This debate, as I shall show, is about responsibility, and causation,[1] but it develops into a complex network of arguments including subordinated or parallel discussions about ontology, method, ethics, and epistemology. Instead of isolating the main topic, as is often done, my interest is to highlight the structure of the debate, and the interconnection between its parts, to show the complexity and sophistication of the argumentation in both Plato and the Stoics, and the depth of the Stoics' engagement with Plato's works. The *main task* of the thesis, then, is to show that there is such a debate (and not, for example, just people offering different theories about the same topic), and that it is as carefully and well articulated as I think it is.

The *motivation* for doing this is to better understand many of the otherwise unexplained and odd starting points of early Stoic philosophy. But since this requires a reconstruction of the dialectical background the Stoic texts assume, this means that the bulk of the thesis is devoted to discussing Plato. The hope is that by showing the structure of the debate in Plato's dialogues, the connections in the Stoic fragments will show with more clarity.

The question that initially motivates and underlies the debate is to understand who or what was responsible for Socrates' death. As I see it, its dialectical structure has three main parts. In the first one, Plato discusses possible accounts of responsibility and causation. Two passages are prominent here. One of them is found in the final section of the *Phaedo* (Ch.

[1] Let me be more precise about the topic of the debate. Plato and the Stoics use a wide range of locutions to express what I call 'causation and responsibility.' This includes: (1) the adjective αἴτιος, used with genitive, or as a noun in neuter (αἴτιον), (2) the noun αἰτία, (3) the verb αἰτιάομαι, (4) διὰ + accusative, (5) causal or instrumental dative, (6) the verb ποιεῖν, (7) ἕνεκα, and (8) διὰ τί, and δι' ὅτι. The translation into English of some of these locutions is problematic. First, because it is almost impossible to find translations that work well for all the passages, and because any available word in English is loaded with philosophical baggage, and could give the impression that one is begging the question about how to understand these terms.
The semantic field of αἰτία, for example, includes 'responsibility,' 'guilt,' 'blame,' 'fault,' 'accusation,' but also 'cause.' In the specific context, other suggestions include, 'reason,' 'explanation,' 'mode of explanation,' 'causation,' and 'causal account.' The adjective αἴτιος, -ον in turn, means 'culpable,' 'responsible,' but used with the genitive means 'responsible for,' and accompanied by an article means 'the accused,' 'culprit,' 'cause,' or 'the thing responsible.' See Sedley (1998, 115). From an etymological point of view, Beekes (2014) explains that 'αἴτιος, αἰτία and αἰτέω were derived from *αἶτος "share'' (see → αἴνυμαι, → αἰτέω).'Although these two terms are not identical, they are at times also interchangeable. As it can be seen, in both cases part of the semantic field implies an evaluative aspect (responsibility, guilt, culpable), while other parts sound more objective (cause). Notice that it also has an epistemological aspect (explanation, causal account).

1), and the other in *Republic* 6 (Ch. 2). In a second moment, Plato discusses an objection that affects the leading arguments advanced before. The objection is known as 'the greatest difficulty,' and is found in the *Parmenides* (Ch. 3). If successful, it not only threatens to demolish the progress done on understanding responsibility and causation, but also brings intolerable consequences in ethics, epistemology, and metaphysics.

A final moment of the debate, then, consists in the discussion of how to respond to the greatest difficulty. A passage in Plato's *Sophist*, known as 'the battle between gods and giants,' has been read as a careful rereading and reflection of the difficulty, which discusses the necessary conditions to solve it, and outlines a tentative way out of it (Ch. 4).[2] It is in this last part that the Stoics enter into the picture. The surviving evidence from the early Stoics suggests, I shall argue, that they engaged with Plato's ongoing debate about causality and responsibility via the *Sophist*, and that their views on these topics are a careful continuation of this debate. The oddity of some of the Stoics' central tenets — and the complexity of their argumentation — is then explained by seeing it with the whole debate in the background (Ch. 5).

At this point, one might be tempted to render the debate as one in which Plato advances an account of causality and responsibility that gets rejected by the Stoics in favour of their own version. This is the way Plato's contribution to the topic, and the Stoics' relationship with him is often portrayed. Moreover, most studies agree that the Stoics were careful readers of the Platonic corpus, but that they were, nevertheless, hostile, and confrontational towards Plato. To put it crassly: under this traditional view, Plato is a Platonist, and the Stoics are anti-Platonists. There is a good reason, however, to resist this portrayal of the debate and the relationship between Plato and the Stoics. In brief, the problem is that this picture simply assumes a doctrinal reading of Plato (where the dialogues are vessels of doctrines endorsed by Plato himself), both as the correct, and as the interpretation favoured by the Stoics. It is far from clear, however, that this reading does enough justice to Plato's texts. And if it does not, but was the way the Stoics understood Plato, it cannot be said, then, that they were as careful readers of Plato as we thought. But the problem, one might think, is not the Stoics' lack of capacity.

[2] There are, of course, other dialogues that also reflect the greatest difficulty, like the *Parmenides* itself, and that were of importance for the Stoics, like the *Timaeus*, and *Theaetetus*. I have decided, however, to focus on just three dialogues (*Phaedo*, *Republic*, and *Sophist*), with secondary reference to other works. The reason is twofold. There is already a fair amount of literature on these other dialogues, and their reception (especially the *Timaeus*), and, more significantly, I believe there is enough material in my selection of dialogues to explain the main features of the debate.

Some recent studies, for example, are sceptical about Plato's direct impact on the Stoics, and insist on the mediation of the Old Academy—the philosophers who succeeded Plato in the Academy from his death to the times in which the Stoa was founded. Although the surviving evidence from the Old Academy is thin, it is commonly thought that they systematised and developed Plato's philosophy into a philosophical system of doctrines. The thought is, then, that even if Plato was not a Platonist himself, the Old Academics were, so the Stoic anti-Platonism is more directly a reaction against them than against Plato.

It is certain that the Old Academy must have had a tremendous impact on the Stoics. After all, Zeno of Citium, the founder of the Stoa, studied in the Academy during the headship of Polemo, one of the last philosophers considered part of the Old Academy. My worry with this line of thought, however, is twofold. First, it only moves the location of the problem. Instead of blaming the Stoics for being lazy readers of Plato, it blames the Old Academy. There seems to be, however, not enough textual evidence to sustain this uncharitable claim. Second, this view ignores textual evidence suggesting that the early Stoa had direct access to Plato's dialogues, or assumes that the Stoics could not have understood Plato outside the assumed doctrinal interpretation transmitted by the Old Academy. Both of these options, however, portray the Stoics as far from being careful and thoughtful philosophers.

In this thesis I argue that we need to rethink the nature of the debate and the relationship between Plato and the Stoics. Through a detailed analysis of the texts, I show, first, that Plato's passages do not offer a single and determinate account or conception of responsibility and causation. Instead, I found various tentative options, and several unresolved puzzles that foster further discussion and leave open various lines of argument. Then, I argue, and show relevant evidence that the Stoics had direct access to the Platonic texts, and were careful readers of them. But by this I mean that they engaged fully with Plato's philosophical project, building upon some of the methods proposed, and rethinking and reflecting about a wide range of arguments discussed in his dialogues. In a nutshell, the reading I put forward considers the debate as a complex interchange where multiple tentative options are tested, and where the Stoics engage in a sophisticated way, agreeing, disagreeing, modifying, developing, drawing consequences, and following the arguments where they lead, trying to solve the puzzles Plato was interested in.

I argue, moreover, that the Stoics share with Plato an organic conception of philosophy and try to give a holistic account of reality with responsibility and causation at the core of their reflection. In both, philosophy is an enterprise where its different areas are

interconnected, and should not be thought separately. The Stoics, of course, were independent and talented philosophers who did not agree with every argument or method tried out by Plato. But to say that they were anti-Platonists is a mistake. But then, we may ask, from where does all the reported hostility come? This is the puzzle I shall try to answer at the end of the thesis. The Stoics, if I am right, are as rightful heirs of Plato as the Academics or Aristotle, not because their philosophy is a derivative critical reaction, or an uncritical and mediated borrowing of his ideas, but because they continue Plato's philosophical project. This challenges a recent trend in Stoic scholarship, which argues that the Stoics were not really interested in Plato's philosophical project even if they read him and use him as a platform for building up their philosophical system.

There is a general objection against the plausibility of my reconstruction, though. One may think—in line with the more sceptical studies—that it is just not possible to be certain about whether the Stoics read Plato. If this were to be true, then, to say that they engaged with him in a conscious philosophical debate, or even with weaker claims, such as partial appropriations, would be a mere exercise of wild speculation. As I mentioned, however, there is some textual evidence to suggest otherwise, which I shall discuss in my last chapter. But here I want to make clear that even in the case of a severe lack of evidence, the retreat to a suspension of judgement is not necessarily the best option.

It is true that there are not enough facts to be absolutely certain about the relation between these philosophers, and that we cannot simply claim there is influence or engagement every time we see vague similarities between two texts. These facts, however, are not in themselves enough to conclude that we should suspend our judgment; first, because for the reconstruction to be plausible, we do not need absolute certainty, and second, because when in doubt it is better to apply the principle of charity, and here it would apply not only to individual philosophers but to the development of the debate as a whole (see Ch. 5, sec. 1.2 The scholarly debate about the Stoics' relation with the *Sophist*).

My starting point, then, goes the other way around. If there is some evidence to suggest the connections, we should assume there is a well intentioned, and conscious rational debate going on, *unless* there is explicit evidence against it, or a more economic, *and* charitable interpretation is available. This requires extreme caution. Scholars, for instance, have seen in the Old Academy and Hellenistic fragments clear references to specific passages in Plato when the evidence also fits well, even better in some cases, with the content of other dialogues. For this reason, the connections between the texts I would

make here do not demand exclusivity. In fact, the texts I am going to analyse make multiple other references I am not going to pursue here. It is with these methodological assumptions that I attempt to reconstruct the debate.

There are some things this thesis is not. First, I am not claiming that Plato was the only or the most important interlocutor for the early Stoa. For the purposes of this thesis I focus exclusively in this relationship, but I do not do justice to all the other important predecessors and contemporary interlocutors of the Stoics. I try to make clear whenever the Stoics introduce non-Platonic elements into their philosophy, but the discussion about the origins of those elements is beyond the scope of this research. Second, I do not think that the passages I shall analyse exhaust the debate. Many other dialogues and passages come to mind when one thinks about the discussion regarding causality and responsibility. The only thing I defend is that my selection of passages is sufficient for arguing my main thesis.

I also need to give an account of the structure and layout of the thesis. I have divided the thesis in five chapters of different lengths. Each of the first four chapters analyses and evaluates a passage from Plato's dialogues, and the last chapter examines a selection of Stoic fragments. All translations from the Greek and Latin are my own. For better or for worse, I decided to leave most of my discussion of the secondary literature and textual issues to the footnotes. This, I hope, separates more clearly the different layers of discussion in the thesis. The downside is that some readers will found that the most interesting bits of analysis are found in the footnotes.

I should warn, though, that in some chapters I defend a couple of controversial theses. This was the result of my incapacity to run with some of the standard interpretations I disagree with, even when in some cases seemed safer and advisable to stay with them from a rhetorical point of view. I do not think I have exhausted all the arguments and objections regarding these views, but I have argued for their plausibility as much as the format allowed me to do it. Although further discussion is required, this seemed to me the most honest decision. In my defence I can say that although these theses play an auxiliary role, they are not essential for my main argument. I hope that even if my readers disagree with particular interpretations of the text, they can still agree with the main premises and the general argument I am making. For more details, a brief abstract is found at the beginning of each chapter.

I am going to end this introduction with a slightly technical note. Causality and responsibility are relations we could express as '*x* causes *y*,' and '*x* is responsible for *y*.' Throughout the thesis I use and make reference to some of the formal properties of binary

relations as understood by modern logic. This should be taken with caution, bearing in mind that the way Plato understands relations in general is not exactly the same.[3] Analysing the formal properties of relations, however, is a useful tool to understand the different models of causation and responsibility discussed in the texts. There are six properties that binary relations could have: reflexivity, symmetry, asymmetry, antisymmetry, transitivity, and intransitivity.[4] But in the case of causation and responsibility, the main tension in the different conceptions discussed is whether the relation is transitive, and whether that transitivity is partial or not.

[3] As Duncombe (2013, 53) rightly puts it, Plato lacks the idea of a dyadic or binary relation, as we understand them now.

[4] These properties are defined in the following way:

- A relation *R* on a set *A* is *reflexive* iff for any *a* in *A*, *a* is *R* to itself.
- A relation *R* on a set *A* is *irreflexive* iff for every *a* in *A*, *a* is not *R* to itself.
- A relation *R* on a set *A* is *symmetric* iff for any *a,* and any *b* in *A,* if *a* is *R* to *b,* then *b* is *R* to *a*.
- A relation *R* on a set *A* is *antisymmetric* iff for any *a,* and any *b* in *A*, if *a* is *R* to *b*, and *b* is *R* to *a*, then *a*=*b*.
- A relation *R* on a set *A* is *asymmetric* iff for any *a*, and any *b* in *A*, if *a* is *R* to *b*, then *b* is not *R* to *a*.
- A relation *R* on a set *A* is *transitive* iff for any *a*, any *b*, and any *c* in *A*, if *a* is *R* to *b*, and *b* is *R* to *c*, then *a* is *R* to *c*.

It is important to note, however, that a relation could be neither reflexive nor irreflexive, or neither symmetric nor antisymmetric.

CHAPTER 1. Responsibility and causation in *Phaedo* 95e8-105c7

In this chapter I analyse and evaluate Plato's argumentation in *Phaedo* 95e8-105c7. My aim is to show how the text discusses three groups of conceptions of responsibility and causation, and how it turns out that progress on this topic is closely related to the method of inquiry, which includes a methodological, an epistemological, and an ethical aspect. On a more controversial note, I argue that Plato's Socrates never abandons the idea that causation and responsibility are explained by the ordering activity of *nous*,[5] and that this is what gives unity to the passage.[6] The chapter is divided into nine sections. In the first one I give a brief context to the passage. In the second one I discuss the general structure of the text, and offer an interpretation of its main argument. Sections 3-8 are dedicated to analysing in detail each subsection of the passage and how they interconnect with each other. Finally, a ninth section evaluates the passage, signals its contributions for causation and responsibility and its remaining puzzles.

1. Socrates' last conversation

Socrates was famously condemned to death, refused the opportunity to escape, and died in 399 BC by drinking the hemlock. Who is to blame for his death? Were the Athenians responsible for what happened or was it a result of Socrates own actions? This traumatic event in the history of Athens led to a philosophical debate about responsibility and causation that occupied Plato for a good part of his life (the Stoics also make reference to this event, see Ch. 5, sec. 7). He reflected and reflected again about the event in many of his texts. He is commonly thought to write about responsibility and causation in various

[5] Contraction of νόος, has a semantic field that includes 'mind, sense, intellect, reason; purpose, aim.' See Beekes (2014). Translations in the *Phaedo* often choose 'mind,' but it has also been rendered as 'intellect.' Gallop (1975, 174), instead, uses 'intelligence,' and thinks *nous* is used as a 'substance term,' referring to the 'faculty of thought, or that which thinks, rather than a mental quality.' He also points out that *nous* is cognate with νόησις (see *Phaedo* 83a8), used for thinking of forms, and the adjective νοητός (see *Phaedo* 80b1, 81b7, 83b4), used to describe forms as objects of thought. See also ἐννοέω in *Republic* 6.507d7. In general terms, I agree with Gallop's description, but I am not convinced that 'intelligence' renders the active, causal, and organising capacity that *nous* has. For that reason I have decided to leave this word untranslated.

[6] The standard view is that after an enthusiastic reaction, Socrates rejects this idea, and goes on to propose forms as the central piece in the causal process. As far as I am aware, this reading was introduced by Shorey (1933), and Murphy (1951, 145-148), and later popularised and defended by Vlastos (1969, 297-298, n.15), and Gallop (1975, 176); for examples of scholars following this interpretation, see Lennox (1985), Fischer (2002), Mason (2013), and Ebrey (2013). For a different reading, see Bluck (1955), and Wiggins (1986). I shall argue my own views in more detail in this chapter's section 5.3.

dialogues,[7] but in this chapter I only focus on a passage from the *Phaedo*, which is one of the most explicit discussions of the topic.

In Plato's *Phaedo*, Socrates is about to die. The dialogue portrays Socrates' last conversation with his closest friends, and ends with the description of how he drinks the hemlock and dies. In his last philosophical debate, Socrates argues for the immortality of the soul. His understanding of his life, decisions, and attitudes depended on the truth of the matter. But this proves to be highly controversial, and two of his friends, Simmias and Cebes,[8] test and object to Socrates' arguments (*Phaedo* 84c-86e, and 86e-88b). Socrates addresses each of their objections in a last *tour de force* (*Phaedo* 91c-95a, and 95a-107b).

Cebes' objection is the one that most worries Socrates, and it is the last one he answers. The problem is—Cebes complains—that Socrates' arguments so far do not guarantee the immortality of the soul, but only that the soul survives the body's death. This leaves open the possibility for long-lived mortal souls. Socrates, then, still needs a decisive argument to show that souls never die. It seems, however, that Socrates has no ready-made answer to this difficulty, since the conversation breaks off, and Socrates takes a long time considering the question in silence (*Phaedo* 95e8-10). After this pause, he announces 'it is necessary to discuss thoroughly the αἰτία[9] of generation and destruction' (*Phaedo* 95e10-96a1). What follows is the passage that concerns this chapter, where Socrates, by reporting his own intellectual journey, explains his own thoughts about causation and responsibility, to finally use them to prove that the soul can never partake in death.

Although a tragic tone pervades the whole conversation, the reader's access to the scene is mediated, and distant. Phaedo narrates by heart events that took place long ago (*Phaedo* 57b), and we are reminded that Plato himself was not a direct witness because he

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[7] For instance, see *Cratylus* 413a1-7, *Lysis* 219a1-220a6, *Hippias Major* 296e7-297c3, *Phaedo* 95a-107b, *Republic* 6.506b-511e5, *Philebus* 26e2-27b3, *Phaedrus* 245c2-246a4, *Timaeus* 28a-b, 46c-48b, 68e-69a, and *Laws* 891e.

[8] For a detailed discussion of the characters in the *Phaedo* see Sedley (1995), and Nails (2002).

[9] There is no consensus about how to translate αἰτία in this passage, and whether αἴτιον is used as a synonym (see note 1). Compare the *Phaedo*, with *Cratylus* 413a4-5; *Philebus* 26e3-27a9, 30d3, and especially 30c4-7; *Phaedo* 110e2-6; *Republic* 379c3, 329d3, 468a8; *Timaeus* 18e3, 29d6, 33a6, 38d7, 40b4, 44c7, 47b6, and 63e; *Philebus* 30c5-6, *Phaedrus* 229e5-230a6, *Laws* 896b1 and 967c5, *Gorgias* 457a3. For a discussion of the use and translation of these words in Plato, see Vlastos (1969, 292-296), M. Frede (1980, 223), Silverman (1992, 99n32), Irwin (1983, 130-132), Sedley (1998, 114-115), Hankinson (1998, 84-85), Ledbetter (1999), Ferejohn (2006, 151), and Sharma (2009, 137n1). Although I am going to leave these words untranslated, my own impression is that Plato is *extrapolating* legal slang, where αἴτιον points to the 'culprit,' that is, an object or person *qua* responsible for something, and the αἰτία refers to the 'charge,' meaning the explanation that links the culprit with her deed. This explains why these terms are so closely connected, and yet have a different emphasis. When someone asks who raped Cassandra, we could answer 'a rapist' or 'Ajax the Lesser.' But if we ask why Cassandra was raped, the answer would be because Ajax the Lesser (a rapist) decided to do it. The potential source of confusion is the fact that the answer to who is the culprit could make reference to the charge, and that the charge mentions who is the culprit.

was ill (*Phaedo* 59b10). This, however, means no simplification nor lack of detail on Phaedo's part. These features are not excuses for the failures of a historical report. More likely, they are indications of Plato's self-awareness of the fictional character of the dialogue. The text seems to recognise its distance from the real events, and stresses instead the prescriptive and philosophical aspect of the dialogue. This does not have to mean an emotional detachment; but the main theme is reflecting on how a philosophical life should be lived rather than how it was actually lived by Socrates.[10] By including the context, emotions, and attitudes during the conversation, however, Plato emphasises the close connection between philosophical conversation and a person's way of life.

The dramatic setting leaves no room for an aporetic finale, and compels Socrates to defend his point to the best of his ability. Although Plato allows Socrates to die in peace of mind at the end of the dialogue, the text allows space to remain puzzled and unconvinced by the arguments. In particular, the discussion about the αἰτία of generation and destruction and the arguments about causation and responsibility are left as an outline. Consider, for example, how Simmias at the end of the discussion says that even if he has no grounds for doubt, he still has some reserve towards the conclusion. Socrates also accepts the matter is in need of further investigation, even if they find it convincing at the time (see *Phaedo* 97b6-7, and 107a8-b10).

2. A complex storyline

In order to understand the complex argumentation of the passage, the first step is to understand its structure as thoroughly as possible. The passage is, on the one hand, divided into four main sections: (i) the introduction of the topic, (ii) Socrates' intellectual autobiography including his own proposal, (iii) a brief interruption of Phaedo's narration of the events, and (iv) the development of Socrates' proposal into a more subtle answer. The latter is then, used as the central piece of Socrates' final argument of the immortality of the soul (see *Phaedo* 105c8-107a1).[11] But the passage is also constituted by three nested dialogues: (a) the indirect dialogue between Plato and the reader, (b) Phaedo's narration of Socrates' last day and dialogue with Echecrates, and (c) Socrates' narration of his intellectual development and dialogue with their friends (cf. Ch. 4, sec. 2. Fiction within fiction).

[10] On this line of thought see McCabe (2006). Scholars did not always have this opinion. For the discussion about the dramatic structure of the *Phaedo* see Dorter (1970), Sedley (1995), Madison (2002), and Jansen (2013).

[11] From where exactly the 'final argument' begins depends, on one's own conception of an argument. See D. Frede (1978, 27), Rowe (1993, 249), and Denyer (2007, 87).

It is also worth noting that Socrates' intellectual autobiography (ii) has a nonlinear narrative: Socrates starts from (1) his inquiry into nature, but then talks about (2) his original views, to then turn to (3) his present views and puzzles. Then, he (4) goes back to narrate his encounter with Anaxagoras' philosophy. In his criticism, however, Socrates (5) talks again about some of his current views. The narration ends with (6) a section about the opinions of the many and other theories. This means that Socrates' autobiographical passage contains both the story of his intellectual development, and some of his current views. This fact is important for two main reasons. First, because if one does not pay enough attention, it is possible to confuse past with present, but it is also important because this going back and forth is part of Socrates' argumentative method. He is contrasting his former views with present ones.

Why did Socrates make so much effort in explaining his whole intellectual journey instead of offering his present views straightaway? When Socrates announces the topic, he says that a thorough investigation is needed. But if the autobiographical passage is part of an argument, what is it for, and what is its conclusion? My suggestion is that the general argument of the passage can be construed as follows:

1. Natural inquiry leads to puzzlements that made Socrates even unlearn his previous views.
2. Socrates' search, however, leads to a promising idea he attributes to Anaxagoras: that *nous* is responsible and orders each thing in whatever way is best.
3. But Anaxagoras' and similar accounts do not hold together because they offer necessary conditions as αἰτίαι, failing to offer real αἰτίαι to connect *nous* with its effects.
4. The source of the problem common to all previous accounts is that their method is unsafe and careless.
5. A tentative solution (to connect *nous* with its effects) is to use the method of hypothesis applied to this case.
6. Assuming, then, the existence of intelligible[12] forms and that it is because things partake in them that they have their properties, Socrates could offer a safe but simple answer.

[12] Cf. *Phaedo* 79a1-4. Cf. *Rep*. 6.507b8-9, and 6.507d7. In *Phaedo* Socrates sometimes uses the word διάνοια, whereas in *Republic* he uses the verb νοεῖσθαι, and ἐννοεῖν, but note that all these words derive from νόος. See Beekes (2014). See also *Phaedo* 65d10-ff.

7. If we also agree that some things other than forms always have the character of a specific form, we can offer safe and subtler answers.

The aim of the argument is to deliver a general framework to offer safe and subtle answers to 'why?' questions. To do it, Socrates first explains why other models to answer these questions are useless, and, moreover, harmful. As a result of his first contact with Anaxagoras, Socrates thinks, however, that *nous* is responsible for each thing, and that its job is to order them in whatever way is best. In an attempt to make sense of what Anaxagoras says, and to use it to answer his own question, Socrates links *nous*'s practical reasoning with order, and order with goodness. If *nous*'s activity can be linked in this way to order and goodness, perhaps, there is a general way to explain why questions.

Socrates is later disappointed with Anaxagoras' incompetence in connecting *nous* with its effects, but I shall show he never abandons the thought that *nous* is responsible for each thing. The main argument here has to do with Socrates' real αἰτία (see sec. 5.1). After Socrates explains that all other people fail to see the real answer due to their laziness and lack of care, he decides to explain again the connection between *nous* and its effects. Since Socrates, however, has no solid starting point, he resorts to the method of hypothesis. This consists in hypothesising whatever seems to be the strongest argument, and establishing as true whatever harmonises with the hypothesis. In this way, Socrates' hypothesis is the existence of forms (accepted at *Phaedo* 77a), adding then that things have their properties because they partake in forms. This allows a safe answer of the type '*X* is *Y* because it partakes in the *Y*-itself.' But to make this account one that really solves Anaxagoras' problems, I shall show that it should be understood that it is *nous* that makes things partake in the forms (see sec. 7.2.1).

Nous is the agent and causal link between forms and the effects in the sensible part of the world; forms are only *nous*'s instruments. In a final step, Socrates adds that there are some things that, although they are not forms, always have the character of a specific form, and when they are present, its opposite cannot be present. This allows Socrates a more subtle answer, which has the form '*X* is *Y* because it has *Z*, since *Z* always partakes in the *Y*-itself and never in its opposite' (see sec. 8.5). Let me now argue that this description of the passage is accurate.

3. Puzzlements that make you unlearn your previous views

Socrates' thoughts on responsibility and causation will turn out to be unconventional. Perhaps for this reason, instead of explaining them right away, he recounts the development

of his understanding of the topic, and the events that lead him to his actual views (*Phaedo* 96a1-97b7). The first part of the autobiographical report[13] explains how natural inquiry led Socrates to puzzles that made him unable to decide which of the available answers was right, and even to unlearn very basic things that he thought he knew before. His journey started from understanding little (or thinking that he understood little) to not understanding at all. It was a process of unlearning.

Socrates' engagement with natural inquiry emphasises his second-order reflections on his own state of mind, and on the nature of the distinctions and methods of the inquiry. Even after all his journey, Socrates acknowledges that at the present moment *he does not think that he knows why things come to be, pass away, or exist; he knows, however, that he does not know the answers*. In addition, he cannot accept the methods of natural inquiry, or their answers, but he has a method, which although not completely lucid, helps him to offer safer answers than those given by others. Although Socrates' confidence on the answers is mild, thanks to the second-order reflections, he presents himself as someone with a better understanding of understanding, and of some claims of responsibility and causation.

Socrates' intellectual journey has various moments, as I mentioned above.[14] At first, Socrates thought he knew some things that he considered were clear to everyone. He spent his time, then, considering the questions of natural science. This adventure had two parts. First, he often changed his mind back and forth, unable to decide which answer was right.[15] But by considering these questions a second time, he resolved he was the most incompetent person for this type of inquiry.[16] For he was so blinded by it that he unlearned even the things he took for granted from the beginning.[17] Socrates explains, then, that at the moment he is far from being persuaded by the naturalistic method of inquiry, or by any of the

[13] The interest around this passage has largely focused on assessing to what extent it is evidence for Socrates' or Plato's youth. See, for example, Burnet (1911, 99), Williamson (1904, 192-193), Gallop (1975, 169-170). Rowe (1993, 229) suggests that it may be 'wholly invented, as a conveniently dramatic way of presenting a collection of problems and solutions.' The presentation, however, has a philosophical significance, and is not only a dramatic or narrative interlude. In this way, Socrates emphasises two aspects: his second-order reflections, and the psychological impact of the inquiry which resembles the method of hypothesis proposed later.

[14] These stages remind us of Socrates' interrogation of Meno's slave-boy (*Meno* 82a-86c), and seem to be a preliminary model for the method of hypothesis later explained at *Phaedo* 100a3-8 (see this Chapter, sec. 7. A new hope. See also *Meno* 86c-e, and compare with the divided line in the *Republic* 6.509d6-511e5.

[15] Cf. *Apology* 19b-d, Aristophanes' *Clouds* 223-ff., *Birds* 1280-4, 1553-6, and *Frogs* 1491-9; as well as Xenophon's *On the Management of the State* 2.3, and *Recollections of Socrates* 4.7.1-6, and 1.6.14.

[16] Socrates describes the effect of natural inquiry in a similar way to Meno when he complains about Socrates' own stingray effect (*Meno* 79e-81e). For an analysis of *Meno* passage, see Scott (2005, 69-74).

[17] This blinding effect will reappear later in the analogy of the solar eclipse. See *Phaedo* 99d4-100a3 (Ch. 2, sec. 5).

proposals it offers, but that he has made up some other confused method of his own (*Phaedo* 97b6-7).

To understand Socrates' most recent ideas on responsibility and causation, then, it is necessary to get a clearer picture of the views he cannot accept and the puzzles he found himself in. However, he never claims these views are false, or that he has arguments to definitely reject them. His arguments only show that these views led him to difficult puzzles, and instead of making him understand more about the topic, they had the opposite effect. They made him understand less. Socrates, however, uses his state of mind as evidence to distrust the answers of natural inquiry.[18] When Socrates says he felt incompetent he is not being ironic. His psychological state at that moment is key to the development of his understanding of himself and of the topic. As many novel students in any area, when he was unable to understand, he blamed himself for his incompetence. But his incapacity to understand the explanations of natural inquiry also gave him evidence that something was wrong with them. The explanations were not explaining anything to him. Since understanding is a personal matter, Socrates, still wanting the answers to these questions, took the only path available to him: to improvise a method of his own.

Let me start from the chronological beginning of Socrates' intellectual development. Before engaging into natural inquiry, Socrates held his initial conception of growth in high esteem since he thought it was reasonable (*Phaedo* 96d5-6), adequate (*Phaedo* 96d8, cf. 92e1), clear to everyone (*Phaedo* 96c8), and that he and others thought they knew it (*Phaedo* 96c4-7). The core idea—perhaps a popularisation of Anaxagoras' insight[19]—is to reduce growth to an appropriate process of addition.[20]

Initially, Socrates had an excellent disposition in his wonderings into nature. He was 'extraordinarily eager for that wisdom,' since he thought it was 'splendid' to know about it (*Phaedo* 96a6-8). Socrates describes its subject matter as the knowledge of 'the αἰτία of

[18] See *Phaedo* 96c3-8, 96e6-7, 97a7, 97b3-4.

[19] See DK59B10. Anaxagoras lived in Athens during Pericles' time, and it is plausible to think that some of his ideas were popular or held as the accepted view in Socrates' time. See DL2.7. For the discussion about the specifics, see Mansfeld (1979), and Woodbury (1981).

[20] Plato uses here the geometrical rather than the arithmetical notion of addition, which means that its opposite is division, rather than subtraction. Socrates offers four examples: (1) humans grow *because* of eating and drinking (*Phaedo* 96c7-9); (2) a big person standing besides a small one is bigger *by* a head (*Phaedo* 96d9-e1); (3) ten is more than eight *because* two had been added (*Phaedo* 96e1-3); (4) two cubits is longer than one *because* it exceeds it by half (*Phaedo* 96e3-4). Socrates expresses the general principle at work saying 'the appropriate (οἰκεῖα) thing is added (προσγένηται) to each of the other parts, so the small bulk comes to be large' (*Phaedo* 96d2-4). The two key terms of the principle—addition and appropriateness—have a broad sense. Addition includes ingestion, adhesion, and juxtaposition (Cf. the dice paradox at *Theaetetus*154a9–155c6). An appropriate part is that which possess some likeness to that to which it will be added; for instance, flesh to flesh, bone to bone, and number to number (*Phaedo* 96d1, and e2-4). This conception of growth, however, is ultimately upset by Socrates' interest in natural inquiry.

each thing, why (διὰ τί)[21] each comes to be, why it perishes, and why it is' (*Phaedo* 96a8-9).[22] Natural inquiry, then, wants to answer particular questions, aiming at exhaustion of every possible case. It does not seek or try to offer, however, a general theory of causation. It only tries to answer particular questions, one at a time. Even if successful, this kind of inquiry offers no universal account. The answers from natural inquiry vary, but the method of investigation assumes an empirical and inductive framework. Socrates gives three examples of the questions he considered in his initial engagement with natural inquiry:

a. Is it when the hot and cold admit some putrefaction that living things grow up? (*Phaedo* 96b2-3).

b. Do persons think with their blood, air, fire, or none of these? (*Phaedo* 96b3-5).

c. Is the brain what produces our sensations of hearing, sight, and smell, from which comes memory and opinion, and from stable memory and opinion knowledge comes to be? (*Phaedo* 96b5-9).[23]

Considering these questions, Socrates 'was often shifting positions back and forth' (*Phaedo* 96a9-b1). Natural inquiry offered him various competing answers, which sometimes were in conflict with Socrates' original views. All of them, however, assume a materialistic, and mechanistic framework. None of these completely satisfied Socrates. He was unconvinced by the idea that combination processes are responsible for growth, that something like thinking could be reduced to a single physical element, or that a body part produces knowledge. Socrates did not understood how these positions explained what they said they were explaining.

In his second attempt to engage with natural inquiry Socrates finally made up his mind. But in a self-reflective turn of events, he had not decided which answer was the right one, but rather that he was blinded and incompetent for the inquiry as a whole.[24] Socrates,

[21] Or more literally: 'because of what.' For a discussion on the translation of διὰ τί, see Ebrey (2013, 5).
[22] Cf. *Phaedo* 95e10-96a1. Later Socrates refers to the inquiry as the consideration of 'what happens in the heaven and on earth' (*Phaedo* 96b9-c1). Cf. *Apology* 19b4-5.
[23] These questions recall various natural inquirers. The reference to the hot, the cold, and putrefaction, recalls Archelaus, who according to Theophrastus was a disciple of Anaxagoras, and teacher of Socrates. See Theophrastus' *Phys. Op.* fr. 4; Hippolytus, *Ref.* 1.9.2, 1.9.5. DL 2.16-17. See also Burnet (1911, 96), and Geddes (1863, 107-8). Rowe (1993, 230), however, thinks that the reference need not be so specific, and that it fits anyone who thought of matter as composed by elements, and held a materialistic view of the soul. The idea that humans think with their blood reminds us of Empedocles (DK31B105). The reference to air recalls Anaximenes (DK13B2), but also the more recent Diogenes of Apollonia (DK64B4,5), and Aristophanes' Socrates (*Clouds,* 230). Finally, fire reminds us of Heraclitus (DK22B36), and the idea that brain explains sensation of Alcmaeon of Croton (DK24A5). See Rowe (1993, 230-231), who also notes that the idea that knowledge can be derived from sensation was already ruled out in *Phaedo* 72e-77d.
[24] Cf. Meno's description of his perplexity after being cross-examined in *Meno* 79e-80b.

instead of learning natural science, felt he could not even accept his original views anymore, nor the method of investigation assumed until that moment (*Phaedo* 97b5-6). He made progress, however, in his understanding of himself,[25] since he recognised he was no expert on the subject (see *Phaedo* 96e6-7).

Socrates is unconvinced by the thought that these answers offer an adequate account.[26] His point is not that each of the specific answers are completely false, but something weaker. He is not convinced by any, nor able to discover the right answer himself, but instead considers the problem an open question. Although the natural inquiry seems promising at first, Socrates found that from it two problems follow that pervade even the most basic of the answers to why questions.

With the method of natural inquiry, Socrates was unable to accept even 'why a unit comes to be, nor, in a word, why anything else comes to be or perishes or *is*' (*Phaedo* 97b3-5). Socrates explains this in two steps. The first one goes against the idea that addition is the αἰτία of the generation of numbers. He does not accept that when a unit is added to another unit, either: (a) one of them becomes two, or (b) both of them become two *because* of the addition of one to the other. For, he thinks, he will be astonished if, first, both units are separated and neither is two, but later the units are put together, and their juxtaposition is the αἰτία of their becoming two (*Phaedo* 96e7-97a6).[27]

The key piece in the argument is that juxtaposition cannot be accepted as the αἰτία. Socrates thinks that neither unit becomes two, nor do they cease to be units and become two just by juxtaposing them.[28] This means that juxtaposing things is ineffective, and hence, making reference to it does not explain anything either. Empirical inquiry assumes the existence of numbers, and cannot give an adequate account of them. So juxtaposition of things is not really responsible for the coming into being of two.

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[25] For self-knowledge in Plato more generally, see Annas (1985), Griswold (1986), Rappe (1995), Benson (2003), and Nightingale (2010).

[26] There is an ambiguity about whether these accounts are 'insufficient' or 'inadequate,' two of the meanings of the word ἱκανῶς (see *Phaedo* 96d8). What is at stake is whether what is missing adds to, and so fixes, the existing accounts (making them sufficient) or whether it will replace it (because the first account was inadequate). I think it cannot be about sufficiency since Socrates will propose a completely new method. This, however, might not mean that we should throw away all the answers that natural inquiry offers. Some of them might answer correctly some other question, for instance, the hows and whens of something, and the necessary conditions for things to happen.

[27] Cf. Burnet (1911, 103) who thinks that what is surprising to Socrates is that the two things (a) and (b) should be true at the same time. This reading, however, is not the only possibility. I think this could also be a dilemma, where both horns are deemed unacceptable.

[28] As Rowe (1993, 234), explains it: 'If two "came into being," then the ones cannot previously have been two; but—Socrates wonders—why not? Why should bringing them together make any difference? (Are they not countable even when apart?).'

Socrates is not convinced either by the idea that division offers the right answer. If that were the case, then, two would also come to be from division, which Socrates understands as separation from one moment to the other, for instance, if we divide four in half. The same reasons to be doubtful about addition would apply for division. There is, however, another problem. Even assuming that from each addition and division it is possible to offer an αἰτία of two, it would imply that two opposites are αἰτίαι of the same thing. This is something, however, Socrates is not ready to accept (*Phaedo* 97a7-b7). The reason is that it makes knowledge much more difficult, and makes the explanations sound irrelevant (why does this happen? Because of *X* or not-*X*).

The crucial premise of the argument is that opposites cannot offer αἰτίαι of the same effects (see *Phaedo* 97a7-8). The worry behind this is universality. If an effect can have opposite αἰτίαι, how to be sure which one is responsible? Moreover, if opposites can offer αἰτίαι of the same effects, in what are they different then? The topic is not an easy one. For now, suffice to say that due to Socrates' belief in juxtaposition and opposites, he is unable to understand how addition or division would be the αἰτία of the coming into being of two. Since Socrates thinks these premises are fundamental for accepting any other αἰτία, then he is unable to accept the whole method assumed by popular wisdom and natural inquiry. Socrates, is unconvinced by popular and scientific accounts because they assume what they are trying to explain, and lead to contradiction. But if the job of an αἰτία was to answer a why question, and make us understand the causal process behind an effect, natural inquiry left people in the dark, not even sure about things they presupposed true at the beginning.

4. *Nous* is responsible and orders each thing in whatever way is best

The explanatory failure of natural inquiry made Socrates develop his 'confused method' (*Phaedo* 97b6-7). But instead of describing it right away, Socrates resumes the story of his intellectual development.[29] One day Socrates listened to someone[30] reading Anaxagoras' book. Unlike other natural philosophers, Anaxagoras gave a more compelling answer—in Socrates' eyes—to the problem of responsibility and causation. This first impression made him take Anaxagoras' proposal to be worth considering. The reason seems to be that Anaxagoras proposed a single answer to any 'why?' question, which would eliminate the worries about the same effect with opposite αἰτίαι.

[29] See πότε at *Phaedo* 97b8.
[30] Archelaus perhaps. See note 23.

Socrates anticipated a whole account, and a programme of inquiry that gave him great hope. He thought that Anaxagoras' books would teach him why each thing is generated, is destroyed, and exists. When he finally got his hands on Anaxagoras' books he was disappointed with the content (*Phaedo* 98b3-6). But what Socrates first thought about Anaxagoras account, reveals instead some of his own views and expectations.

Socrates first heard one single claim from Anaxagoras' book, which is about *nous* and its connection to order, and responsibility:

νοῦς ἐστιν ὁ διακοσμῶν τε καὶ πάντων αἴτιος (*Phaedo* 97c1-2).[31]

This translates as 'it is *nous* that orders and is responsible for each thing.'[32] As it stands, without any further context, the report introduces the thought that *nous* alone has the active power to order things, and that it can be blamed for this. This closes responsibility under *nous* (only *nous* is held responsible for the things in the world), and thus, could be understood as some sort of closure principle. But depending on how the sentence is read, it could mean very different things. Is the claim referring to a concrete *nous* (a cosmic *nous*), or the universal concept (in which case it includes any human and divine *nous*)? It leads to different claims in terms of quantification:

If the claim is about a concrete *nous*:

1. $\exists y, \forall x\ (Ny \wedge Oyx \wedge Ryx)$

There is a *y*, such that for any *x*, *y* is a *nous*, and *y* orders *x*, and *y* is responsible for *x*.

If the claim is about the universal concept:

2. $\forall x, \exists y\ (Ny \wedge Oyx \wedge Ryx)$

For any *x*, there is a *y*, such that *y* is a *nous*, and *y* orders *x*, and *y* is responsible for *x*.

If Socrates takes the claim as referring to a cosmic *nous*, as it has often been understood,[33] that would raise a lot of questions regarding the cosmic *nous*'s relationship with each and every human *nous* in terms of action, and responsibility. Under this reading, if the cosmic *nous* is responsible for *each thing*, what would it be the causal role of human *nous*? If responsibility is closed under a cosmic *nous*, so to speak, does that mean that

[31] See *Phaedo* 97c3-4: '*nous* is the αἴτιον of each thing.' Cf. Anaxagoras' fragments DK59B 11-14, and *Cratylus* 413c6-7. See also Aristotle's *Metaphysics* 1.3, 984b8-22, where Aristotle mentions that Hermotimus of Clazomenae proposed this view even before Anaxagoras. See also *Philebus* 28c, 30c4-7, and 30d6-8. Cf. *Laws* 10.888e. Again, the distance between Socrates' report and Anaxagoras' fragment reminds us that the story is told from Socrates' perspective and limitations.

[32] That πάντων refers to every concrete thing, is reinforced by τὰ πράγματα in 98c1. This does not imply that *nous* orders everything at once. Against this view see Sedley (2007, 88).

[33] See, for instance, Bostock (1986, 143), and Sedley (2007, 88).

humans cannot be held responsible for anything? Would Socrates still be able to claim that humans have *nous*? Socrates did not ask any of these questions, nor seemed worried about the multiple problems an over-controlling cosmic *nous* raises. Scholars reading the text in this way are forced to say that Socrates' explanation of his *nous* as the being responsible for his staying in jail is an analogy. But the text does not present it as an analogy at all (I shall return to this point later). If Anaxagoras' claim introduces a cosmic *nous*, then Socrates was tremendously enthusiastic about a *deus ex machina* strategy that tries to solve a puzzle with even more obscure assumptions.

These arguments, however, do not rule out completely the cosmic *nous* reading. There are ways in which it would be compatible with human *nous* and human responsibility. But for that to work, some assumptions about causation and responsibility are needed, for example, that they are a transitive relation—an idea developed in the *Republic*, but absent in *Phaedo* (see Ch. 2). However, if Socrates is taking *nous* as a universal that encompasses any *nous* (either divine, or human),[34] there is no need to supply premises or extra assumptions from other dialogues. Divine *nous* would be accountable for natural phenomena, whereas human *nous* would be responsible for people's actions, and creations. This picture fits with the text, with traditional Greek religion, and avoids the problems that the cosmic *nous* generates. The difference between Gods and humans is not their type of *nous*, but the fact that gods are more resourceful, for instance, in terms of time, memory, information, strength, and physical objects they can direct, and order.

There is also a question about order (διακοσμέω), and its relation to responsibility. Is the ordering exclusively intrinsic (*x* is ordered; *i.e*. *x*'s parts are ordered), extrinsic (*x* is fitted in a wider order), or both? Moreover, one may wonder what exactly (if any) is the link between order and responsibility. Is the thought that order explains responsibility? The reason to think that is that later Socrates just makes reference to the ordering activity of *nous*, and assumes that this means it is responsible for what he does. If this is true, Socrates understood the claim as saying something stronger:

3. $\forall x, \exists y\, [Ny \wedge Oyx \wedge (Oyx \supset Ryx)]$

   For any *x*, there is a *y*, such that *y* is a *nous*, and *y* orders *x*, and if *y* orders *x*, then *y* is responsible for *x*.

Note that from claim (3), it is possible to infer (2). Socrates' positive reaction to Anaxagoras' claim, however, was the result not only of this, but also of his addition of the

[34] Cf. *Sophist* 265e: the making art is of two kinds, human and divine.

idea that if *nous* directs and arranges each thing it does so in whatever way is best (since that is what a *nous* does):[35]

> For I never supposed he [Anaxagoras], having said they [*i.e*. each thing] were ordered by *nous*, would offer any other sort of αἰτία of them other than that it is best for them to be exactly the way they are (*Phaedo* 98a7-9).

Socrates idea is that: for any *x*, there is a *y*, such that *y* is a *nous*, and *y* orders *x* in whatever way is best.[36] Adding the reference to responsibility, we have the following claim:

4. $\forall x, \exists y\, [Ny \wedge BOyx \wedge (Oyx \supset Ryx)]$

For any *x*, there is a *y*, such that *y* is a *nous*, and *y* orders *x* in whatever way is best, and if *y* orders *x* in whatever way is best, then *y* is responsible for *x*.[37]

This is Socrates' *Nous* Closure Principle, even if inspired by Anaxagoras. The claim, however, does not necessarily imply that a *nous* is aware of what it is doing, or that it has purposes or intentions. *Nous* is a principle of order that only has one function. Whatever is at the disposition of a *nous*, gets ordered in whatever way is best:

nous(*x*) = *x* is ordered in whatever way is best.

This leaves open, however, the question about what the best is. The text gives no indication about for whom it is best, or if it is the best order *simpliciter*. It is difficult to see, however, the claim as meaning that any *nous* orders in whatever way is best *simpliciter*, since if that were true all actions would be successful and all agents would be infallible. It seems, in turn, that each *nous* orders in whatever way is best to the best of its ability and resources. The outcome seems to depend, however, on whether there was enough time, knowledge, and so on.

Also missing from the passage is an explicit indication as to what makes a specific order better than the other. The passage has been traditionally read as a teleological account, and the discussion has focussed on whether Socrates ends up discarding it or not.[38] But there are many ways to understand teleology.[39] In this passage the good is achieved through

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[35] The explanation of 'what is best' is revisited in *Timaeus* (29-34, 44d-46a, 48a2-5, 68e-71a). In other texts, Plato's Socrates says that people always aim at the good. See *Phaedo* 69a-c, *Protagoras* 358b-c, *Gorgias* 466b-468e, *Meno* 77b-78b. Here the claim is stronger. Humans could aim at the good not only with their *nous* but also with their desires, and appetites. The thought here is, perhaps, that the *nous* aims at the best of the options. Sedley (2007, 75-92) argues that this thesis is an innovation of the historical Socrates, but a similar idea is also found in Diogenes of Apollonia (64B3), Socrates' contemporary.

[36] See *Phaedo* 97c4-6, and 98a6-b1. See also *Republic* 379b-c.

[37] This would imply the weak version of the claim, which following (2) would be $\forall x, \exists y\, (Ny \wedge BOyx \wedge Ryx)$: 'For any *x*, there is a *y*, such that *y* is a *nous*, and *y* orders *x* in whatever way is best, and *y* is responsible for *x*.'

[38] See, for instance, Bedu-Addo (1979), Wiggins (1986), Vlastos (1969), MacKenzie (1988), McCabe (2000, 165, 187), and Sharma (2009).

[39] See McCabe (2000, 187-189).

an ordering activity. The idea seems to be that order is intrinsically good (why it is good, it is not said). The superlative—what is best—could be, then, the most ordered option available for each specific thing.[40] This quantitative reading seems the most economical; the more order there is, the more goodness it has. Otherwise, the criterion to decide what is best would be something else, and Socrates says nothing about what that could be. The quantitative reading will also solve the doubt about whether Socrates had in mind internal, external order, or both. What is best, on this interpretation, is to be ordered in both ways.

Any human not choosing what is best will imply a failure that is not due to that person's *nous*, but a deficiency in a different area. This picture will explain at once both the natural and human ambits of the world without implying that human *nous* is a second rate entity, nor that it is only *nous* in a derivative or diluted sense. Moreover, any human using his *nous* will think that acquiring *nous* is the best investment of their time.

Note that this proposal, in contrast with the inductive method of natural inquiry, offers a universal principle from which particular answers can be derived. Socrates saw in Anaxagoras' claim, then, a promising way out from the problems he found in the previous accounts.[41] That meant an account where opposites are not αἰτίαι of the same effects, and where causation is not explained by mere manipulation of physical tokens (like juxtaposition and separation)

Socrates' interpretation of Anaxagoras allows him to anticipate a programme to answer the questions of natural inquiry. It only gives a general direction to the inquiry and not a step-by-step method to get the answers, but it advises that: if a person *S* wishes to find the αἰτία of *X*, *S* has to find in what way it is best for *X* to exist, or else to act, or be acted upon in any way (see *Phaedo* 97c6-d1).[42]

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[40] See *Phaedo* 98a7-9.

[41] Socrates reaction to Anaxagoras' claim was enthusiastic. After feeling incompetent, blinded, and ignorant due to his previous experiences, now he was 'delighted,' (*Phaedo* 97c3), 'glad' (*Phaedo* 97d7; cf. *Meno* 84b), eager to know more (*Phaedo* 98b3), and 'wonderfully hopeful' (see *Phaedo* 98b3, and 98b7). But notice that hope is a dangerous business in Greek culture, if we remember Pandora's box, for example (cf. Hesiod's *Theogony* 507-616, and *Works and Days*, 42-105). Socrates also made a preliminary evaluative judgement. Anaxagoras' claim seemed to him 'good' (*Phaedo* 97c3), and something that was 'in accordance with his *nous*' (*Phaedo* 97d7). The use of *nous* here makes a pun with Anaxagoras' *nous*. But it might not be a joke, as Burnet (1911, 104) notes, but something that will highlight an important ethical consequence of Anaxagoras' claim. See *Phaedo* 98b8-9. The inclusion of all these emotions in the philosophical conversation will turn out to be important later. See Ch. 4, sec. 3.

[42] The language of acting or being acted upon (πάσχειν ἢ ποιεῖν in *Phaedo* 97d1) will be a central topic in the *Sophist* 245e-249d (Ch. 4, se. 5), and for the Stoic ontology (Ch. 5, sec. 2.2).

This programme presupposes the *Nous* Closure Principle. Since a *nous* orders things in whatever way is best, therefore an αἰτία should explain in what way the *explanandum* exists, or is acted upon, in the best way, or in which way it is an αἴτιον (in which case it would not be the αἰτία of it, but how it is responsible for something else). Socrates' suggestion is to accept the *Nous* Closure Principle, to have a clear path to search for αἰτίαι of particular things and phenomena. While the popular view and the natural scientists tried to answer why questions (διὰ τί in 96a8-9, and c7; δι' ὅτι in 97b3-5) by reducing them to specific hows and whens (ἐπειδάν in 96b2, c9; πότερον in 96b4, ἐπεί in 97a4), this programme would answer them by finding in what way (ὅπῃ in 97c6) is the best for them to be, act, or be acted upon.

Socrates' programme sets a new way to look at natural inquiry, and this requires a new method. A question that emerges, however, is whether the programme is supposed to completely overthrow everything said in the popular and scientific inquiry, build upon it, or ignore it.[43] On the one hand, Socrates does not deny the popular and scientific accounts as explanations of how and when. He could agree with the temporal sequences and mechanics of some of them. He may agree, for instance, that at some point a small man eats and drinks, and at a second moment that man is bigger. What he would not accept is that eating and drinking is what is *responsible* for that growth. On the other hand, it may be that we do not need that kind of knowledge but only the knowledge of what is best. It is possible, however, that the knowledge of what is best requires the knowledge of the sciences and popular opinion to be able to judge what is best (see *Phaedo* 97d4-5). These questions are left unanswered.

Socrates, however, realised that the general programme affects a person's whole way of life:

> It belongs to a human to investigate, in relation to himself[44] and other matters, nothing other than what is the finest and best (*Phaedo* 97d1-4).

Doing this is using one's *nous*. But this claim makes humans not only the inquirers but also the objects of investigation, which means that the programme allows self-inquiry, and self-transformation.[45] The same programme will do for all kinds of knowledge, and enterprises

[43] This is again the question about ἱκανῶς at 96d8 as 'sufficient' or 'adequate.'
[44] For a different reading, see Verdenius (1958, 229).
[45] This is in two senses, independent inquiry, and inquiry into oneself. This means that if knowing yourself were ever possible, it would be through this programme, namely to know what is best in relation to oneself. Cf. *Phaedrus* 230a. See Rowe (1993).

from sciences to psychology and leading one's life. Socrates' extension of the programme means that he sees all the areas of knowledge as engaged in essentially the same business.

The general programme also imposes limits and termination criteria for the investigation. For any inquiry, one would only need to investigate what is the finest and best for each thing. Socrates clarifies, however, that it also needs to include knowing what is worse, since it is part of the same knowledge (*Phaedo* 97d4-5). Once one knows what is best for something, then there is no need to keep looking; that would give a satisfactory and sufficient answer to the why-question (*Phaedo* 98a1-2), subject to review only if more information arises. Of course, there is a question here about how on earth we get access to that knowledge. In this sense, the failure of Anaxagoras will be instructive.

Socrates also expands the programme in another direction. Until now it sounds as if it was only for finding αἰτίαι of effects already familiar to us. But when Socrates explains the kind of account he was hoping to learn from Anaxagoras, he indicates that it could also help to solve matters of fact (*Phaedo* 97d8-e3, and 98a2-7). Put in general terms, Socrates was ready to learn whether *x* was *Y* or *Z* (for instance, whether the earth was flat or not, and whether the sun had this or that relative speed); and then, to receive an explanation of its causation and necessity. This explanation would consist in saying which option was better, and how it was best for each thing to act or be acted upon.

The method serves then to predict events, to describe matters of fact, or point out in which direction to look for what is wrong (certainly not *nous*, which has a stable function, but somewhere else). This could also be applied to analyse human action. To answer the question why *S* did *X* (Why did Socrates stay in prison? Why did Ajax the Lesser rape Cassandra?), it is necessary to explain how by doing *X*, *S* necessarily does the best thing she could have done; again, with the knowledge, time, resources available at the specific moment.

Socrates was also hoping to get the αἰτία common to each thing (that is, an answer to how in general *nous* orders each thing); and, finally, an explanation of the common good for each thing (see *Phaedo* 98a9-b3). That and no less is what would have fulfilled Socrates' desire for knowledge. Human beings, then, just need to find the best order to understand why things generate, perish, and exist. At this point, this only constitutes a general programme but lacks a clear method to succeed. This is what Socrates was hoping to learn from Anaxagoras.

5. Accounts that do not hold together

5.1 Real αἰτία, and real αἴτιον

Socrates expresses his objections to Anaxagoras' account at *Phaedo* 98b7-99d3. His description reveals a deep feeling of disapproval[46] and disappointment. After reading his books, Socrates found out that Anaxagoras' actual philosophy was far from his expectations.[47] The books offered an account Socrates did not even consider a viable option.[48]

First, Socrates explains why his hopes for Anaxagoras' philosophy vanished away.[49] The main failure—he thinks—is that Anaxagoras does not use his *nous*, nor does he ascribe to it any responsibility in the ordering of things, offering instead αἰτίαι that made no reference to *nous*, but to other αἴτια.[50] This implies three thoughts: an inconsistency between two claims, a disconnection between two parts of the theory, and an overdetermination of αἴτια. Anaxagoras seems to be claiming that *nous* is the αἴτιον of each thing, and yet alleges there are others, which seems contradictory.[51] Even ignoring this problem, Anaxagoras' account explains nothing about how *nous* is responsible for everything.

This latter point is the main topic Socrates was hoping to learn from Anaxagoras. Without a clear account of how *nous* is related to everything else, the proposal remains just as a fairy tale. Finally, since Anaxagoras is proposing countless αἴτια, and his αἰτίαι make no reference to *nous*, it seems uneconomical to also propose *nous* as an αἴτιον. But without *nous*, Anaxagoras' account is no different from that of the other natural philosophers, which means that it will also suffer from the same limitations.

To illustrate the seriousness of the matter, Socrates puts forward two cases.[52] One case refers to why Socrates is sitting in jail, and the other about why he is having a conversation with his friends. In both cases, an Anaxagorean answer would allege that the

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[46] Socrates refers to Anaxagoras not by name but with a derogatory 'ἄνδρα' (the man). See Burnet (1911, 105).
[47] See *Phaedrus* 269e-270a on Anaxagoras as teacher of Pericles, *nous* and lack of *nous*.
[48] See *Phaedo* 98a7.
[49] Socrates' 'wonderful hopes' 'vanished away'. With the expression ᾠχόμην φερόμενος at *Phaedo* 98b7-8, Socrates 'speaks as if he had been cast down from Olympus like another Hephaestus' Burnet (1911, 98). Cf. *Euthyphro* 15e5.
[50] See *Phaedo* 98b7-c2, and *Phaedo* 98c1-2: 'holds as the thing responsible (αἰτιώμενον) air, aether, water, and many other absurd things.'
[51] There are more charitable readings of Anaxagoras. It could be that the proposal was to offer two *types* of αἴτιον, or that they are related in some way Socrates missed.
[52] There is no reason to think these cases are hyperbolic, as Ledbetter (1999, 263) wants. See the superlative 'ὁμοιότατον' ('in exactly the same position') at 98c3.

things responsible are material things (bones and sinews, air and sounds), and would offer mechanistic αἰτίαι, just as the natural inquirers did before (*Phaedo* 98c2-e1). The first case, for instance, is expressed in the following way:

> He [Anaxagoras] seemed to me to be[53] in exactly the same position as if someone said that all Socrates' actions were accomplished by his *nous*, and then, in attempting to express the αἰτία of each of my actions, were to say, first, that the reason [διὰ ταῦτα] that I am now sitting here,[54] is that my body is composed from bone and sinews, and the bones are hard and are separated from each other by joints, whereas the sinews, which can stretch and relax, surround the bones along with the flesh and skin which hold them together; then, with the bones hanging on their joints, the sinews by relaxing and contracting, somehow make me able to bend my limbs now, and this is the αἰτία of my sitting here bent down (*Phaedo* 98c2-d6).[55]

The Anaxagorean proposes a general principle: (1) all Socrates' actions are accomplished by his *nous*; and then, that (2) Socrates is sitting in jail because his bones and sinews make him able to bend his limbs. Socrates' *nous* is blamed for all his actions, which means that it is their αἴτιον. But then, when the Anaxagorean actually attempts to express the αἰτία of each of Socrates' actions, he offers a physiological account that only explains how human bodily motions are possible in general.

It is true that Socrates' bones and sinews make him able to bend his limbs, but that is not *why* he is sitting *in jail*, nor does this account mention Socrates' *nous*. *The physiological account does not advance our understanding of Socrates' decision to stay in jail*. Moreover, someone who accepted it would think that the αἴτιον of Socrates' action is not *nous* but his bones and sinews. This is made clear when Socrates offers the second case:

> And further, with respect to our conversation he would speak of other αἰτίαι such as this I just mentioned,[56] alleging as the αἴτιον (αἰτιώμενος) sounds, airs, hearing, and countless other things such as these, … (*Phaedo* 98d6-8).

Socrates thinks that the Anaxagorean would offer another physiological account, just like the one given to explain the movement of Socrates' limbs. But in this case, instead of bones and sinews, the αἴτιον would be sounds, airs, and other things. This presents an additional problem. Socrates thinks that Anaxagoras' philosophy posits a set of different αἴτια for each of Socrates' actions. It seems, then, that in order to explain a day in Socrates' life he would need countless αἴτια. The Anaxagorean in these two cases—Socrates thinks—

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[53] Plato uses the perfect infinitive πεπονθέναι, but Williamson (1904, 198) notes that this is a common euphemism for ἁμαρτανεῖν. The sense of the sentence is to show how these cases fail or miss the mark exactly in the same way as Anaxagoras' account.
[54] Cf. *Phaedo* 60b.
[55] Cf. *Metaphysics* 1.4, 985a where Aristotle makes the same complaints about Anaxagoras.
[56] Here τοιαύτας refers to αἰτία in 98d5, and not to what follows. Sedley (1998, 115) points to this passage (and 101c4-5) to suggest that the distinction between αἴτιον and αἰτία is not entirely clear in the *Phaedo*, but if I am right in the reference of τοιαύτας, the distinction is clear.

would neglect to say the real αἰτία[57] of why he is sitting in jail, which is his decision about what was best under his circumstances (*Phaedo* 98e1-99a5). Socrates spells out his decision in two steps; first he explains the context of his decision, and then the evaluation he gave to his action:

> …he would neglect to say the real αἰτία, that, since the Athenians thought it was better to condemn me,[58] *because of this* (διὰ ταῦτα) I in turn also thought better to sit here, *i.e.*,[59] more just to stay to suffer whatever penalty[60] they ordered (*Phaedo* 98e1-5).

This is the real αἰτία. This is Socrates' judgement in jail the day he is set to die. The inference the reader is invited to make is that this should be the kind of αἰτία one gets from Socrates' method. Even if Socrates' method is a little bit confused or imprecise, it is good enough to offer a sketchy but authentic αἰτία, instead of an inadequate one. In this sense, the difference perhaps would be that a real αἰτία points at the right αἴτιον. Socrates' real αἰτία can be read as the following argument:

A. Since the Athenians thought it was better to condemn him, Socrates thought it was more just to stay to suffer whatever penalty the Athenians ordered.

B. Since Socrates thought it was more just to stay to suffer whatever penalty the Athenians ordered, he thought it was better to sit in jail (rather than run away).

C. The Athenians thought it was better to condemn him.

D. Therefore, Socrates thought it was better to sit in jail.

This αἰτία assumes that Socrates acts according to what he thinks is best in his circumstance, and that explaining why he thought this or that specific action was best is explanatory in a way the answers from natural inquiry were not. This fits with the claim that all his actions are accomplished by his *nous*, and with the *Nous* Closure Principle. The αἴτιον is Socrates' *nous*, the αἰτία his choosing of what was more just. The job of an αἰτία, then, is to explain a specific action given the above framework. In this case, the αἰτία needs to explain why Socrates thought sitting in jail was better than any other action available to him. Notice that Socrates does not give the general answer that Socrates' *nous* always chooses what is best. The real αἰτία tells us why Socrates chose what he chose in this particular case. This does not require, however, a commitment to the thought that in fact

[57] Cf. *Phaedo* 99b3-4.
[58] See *Phaedo* 116c-d.
[59] Taking καί as epexegetic.
[60] There is a pun with δικαιότερον … τὴν δίκην that gets lost in translation.

sitting in jail was the best thing to do. It may turn out that after further reflection one finds out that there was a better action available.

Socrates' αἰτία shows that his action is linked to a wider context. It is a response to the activity of other people's decisions (which they took by using their *nous*). The Athenians and Socrates, however, follow the same pattern, they did what they think was best. This shows that *nous* aims for the best action in its specific context and options available. A *nous* will always order things in the best way between the possible options.[61] But the αἰτία clearly states that Socrates' decision to stay was prompted by the action of the Athenians. For instance, without sentence or in case of an unlawful detention, Socrates might have decided a different thing.

The general structure of the αἰτία seems to be the following: for any agent *S,* and any action *Y*, an αἰτία of *Y* offers a) the previous action(s) that demand *S*' action, b) *S*' rationale in the light of (a), and c) how *Y* is a consequence of (b). According to this, (a) demarcates *S*' scope of action, (b) makes explicit *S*' action criteria, and (c) shows how the action criteria lead to *Y*. Due to the Athenians' decision, Socrates was in jail, but he could have escaped, so the decision to stay was in his hands (*i.e*., in his *nous*'s power). However, his criterion for action was to consider which option was more just, and thus, he decided to sit and stay in jail (assuming a conception of justice where being just implies to comply with the law). In doing so, Socrates reveals that for him, it is better to act according to justice than any other criteria for action. However, someone else might have acted according to a different principle, for example, self-preservation, and then the best course of action would have been different.

Socrates explains that the problem with his predecessors' accounts is that they confuse the real αἴτιον with the necessary conditions for its action (and thus they are unable to give a real αἰτία):

> Since—by the dog!—I believe these sinews and bones could long ago have been in Megara or Boeotia taken by my belief as to the best, if I had not thought more just and fairer to suffer whatever penalty the city ordered, rather than escape and run away. But to call such things [*i.e*. these sinews and bones] the αἴτια is out of place (*Phaedo* 98e5-99a5).[62]

Although Socrates' scope of action may be determined by the Athenians' actions (they put him in that position), they do not determine his decision. He could have escaped if

[61] We could rephrase the function as *nous*(*x*) = best order for *x* (that that specific *nous* can think of under the circumstances).
[62] Cf. *Timaeus* 46c7, where these types of things are called συναίτιον, and distinguished from the αἴτια. The Stoics also use the word συναίτιον, but not in the same sense (see Ch. 5, sec. 6.5).

he had thought it was the best. But Socrates considers that it is a mistake to think that the bones and sinews are the αἴτια of his action, instead of his *nous*'s activity. Socrates, however, is not rejecting the physical reality. He recognises that having bones and sinews is a necessary condition for *nous*'s activity:

> If someone said that without having such things, as bones and sinews and many other things, I should not be able to do what I decided, he would be speaking the truth. But to say that *because of* these things I do what I do, even doing them with my *nous*, rather than *my choice of what is best*, it would be a profoundly lazy way of talking (*Phaedo* 99a5-b2).

Nous's activity depends on some necessary physical conditions, but this passage puts emphasis on decision and choice. The necessary conditions could be established by reflecting on all the things whose absence would make impossible the action of *nous*. For example, without legs, Socrates cannot sit, even if his *nous* commands it. The activity of *nous*, then, presupposes the existence of the material part of the world, and depending on the action, a specific set of complex realities. Otherwise, a *nous* would have nothing to order or direct. The necessary conditions, however, fail to answer the why question. Socrates continues:

> For not being able to distinguish that the real αἴτιον is one thing, and that without which the αἴτιον would not be able to be a αἴτιον, another (*Phaedo* 99b2-4).

Mentioning the necessary conditions as αἴτια calls for counter-examples. The reason Socrates is in jail cannot be that his bones and legs put him there, because his legs could have also been in Megara or Boeotia. Therefore, although these things are necessary, they are not why Socrates is sitting in jail. Moreover, even if *nous* is mentioned as the αἴτιον, if it does not make reference to its function, namely choosing what is best, the account would be lacking. Socrates' contribution to the discussion is the thought that *nous* orders things in whatever way is best. Notice how the real αἰτία of why he is sitting in jail makes no reference to Socrates' bones and sinews, even when he recognises that they are necessary conditions of Socrates' action.

Socrates, then, groups Anaxagoras, natural inquirers, and ordinary people, to make a comparison:

> It is precisely what the many seem to me to do, groping about like in darkness, using a name that belongs to something else, and thus calling it as if it itself were an αἴτιον (*Phaedo* 99b4-6).[63]

The problem is one of misidentification. Everyone is blaming the wrong things as responsible for all that happens in heaven and on earth. This is a bold claim Socrates has

[63] Cf. Ch. 2, sec. 4.

been waiting to reveal. He thinks that everybody else is in the dark. He is the exception, however, since he is able to see which is the real αἴτιον, and what is the problem with everybody else. If people continue to mistake necessary conditions for αἴτια, they will never find the real αἰτίαι of things. Socrates is arguing here that people need to stop thinking about causation in the way they have been thinking because it leads nowhere. It does not matter if this goes against common sense, or the original intuitions, the point is that it is a mistaken way of thinking about the whole topic.

5.2 The *Titanomachia*

The result of such a mistake is to propose theories that do not hold together. Socrates offers two cases: one is a person who argues that a vortex surrounds the earth to keep the heavens in place,[64] another is someone who makes the air support the heavens like a wide lid (see *Phaedo* 99b6-c1).[65] Socrates presents these accounts merely as competing descriptions, unable to explain why things are in the way they say. For Socrates, people who do that do not inquire into the capacity that things have to be located in the best possible way, nor do they think this capacity has divine power, nor do they think that what is good and binding really binds things together. They think, in turn, that at some point they will find a firmer αἴτιον to hold everything together (see *Phaedo* 99a5-c6).

Socrates thinks, in contrast, that things do have the capacity to be disposed in the best way possible. This implies that to know the αἰτία of generation and destruction, one needs to inquiry into this capacity. Socrates also believes this capacity bears certain divine strength (cf. the Stoic view, see Ch. 5, sec. 2.2). Socrates also complains that people do not believe 'what is good and binding really binds.' According to what has been said in this passage, this seems a reference to *nous*; *nous*—by ordering—is what really binds things, instead of bones, sinews, airs, and vortices; *nous* is the capacity with divine power to really bind things together (this idea will later be defended in the *Sophist*, see Ch. 4, sec. 7).

It seems that some of the natural inquirers think, in contrast, that in case they haven't found the ultimate αἴτιον of why things hold together, they will find it at some point using their mechanistic method. They think they will 'find at some point a more powerful and more everlasting Atlas' (*Phaedo* 99c3-4). Plato uses ἰσχυρότερος (more powerful) here, referring back to the divine ἰσχύς (power) of *nous* (in 99c3). These people are looking for 'an Atlas' with a divine power, stronger than the divine power of *nous*. Socrates, however,

[64] Perhaps Empedocles. See Aristotle *DC* 300b2-3, cf. 295a166-ss. See the discussion in Rowe (1993, 237), and Burnet (1911, 107).
[65] Rowe (1993, 238) suggests the reference may be Anaximenes, Anaxagoras, and Democritus. See Aristotle *DC* 294b13-17; cf. *Clouds* 379.

never talks about whether these people have reasons for their failure to believe in *nous*. They might be materialists who wish to avoid certain metaphysical commitments, but if so, in a sense, they are populating their ontology with countless material αἴτια. They might not want to believe in a different type of αἴτιον, *nous*. But if *nous* is used in the universal sense, in insisting on their materialism these folks are erasing not only divine *nous*, but also human *nous* from their ontology. This seems too much of a cost for Socrates. Materialism will be further discussed later in the *Sophist* (see Ch. 4, sec. 6-7).

The comparison between the divine power of *nous*, and the strength of Atlas, also implies some differences. The reference to Atlas, a titan from the pre-Olympic era, makes an allusion to the Titanomachia.[66] Atlas, the god of astronomy, defied Zeus in the Titans' revolt, and after the Olympic gods won, he was condemned to hold up the sky for all eternity. By comparing the missing αἴτιον of the natural inquiry with Atlas, Socrates is also implying that those who look for it are joining forces with the loser's side, since at the end it was Zeus who commanded Atlas to hold up the heavens, and in the same way the inquirers into nature will find out that *nous* is behind even the strongest of their alleged αἴτια. Atlas was also known as a dull, witless giant, somewhat stupid.[67] He represents in this way the contrary of *nous*: *nous* is an Olympic, heavenly, divine force, whereas the power of Atlas is that of a son of the goddess Earth.

5.3 The Second Voyage

Socrates, in the end, remains open to becoming a student of anyone able to put such a theory together (a theory with a stronger Atlas than the one they have), but since he was deprived from any good candidate from the beginning, however, was unable to discover it by himself, nor learn it from another, he decided to begin a second attempt in search of the αἰτία (*Phaedo* 99c6-d3).[68]

Phaedo 99a5-c6 raises the following exegetical questions: 1) what exactly is Anaxagoras' mistake, and what implications does it have? 2) Why it is a mistake? 3) What exactly is Socrates' decision about it, and is it justified? There has been much discussion about (1)[69] and (3).[70] It has been thought that the outcome of this section is Socrates'

[66] This links with the *Sophist* passage I analyse in Ch. 4 (see esp. sec. 1, and 3). There, there is a second Titanomachia, known as the gigantomachia, where the Giants, sons of the Goddess Earth, rebel against the Olympic gods.
[67] See Homer *Odyssey* 1.51-4; Hesiod *Theogony* 507-20, 744-50; Pindar *Pythian* 4.289-90; Aeschylus *Prometheus* 347-20, 425-30.
[68] See *Politicus* 300c.
[69] See, for example, Vlastos (1971, 138); Annas (1983, 314); Sedley (1990, 7), (1995), and (1998); and Hankinson (1998, 84-87). Ledbetter (1999, 260) adds that Socrates also objects Anaxagoras' inclusion of bodies as causes.

complete abandonment of the search for a teleological answer. In contrast, some have seen a hint of a full teleological account that gets expanded in *Republic* 6, with the form of the good as the cause, but that it is put on hold here.[71] Everybody agrees there is a change of αἰτία. I think, however, that even after rejecting Anaxagoras' αἰτίαι, Socrates still considers *nous* as the αἴτιον of each thing. The passage criticises Anaxagoras not for proposing *nous* as the αἴτιον, but for being unable to deliver αἰτίαι that connected *nous* with its effects.[72]

As other dialogues use mathematical or medical methodologies to extend their use to other areas,[73] so Socrates extends here a legal framework and applies it to everything.[74] Anaxagoras charged *nous* as being responsible for each thing, but his own

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[70] This is the famous discussion about the meaning of 'δεύτερος πλοῦς.' See, for instance, Murphy (1933), Rose (1966), Shipton (1979), Ross (1982), Gonzalez (1998), and Sharma (2009).

[71] See Bedu-Addo (1979); McCabe (1998), (2000, 165).

[72] The standard interpretation comes from Vlastos' (1969, 297-8, n. 15) reading of *Phaedo* 99c6-d2. According to him: 'what Socrates has failed to discover by his own labours or from those of others and is prepared to do without for the present is the teleological *aitia* itself. This leaves no room for understanding him to mean (as has been done over and over again in the literature) that his "second-best journey" is (a) an alternative method of searching for teleological *aitiai* rather than (b) an alternative method of searching for *aitiai*. The text offers no direct support for (a), since nothing is said of different methods of looking for teleological *aitiai* (the natural philosophers were condemned for failing to look for such *aitia*, not for looking for them by the wrong method).' Bostock (1986) for example, follows this line of thought. But this reading has led not only to an unsatisfactory answer as to why Socrates stayed in prison but also to a complete misreading of Socrates' account of causation and responsibility in the *Phaedo*. The main problem with this interpretation is that it construes Socrates second voyage as a weak, and weird proposal, subject to many counterexamples. More importantly, it is unable to explain the real αἰτία and real αἴτιον (see this chapter's sec. 5.1). Bostock (1986, 155) accuses Plato of carelessness, and says that his 'line of thought has led to an obviously absurd result.'
Sedley (1998, 123-124), however, has shown that Bostock's approach is inadequate 'to object on the ground that Plato's causal theory cannot account for all the relations which we consider causal.' The problem with Bostock's counterexamples is that they take our intuitions about causation as evidence against Plato. But this is to misunderstand the whole point of the passage. Plato wants us to change our intuitions about what is and what is not an αἰτία, not to give a theory to explain them. Plato himself makes this clear when he recognises that previous philosophers and ordinary people have a radically different understanding of what is an αἰτία.
The problems, then, can be avoided by correcting Vlastos' mistake. Let me first quote the relevant passage from the *Phaedo* 99c6-d2: 'ἐγὼ μὲν οὖν τῆς *τοιαύτης αἰτίας* ὅπῃ ποτὲ ἔχει μαθητὴς ὁτουοῦν ἥδιστ' ἂν γενοίμην· ἐπειδὴ δὲ *ταύτης* ἐστερήθην καὶ οὔτ' αὐτὸς εὑρεῖν οὔτε παρ' ἄλλου μαθεῖν οἷός τε ἐγενόμην, τὸν δεύτερον πλοῦν ἐπὶ τὴν τῆς αἰτίας ζήτησιν ᾗ πεπραγμάτευμαι βούλει σοι, ἔφη, ἐπίδειξιν ποιήσωμαι, ὦ Κέβης;'
This translates to: 'So I would gladly become student of anyone who possess [the knowledge] of *such αἰτία*. But since I was deprived of *it* and have not been able either to find it myself or to learn it from someone else, would you like me to give you a demonstration, Cebes, of how I pursued my second voyage in search of the αἰτία?'
Vlastos' (1969, 297) rejects the teleological αἰτία on the basis that: 'the reference of ταύτης in C8 (the object of ἐστερήθην and also, with the implied change of case, of the infinitives εὑρεῖν, μαθεῖν) is to τοιαύτης αἰτίας in C7.' Vlastos reads the text as saying that Socrates was deprived of the teleological explanation (*i.e.*, 'τοιαύτης αἰτίας'). I agree with his reading of the Greek, but I do not think that τοιαύτης αἰτίας should be identified with the teleological αἰτία (an Aristotelian distinction Vlastos imposes on the text), but with the Atlas sought by natural inquiry. Socrates abandons his confidence in the naturalistic explanation that promises to answer the 'why?' question. But that does not mean he rejects the search for the αἰτία of the divine force referred as 'the truly good and binding' (ἀληθῶς τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ δέον, *Phaedo* 99c5), and the capacity of natural things to be in the best place they could possibly be put.

[73] For an example with medicine see *Phaedrus* 270c1-d7, discussed in Ch. 4, sec. 5.

[74] Legal analogies have already been suggested, see Sedley (1998). I think, however, that Plato is not making analogies but extrapolating a legal framework and applying it to the whole of reality. That the *Phaedo* is framed as Socrates' second legal defence is stated in 63b.

allegations failed to prove *nous*'s blame. His mistake was to end up accusing[75] other suspects, without making clear their connection with *nous*. Socrates, who also suspects *nous*, is disappointed by Anaxagoras' lazy performance as prosecutor.[76] Socrates criticises Anaxagoras' legal strategy, but not in order to drop the case but to promote himself as the leading prosecutor. He still thinks the case could be won. The legal framework also explains Socrates' insistence on the thesis that opposites cannot be responsible for the same effects, and that a single effect cannot have an opposite αἰτία. If any of those things were possible, they would lead to two opposite αἴτια with two opposite allegations for the same deed. Notice, however, that the problem is not that Socrates is assuming there must be only one *nous* per effect (the democratic decision to condemn him to death penalty makes this clear). The difficulty is that the two alleged αἴτια would be opposite to each other.

At *Phaedo* 98c4-5, Socrates makes clear that each of his actions needed an αἰτία, even if his *nous* is the αἴτιον of all of them. Each of his deeds requires a new trial. This means that there are as many αἰτίαι as things in the world, even if there is only one kind of αἴτιον. If *nous*, then, is the thing responsible for everything, with one counterexample, with one αἰτία of something that successfully proves that the αἴτιον is something other than *nous*, the whole proposal falls apart.

Socrates is also concerned that Anaxagoras is not giving *nous* any responsibility for the ordering of things,[77] but alleging that the culprits are a multitude of other things. Socrates calls these things ἄτοπα,[78] which is normally translated as 'absurd,' but its literal meaning is 'out of place.' Anaxagoras' error is to misplace other αἴτια instead of *nous*, proving he is not using his own *nous* to order things in the best way possible. What is absurd is to put things out of their place. For instance, people unable to distinguish between αἴτιον and necessary conditions use names in a disordered fashion, since they use the name 'αἴτιον' referring to certain things when in reality it belongs to something else. Even if they say true things while describing the necessary conditions, since they talk about them as if they were the αἴτια, they have failed to answer why each thing is or should be where it is. In addition, when Socrates explains what he considers the real αἰτία of why he is sitting in jail, he says that his decision to stay there is to suffer the Athenians' orders (κελεύω in 98e5),

[75] See *Phaedo* 98b9. Plato uses the participle ἐπαιτιώμενον, literally 'bringing a charge against, accusing.' This vocabulary was normally used to bring legal charges against someone.
[76] See ἀμελέω, 'have no care for,' in *Phaedo* 98e1, and πολλὴ ἂν καὶ μακρὰ ῥαθυμία εἴη τοῦ λόγου ('it would be to speak extreme laziness'), in *Phaedo* 99b1-2.
[77] *Phaedo* 98c1: τὸ διακοσμεῖν τὰ πράγματα. Here it is clear that *nous* orders each specific thing. Note that διακοσμέω is the same word the Stoics use to refer to the re-establishing of the world's order after the conflagration.
[78] See *Phaedo* 98c1-2, and 99a5.

and whatever penalty the city has imposed (τάσσω in 99a4). The decisions of both, the Athenians and Socrates, are about putting things and persons in the right order.

6. The solar eclipse and why previous methods are unsafe and careless

Socrates begins the exposition of his own method and the type of αἰτία he champions, after his deep disappointment with the previous inquiry. This is the first lesson he took from all these:

> Well then, after these things,[79] he said, since I had failed in my inquiry into things, I thought it was necessary to be cautious not to suffer the same as what happens to those who observe and examine the sun during an eclipse. For I suppose some[80] ruin their eyes unless they examine its reflection (εἰκών) in water or something such as this. I just had in mind something such as this, and I feared my soul would be completely blinded by looking at things with my eyes and attempting to grasp them with each of my senses. I thought I must flee and take refuge in arguments, and examine in them the truth about things (*Phaedo* 99d4-e6).

Socrates recommends a change of attitude, which leads to a change of method to save him from the risks of inquiry. First, he wants to be more careful than everybody else. Note that it is through thinking that he decides to change his attitudes towards inquiry. Before, Socrates was, perhaps, overly enthusiastic, but was not especially concerned with being careful. But his assessment of Anaxagoras led him to evaluate everybody else as lazy, and careless (see *Phaedo* 99b1-2). That lack of care, it seems, is one of the reasons their theories do not hold together. Socrates suggests a relation between the attitudes towards inquiry, the risks, and the harm that can result from it. He thinks that an inquiry badly conducted could make people permanently resilient to his method, the real αἰτία, and αἴτιον.

To explain this, he draws two analogies with the different ways people look at solar eclipses. These analogies compare two different methods of observation of the sun, with two methods of inquiry of the αἰτίαι of things:

1. Looking directly : Solar eclipse :: Using the senses : searching for the αἰτία of things.
2. Looking at reflections : Solar eclipse :: Examining arguments : searching for the αἰτία of things.[81]

[79] See *Phaedo* 99c6-d3.
[80] The word is ἔνιοι, and seems to refer back to Anaxagoras and everyone else making the same type of mistake. Anaxagoras may have seen the real αἴτιον of things, but by being careless with his method, he ended up blinding himself.
[81] This allows a more general analogy: method of observation: phenomenon :: method of inquiry: subject of inquiry.

In the first analogy, just as some people ruin their eyes by looking directly at the eclipse, some people ruin their souls by attempting to grasp everything exclusively with their senses (Or with their senses while being careless with the arguments). In the second analogy, Socrates thinks that looking at the eclipse's reflection in the water is safer, just as examining the αἰτία of things with arguments. There are two main things to take into consideration, the methods, and the possible outcomes.

In the first analogy the method of observation is unsafe, and careless, while in the second one it is safe, and careful. The reason for these differences seems to be the directness or indirectness of the method. Socrates, however, is going to reject this line of thought in *Phaedo* 99e6-100a1. But if it is not a problem of directness, then it seems that the difference is about using all the resources at hand to inquire into nature. In the case of watching an eclipse, people should consider, for instance, the testimony of previous observers, and be aware of the dangers of eye damage. They should use their reason to find out a way to study solar eclipses without risking their sight. In the case of the soul, Socrates thinks he should avoid the exclusively empirical observation of nature, and undergo instead a careful examination and reflection of the arguments, theoretical frameworks, and concepts used. The examination of the arguments is the safest method to observe and study nature.

The possible outcomes of (1) are blindness, and (metaphorical) 'blindness' of the soul. Both imply a damage that could be temporary, or permanent. Socrates has already talked about his own temporary blindness of the soul after his inquiry into nature (see *Phaedo* 96c6). Now his worry is that the damage may become permanent. If the analogy holds, the suggestion is that the damage to the soul is directly proportional to the time spent using the senses as the method of inquiry. But what exactly would the blindness of the soul consist in? Real blindness is the loss of sight. In that case, the eyes stop seeing light, and colour. Staring at a solar eclipse, however, involves the corruption of the organ of visual perception due to a misuse (in contrast with an accident or the loss of sight that comes with age). The blindness of the soul in this passage seems to be a loss of the capacity to see what is best. Notice that what is best is out there in the world. It is something to be 'seen' with one's *nous*. It implies a realist conception of the good. Therefore, the soul's blindness is, more specifically, a corruption of a person's *nous*, which implies an impediment to understanding reality thereafter.

Socrates' claim is, then, that what his predecessors have done has a degenerative consequence for someone's *nous*. Socrates thinks that an extended use of the empirical method may lead to a permanent blindness of the soul, and therefore, a permanent inability

to grasp the αἰτίαι of things. This would imply not only a scientific bad practice, but a moral one, since Socrates includes in the inquiry into αἰτίαι, and certainly in the task of one's *nous*, questions of justice and goodness (this explains the reference to people who do not believe in 'what is good and binding' in *Phaedo* 99b6-c1). Socrates thinks that an incorrect method can cause axiological blindness. But it may not only include Anaxagoras and famous natural philosophers, but everyone who is not doing philosophy in the right way, that is, Socrates' way.

There is a scale of the degrees of damage a *nous* has suffered by failing to inquire into the αἰτίαι of things. Remember, for instance, that Socrates has also compared the inquirers into nature with people groping about in darkness (see *Phaedo* 99b4-6). The comparison with the eclipse, however, warns against their method and attitude not because it leads to a misidentification of the real αἴτιον, but because it can produce a permanent damage to the soul. It seems, then, that there are at least three different kinds of blindness of the soul:

a) Brief temporary blindness: like Socrates' inquiry into nature. People switching positions, puzzled.

b) Prolonged (but hopefully still temporary) blindness: some of the scientists who are groping about in the dark, like Anaxagoras, or the Athenians. People holding inconsistent accounts of reality, and/or misidentifying the αἴτιον of things.

c) Permanent blindness: scientists that do not even believe in what is good and binding, and think they will find a stronger Atlas.

According to this picture, a brief temporary blindness might even be therapeutic and helpful in certain circumstances. It would count as a healthy amount of puzzlement. The problem is when the blindness persists, and people stop realising their arguments do not hold together (like Anaxagoras), or worst, when someone starts thinking that darkness is all there is. The risk of being careless with the inquiry into things is that one may ruin one's *nous*, and cause oneself's axiological blindness. This would also imply the loss of one's agency, since that was *nous*'s job-description. *Blindness of the soul leads to the loss of agency, and, therefore, to the loss of full credit of one's actions*. The threat involved in failing to examine arguments is to become by one's own actions a slave, or worse, a mindless zombie. It is a loss of the capacity to do good (order things *in the best way*), but that does not imply people in that situation lose their capacity to move things around. The danger is to lose sight of what is good and just, while keeping the instrumental use of

reason.[82] The threat of complete axiological blindness is that it means an irreversible damage to one's soul.[83] Does the permanent damage to the soul mean that arguments are useless against this type of blindness?

The possible outcomes of the second analogy seem more promising. People who watch a solar eclipse in reflections do not ruin their eyes, and are able to study the eclipse in a safer way. Accordingly, Socrates suggests that by examining arguments he can avoid blindness of the soul, and study the αἰτίαι of things without the risks. But, unlike the case of watching eclipses through their reflection, Socrates presents himself as the discoverer and only practitioner of the right way to examine arguments to get to the αἰτίαι of things. As in the eclipse's observation, Socrates' method may not be straightforward, absolutely accurate, or certain, but it is at least safer for the soul, and is able to consider a wider scope of reality. It considers the whole picture, since it includes the good and the capacity of things to be in the best way, and (allegedly) it also offers an account that will hold together.

Socrates' method, however, does not reject the phenomena. After all, arguments are about the generation, destruction, and existence of things, and some observation is needed. Moreover, in the eclipse analogy the use of reflections in the water implies a causal connection between the eclipse and its reflection. A reflection is there only if there is something that is reflecting in the water. In the same way, first order arguments are 'reflections' of things, and are caused by them, while second order arguments are reflections of first order arguments. If the arguments are about how the αἴτιον is linked with the physical reality, it is necessary that those arguments include the empirical observation.

Socrates' retreat to arguments is not an absolute abandonment of the information of the senses, it is, however, a change of priority. Socrates may think that an empirical expedition without a proper theoretical framework would end up in disaster. Instead of trying to observe nature for a longer time and being obsessed about developing the art of empirical observation while being careless with the argumentation, then, he suggests that first we need some conceptual clarity. Socrates makes clear, however, that he did not develop his method with the empirical detail covered by his predecessors, and he claims to know nothing or very little about the necessary conditions, and the 'how' of things. But this does not mean it is impossible, or that it is undesirable to have that knowledge.[84]

[82] Similar complaints are done by Adorno and Horkheimer (1944) in *Dialectic of Enlightment*.
[83] This also shows that philosophy can be a dangerous business if done carelessly.
[84] Against this reading see Bostock (1986, 147).

Socrates points out, however, an important dissimilarity between the solar eclipses and the investigation of αἰτίαι (see *Phaedo* 99e6-100a1). He explains it in the following way:

> For I do not actually agree that someone who examines things with arguments examines them with reflections[85] more than one who examines facts (*Phaedo* 100a1-3).

The eclipse analogies sound as if inquiry through sense perception were better and more direct than examining things through arguments. Socrates thinks, however, that both are reflections, and both are, at least, equally close to reality. In the eclipse case, staring directly with the naked eyes has a claim of authenticity and accuracy that empirical inquiry lacks in the examination of the αἰτίαι of things. Socrates thinks, then, that empirical inquiry of αἰτίαι is not staring at reality in a purer way than by argument, but it is a harmful one. With this clarification, Socrates undercuts one of the advantages that empirical inquiry had to offer. Another problem with empirical inquiry is that it may lead people to misidentify reflections with the originals. Socrates' stepping back to arguments, and all his previous journey that led him to that point, implies that he is now able to see reflections as reflections, which means he knows there are originals, even if he cannot see them directly, or clearly.[86]

7. A new hope

7.1 The method of hypothesis.

Once Socrates clarifies the dissimilarity between solar eclipses and the inquiry into αἰτίαι, he offers a first general description of his own method of inquiry. This is the method he developed as a δεύτερος πλοῦς after he failed to learn a reliable method from someone else or by his own first attempts. He describes it by saying:

> I started in this way: hypothesising in each occasion the argument which I decided would be the most powerful; I established, on the one hand, as being true that which seemed to me in harmony with it [*i.e.*, the argument], about αἰτίαι and about everything else; on the other hand, I established as not true whatever seemed to me not in harmony with it (*Phaedo* 100a3-7).[87]

The method assumes a certain familiarity with the competing arguments and an evaluation of which is the most powerful. It does not start from scratch, but from an implicit first survey of the possible arguments to answer a problem, and the realisation that none of

[85] The word εἰκών is normally translated as image or likeness. That, however, dilutes the causal relation between the original and its reflection, since likenesses could be accidental. For the use of εἰκών in other dialogues see *Phaedrus* 250b3, 4; *Republic* 520c4-6; *Timaeus* 48e-49a.
[86] The distinction between reality and fiction is a theme the Stoics will also use in their discussion of forms (see Ch. 5, sec. 5.1).
[87] Cf. *Phaedo* 97c6-61.

them work. This is important because it stresses the fact that the previous inquiry was not a waste of time, and the new method is not an abandonment of the phenomena, and also because it means that the method does not try to wipe everything at once. In the case of the αἰτία of generation and destruction, Socrates' method presupposes his previous knowledge of the accounts of natural inquiry. This means that his second method subsumes the experiences from the first one. Socrates' method, then, consists in the following steps:

If in puzzlement about *X*:

1. Decide which would be the most powerful argument.
2. Hypothesise the most powerful argument as true.
3. Stipulate as true everything that seems in harmony with the most powerful argument.
4. Stipulate as not true whatever is not in harmony with the most powerful argument.

This is a method to order one's own ideas. Getting out of puzzlement is crucial because otherwise one's *nous* cannot decide which order is best. The key to the method is harmony (συμφωνεῖν). Socrates use of this word seems to make a point about compatibility and complementarily.[88] If this were the case, the method would be able to accept arguments as true even if they do not follow from the hypothesis, as far as they are compatible with it. If the main concern is compatibility, it would certainly include whatever it can be logically deduced from the hypothesis, but it would not be limited to that. This also means that the hypothesis does not need to be the foundational axiom of the account.[89] Moreover, it gives the impression that from a single hypothesis one can build different harmonies, accepting as true things that are more specific, more general, and also in other areas of knowledge. Socrates, in any case, seems aware of the tentative nature of his method. As such, it does not guarantee in any way the truth about the answer it can offer, but only the consistency of one's account.

[88] This is often considered as a deductive method. See Burnet (1911, 109). Socrates idea would be, then, to set an axiomatic account of reality. In such case, an argument is selected as the axiom, and everything that logically follows from it would be accepted as true, and anything inconsistent with it would be dropped and considered false. There is, however, no reason to think this is about deduction. For a detailed discussion on συμφωνεῖν see Bailey (2005) who discusses various alternatives. I agree with him that συμφωνεῖν is not 'to be consistent with,' or 'entail.' I also agree that Gentzler's (1991) view that is an interim between these other options is also problematic. Bailey's own view, that συμφωνεῖν stands for 'mutual explanatory support,' in a generalising and particularising kind of explanation, where they form an unity, seems, however, an over-translation. I think, instead, that συμφωνεῖν is about complementarity in a looser sense that may include explanatory support but also mere compatibility.

[89] Contrast with *Republic* 437a5-8.

The first step of the method, however, seems to generate a problem. The decision it requires seems to presuppose a criterion or some way to tell which argument is the most powerful, but it does not say how one is supposed to make this decision. The best option I can think of is that its basis is how well the person in puzzlement understands the different arguments.[90] In that case, the decision of which is the strongest argument would be based on which argument the inquirer understands best. This of course would not guarantee the truth of the argument, and that is why there is need to hypothesise it as true, but it will at least give to the inquirer a firm ground to start looking. Of course, the inquiry could prevent understanding the selected hypothesis or it could cause us to unlearn it, which is what happened with Socrates' initial intuitions about growth.

7.2 Safest answers and the method of hypothesis

7.2.1 Using the method of hypothesis.

Socrates thinks his first attempt at explaining his method needs some clarification since Cebes seems not to understand it (see *Phaedo* 100a7-8). What follows is not an elaboration on the details of the general method but an explanation about how Socrates *applies* this method to their specific problem:

> But this is what I say: nothing new, but what I never stop arguing both elsewhere and in the previous part of our conversation.[91] For I am going to try to show you the kind of αἰτία with which I busy myself; and I am back to those well known things, and I begin from them. I assume there is a beautiful itself by itself, and a good, and a great, and all the rest (*Phaedo* 100b1-7).

Socrates makes three points in this passage. First, that his task is to show the kind of αἰτία he proposes. (Note that he is not proposing a new αἴτιον). Then, he says that the arguments from where he is going to start are nothing new: he argued them in previous occasions, and in a previous part of the conversation. This seems to be the arguments he has

[90] There are various options. One could be to think it needs to be just an educated guess, or a bet, since otherwise there would be no real puzzlement about the topic under discussion. But still, someone could ask, if a person is in genuine puzzlement, on what grounds could she decide which is the most powerful argument? Plato's word for 'most powerful', 'ἐρρωμενέστατον,' could also mean most influential, in which case, the person would go with the argument that has the best reputation among others. Socrates, however, makes a case for his own argument (that forms exist). A solution to this problem could be to think that the decision just rests on what appears to be an individual in each case, relying on subjective taste. There is, however, no hint of that in the text. A better option is to read the passage as saying that the argument used as the hypothesis is not about the topic being discussed (since one is completely at a loss about it), but a strong argument at a more general level. The idea would be to take that strongest argument from there, and try to see if by examining arguments compatible with it, one can discover which arguments in the area of puzzlement would be compatible with the hypothesis. There is one problem with this solution. If the most powerful argument is from a different topic, why would we need to posit it as a hypothesis? Why would we not just consider it true?

[91] See *Phaedo* 65d-ss. Cf. *Republic* 6.507a7-b10 (see Ch. 2, sec. 3).

decided are the most powerful. Then, he assumes them as true, and reveals that he means the arguments about forms, which if true, imply that some forms exist.

Socrates, hope is that if he can show the kind of αἰτία he proposes holds together, he will be able to show that the soul is immortal.[92] Note that the promise is not that his kind of αἰτία will be logically deduced from the arguments about forms, but it presupposes their existence. Thus, they may be just an extension of the theory of forms, something compatible with it, or co-supportive, not necessarily a logical consequence. Following the method described above, Socrates says:

> Consider, he said, whether you also agree with me as to the following; for it seems to me that if something else is beautiful besides the beautiful itself, it is beautiful by no other reason than that each of these things participates in that beautiful, and I say so in everything.
> —Do you agree with an αἰτία such as this?
> —I agree.
> —Well then, he said, I no longer understand nor I am able to recognise those other ingenious αἰτίαι. But if anyone tells me why something is beautiful either because it has a bright colour, or shape, or anything else such as these, I dismiss these other things. For I am confused with all these other things. But I simply, artlessly, and perhaps simple-mindedly, admit this to myself: that nothing different makes something beautiful than the beautiful itself, whether by its presence or by communion, in whatever way or manner happens (*Phaedo* 100c3-d6).

Once the existence of forms is accepted, Socrates asks to accept a further claim about their causal relationship with the rest of the things in the world. The claim can be expressed as follows:

> If *X* is *F*, and *X* ≢ the *F*-itself, then *X* is *F because and only because X* participates in the *F*-itself.

The claim is composed by three elements: the particular objects, their properties, and the forms. The claim's *explanandum* is a particular object *X* with a specific property *F*. The *explicans* is the participation of *X* in the *F*-itself. The grounds to accept this claim are that it is in harmony with the existence of forms, and, thus, it is an application of the third step of Socrates' method and should be considered as true. The claim offers a general framework of αἰτίαι. If someone asks why *X* is *F*, the answer would be that it is *because X* participates in the *F*-itself.

Socrates, however, does not explain what is meant by participation (μετέχει in 100c5), and later will make clear that his argument will not explain it; perhaps because he does not need to for the purposes of proving the immortality of the soul. What he needs is

[92] See *Phaedo* 100b7-9.

that an explanatory relationship between the forms and its participants is accepted. There are, however, some things that can be said about this participation. First, it is an asymmetric relation: the *F*-itself will never participate in *X*; and second, participation has an explanatory power for the qualities that things have.

Does that mean that Socrates is proposing that forms can be the αἴτιον of generation, destruction, and existence? Accepting this idea, however, would raise a question about how forms, which are only intelligible, can cause something in the physical part of the world. This is a well-known objection against forms.[93] If they are intelligible, it seems they are passive, and even if they offer a formal explanation, that certainly does not make them the entities responsible for the generation, destruction, and existence of things, which is what Socrates is looking for. The agency is missing here.

A more charitable reading is to see in Socrates' proposal an implicit reference to *nous*. This means *nous* is the missing link between forms and particulars. If someone asks not why *X* is *F*, but, accepting that it is because it participates in the *F*-itself, now asks why *X* participates in the *F*-itself, the answer is that it partakes in it because a *nous* acted upon *X* to that effect, that it was best for *X* to be *F*. A *nous*'s job—ordering in the best way—could be done using the forms as instruments.

In fact, if the Forms were αἴτια, then there will be an over-determination of culprits for each thing (the culprit of action *X* is Socrates, and the form of the good, and the form of justice, etc.). But the agent of an effect should be the only one accountable for her actions (even if other things are necessary for the causal explanation). If Anaxagoras was unable to explain the connection between *nous* and its effects, here Socrates is trying to connect *nous* with its effects through forms. This also explains, then, how a *nous* orders things: *through forms*. Even if the grasp of them is defective, whenever a *nous* creates something beautiful, it is through the form of the beautiful. This means that the claim about forms can be understood as saying:

> If *X* is *F*, and *X* ≢ the *F*-itself, then *X* is *F because and only because X* participates in the *F*-itself (through the activity of a *nous*).

Socrates applies the last step of his method to all other alleged αἰτίαι, and since they are not in harmony with the hypothesis of the existence of forms, he is unable to understand them and recognise them as genuine αἰτίαι. On these grounds, the stipulation is that the claim '*X* is *F* because of *Y*,' where *Y* is not the *F*-itself, nor participates in the *F*-itself, must

[93] See Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 991b3-991b8, and *De anima* 430a10-25.

be rejected qua αἰτία (even if it is a true description). The reason, Socrates says, is that he would be confused. These αἰτίαι would not be in harmony with the existence of forms. Socrates seems worried with universality again. In his example of beauty, the αἰτίαι he rejects are that something is beautiful because it has a bright colour, or certain shape. But, even if a specific object is beautiful and has a bright colour that does not guarantee that all bright-coloured things are beautiful. In fact, accepting the existence of forms implies there is at least one beautiful thing, the beautiful itself, which has neither bright colour, nor any kind of shape. There is no need, however, to go that far. Surely there are beautiful things that fail the test, or things that are not beautiful and have a bright colour or certain shape that in another context would belong to something considered beautiful.

7.2.2 The safest answer

Socrates assesses the merits of his own account at this point. Other alleged αἰτίαι, while ingenious, confuse him. They are not in harmony with the hypothesis of the existence of forms. Puzzlement and confusion are evidence that something is out of place. But Socrates explains that his answer's requirements are low:

> But I simply, artlessly, and perhaps simple-mindedly admit this to myself: that nothing different makes something beautiful than the beautiful itself, whether by its presence or by communion, in whatever way or manner happens (*Phaedo* 100d3-6).

Socrates thinks that even a fool without skills would accept his αἰτία (at least, if one is ready to accept the hypothesis that there are forms). He is going to repeat the safest answer in various occasions, using the example of the beautiful itself, with other forms, and finally in a general formulation at *Phaedo* 101c2-9. But these repetitions are not gratuitous. Socrates speaks each time as if someone were leading a cross-examination of the person who is following the method of hypothesis, like someone trying to catch her or make her fall into a 'disharmony' (διαφωνία) by accepting other αἰτίαι to explain beauty or other attributes. The repetitions of the safest answer, then, show an increase in the intensity in the way the claim is stated. First, it is introduced as a consideration (100c3), then, as a simple-minded admission (100d4). Next, it seems to become a more confident statement: 'For I no longer affirm this[94] with confidence,[95] but only that it is through the beautiful that all beautiful things are[96] beautiful' (100d6-8). Some lines later, Socrates says that anyone following him through the method would solemnly testify the safest answer (101a1). At the

[94] In d6, τοῦτο refers back to the 'ingenious αἰτίαι' of *Phaedo* 100c9-10.
[95] Note that Plato uses διισχυρίζομαι (affirm confidently) in d7, which is the same word the ES uses in the *Sophist* (246a9-10) to describe in negative terms the materialists (see Ch. 4, sec. 4).
[96] Following MS B which omits γίγνεται here and in e3. See Burnet (1911, 112).

end, he says that things would reach the point of loud shouts (101c2). The point of all this is that Socrates wants to test how secure and stable his safest answer is, in contrast with the changing his opinion was after his first attempts at natural inquiry.

Socrates' relation with the ingenious αἰτίαι shows an inverse transformation. There is a decrease of intensity, and a distancing from them. First, Socrates stopped understanding and recognising them (*Phaedo* 100c9-10), which led to confusion (100d3), and prevented his affirming them (100d6). Next, anyone in agreement with him would not accept it if someone else proposes other αἰτίαι (100e8). Finally, there would be firm rejection of any other αἰτίαι apart from those derived from the safest answer (101c2). Socrates thinks that the safest answer provides him with the most secure route to answer the 'why?' questions:

> For I think this is the safest[97] thing to answer to myself and to others; and I believe holding to this I shall never be ruined; but this is the safe thing to answer for me and for anyone else, that it is through the beautiful that beautiful things are beautiful. Or do you not think so too?
>
> —I think so (*Phaedo* 100d8-e4).

Safety makes reference to the dangers of inquiring in the wrong way criticised before, when using the solar eclipse analogies (see *Phaedo* 99d4-e6). Using the causal claim to answer why questions is, allegedly, not only safer, but the safest of all routes. This safest answer may have some limitations, but it promises to keep people's souls unharmed. So it is not only about avoiding errors, or inconsistencies, but to protect the inquirers' integrity, and capacities.[98]

This answer is safe because it is in harmony with the hypothesis of the forms, and because it tries to grasp what things are with arguments rather than with the senses (see *Phaedo* 99e4-6). The αἰτίαι they offer are not devoid of empirical data, but they explain empirical evidence through forms, which are not sensible. This means that empirical data is the *explananda*, whereas the forms are the *explicantia*. In the empiricist model—the unsafe one—it seems that both *explanandum* and *explicans* are empirical data:

[97] Cf. *Phaedo* 101a5-6.

[98] This means that πεσεῖν, which I translated as 'be ruined,' should not be translated as 'fall into error.' It is true that it means 'to fall down' or 'to cast oneself down' from somewhere. In this context, however, it has the sense of failure, but not a narrow logical mistake but a more comprehensive failure.

Difference between *Explananda* and *Explicantia*

	Explananda	***Explicantia***
Empirical answer:	A beautiful flower	Bright colours, shape, etc.
Safest answer:	A beautiful flower	The beautiful itself

When Socrates says he fled and took refuge in arguments he means that he tried to explain empirical phenomena not with more phenomena but with objects that can only be grasped by thought. A question that arises now is where does the safest answer stand in relation to 'the real αἰτία' (at *Phaedo* 98e1-5). They seem quite different. But if the real αἰτία is the end point of Socrates' method, the safest answer is somewhere in the middle. The safest answer does not answer the question 'why?' for specific things or events. Taking the flower example, to say that it is through the beautiful itself, explains why beautiful flowers *in general* are beautiful, but it does not explain why *this* flower is beautiful. But, why are there things that partake in the beautiful itself, and others that do not? So if someone asks why Alcibiades is beautiful, the safest answer would be to say that it is because he partakes in the beautiful. One may complain, however, that that is no answer to why specifically Alcibiades, among all other Athenians, is beautiful. Why him, and not, for instance, Socrates? If this is the level of specificity required to answer questions like why Socrates stayed in prison, the safest answer seems insufficient.

In all cases of *X* being *Y*, the safest answer would apply, and the explanation would invariably be by partaking in a *Y*-itself. From this, it follows that Socrates and anyone following his method would reject any other αἰτία:

> You would not accept if someone says that one person is bigger than another by a head,[99] and that the smaller is smaller by the same thing, but you would solemnly testify[100] that, on the one side, you mean nothing else than that everything bigger is bigger than something else by nothing but bigness, and because of this is bigger, [*i.e.*] by the bigness. On the other hand the smaller is smaller by nothing else than the smallness, and because of this is small, [*i.e.*] by the smallness (*Phaedo* 100e8-101a5).

The passage looks back to the first αἰτίαι Socrates considered when he was young. The rejection of any supporter of these other αἰτίαι follows from the application of the method of hypothesis. This means that any αἰτίαι other than those complying with the safest answer

[99] Cf. *Phaedo* 96d9-e1.
[100] The word διαμαρτύρομαι, means protest solemnly, call to witness, testify, asseverate. For its use in Plato see *Philebus* 59b11, 66d4; *Phaedrus* 260e4. It seems as if Socrates was preparing Cebes to give a testimony in a court of justice.

are not in harmony with Socrates' account, but not because they are inconsistent with the existence of forms, but because they go against the causal claim. So even when the causal claim is not the main hypothesis, once accepted everything else should be in harmony with it.

For this to work in that way, it is essential to understand why the 'additive' αἰτίαι are incompatible with Socrates' safest answer. This is clear, however, if we analyse both. The 'additive' αἰτίαι can be put in the following way:

1. *X* is bigger than *Y* by a head.
2. *R* is smaller than *Q* by a head.

Socrates' answer, however, is that:

1. For any *X*, *Y*, if *X* is bigger than *Y* it is by and only by participation in the bigness-itself.
2. For any *X*, *Y*, if *X* is smaller than *Y* it is by and only by participation in the smallness-itself.

The latter cases are both universal explanations, in contrast with the particularity of the 'additive' αἰτίαι, since not every object will have a head of difference in size. In addition, the 'head' examples assume that a head can be the cause of opposite effects. This as we know is something Socrates is not prepared to accept. His answer, in contrast, is able to avoid the problem since it offers opposite causal explanations for the bigness or smallness of things. Another difference is that the head examples assume a process of addition or division (the full statement would be that *X* is bigger than *Y* by the addition of a head), whereas Socrates means here the relation of participation. Participation – whatever it turns out to be – must be different from addition and division, at least because participation is a relation between intelligible and sensible things, and addition and division are relations between sensible things. Someone could complain here that Socrates is not explaining how participation is possible, but, as I have argued, the text could be assuming that sensible objects are able to partake in intelligible forms by the action of a *nous*. Then the pressing issue is to explain how *nous* does what it does. This is something that will be discussed later in the *Republic* (see Ch. 2, sec. 5), *Parmenides* (Ch. 3, sec. 6), and *Sophist* (see Ch. 4, sec. 6).

To reject the 'additive' αἰτίαι, Socrates also offers an abbreviated form of the argument in 96e7-97b7. It also has the form of a *reductio ad absurdum*:[101]

> I think you will be afraid that some opposing argument would confront you if you say that someone is bigger or smaller by a head. First, on the one hand, since the bigger is bigger and the smaller smaller by the same thing, then since the bigger is bigger now by a head which is small, and this is a monstrosity,[102] namely that someone is big by something small. Would you not be afraid of this?
>
> —I would, said Cebes, laughing (*Phaedo* 101a5-b3).

The problem with the 'additive' αἰτίαι, and the fact that they propose an αἴτιον which produces opposite effects is that, used in a legal context to find the thing to blame for something, it turns out that these αἰτίαι undercut themselves. If a person were trying to find culprits, she would have too many valid accusations, pointing to opposite things. They will show that they were only necessary conditions for the effect in question but also for the opposite. Socrates makes this argument with an exaggerated tone (this is clear by his use of τέρας instead of ἄτοπος). This is why Cebes laughs. He assents to the argument but recognises that it is so obvious, so absurd, that at this point none in their right mind would accept it. The 'additive' αἰτίαι sounds ridiculous and utterly absurd at this point of the conversation. Socrates has been successful in convincing Cebes.

The *reductio* works, but only assuming the principle that like causes like. This principle, however, seems to be a central piece of the safest answer. It is what guarantees the safety, and makes it possible for Socrates to flee from the fieldwork of the empirical enterprise. The 'like causes like' principle tries to track the legal and moral context. Socrates point is to advance the thesis that the principle applies not only to cases like heat and cold, but also to other cases of causation even if this goes against our original intuitions. Next, Socrates makes the same point but with numbers, and units of measure:

> Then, he said, would you not be afraid to say that ten is more than eight by two, and that this is the αἰτία of the excess, but not bigness and because of bigness?[103] Or that two cubits are bigger than a cubit by half, rather than by bigness? For I suppose it is the same fear.
>
> —By all means, he said.[104]
>
> What then? Would you not be beware to say that when one is added to one the addition is the αἰτία of the coming into being of two, or when one is divided the division? (*Phaedo* 101b4-c2).

These four examples give further support to Socrates' thesis. He has no problem with the addition 8+2=10, but with saying that the addition of two is the αἰτία of the coming-into-

[101] See Rowe (1993, 244).
[102] For the use of τέρας, cf. *Meno* 91d5, *Parmenides* 129b2, *Theaetetus* 163d6, and *Philebus* 14e3.
[103] Cf. *Phaedo* 96e1-3.
[104] Cf. *Phaedo* 96e3-4.

being of ten (where two is the αἴτιον). For anyone assuming the hypothesis of forms and the safest answer, they will be afraid to accept: 10 > 8 *because* of the addition of 2, and not because of participation in bigness-itself; 2c > 1c *because* of the addition of 1c, and not because of participation in bigness-itself; 2 *because* of the addition of 1 to 1; and 1 *because* of the subtraction of 1 from 2.

The addition of one is not the αἰτία of the coming into being of two, since it would have the same problem as the 'additive' αἰτία. It will make opposite cause opposites. Socrates shows that fear leads to being careful. It is not a negative thing to have fear if one has fear of the right things, like being careless. Socrates insists that anyone following the method would be by now desperate, and will insist shouting the same thing:

> And you would loudly shout that you do not know how else each thing comes to be other than by partaking in the distinct being of each thing in which it partakes, and in these [cases][105] you do not admit of any other αἰτία of the coming into being of two except by participation in the two, and things that are going to be two must partake in this, and whatever is going to be one must [partake] in the unit, and you would dismiss these divisions and additions and other such refinements, leaving them for those wiser than yourself to answer (*Phaedo* 101c2-9).

Socrates is saying that the person following the method will be able to make two claims regarding knowledge, one positive and one negative: she would know a way in which things come to be, and she would not know how else things could come to be.

Note that Socrates does not dismiss the wisdom of adding and subtracting, but he considers it a refinement that belongs to wiser people than him. But we can infer that that other knowledge is not about αἰτίαι, or αἴτιον, since it answers different questions. It is a knowledge that needs experience that Glaucon lacks at the moment: 'But you, afraid, as the saying goes, of your own shadow and inexperience, holding to the safety of that hypothesis, would answer in this way' (*Phaedo* 101d1-3). The method prefers a safe route, even if it cannot answer all the questions. It accepts its limitations, and prefers a narrow scope rather than trying to cover too much, and fail.

7.2.3 Recursiveness of the method of hypothesis.

Socrates then explains a second part of his method. What follows is a description of the steps to follow when the hypothesis itself—that is the argument selected as the strongest—becomes the topic of discussion (*Phaedo* 101d3-102a3):

> But if someone were to hold on the hypothesis itself, you would dismiss him, and would not answer until you had examined whether the things that came from

[105] *Phaedo* 101b9-c2.

> it harmonise[106] or are discordant with one another. But when you need to provide an argument for the hypothesis itself, you would give it in like manner, hypothesising again another hypothesis which seems the best of the higher ones, until you arrive at something adequate, but you would not confuse both just as the disputants do by discussing about the beginning and the things that came from it at the same time, since you want to discover the things that are. For these persons on the one hand, probably do not talk nor give one thought about this, since their wisdom enables them to throw everything together into confusion, yet to be pleased with themselves. But you, on the other hand, I think would do as I say, if you are one of the philosophers.
>
> —It is absolutely true what you say, answered Simmias and Cebes at the same time (*Phaedo* 101d3-102a3).

Socrates' recommendation can be understood as the following list of steps:

1. If a person *S* holds on to a hypothesis *X*, then dismiss *S* until step (2) is complete, then proceed with step (3).
2. Examine the things harmonic with *X*, and see whether they harmonise or are discordant with them.
   2.1 If they do not harmonise, dismiss what is discordant, then go to step (3);
   2.2 if they harmonise, go to step (3).
3. Provide an argument for hypothesis *X* by:
   3.1 Hypothesise Φ, where Φ is the best of the hypotheses at a higher level than *X*.
   3.2 Repeat step (2) for Φ, then repeat step (3.1) at a higher level until arrival at something adequate. Then, stop.

The recommendation is that if you were trying to answer, for instance, why *p*, and following Socrates' method you hypothesised *X*, you should not try to examine *X* until you examine whether the things accepted as harmonic with *X*, lets say *q, r, s*, also harmonise between them, that is *q* with *r, r* with *s, q* with *s*.[107]

Note that in the case being analysed by Socrates here, the original hypothesis was the existence of forms, and then, as something that is harmonious with it, they accepted that there is a safest answer of the form '*X* is *X* by the *X*ness'. This already anticipates a new discussion about the existence of forms, and a method to go about it. The method, then, does not map ontology but discovery.

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[106] This does not necessarily mean logical inference. It can be the things added in harmony with the hypothesis.

[107] For the debate about the method of hypothesis in the *Phaedo*, see Archer-Hind (1894), Murphy (1936), Robinson (1953, 157), Bluck (1955), Taylor (1956, 107), Gulley (1962, 53-54), Sayre (1969, 40-44), Bedu-Addo (1979a), Rose (1996), and Newton Byrd (2007).

The method establishes, first, that Socrates needs to examine whether other things that "came" from the hypothesis that forms exist harmonise with the safest answer. Once this is done, the argument for the existence of forms can be called into question. Socrates, however, does not say what that hypothesis is. He also fails to explain what something adequate will be, and how to recognise it. The recursive aspect of the method of hypothesis, however, seems to set up both, the proposal of the good itself as the unhypothetical first principle in the *Republic* (510b6), and the examination of whether the forms really exist in the *Parmenides* (see Ch. 2, and 3). But for now, it seems that Socrates is only interested in whether what is derived from the hypothesis harmonises. Socrates, however, makes clear that his method and its answers hang on the assumption that at a higher level there will be something adequate to harmonise the discovery of the safest answers he is making.

8. Opposites, and the safe and subtle answers

8.1 Echecrates' interruption

After the explanation of Socrates' method, Echecrates interrupts Phaedo's narration, and expresses his reaction to Simmias' and Cebes' approval of the method (*Phaedo* 102a4-b3). He says that Simmias and Cebes reaction is very natural since Socrates explained his method with marvellous clarity, even to people with little intelligence (σμικρὸν νοῦν, 102a4). Phaedo agrees and says that it seemed that way to everyone present at Socrates' last day. Echecrates speaks for everyone else in that moment and says that they also agree. Plato presents Socrates' method as able to reach agreement even through Phaedo.

But notice that persuasion has required all and every detail of Phaedo's narration. It is through presenting the whole conversation (with objections, and autobiography), and by making us aware of the context that Plato portrays everyone as being persuaded. Consensus at the different levels marks off Socrates' method as an important contribution. Agreement with the method also works as a kind of entry to the philosophical community. It seems that as long as Simmias and Cebes agree with Socrates on this, it does not matter whether they have doubts or disagree with Socrates in the details of the present argument. They have now a way to evaluate and review their arguments. But the text does not prescribe the reader's reaction to this. It is up to the reader to decide the meaning of this widespread consensus. It could just mean that everybody is biased. Does the method really have the philosophical calibre shown in the text? The structure of how the dialogue is constructed could well be an invitation and a provocation to assess it. The philosophical relevance of the dialogue form,

and these multi-layered set ups will become more clear later (see Ch. 3, sec. 2, and Ch. 4, sec. 3).

8.2 Opposites

Phaedo continues his narration by explaining how Socrates and company examined whether the things accepted before were harmonic or not with their hypothesis (*Phaedo* 102b3-d4). Phaedo explains that once everyone conceded the method, and agreed that in the present case the strongest argument was that 'each of the forms is something' (εἶναί τι ἕκαστον τῶν εἰδῶν, at *Phaedo* 102b1), and that 'other things acquired their name by partaking in them' (*Phaedo* 102b1-2), then they considered whether Simmias is bigger than Socrates but smaller than Phaedo, and therefore that Simmias possesses bigness and smallness (*Phaedo* 102b3-7). Socrates accepts this (as harmonic with the hypothesis) but makes it more precise.

He explains that when they say that the claim 'Simmias surpasses Socrates' does not express the truth of the matter. Since 'it is not the nature of Simmias, by being Simmias (τῷ Σιμμίαν εἶναι), to surpass Socrates, but by the bigness he happens to have' (*Phaedo* 102c1-2); nor Simmias 'surpasses Socrates *because* Socrates is Socrates, but because Socrates has smallness in relation to Simmias bigness.' (*Phaedo* 102c3-4) Then, nor does Phaedo surpass Simmias 'because Phaedo is Phaedo, but because Phaedo has bigness in relation to Simmias' smallness.' (*Phaedo* 102c6-7). From these points Socrates concludes that Simmias is called both small and big, being between the two: his smallness is surpassed by the bigness of one, his bigness surpasses the smallness of the other.

Socrates gives a further argument that uses the bigness and smallness but then he applies it to all the opposites. It has the following general form (*Phaedo* 102d5-103a3):

In a case where *X* and *Y* are a pair of opposites:

1. The *X*-itself is never able to be *X* and *Y* at the same time.
2. The *X*-in-*a* will never admit the *Y* but whenever *Y* approaches, *X* flees from *a*, or *X*-in-*a* is destroyed.
3. The *X*-in-*a* is not able to endure and admit *Y* and be other than it was.
4. But *a* admits and endures *Y* and still remains *a,* and *a* is *Y*.
5. *X* being *X*, cannot be *Y*.
6. The *Y*-in-us is unable to become or to be *X* ever.

The argument implies that we can talk about opposites in two ways, in themselves, and in other things. Socrates, however, argues that *X*-ness (in both cases *X*-itself, and *X*-in-*a*) never admits its opposite *Y*. The difference between *X*-itself and *X*-in-*a* is that only the second one flees or is destroyed. But what happens to *a* is that it can admit both *X* and *Y* without destruction. The presence of X-in-*a*, or the Y-in-*a* is what makes *a* be *X* and/or *Y*. But, what is the ontology behind this? Is it that there are intermediaries between forms and us and between forms and particular things?[108] Are these intermediaries qualities? They seem different from forms themselves, in which case: *X*-itself ≠ *X*-in-*a.* We are not told why would we need this intermediate step. The focus of the argument is that in any of these cases, *X,* being *X*, can never be *Y*. This argument does not argue for the existence of 'forms in us,' it just includes them and argues that whatever the case, *X* cannot be *Y*. This feature of the opposites is not really dependent on the hypothesis that forms exist, it is consistent with that, but is logically independent of it.

8.3 A doubt about opposites, and the law of opposites

Someone whose name is not mentioned, voices a doubt which connects the previous argument with what Socrates discussed at *Phaedo* 70d-71a. The worry is about harmony between what was said before about opposites and this new argument (see *Phaedo* 103a4-c9). The concern is that if Socrates has agreed to something opposite before, he cannot change his mind now without compromising the whole demonstration of the soul's immortality. The problem has two levels. On the one hand, it is problematic to agree to opposite things, regardless of the content of what is being said. But, on the other hand, the topic of the conversation is about the opposites, and the first agreement was that opposites are generated from each other. If this is naively applied to the conversation itself the problem is that the discussion could have generated the opposite of what was said at the beginning. The question is completely relevant, even if based on a misunderstanding (that's why Socrates praises the person's manly attitude in a sexist remark at *Phaedo* 103b1). It is important to make sure that everybody has followed the argumentation, and that it holds together.

The doubt is that if it was agreed that the bigger comes from the smaller and vice versa, and this was how opposites come to be from opposites, how is it that now they are saying that this would never happen. Socrates answers that the speaker does not understand (οὐ ἐννοεῖς, 103b1)[109] the difference between what was said then and what is being said

[108] Forms in us; see Denyer (2007, 91-93). This will be discussed later in the *Parmenides* (see Ch. 3, sec. 4).
[109] This vocabulary is further evidence that the method is about how to use one's *nous*.

now. The blame is on the person who asks, since he is not using his *nous* to put together or order the thoughts that have been discussed, not Socrates. Before, Socrates explains, they were talking about things that receive their name due to the opposite they have, whereas now they are talking about those very opposites that give their name to those things. The confusion is caused by the use of names. In the first case, we have an object *a*, which is *X*, receives for that reason the name '*X*' (like when we say 'that's hot' referring to a hot pot of tea). But in the second case we are not talking about objects that are *X*, but about the *X*ness (both in itself, and in *a*).[110] The discussion of this doubt ends with the so-called law of opposites: 'An opposite will never be an opposite to itself' (*Phaedo* 103c7-8).

8.4 Opposite bearers

Once the doubt has been clarified, Socrates asks whether Cebes will agree with a new idea (see *Phaedo* 103c10-104c10). The general claim could be put as follows:

There are some *a*, which are not the *X*-itself, but always have *X* whenever they exist, so that any *a* is *X*.

I will refer to these objects as 'opposite bearers.' Socrates explains them with two examples. The first one is with snow and fire:

1. There is something called hot and cold.
2. The hot is different from fire, and the cold is different from cold.
3. Snow will not admit the hot, and be both snow and hot, but it will retreat or be destroyed.
4. Fire will not admit cold, and be both fire and cold, but it will retreat or be destroyed.

Socrates concludes, then, that (C1): 'Not only the form itself deserves its own name for ever, but there is also something else which is not that [i.e., the form] but has its character always, whenever it exists' (*Phaedo* 103e2-5). Universality again seems to be the worry. Notice that the argument is based on an observation. Premise (3) is observable, and falsifiable. The nature of snow and fire is open to further investigation, and we may argue about the true nature of fire and snow. The conclusion that Socrates is trying to obtain is, nevertheless, that there are some opposite bearers. Socrates then, gives a second example:

1. The odd [itself] is always odd.

[110] Cebes seems not worried about all this, but tells Socrates that other things disturb him. He, however, does not say anything else, and Socrates ignores him completely and continues his argument. This is similar to the way Socrates dismisses Glaucon's worries in the *Republic* (see Ch. 2, sec. 7).

2. There are other things that are always called odd, as well as by its own name, since it is in their nature never to be separated from the odd. Each of them is (always) by their nature odd, but not the odd itself.

3. Even numbers are always even but not the even itself.

The conclusion Socrates takes from this is that (C2): 'opposite bearers are not opposite to each other, yet always contain the opposites, and do not admit the form which is opposite to that which is in them, since if it approaches them, they perish or give way' (*Phaedo* 104b7-c1). Opposite bearers, then, are particulars which cannot receive an opposite to what is in their nature. From this it also follows that (C3): 'then, it is not only opposite forms that do not bear the approach of each other, but also some other things that do not bear their opposites' (*Phaedo* 104c7-9).

Once the existence of opposite bearers is accepted, Socrates tries to 'define what sort' (ὁρισώμεθα ὁποῖα, *Phaedo* 104c11) of things they are. They agree that opposite bearers compel whatever they occupy to contain their character[111] but also that of an opposite. This can be expressed in the following way: *a* is an opposite bearer of *X,* if *a* compels any *b* it occupies to contain not only the character of *a* but also of *X* (*Phaedo* 104d1-3). From this it follows that an opposite bearer of *X* will bring along *X*ness and will not admit the opposite of *X*. But as is clear with the examples, even things that are opposite to something else can be opposite bearers of something else. Like the double, itself and opposite of something else, yet not admitting the form of odd.

8.5 A safe and subtle answer

Finally, Socrates uses the opposite bearers to formulate a new way to answer 'why?' questions, more sophisticated than the safe answer he offered before:

> Then, tell me again, from the beginning—Socrates said. And do not answer with what I asked, but imitating me. I say, then, that beyond that first answer we spoke of, the safe one, I see—from what we have discussed now—another safe answer. Since if you ask me what will exist in a body that becomes hot, my answer will not be that safe and ignorant one, that it is heat, but a more sophisticated answer, from what we discussed now, that it is fire. And if you ask me what will exist in a body that becomes sick, I will not say sickness, but fever. And if you ask what will exist in a number that becomes odd, I would not say oddness but oneness, and in this way with other things. But see whether you adequately understand what I want.
>
> Quite adequately—he said. (*Phaedo* 105b5-c7)

[111] Socrates uses the word ἰδέα at 104d2, but does not seem to refer to forms but to the character of things.

The new answer is said to also be safe, although not ignorant as the first one, but sophisticated. The main difference between the safest and this new answer is more empirical and mathematical knowledge. This new answer shows that the person knows, for example, that fire is an opposite bearer of heat (cf. Ch. 5, sec 6). The difference between the safe but ignorant, and the safe and sophisticated answer can be seen in the following table:

Opposite bearers' types of answers

Type of answer	Example 1: what will exist in a body that becomes hot?	Example 2: what will exist in a body that becomes sick?	Example 3: what will exist in a number that becomes odd?
Safe and ignorant answer	Heat	Sickness	Oddness
Safe and sophisticated answer	Fire	Fever	Oneness

If we go back to the question about why Socrates stayed in jail, we could wonder whether Socrates' 'real αἰτία' (*Phaedo* 98e1-5) is compatible with these sophisticated answers. According to the real αἰτία, Socrates stayed in jail because he decided that it was more just to stay. This could be analysed as Socrates being just. If someone asks him why justice exists in Socrates, we could answer that it is because he possesses justice. But that will be the safe and ignorant answer. If we were to know more about opposite bearers of justice, then we will be able to say something more sophisticated. For example, if we know that suffering an injustice is always more just than committing one, and that is what Socrates did, then we can call that a more sophisticated answer, if that kind of action is a true bearer of justice. Socrates only puts forward the outline of how to do it; it is a programme of investigation, a framework to investigate the world. But again, note that both answers presuppose Socrates' agency. He, or to be more precise his *nous*, is the αἴτιον of those actions, the entity responsible for them.

9. Progress and remaining puzzles

Phaedo 95e8-105c7 discusses different conceptions of causation and responsibility: the appropriate addition, the various accounts offered by natural inquiry, Anaxagoras' account, and Socrates' own tentative proposals. All of them offer different choices to answer 'why?' questions, either in a specific domain or in general. These conceptions could be grouped now in three groups: (1) those where two opposites are used to explain the same effect (sec. 3), (2) those which confuse necessary conditions

with αἴτιον (sec. 4-5), and (3) those which hold together, are explanatory, and safe (sec. 7).

The first part of Socrates' intellectual autobiography highlights some puzzles that arise from reflecting on the properties in group (1). As a result of these puzzles Socrates unlearned what he thought he knew, making him unable to understand even the simplest things. Socrates uses this lack of understanding as evidence that his initial intuitions, and the answers from natural inquiry, were flawed. Later Socrates rejects accounts in group (2), arguing that their main problem is an inadequate method of inquiry. This implies there is a proper way to inquire and answer why questions. But the repercussions of inquiring in the wrong way, according to Socrates, are worse than simply not finding the answers; it has a harmful effect in our souls.

For Socrates, the only clear thing is that opposites cannot be opposites of themselves. This means that when certain alleged αἰτίαι imply two opposites producing the same effect, Socrates is unable to understand how that would explain anything. Then he explains the confused but safe method he developed to answer why questions.

I have argued that Socrates' proposal is one in which for each thing there is a *nous* that ordered it in the best way possible and it is therefore responsible for it. I have also argued that the two types of answers Socrates developed connect each effect with the ordering of a *nous*, in an ignorant and in a more subtle way, using forms as instruments. The main reason to think that this is the most plausible way to read the passage is Socrates' proposal of real αἰτίαι, the use of cognitive vocabulary through the safe and sophisticated answer, and the fact that there is no clear indication that Socrates abandoned *nous* as the αἴτιον of each thing.

Socrates explains the different conceptions with a framework and vocabulary that he extrapolates from the legal context in which relations of causation and responsibility are identified ('*x* causes *y'* is the same to '*x* is responsible for *y*'). But Socrates sees this process as having four elements: one or more αἴτιον; something that is generated, destroyed or exists; an αἰτία, which explains the connection between the previous two elements; and finally the necessary conditions. The αἴτιον refers to the thing or event that bears the responsibility, and gets the blame. The things that are generated, destroyed, or exist constitute a wide spectrum of things, from concrete particulars to events, and the criterion is simply whether it is possible to ask of them why. An αἰτία is understood as the answer to the 'why?' question. It explains who or what is the αἴτιον, and which of its actions produced a specific effect. In modern terminology we could say

that this general framework understands relations of causation and responsibility as processes with two relata (one or more αἴτιον, and one or more effect), background conditions without which the relation is not possible, and an explanation of the relation between them (αἰτία).

The text, however, leaves some remaining puzzles and themes that set the scenario for the passages discussed in the following chapters. First, the text is not clear about what happens in bad actions, and why that happens. If *nous* always orders in the best way possible, then there is something else that affects the range of options available to it. We may think that what makes a difference is the knowledge of forms, and the ability to get out of puzzlement, but there seem to be other factors that could affect *nous*'s decision at a specific moment. The sun analogy in *Republic* 6, will offer a way to explain this problem (see Ch. 2, esp. sec. 8), and the Stoics will offer their own account of this too (see Ch. 5, sec. 7). A second theme is the relationship between divine and human *nous*. This is also explored in the sun analogy (see Ch. 2, esp. sec. 4), problematized in the *Parmenides* (see Ch. 3, sec. 5-7), and discussed more directly in the *Sophist* (see Ch. 4, sec. 6), and by the Stoics (see Ch. 5, sec. 2.2-3). The distinction between necessary conditions and αἴτια is also prominent in the *Republic* 6, which tries to explain their connection with the good itself (see Ch. 2, sec. 6), and plays an important role in the Stoic conception of causality (see Ch. 5, sec. 6.5). Finally, the question of how *nous* could, if at all, be the link between forms and particulars is the main puzzle throughout the rest of the debate.

CHAPTER 2. Causality, and responsibility in the Sun analogy (*Republic* 6.506d7-509c4)

In this chapter I analyse and evaluate *Republic* 6, 506d7-509c4. The main purpose is to show how this text continues the discussion on some of the remaining puzzles in the *Phaedo,* exploring new models and aspects of causality and responsibility by examining an analogy between the good itself and the sun. This analogy focuses on the relation between background conditions and αἴτια, and explores the connection between forms and *nous*. I argue that the passage offers an inference from analogy, but it also sets up a puzzle between two options: in one of them the good itself is an active and productive God, whereas in the other it is a structure that explains reality. There are methodological reasons to think that the first one is correct, but there are also good reasons to reject it. Both alternatives present problems that will remain open.

The chapter is divided into eight sections. In the first one I present the place of the passage within the *Republic* and its relation with *Phaedo*; then, in a second section, I give a reconstruction of the general dialectical and argumentative structure of the text. I dedicate sections 3 to 7 to an in-depth analysis of the text. Finally, the last section evaluates the contributions of the passage to the discussion on causation and responsibility, highlights the progress made, and the new puzzles introduced by the text.

1. Context, and relation with *Phaedo*

In the *Republic*, philosophers are described as lovers of all wisdom and especially of the sight of truth.[112] They are the only ones who can distinguish forms from their particulars, and have the skills necessary to be rulers. But these philosophers need a proper education. The most fundamental field of study in the philosopher ruler's curriculum, even superior to justice, is the form of the good (*Republic* 505a). Socrates complains, however, that his own knowledge of the good is inadequate. Yet, having this knowledge seems of outmost importance to be able to grasp anything worthwhile. Socrates rejects the idea that the good could be either pleasure or knowledge, and complains that the rulers of the city cannot be in the dark about this topic. But then, Glaucon demands Socrates views on the matter (*Republic* 506b).

[112] For recent studies about the structure of the *Republic,* see Rowe (2006), and Barney (2010).

It is at this point that the passage which I analyse in this chapter begins. The passage shows a tension between the significance of the topic and Socrates' poor understanding of it. He warns his interlocutors that he possesses no knowledge about the good, and implies his opinions about it are defective, blind, and deformed. This makes him feel afraid that to speak his mind would make him look ridiculous (*Republic* 506d). At the end he agrees to talk, not about the good itself, but about its child, the sun, since according to him its account can illustrate some features of its father. The comparison is multifaceted, but one of the things it reveals is a causal and explanatory connection between the form of the good and everything else. It is necessary, however, to remember that the passage is further explained by the analogy of the Line and the Cave (*Republic* 509d-520a).

The sun analogy's passage is strongly connected with the *Phaedo*. Their relationship has been widely discussed, so I will only mention some important aspects of it.[113] The structure of the passages is similar in various ways, for example, in both, Socrates uses previous agreements about the forms to advance in the discussion, and his method of inquiry, if not the same, has a strong family resemblance.[114] The passages also use analogies with blindness, and talk about the lack of knowledge as a state where people change their mind from one view to the other.[115] In addition, both texts are interested in the distinction between αἴτια and background conditions.[116] But perhaps the most important aspect is that the *Republic* can be seen as continuing the discussion about *nous*.

There are some differences too. For a start, Socrates in the *Phaedo* is talking with his closest friends, whereas in the *Republic* his interlocutors are a heterogeneous mix between friends and hostile acquaintances. This might have an impact on the willingness of Socrates to speak, and how afraid of ridicule he is. In addition, although both passages talk about forms, they are described somewhat differently. It has even been suggested that one account might be designed to reject the other.[117] But the most important difference for the discussion about causality and responsibility is something else. If in the *Phaedo* there is an interest in discussing the role of *nous* in the generation, destruction or existence of things, the *Republic* passage is interested, I suggest, in the

[113] See Silverman (2002, ch. 3), and Ferejohn (2006) for recent discussion on the relation between *Phaedo* and *Republic*.
[114] Compare *Phaedo* 100a3-7, and 100a7-b9, with *Republic* 509d-511e, and 533c9-d1. For a discussion on the relation between the method of hypothesis and dialectic see Benson (2006), and Newton Byrd (2011).
[115] Compare *Republic* 508d5-8 with *Phaedo* 96a9-b1, and 99d4-e6.
[116] Compare *Phaedo* 98e5-99b6 with *Republic* 509b1-9.
[117] See, for instance, White (1978), and Politis (2010).

possibility conditions of causality, and in arguing that the relation between *nous*, forms, and visible things is natural, even if the explanation of how it works remains a puzzle.

Taking all this into consideration, how are we supposed to read the passages? Are we supposed to read them separately, or are we allowed to supply premises or ideas from one to the other? Is the relation between them one of explanation, extension, mutual support, replacement? Is it possible that, even if the arguments are independent, they share a single conception of cause and responsibility? The answer to these questions is affected by decisions about the order of composition, reading order of the dialogues, and one's own exegetical principles.[118]

Although the discussion on these areas is far from being settled, the widespread assumption is that, although the composition of both dialogues is close, the *Republic* is a later work that expands, explains, or modifies *Phaedo's* arguments.[119] Consequently, the normal practice is to read the *Phaedo* first, even when its dramatic dating is later.[120] These assumptions, however, do not really answer what is the relation between the two passages, and the arguments are insufficient to justify an inference to the further assumption that we are supposed to read the arguments as a single proposal. My analysis, therefore, would not depend on these assumptions. The safest strategy, perhaps, is to read both passages in isolation, as self-standing conversations.[121] The analysis, however, does not need to stop there. Once the independent examination of the texts is done, we cannot be blind to the fact that both passages touch on the same topic, and have intertextual references, even if we are not sure in which direction they go.[122] It is still possible to ask whether the same conceptions are at play, whether the arguments have shared assumptions, and whether one premise in one is the conclusion in the other.[123]

2. Argumentation, analogies, and puzzles

The *Republic* passage has five sections. It starts with an introduction where Socrates trades the account of the good itself for that of its offspring, the sun. This is followed by a preliminary agreement and reminder of the existence of forms and its relation with

[118] For this discussion see Howland (1991), Brandwood (1992), and Young (1994).
[119] See, for example, García Gual (1986, 10).
[120] Ordering the dialogues by their dramatic dating is complicated. Even if we were able to know the chronological order, why should we assume that is the correct reading order? For the discussion of this topic, see Festugière (1969), Nails (1998; 2002, 307-330), Zuckert (2009, 8-9), and Altman (2010, 44).
[121] See Rowe (1993, 12).
[122] For this worry see McCabe (2002).
[123] See *Apology* 26d1-e4.

particulars. Then, Socrates explains how sight needs not only the objects of sight but also light, which is a link caused by a God identified with the sun. Once this is established Socrates offers the analogy of the sun. Finally, Glaucon reacts to this by mocking Socrates, while Socrates complains he warned his interlocutors of the risks of sharing his beliefs about the good.

The dialectical and argumentative structure of the passage includes various arguments, agreements and disagreements, and different reports of epistemic attitudes towards Socrates' analogy. First, Socrates claims he has no knowledge of the good, but only opinions (*Republic* 506c). He seems, however, more confident about his account of the sun, and the arguments about forms and particulars. Glaucon, on the other hand, agrees on the account of the sun and the previous arguments, but regards Socrates' opinions of the good as inconceivable (ἀμήχανον, *Republic* 509a6) and ridiculous (γελοίως, *Republic* 509c1-2). Socrates, in turn, overlooks Glaucon's worries about conceivability (*Republic* 509a9-10), but seems to concede that his opinions sound ridiculous (*Republic* 506d, 509c2-4; see sec. 6, below). The general dialectical structure of the passage could be understood as follows:

1. Socrates says that he has no knowledge of the good but mere opinions.
2. Socrates and Glaucon make some agreements (on what they should do next, and on the right account of sight, light, and the sun). The characters reach these agreements through two arguments:
    A. A practical argument to explain why they should consider the child of the good (the God sun) instead of the good itself;
    B. A descriptive account of the sun's relation to sight;
3. Socrates claims that the good produced the God sun as its analogue, and explains how the analogy maps onto the visible and intelligible parts of the world. This is done in two steps:
    C. Explaining the analogy between the sun and the good in relation to sight and *nous*.
    D. Extending the descriptive account of the child and the analogy.
4. Glaucon responds to Socrates with two complaints:
    E. If Socrates' opinions in C were right, then the good would be inconceivably beautiful.
    F. Socrates' extension of the analogy in D is ridiculous.
5. Socrates, in turn, *dismisses* E, but seems to *concede* F, at least in the present context.

At the end, there are some agreements even though some disagreements remain. Glaucon's main concerns are not discussed, and Socrates continues his explanation of the sun analogy by offering the analogy of the line. In the present passage Socrates only shares a small part of his 'ridiculous' opinions about the good.

The main argument of the passage is an inference from analogy:

1. There is no direct access to the good.[124]
2. However, the sun is to the visible part of the world as the good is to the intelligible part of the world, where:
    a) the sun's relation to sight maps the good's relation to *nous*, and
    b) the sun's relation to the coming-to-be, growth, and nourishment of visible things maps the good's relation to being and existence of the intelligible things.
3. Therefore, by examining the sun's relation with the visible part of the world, we can infer the relations the good has with the intelligible part of the world.

The sun analogy is supposed to tell us something about the good; more precisely, about the good's relation to forms. The idea of an analogy is to state the identical structure two different systems share (the identity of relation).[125] The source system in this case is the visible part of the world, and the target system the intelligible part of the world. The sun's relation to the visible things is supposed to map and help us know something about the good's relation to forms. Methodologically, then, the passage invites us to take the things Socrates says about the sun as indicative of what we are supposed to think about the good. There is a puzzle, though.

The passage emphasises the agency of the sun as the producer of all the necessary conditions for sight, and later as the being responsible for the coming-to-be, growth, and nourishment of all visible things. Socrates goes on as to say that the sun is a benevolent God. *Prima facie*, then, it seems that the purpose of the sun analogy is to argue that the good is a benevolent God (it is 'most generous' πολυτελεστάτη, lit. 'the most lavish,' *Republic* 6.507c7). The analogy could be spelled out as 'the sun *is a benevolent God in* the visible part of the world, as the good itself *is a benevolent God in* the intelligible part.' The

[124] This is only because Socrates is unwilling to tell his views about it, and not because it is impossible in general.
[125] An analogy states the structure shared by two systems (target *T* and source *S*). An analogy of the form '*A* is to *B* as *C* is to *D*' means that there is a single relation *R* such that *R*(*A, B*) in *T*, and *R*(*C, D*) in S. The identity of relation means that *R* in *T* ≡ *R* in *S*. See Steinhardt (2001, 82).

identity of relation here is 'is a benevolent God in.' This can be expressed in the following way:

Is a most generous God in ≡ Is a most generous God in

The sun: the visible part of the world :: The good: the intelligible part of the world

This interpretation of the text has had its champions,[126] but it has also met fierce opposition.[127] It could be said that scholarship on the sun analogy has traditionally lined up into either a theological, or a formal reading. The latter rejects the identification of the good with an active God, and defends an abstract conception of the good, where the good is understood as a structure, and its relation with forms an explanatory one. Recent scholarship lines up unanimously, as far as I am aware, with the latter, formal readings,[128] and I believe it is because there are good reasons to reject the theological reading. I will briefly mention three of them.

In the first place, the theological reading seems to be incompatible with the general account of forms, which describes them as unchanging.[129] The thought is that since forms are unchanging, they cannot literally receive anything from the good, and the good, since it is a form, it cannot literally give anything to the forms. Therefore, we are supposed to read all the references that identify the good with God as metaphorical.[130] The second reason to reject the theological reading is based on the idea that the good cannot be a complex entity like a *nous*, since it is beyond being,[131] and it is what makes it possible.[132] Finally, it has been also noted that even if the theological reading were not inconsistent with the

[126] According to Benitez (1995, 114 n. 8) the idea that the good is God can be traced as far as Thrasyllus. It was common in antiquity, see Sextus Empiricus *M* 2.70. See McPherran (2006, 95, 100 n. 35). Scholars who support the claim that Plato identifies the good with God include: Zeller (1888, 282), Jowett (1892, xcviii), Adam (1902, 58 *apud* 508a), (1908, 442), Wilamowitz (1920, I, 589), Friedländer (1928, I, 72), Lodge (1928, 171, 466-ff), Ritter (1933, 130, 375), Festugière (1936, 264-266), Hardie (1936, 156), Robin (1938, 259-f), Pacheco (1942, 70-83), Jaeger (1943, 285-f, 415 n. 39), Frank (1945, 92-96), and Doherty (1956, 459), (1961).

[127] Against the identification are Shorey (1895, 239),(1934, 230), Bovet (1902), Raeder (1905, 381), Steward (1909, 53, 59), Burnet (1928, 337), More (1921, 312-314), Grube (1935, 152), Taylor (1929, 232), Cornford (1935, 245-ff.), (1937, 34-35) Demos (1939, 10, 64, 123), Solmsen (1942, 72, 92), Gilson (1940, 437-438), (1941, 25-ff.), Rutenber (1946, 34-f.), Ross (1951, 43), and Cherniss (1944, 603-610).

[128] See, for example, Cooper (1977, 154), Santas (1980), (1999), (1985), (2001, 58-193); Hitchcock (1985); Fine (1990); and Annas (1999, 96-116).

[129] The theological reading, however, would explain the odd passage about the form of bed in *Republic* 10 (596a-598c).

[130] See Ketchum (1994, 1). See also Wheeler (1997, 172-173), who substitutes the verb 'produce' with 'logical unfolding.'

[131] See *Republic* 509b8-11, but see my discussion of this sentence in this chapter's sec. 6.

[132] See McPherran's (2006, 95-96) description of this argument. He further explains that "since it would seem that for Plato a necessary condition for something's being a God is that it be a mind/soul possessing intelligence, the good cannot be a God." Plato, he continues, "is willing to talk as though the good might be a God that we could call Great Commander Zeus (*e.g.*, at 596a-598c), but without working out the problems of ascribing mental states to a being beyond being."

description of forms, Socrates still fails to explain how the good's agency works, how could it be an efficient cause, to put it in Aristotelian terminology.[133] But if we accept these objections against the theological reading, how should we understand the analogy? What are its structural and methodological consequences?

If the references to divine agency are metaphorical, they seem to ruin the whole point of the analogy, since the identity of relation would no longer hold, and the analogy would lose its explanatory power:

Is a most generous God in ≠ "Is a most generous God in" (metaphor)

The sun : the visible part of the world :: The good itself : the intelligible part of the world

According to this, Socrates would be offering an analogy with an embedded and undercover metaphor. But we do not get any clue as to what it is a metaphor of. All guesses would be speculations,[134] and the method intricate to say the least. Perhaps, however, the identity of relation is something less pretentious. The analogy might be explained by an identity of relation like 'explains' or 'is explanatory of.' In this case, the analogy would look like this:

Explains ≡ Explains

The sun : the visible part of the world :: The good: the intelligible part of the world

The problem with this idea is that it seems to make irrelevant the references to divine agency. Worst, it makes them look as extra information that obscures the passage. If the identity of relation is only an explanatory one, why does the passage waste so many words in obscuring this relation by talking about the sun in those terms? This reading makes Socrates garrulous.

I am not interested in defending the theological reading, but in pointing out that the text does not rule it out. Assuming Plato is a careful writer, the references to divine agency are there for a reason. The sun analogy offers a puzzle for us to worry about. Moreover, it explores the relationship between divine and human agency that was envisaged in the *Phaedo* (see Ch. 1, sec. 4-7).

3. You shall know the father through his son

At *Republic* 506d7-a5 we read:

> But, my dear friends, we should leave the question about what the good itself is for the time being; for it seems to me it is beyond the present project to reach my

[133] See McPherran (2006, 96).
[134] See, for example, Wheeler (1997, 172-173), who substitutes the verb 'produce' with 'logical unfolding.'

> own views now. I am willing to say, however, what seems both a child (ἔκγονος) of the good and most like it; if it is also pleasant to you, but if not, we leave it.
>
> Well, tell me—he said. You will pay for the story of the father later.
>
> I could wish, I said, both for me to be able to pay, and for you to be able to receive it, and not like now only with the interest (τόκος). But at this point receive at least this, both the interest (τόκος) and the child (ἔκγονος) of the good itself. Be cautious, however, that I do not deceive you involuntarily in some way, by giving you a fraudulent account of the offspring (τόκος).
>
> We will be cautious—he said. But only tell us.

Socrates is not willing to talk about what the good itself is.[135] He thinks it is 'too much for the present impulse' (*Republic* 506d8-e1). This could be understood in various ways, though. It might be that too much time is needed when the topic is not the main point of the discussion, or perhaps, since it is a difficult enterprise, it requires too much energy. Socrates seems to think that it is a *shared responsibility*, and wishes he will be able to express his views later, and that Glaucon will be fit to receive them.[136] It does not need to be the topic's fault, but that of Socrates and his interlocutors. Socrates might think that explaining his views to these specific interlocutors and in the present circumstances would need too much effort from everyone involved. It seems a pragmatic problem. The context for talking about the good is not ideal, so Socrates excuses himself. He makes clear, however, that he does have views about what the good itself is, and he is purposely not telling his interlocutors. Socrates is worried about how convincing he will be under the circumstances, a worry that will prove to be important later (see *Parmenides* 133a11-c1; Ch. 3, sec. 3).

In trade for his opinions about the good itself, Socrates offers to talk about something that has two relevant characteristics. It is what seems (φαίνεται at e2) both a child of the good itself, and most like it (*Republic* 506e2). The first question that arises from this claim is how to take the verb φαίνεται. It could be that Socrates is creating an image that will explain some point but imply no causal connection in the real world. However, it might point out a real relationship in the world, but emphasise that it is just Socrates' opinion. The ambiguity of this sentence begins to set the tensions and puzzles of the passage.

A further question is about the relation between the two characteristics attributed to the child of the good. The text expresses it as a conjunction (*X* is the child of the good, and *X* is most like it), but one may think that the conjunction of both characteristics is not

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[135] His unwillingness recalls *Meno* 86c4-e1. The difference, however, is that in the *Meno*, Socrates is the one willing to examine what virtue is, and is Meno who insists on answering a different question. The Socrates of the *Meno*, thinks the proper order of investigation is from the definition to the characteristics of a thing, but in the *Republic* Socrates insists on a reverse order.

[136] This seems to make reference to the advice not to return lent arms to a mad friend in *Republic* 1.

accidental, but a result of an implication (since *X* is a child of the good itself, then *X* is most like it). It could be that all things are in a sense offspring of the good, in which case we will need an additional reason to explain why this specific offspring is the most similar to his father. Socrates will offer not such explanation, but perhaps this is because it is just an opinion and not knowledge. On the other hand, if this offspring is most like the good because it is his offspring, later when Socrates talks about other products of the good, he will be committed to distinguishing between both relationships. It could be that the good produces things like truth and knowledge, but has offspring like the sun, on the other hand. Both products, however, are said to resemble the good, although the thought might be that fatherhood is a stronger relationship. A reason to think this is that the child of good has agency and directive powers, whereas truth and knowledge do not. None of these options closes the possibility that the good has another offspring. But let me now analyse the first of these characteristics.

In general, a parenthood relationship, of the type *X* is father of *Y*, and *Y* is a child of *X*, suggests many features. To begin with, they normally suggest a natural correlation that results from the father's activity—normally the intercourse with another parent—to beget the child (correlations are discussed later in Ch. 3, sec. 4). It often transfers likeness from parents to children, who were born smaller and weaker than their parents. If there is another parent here, Socrates does not talk about it, but we should not discard this possibility since in the *Timaeus* that role seems assigned to a receptacle, or necessity.[137] In terms of their formal properties, it can be said that both relations are irreflexive, asymmetrical, and intransitive.[138]

If the good has a parenthood relation to something else, even without knowing what the child is we can infer that the good is something with a specific causal power, the power to beget children like him. This power transfers the good's main characteristic(s) to some degree, and makes the discussion about the child worthwhile. If the relationship is not only a story or an image but literally true, then it will also explain many more things, since we would be able to assume that the good is some sort of living being. Maybe because of some of these reasons, Glaucon accedes to Socrates' suggestion, and allows him to avoid the topic under the condition that it remains a debt to talk about later. Glaucon concedes only if Socrates promises to pay him later. This establishes a creditor/debtor relationship between

[137] See *Timaeus* 49a-ff.

[138] That is just to say that no one is his own father (irreflexive); that it implies that if *X* is the father of *Y*, then *Y* is not the father of *X* (asymmetrical); and that if *X* is the father of *Y*, and *Y* of *W*, then it is not true that *X* is the father of *W* (intransitive); the same properties are true for the 'child of' relation. See note 3.

Socrates and his interlocutors, which means that Socrates is not free from the commitment,[139] and remains with certain responsibilities towards his interlocutors. This relationship makes an analogy with the father/child description, where the debt begets its interest in the same way a father begets its children. Plato plays with the double meaning of the τόκος ('offspring,' 'interest'), word which comes from τίκτω, 'to produce, generate, cause.' In this sense a debt begets its interest:

Debt: Socrates' views about the good.	Father: The good
↓	↓
Interest: Socrates' account of the child of the good.	Children: the sun

Note that the debt is to blame for the existence of the interest. It is not the creditor's fault, but the debt's existence. That is what a debt produces in normal circumstances. Even if the child's account is not part of the 'capital' of the debt, interest is usually an increase of the same sort of thing as is owed. If Socrates owes 10 drachmas, a 10% interest rate will be 1 drachma. In this case, the difference between the capital and the interest is only of quantity. The creditor/debtor relation also establishes the terms in which the conversation will develop. It is a transaction. The interlocutors should not just believe what Socrates has to say, but *they should be cautious not to be deceived,* specifically about the account of the child (*Republic* 507a4-5). A mistake there will lead to a mistake in our conception of the good. Socrates' aim is to avoid giving a fraudulent account of the child.

The audience, then, is told to be as active, wary, and careful, as they are when someone is paying them a debt. For even when Socrates may have no intention to deceive their creditors, he may still pay with a spurious coin inadvertently. That Socrates says he has no intention to deceive is important in a topic where only opinions are being told, although a person trying to deceive would probably say the same thing.[141] Perhaps for this reason, Socrates does not want their interlocutors just to trust his word. He is not seeking mere persuasion, but a critical engagement and scrutiny of what he has to say. But why does Socrates only ask for care with respect to the account of the sun, and not for all he has to say?

One reason may be because he has no way to justify his other opinions, but it might also be because being careful about the account of the child is something their interlocutors can actually do since they are much more familiar with it. Since the child will turn out to be

[139] This recalls Socrates' debt to Asclepius at the end of the *Phaedo*. For the discussion of Socrates' last words see McPherran (2003), and Peterson (2003).
[141] Cf. the description of the sophist as a magician in *Sophist* 234e-235b.

an object of sensation, claims about it are empirically verifiable (like the subtle answer in the *Phaedo*; see Ch. 1, sec. 8.6).[142] For this reason the account of the sun is the source system of the inference from analogy. But Socrates will not share his account of the child unless some preconditions are met. He asks his interlocutors both to recall and to agree something that has been mentioned before in their conversation and elsewhere (see *Republic* 507a7-9).[143] Socrates summarises it in three main points:

> We affirm—I said—there are many beautiful things, and many good things, and so on in each case, and we also distinguish them in argument.[144]
>
> —We say so.
>
> Also, then, we say there are and we distinguish in argument the beautiful itself, and the good itself, and so on about everything which we formerly established as many; in turn, we establish[145] many things as having one being, because of[146] one form[147] for each, and we call it the 'what is'[148] of each.
>
> —That is true.
>
> And we say the many things in fact are visible, but not perceived by *nous* (νοεῖσθαι), while in turn forms are perceived by *nous* (νοεῖσθαι) but not visible.
>
> —Absolutely (*Republic* 507b1-10).

These three agreements are packed with information. The first one establishes two claims: (a) the existence of qualified things; and (b) the fact that they have distinguished them by argument. In the second point, Socrates adds five further claims: (c) there are forms; (d) they have distinguished those forms by argument; (e) each form corresponds to a quality distinguished in (a); (f) that they established many things as one being in accordance with one form for each; and (g) that they call this being the 'what is' of each group of things. Finally, the third point includes two more claims: (h) they say that the many qualified things

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[142] Comparing the two passages, the first impression might be to wonder why empirical inquiry is not puzzling in the *Republic*. On the contrary, the agreements on the account of the child will reveal something about the good. The key to the strategy, however, depends on the strength of the resemblance between the good and its child. But Socrates will not elaborate on it, nor will his interlocutors protest, at least at this point. Would it be possible that Socrates is presupposing the framework of *Phaedo*'s subtle answer? Everybody seems to accept the relationship very easily. Glaucon's silence here, however, might be explained by the fact that he wants to listen to the whole account before mocking Socrates about it.

[143] In the *Republic* it could be a reference to 5.476a, 475e. Elsewhere, it may refer to *Phaedo* 75b, 66d-ff, 74a-79a, 99e-100d, and *Symp*. 210e-212a. Perhaps also *Euthydemus* 300e-301a, and *Cratylus* 430a-b. For similar restatements of the arguments about forms see *Republic* 596a-ff, *Phaedo* 108b-ff. Compare Socrates' request with *Phaedo* 100b1-3 (Ch. 1, sec. 7.2.1).

[144] This recalls *Phaedo* 99e4-6, and the statues of Daedalus in *Meno* 97d-98a.

[145] But see Rowe (2007, 240), who translates: 'positing [sc. beautiful itself, good itself, and so on] in accordance with one form [..] belonging to each, as being, each, one form [kind], we address each of them as 'what is.'' I do not see, however, how this fits with πάλιν αὖ in b6.

[146] Here κατ' ἰδέαν is normally translated as 'in accordance with one form,' but that point was already made by the first part of the sentence. For that reason, I take it as causal or instrumental, and explanatory.

[147] Cf. *Rep*. 597a2, *Cratylus* 389b5-6. For locutions about forms, see Sedley (2007, 72-73).

[148] Cf. *Phaedo* 75b, d, 78d, *Parmenides* 129b, *Symposium* 211c, *Rep*. 490b, 532a, 597a. For a recent discussion of the meaning of this locution see Politis (2012).

distinguished in (a) are visible but not perceived by *nous*; and (i) forms are perceived by *nous* but are invisible.

Socrates emphasises not only that they agree on the ontology and epistemology of all this but also on the fact that they did it by argument, something that was also emphasised in *Phaedo*, when Socrates retreats to arguments (see 99d4-e6, Ch. 1, sec. 6). But what exactly is this ontology and epistemology he wants his interlocutors to take for granted? Even if he wants to recall something that has been said before he may only require part of it. From what he says in this passage we can infer a basic picture. First, there are qualified visible things, which imply a pluralism where there are things, visible characteristics, and the idea that the same characteristic could be shared by more than one thing. We also learn that these qualified visible things are not perceived by *nous* but by sight. Socrates and his interlocutors also agree that there are characteristics themselves, but that they are not perceived by sight but by *nous*. Finally, the characteristics themselves and the visible things have the following relations: for every characteristic itself there is a corresponding visible characteristic; and many qualified visible things share the same characteristic (*i.e.*, being) by virtue of one characteristic itself (*i.e.*, form), which we call the 'what is' of each.

With these agreements it seems that Socrates and his interlocutors can then establish that for many cases of visible things with a shared characteristic, there is a characteristic itself in virtue of which the sharing of the visible characteristic is possible. These claims, and the agreement that they have established them through argument are the preconditions set by Socrates to proceed with his account of the child of the good.

4. The child of the good in relation to sight

Socrates offers an account of the child of the good in relation to sight, although he expands his account later. This needs to be the non-fraudulent account that Socrates promised. For it, he first examines with Glaucon how sight works, and identifies as one of its characteristics that it is deficient, and that it needs light to be able to see (*Republic* 507c1-e4). The agreements are as follow:

4. If *X* is one of person *S*'s senses, then *X* has the power to perceive a corresponding sensible quality *x* in a perceptible thing *Y*.
5. Sight is a sense that person *S* has to see visible things.
6. Many senses and sensible qualities do not need a third kind of thing without which they will not perceive and be perceived, respectively.

7. In a case where a person *S* is in front of a sensible thing *Y*, it might happen that: (a) *S*'s sight is fine, (b) *S* is attempting to use her sight to see *Y*, (c) *Y*'s colours are in front of *S*'s eyes,[149] (d) but if the situation is not supported by a third thing *W*, then, (C) *S*'s sight will not see *Y*, and *Y*'s colours will be invisible to *S*.

8. The third kind of thing *W*, which *S* needs to see *Y* and that *Y* needs to be seen by *S*, is specific to the circumstance by its nature, and it is called light.

9. The craftsman[150] of our senses was most generous when he crafted the power of seeing and also to be seen [since he also provided us with the light needed to see and be seen].

These claims offer a brief description of vision which distinguishes the following elements: subjects who possess the faculty of sight, visible things which possess colours, eyes as the organs of vision, light, the actual event of seeing[151] and be seen, and a craftsman both of the senses and of the power of seeing and to be seen. Socrates does not explain all the relations between these elements nor all the details of how vision is supposed to work. He does not explain, for instance, why sight needs a third element unlike all the other senses. Moreover, someone might complain that this is not true. Is it a problem of directness versus indirectness? Is it because sight requires no contact with the object perceived, and thus needs an intermediary? If so, Socrates does not make it explicit. He only establishes that an instance of successful seeing requires that:

> A person *S* sees *Y*, iff *S* possesses eyes with sight, *Y* is a visible object, *Y* is in front of *S*, and there is light.

The introduction of a provident craftsman of the senses and of the power of seeing and to be seen could sound odd to modern readers, but Socrates introduces it as smoothly as

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[149] Adam complains that in 507d11 ἐν αὐτοῖς ('in these') should make reference to the sensible things, but grammatically seems to refer to τοῖς ὄμμασιν (the eyes), and there is no relevant variant in the MSS. But if ἐν αὐτοῖς refers to τοῖς ὄμμασιν, the colour would be in the eyes even without light, which might seem self-defeating if what Socrates wants to say is that light is a necessary condition for sight. Adam ends saying that it is better to retain the Ms reading and 'understand αὐτοῖς perforce as τοῖς ὁρωμένοις.' (Adam, 1902, 83, app. VIII). It can be argue, however, that keeping the text as it has been transmitted is not necessarily self-defeating even if ἐν αὐτοῖς refers to τοῖς ὄμμασιν. The phrase 'in the eyes' could mean 'in front of the eyes'. If colours exist even if a person is not perceiving them, then the colours may be at reach from one's eyes, but invisible without external light. Compare this theory of vision with *Lysis* 217c-e, *Meno* 74c-77a, *Phaedrus* 110b-e, *Critias* 116a-b, *Theaetetus* 156d-e, *Philebus* 12e, and *Timaeus* 45a-46c, 67c-68d.

[150] This craftsman of our senses, of course, reminds us of the craftsman in *Timaeus* 47a, *Philebus* 27b, and *Republic* 10.596b-598c but also the titan Prometheus, who brought light and reason to humankind. Thus, it recalls also Protagoras' long speech in *Protagoras* 320c ff.

[151] One thing is the faculty of sight (ὄψις) that someone could possess even if it is not able to see at a given moment due to lack of light, and another is the actual seeing (ὁρᾶν). Contrast *Theaetetus* 184c, where Socrates distinguishes between ὀφθαλμοῖς and δι' ὀφθαλμῶν. See Denyer (2007, 91).

any of the other claims. The role of the craftsman seems to be that he is responsible for the whole setting needed to see, from the existence of sense organs, faculties, but also light, and colours. The craftsman is an agent not only able to create structured and ordered things, but to be generous to humankind. He is a benefactor in a literal sense, he does good through his craft, and humans are the recipients of his generosity. In the same way, Socrates makes clear that sight depends on the craftsman's good will.

Socrates' account of vision simply assumes there is such a craftsman, and then asks whether he is the most generous (*Republic* 507c7). But notice that the craftsman only provides the possibility conditions for successful seeing, but for that to happen the person needs also to have good sight in her eyes, and attempt to use it to see something visible. It is not the craftsman who makes a person see, it is that person's responsibility, even when the craftsman provides the conditions for this to happen. This illustrates the interconnection between necessary conditions and causality and responsibility—one of the questions left unexplained by the *Phaedo* (see Ch. 1, sec. 6). The text here makes clear that the effects of an αἴτιον could be the necessary condition for the activity of another αἴτιον. Note, however, under this model, effects are not necessarily αἴτια. Let us look at the specific case of sight and light again. Due to its role as a necessary condition of vision, both Socrates and Glaucon praise light:

> If indeed light is not without value, then it is not an unimportant kind of link that joins (ἐζύγησαν) the sense of seeing and the power to be seen—more valuable than other links there are.
>
> —But surely it is far from being without value (*Republic* 507e5-508a3).

Light has an instrumental value. It is relevant so far as it enables seeing and to be seen, both assumed as valuable. Light links the sense devoted to seeing and the power visible things have to be seen to allow instances of successful seeing. Plato uses the word ἐζύγησαν, the aorist passive of ζεύγνυμι, which can also mean join 'in wedlock.' If the word is intentionally used to suggest marriage, then we may wonder whether the instances of successful seeing are the children of the union.[152] Note that light is a real thing in the world, independent of perceivers, but *its natural role is to bind ontology and perception together* (cf. the binding capacity of *nous* highlighted in *Phaedo* and *Sophist*; see Ch. 1, sec. 5, and Ch. 4, sec. 7).

Socrates' next question is to identify the source of light, which was already presented as a craftsman (see *Republic* 507c6-8). He phrases it as follows:

[152] The reflection about links is going to become a prominent aspect later (see Ch. 3, and Ch. 4, sec. 6-7).

> Then, which of the gods in heaven would you hold responsible (αἰτιάσασθαι)[153] and author of this, whose light makes both our sight to see in the best way and the visible things to be seen?
>
> The same also you and others would say—he replied—since it is evident that you asked about the sun (*Republic* 508a4-8).[154]

This is the non-fraudulent account of the child. It reminds us of *Republic* 2, 379a, when Socrates demands that gods must be always represented as they are. Here in *Republic* 6, Socrates and his interlocutors think that the account of the sun is accurate. Everyone assumes a divine design of the visible part of the world, and that fact is never questioned. The sun, then, is the heavenly god responsible for light because it has the power and authority to produce it. The sun is provident since without his light, humankind will be in the dark. Humans and any animal capable of vision need the light of the sun to lighten up the place, since otherwise they see nothing, and things remain invisible. Human effort, and the possession of good sight is not enough to see visible things and their colours.

The sun's light produces two things at once: sight in the perceiver, and the power to be seen in the visible things. Put more generally, it enables something to act, and another to be acted upon. This intermediary role can be understood as follows: *X* is an intermediary, if *X* makes *Y* act and allows *Z* to be acted upon.[155] Note that in the case of seeing and being seen, the activity does not imply a real change for the thing observed but for the viewer, who acquires a perception of the object.

If Socrates is right in his account of light, then light is the natural link between sight and the visible (*Republic* 507d12). But now Socrates will ask whether that means that the relation between sight and the sun is according to nature. The reasoning seems to be that if sight and light have a natural relation, and the sun is the responsible for light, then there should be a natural relation between sight and the sun. The conclusion is true only if natural relations are transitive, or sight and the sun are naturally related anyway by a different reason. But the text seems to use light as a link not only between sight and the visible things but also between sight and the sun (*Republic* 508a9-10), and also between the visible things and the sun. To explain this, Socrates first step is to emphasise the distinction between sight, the sun, and the eye:

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[153] For αἰτιάσασθαι in 508a4 see *Republic* 1.329b4: τὸ αἴτιον αἰτιᾶσθαι. ('Accuse as the responsible αἴτιον'). The whole passage in 1, 329b1-6 talks about confusing a necessary condition with the real αἴτιον. Here in book 6 this is also an intertextual reference with the *Phaedo* (Ch. 1, sec. 5).

[154] Cf. *Cratylus* 397c4-d7; *Laws* 7.821b5-6, 899b3-10, 950d2-5; and *Apology* 26d1-e4. See also Aristophanes *Peace* 406 ff., Herodotus iv. 188, and *Epinomis* 985b, 988b.

[155] The capacity to act and be acted upon will be considered a mark of being in the *Sophist* 247d8-e4 (see Ch. 4, sec. 5). Cf. also the Stoic corporeal relation between God and all other bodies (see Ch. 5, sec. 2.2).

> Sight is not the sun neither itself nor that in which it comes to be, which we call the eye.
>
> —Certainly not.
>
> But, I think it (*i.e.*, the eye) is the most sunlike of the organs of sensation.
>
> —Very much so (*Republic* 508a11-b5).

But what does it add to say that the relation between the sun and sight is a natural one? Knowing that a relation is natural tells us, first of all, that it is possible, genuine, and it is not a human invention, even if we are unable to pin down how exactly it works. Socrates seems also to imply there is a non-arbitrary resemblance between things related by nature. This makes clear that sight refers to the faculty in the eyes, but it is not identical with them, since one can have blind eyes. Sight, then, is not the source of light since if it were, it would not need the benevolent God's aid to see.[156] However, Socrates adds, the eye is sunlike. This establishes a resemblance relation not between the sun and sight, which were the elements he was trying to explain are naturally related, but with the organ of vision. This makes a chain of resemblance from the form of the good:[157]

The good itself

↓

The sun

↓

The eye

The sun is the most good-like of the visible things, and now the eye is the most sunlike of the organs of sensations. But in what respect do these things resemble each other? Could it be authority, responsibility, and causal capacity? But if so, what exactly do the eyes produce? Socrates says that sight comes to be in the eye, so it might be that the eyes are not only a passive place where sight happens to come to be, but that the eyes (if all the necessary conditions present) *produce* sight. Socrates' idea, perhaps, is that, for instance, the eye's iris controls the diameter and size of the pupils, which adjust the amount of light needed to produce sight. In this way, sight is a faculty that depends on certain background conditions but also on the proper function of the eyes. So, the eyes are the creators of sight, as much as the sun is the craftsman of light, the senses, and the power to

[156] Cf. *Timaeus'* account of vision at 45b-47e.
[157] This recalls the magnets in *Ion* 533d-e. In the same way the bits of iron depend on the magnet, the eye's and the sun's productive power depend on the activity of the good itself.

see and be seen. If this is so, sight is an active faculty. Socrates further explains the relation of sight with the sun with a comparison:

> Surely then, sight[158] also acquires from him (*i.e.*, the sun) the power it has, just like an abundant (ἐπίρρυτον)[159] treasurer.
>
> — Certainly, in fact (*Republic* 508b6-8).

An abundant manager or treasurer administers the wealth of her employer or master. She can decide, up to a point, how to use the employer's wealth, but has no wealth of her own, and depends on her employer to have a job. The treasurer's power comes from the employer's deposit of her goods. As a treasurer, a person does not generate wealth, just administrates it, and the job consists in looking after the interests of the employer. The treasurer uses his power to exercise the employer's will.

Just like a treasurer, then, sight has the power for seeing thanks to the light given by the sun. The comparison emphasises that sight has a limited active capacity. Just as the treasurer did not own the money and his power is not to make more, but to administer it, sight has no power to make light but to see thanks to it. Sight sees the things that the sun allows us to see, so much that it takes away his light during night. The benevolence of the sun, then, is not that he gives humans a gift, but that he gives them a job. There is an employer/employee relation with the sun, just as a treasurer has a relation with the owner of the money. But in the case of sight and the sun, the relation is said to be natural. So it seems that sight has a limited authority, it is dependent on the God's will, and that is the natural order of things.[160]

Socrates adds that the sun is not sight but is *responsible for* it (*Republic* 508b9-10). Before, he said that the craftsman was responsible for the senses and the power to see, but now he adds that he is also responsible for sight, something that does not follow from the previous claims.[161] But, since eyes are said to be producers of sight, what Socrates claims seems to be that the sun holds an indirect responsibility. If this is so, responsibility is a transitive relation (if *X* is responsible for *Y*, and *Y* for *Z*, then *X* is responsible for *Z*). This is an innovation with respect to the discussion in the *Phaedo* where responsibility is not transitive (see Ch. 1, sec. 4). In the *Republic*, however, this is what allows a connection between necessary conditions and causality and responsibility. This, however, seems to contrast with a passage from the myth of Er in *Republic* 10 (617e4-5), where Lachesis,

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[158] Since ἣν refers to sight at *Republic* 508a11.
[159] Adam translates 'flowing over' and refers to *Timaeus* 80d.
[160] This relation will come under attack later with an example about the master and the slave relationship. Cf. *Parmenides* 133d6-134a2 (see Ch. 3, sec. 5). See also Xenophon's *Memorabilia* I 1.11-15.
[161] Otherwise Socrates would mistake necessary conditions for αἴτια. See Ch. 1, sec. 5.

the maiden daughter of Necessity, informs the souls that when they choose a new life for the next cycle of reincarnation, the responsibility of their action lies with them, while God remains innocent. Responsibility there seems again intransitive. Although this passage is part of a myth, it would still seem problematic if the myth were to misrepresent the relation between gods and humans.

Is there a way to explain these hesitations? *Republic* 2.379b1-c7 might be the answer. There, Socrates says that God is good, and that he is the αἴτιον of no evil, but only of good. A suggestion, then, could be that the *Republic* conceives responsibility as transitive when it is about good actions, and effects, but intransitive when it comes to evil ones. In this way, God would be indirectly responsible for every good action and effect in the world, but not of any evil. The responsibility of bad actions would stop with the wrongdoer. If Socrates performs a good action, then, he but also God would be responsible for it, whereas in the case of rape, murder, or condemning the innocent the responsibility would be exclusively in the hands of the criminals who committed those crimes. This fits well with the comparison with the abundant treasurer. Whenever someone is doing good, it is doing the job God gave her, and therefore God is also responsible for its outcomes. This would not he the case, however, when a person does something wrong.

Looking back again to *Republic* 508b9-10, Socrates also says that the sun is seen by sight. It seems that the sun, in its benevolence, has not only revealed the visible things but it has also revealed itself. Note that the way the sun reveals itself fits with the natural faculty humans have. Human sight is naturally able to see the sun, even if the eyes can only hold the sight for a moment, and it is a bit painful, or dangerous if done without care, as we learnt from *Phaedo* 99d4-e6 (see Ch. 1, sec. 6). Notice this is also a hint about sight being something that could be done properly. If we want to study the sun we will need to see its reflection in the water to avoid being blinded by it, just as Socrates is making us study the form of the good by an inference from analogy. This seems to suggest that this is the proper way to study the form of the good, and that Socrates is not planning to pay his debt after all. All these characteristics will map the relationship between *nous* and the good.

5. The set up of the analogy

Let me now analyse in more detail the way Socrates expresses the analogy:

> Therefore, I continued, say[162] that this is what I call the child of the good, which the good begot analogous to himself; for what the good itself is in the intelligible part of the world[163] in relation to both *nous* and the intelligible things, this is the sun in the visible part in relation to both sight and the visible things (*Republic* 508b12-c2).

The passage states the sun analogy, but it also reminds us of the parenthood relation, and tells us that the good begot the sun as analogous to him. So we have three claims:

1. The good is the father of the sun.
2. The good begot the sun analogous to himself.
3. The sun is to the visible part of the world what the good is to the intelligible part.

The analogy states an identity of relation between the two parts of the world, but the other two claims establish a causal link between the intelligible and the visible part of the world. The good stands in a relation both to the forms and to its child. This picture, however, is vulnerable to the same objections I presented above regarding the good's relation to forms. If the good is a form just like the others, namely unchangeable, it is difficult to imagine how it can literally beget the sun, even if the sun was begot by something. The tensions generated by these ambiguities, however, could have been one of the motivations to introduce a distinction between a craftsman and the forms in the *Timaeus*. It could also explain why in the *Sophist*, the Eleatic stranger revises whether the intelligible realm should include some change (I shall come back to the latter in Ch. 4, sec. 6-7).

This general analogy is elaborated by Socrates in more detail by making explicit the different relations the sun and the good have with different things in their corresponding part of the world. Socrates first adds two relations in each part, *nous* and intelligible things, and sight and visible things on the other. But shortly after he gives a fuller picture of the epistemology in both parts. In the case of the sun, it is also in relation with the eyes, seeing, the power to be seen, and light. The good, in turn, is also in relation to understanding and knowledge, and truth and being. How exactly are these pieces supposed to fit in the analogy? Is every bit analogous to another element in the other part of the world? If so, then there is not only one analogy but many derived analogies, which make one part of the world a mirror of the other (which reminds us of *Phaedo* 100a1-3; Ch. 1, sec. 6). If so, Socrates does not stop to say exactly which element corresponds to which, but the following table

[162] See φάναι in *Republic* 473a8.
[163] Translating τόπος as 'part [of the world],' There is no reason to think the intelligible and the visible are two different worlds.

offers what seems to be a fuller picture of the resemblance between one part of the world and the other:

Plato's visible and intelligible parts of the world

Visible part	**Intelligible part**
The sun	The good itself
Sight	*Nous*
Visible things	Intelligible things (forms)
Light	Truth
Eyes	Soul (?)
Seeing	Understanding and knowledge
To be seen	To be understood and known
Colours	Being (?)

According to this, each pair implies an identity of relation, and to find it, it is necessary to remember what was said about each element in the visible part of the world. Sight and *nous*, for instance, are both deficient faculties that require a third thing to successfully operate. In the first case, this third thing that naturally fulfils this need is light, whereas in the case of *nous* it is truth, which connects the faculty with the intelligible things. Truth, as light, has instrumental value. It is a link that 'joins in wedlock' *nous* and the intelligible things. Socrates also says that sight comes to be in the eye, and, as I suggested, it is a product of the eyes' activity. In the same way, it seems, *nous* is a faculty that exists or comes to be in an organ of intellection, and it is a product of its exercise. Socrates does not talk about an organ of intellection, but he normally talks about *nous* as a faculty of the soul.[164] Therefore, it seems that *nous* is a faculty product of the soul's activity (interestingly, both the eyes and the soul, may allow for voluntary and involuntary activity).

Socrates does not say what is the analogue of colour in the intelligible part, but it must be something that intelligible objects have, and is perceived by *nous*. This makes plausible the idea that being is the analogue to colour. So knowing or understanding an intelligible thing would include comprehending its being (perhaps that it exists, and 'what it is;' see *Republic* 507b1-10, in sec. 3 of this chapter). Now, just as in the visible part having sight, attempting to see and even having the colours of an object in front of one's eyes may not be enough to actually see, so in the intelligible part of the world something analogous

[164] For a similar claim see *Phaedo* 70b1-4, where Plato uses φρόνησις, not *nous*.

would happen. A person may have *nous*, attempt to use it to comprehend or know something, and that something may exist and being in front of the person's *nous*, but without truth linking the intelligible things and the person's *nous* there will be no successful knowledge or understanding. The analogy between sight and *nous* also reinforces the idea that both are faculties that can be developed, adapted, and that effort can make some difference, and that we may become better at exercising them. In addition, the sun and the good itself will be both objects of their corresponding faculties, that is, as we have seen, that the sun is seen by sight, but also that the good is known by *nous*, all this within the natural capacities of each faculty, even if in both cases it could be a difficult and dangerous thing to do. Done with the appropriate provisions, it is perfectly possible to have a sight of the sun, and to grasp the good itself. This is one of the promises of the analogy.

That the sun and the good itself provide a link between their corresponding faculties and their objects does not mean they are the only sources or that there is no other thing that can serve as a link in each case. Socrates explains this when he says:

> You know, I said, that when we turn our eyes to things upon which colours are no longer illuminated by the light of day, but by night-light, they have a weak sight and seem nearly blind, as if they lacked clear sight.
>
> Of course—he said.
>
> But I suspect that when the sun shines[165] upon things they [*i.e*., the eyes] see clearly, and it seems that [clear sight][166] exists in those very same eyes.
>
> —Indeed.
>
> Thus, now understand (νόει) the soul also as follows. When, on the one hand, it fixes on something that 'shines'[167] by both truth and being (τὸ ὄν), it both understands (ἐνόησέν) and knows (ἔγνω), and it seems to have *nous*. On the other hand, when it fixes on what is mixed with darkness, on what comes to be and passes away, it opines (δοξάζει) and it has weak 'sight,' changes its opinions 'upwards' and 'downwards,' and in turn seems to lack *nous*.[168]
>
> —Yes, it looks like it (*Republic* 508c3-d9).

The passage establishes two cases for each part of the world, an optimal and a deficient one. This makes it possible to compare the differences between the two cases in each side, and also the similarities and differences across the visible and intelligible part of the world. Socrates, however, leaves some of these relations unspoken. In the following

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[165] I think καταλάμπει should be translated as 'shines' and not 'lightened' as Grove and Reeve do, since *X shines* by virtue of *X* having colour(s) and receiving light from a source *Y*.

[166] And not only 'clarity' (claridad), as Eggers Lan (1988, 333), or 'vision' as Grube and Reeve (in Cooper & Hutchinson 1997, 1129). See Adam's note *ad locum*.

[167] Socrates exports some vocabulary from the visible part to the intelligible, like καταλάμπει, σκότος, ἀμβλυώσσω, ἄνω and κάτω. Since their use in the intelligible part of the world is either metaphorical or an extension of its meaning, I have added quotation marks to those words in my translation.

[168] This last sentence, as noted at the beginning of the chapter, is a clear reference to *Phaedo* 96a9-b1, and 99d4-e6. See Ch. 1, sec. 3, and 5.

table I summarise the information he provides plus the necessary inferences to complete the picture:

Plato's visible and intelligible parts of the world and their inferences

Visible part	**Intelligible part**
Optimal case: when a visible object *X* shines thanks to both sunlight and its colours, and *S*' eyes fix on *X*, *S*' eyes then: A) see *X* clearly, and B) clear sight seems to exist in *S*' eyes.	*Optimal case*: when an intelligible object *Y* 'shines' thanks to both truth and being, and *S*' soul fixes on *Y*, *S*' soul then: A) understands, and knows *Y*, and B) *S*' soul seems to have a [functional] *nous*.
Deficient case: when a visible object *X* is not illuminated by sunlight but by moonlight, and *S*' eyes turn to *X*, *S*' eyes then: C) [guess?], D) have weak sight, E) seem nearly blind, F) are just like if they lacked clear sight (have permanent visual impairment).	*Deficient case:* when an intelligible object *Y* is not 'illuminated' by truth but by what is mixed with what comes to be and passes away, and *S*' soul fixes on *Y*, *S*' soul then: C) opines, D) has a weak 'sight' [i.e., *nous*] E) changes its opinions (nearly lacking all understanding and knowledge). F) seems to lack *nous* (permanent below average intelligence).

Note that there are four links, with four different sources. In the visible part of the world, there are two different types of light that come from two different sources, that is sunlight and moonlight, which come from the sun and the moon. In the intelligible world, in turn, there are also two types of links between intelligible objects and *nous* that come from two different sources, that is truth, on one side, and what is mixed with coming to be and passing away, in the other. Although moonlight and what is mixed with coming to be and passing away can in some way link the corresponding faculties with their objects, they do a very poor job. Moonlight is dimmer than sunlight, and what is mixed with coming to be and passing away is always changing, and thus unreliable.

Socrates makes an interesting clarification of the analogy between sight and *nous*. Given the more complex picture, he compares not mere sight but *clear sight* with *nous*. The deficient case is called in both sides 'weak sight,' which in the intelligible part would mean 'weak *nous*' **(**or perhaps small *nous*, like in *Phaedo* 102a4; see Ch. 1, sec. 4). Socrates, however, seems to leave the use of the word *nous* to refer exclusively to the use of the faculty in optimal conditions, as if he were unwilling to use the word when the faculty is used in the deficient case.[169]

It is important to notice, however, that in the deficient case of the intelligible part, the idea is not that *nous* is trying to perceive colours or any other perceptual quality. *Nous* used in optimal or deficient conditions is a faculty whose objects are intelligible things, like justice and virtue. But when *nous* tries to understand their being by fixing its attention on particulars, like, for instance, trying to understand justice or virtue by exclusively looking at specific cases, local laws, and cultural traditions, even the best *nous* will only reach shifting opinions—just like when Socrates' *nous* studied nature in *Phaedo's* autobiographical passage (see Ch. 1, sec. 3). To reach real understanding and stable knowledge about those things, then, *nous* needs to be aided by truth.

The sun and light relation is clear, but the relation between the good and truth is puzzling. It could be that the good itself has a veridical aspect, or that truth has an ethical component, or both. According to the account of the child, the sun in his benevolence gives us light as the third thing necessary to see. The good, then, provides us with truth as the third thing that naturally fits with our *nous* and the objects of thought, to make us 'see' the qualities of the objects. Truth, however, does not need to be the only or most important characteristic of the good. After all, the sun in the visible part also gives us, for instance, warmth. It is simply that truth is the gift we need to successfully use our *nous*. The difference between truth and what is mixed lies in its stability, but also its universality. Moreover, the passage seems to imply that without the presence of the good, there is no truth, so whatever a discerner thinks she is 'seeing,' if there is no good in it, it has no truth.

The existence of four links in the world, two better than the other, implies that *nous* and sight have a normative component. If you are not 'seeing' things through the 'light' of the form of the good, then you are almost without *nous*, you are not doing things in the right way. There is also a reference to strength. To be able to see properly gives you power,

[169] There are other similar cases of this peculiarity in Plato, like οὐσία and γένεσις in the *Sophist*'s gigantomachia. Moreover, this use explains why the ES is able to say that in materialism and certain types of idealism, *nous* disappears (see Ch. 4, sec. 6).

and strength. Blindness here also conveys being crippled, disabled, and weak. No one wants to be voluntarily weak and disabled. Notice, however, that there is no reference to complete blindness. Even without good illumination, the eyes work, and do their job, if somehow poorly. A person's *nous* also works even when little truth is present.

In what follows, Socrates drags the epistemological conclusions of the analogy, together with the distinction between the good, knowledge, and truth, and an evaluative claim that puts the possession of the good above the others:

> Then, you could say that this is the form of the good, what produces truth in the things discerned[170] and what gives the power to discern to the discerner. But being responsible for (αἰτίαν) knowledge and truth, you could on the one hand think it [*i.e*., the good itself] as an object of discernment; on the other hand, as they are both beautiful beings, seeking to know and truth, judging that it [*i.e*., the good itself] is other and more beautiful than they, you will judge (ἡγεῖσθαι) correctly. But knowledge and truth, just as in the visible part both light and sight are correctly considered as sunlike, but it is not correct to judge they are the sun, in the same way also here they are both correctly considered as goodlike, but to judge that either of them are the good is not correct, since the possession of the good is yet more valued (*Republic* 508d10-509a5).

This passage offers some substantive content about the form of the good. But this is striking, and the reader should be surprised since Socrates said he was not going to talk about the good, and here he seems to offer if not a definition, various important features of it. The fact that Socrates insists on giving this analogy might be intended to clarify the causal connection between the good and the rest of the world, and in this way to reemphasise its centrality and relevance.

The information in this passage can be broken down into two main parts, one about the form of the good and the other about knowledge and truth:

A. The form of the good is:

With respect to its causal capacity (in epistemology):

1. What produces truth in the things discerned.

2. What gives the power to discern to the discerner.

With respect to its explanatory role:

3. It is responsible for knowledge and truth.

With respect to its relation with knowledge and truth:

4. It is an object of discernment.

[170] See Adam's note and his Appendix IX for the discussion about correcting γιγνωσκομένης to γιγνωσκομένην in e3. I think, however, it can be translated with the genitive. See Slings (2005, 111-112).

5. It is different from knowledge and truth.

6. It is more beautiful and valued than knowledge and truth.

B. Knowledge and truth:

With respect to its relationship with the form of the good:

1. They are goodlike.

2. Since (6), they are not the good.

The form of the good is described as active. It produces something in both sides of the knowledge relation: truth in the 'things discerned,' and the capacity to discern in knowers. Notice that those two things are only necessary for knowledge, but not sufficient. But it seems that by being the source of these two things, the good explains why knowledge and truth are possible. According to the analogy, it also seems to follow that the form of the good gives their soul to the discerners (as the craftsman of the senses gives us eyes).

The good, however, is itself discernable, and it is different from knowledge and truth, since apart from being its αἴτιον, it is more beautiful and valuable than them. This means that the object of discernment is different from the act of knowledge, and what is needed to actualise knowledge, namely truth. Socrates conceives the good as whatever is the most valuable, and beautiful possession. This raises the question of what exactly it is to possess something in general, and specifically, what is to possess the knowledge of the good (this will be discussed again in relation to the *Parmenides*, see Ch. 3, sec. 6). When Socrates says that knowledge and truth are goodlike, what exactly is the similarity? It does not seem to be the same similarity the sun has with the good (regardless of whether we read it in the theological or in the formal way).

6. Extending the analogy

I shall leave Glaucon's remark at *Republic* 508a6-8 aside for a moment, since Socrates ignores it and continues with his exposition (perhaps hoping that he will convince Glaucon with what he is about to say). This new part has the same structure as the previous passage (*Republic* 508d10-509a5). Socrates begins by asking Glaucon to 'examine, however, its

image (εἰκών)[171] more fully in this way' (*Republic* 509a9-10). Socrates expands the scope of the analogy, and to do it he also expands his account of the sun:

> You will say, I think, that the sun produces not only the power to be seen in the visible things, but also their coming to be, and growth, and nourishment, but it is not itself coming to be.
>
> —How could it be?
>
> And, therefore, you could say that not only do the things discerned owe their being discerned to the good, but also they take from it [*i.e*., the good] both their existence and being, although the good is not being, but goes beyond being [by] excelling it in dignity and power (*Republic* 509b1-9).

The passage, then, goes back to the description of the sun to finish the examination about how it maps the form of the good. But what he says about each part is not exactly symmetrical as is shown below:

The sun and the form of the good

The sun	**The form of the good**
1. The sun produces (in the visible things):	1. The good produces (in the things discerned):
a) the power to be seen,	a) the possibility to be known.
b) coming-to-be,	2. Things discerned take from the good:
c) growth, and	a) existence (τὸ εἶναι), and
d) nourishment.	b) being (οὐσία).
2. The sun is not coming-to-be.	3. The good is not being (οὐσία), but what excels being in power and dignity.

The passage moves from claims about epistemology to claims about ontology. I will start with the extension of the account of the sun. Socrates claims that the sun also produces the generation, growth, and nourishment of the visible things. How is the sun the source of so many things? The idea seems to be that the sun produces all things with its light, and heat.[172] But this does not explain the variety of things in the world. Is something else required? Someone might complain that the sun only takes part in the production of these things, and is not the only responsible, nor always a direct participant. Glaucon makes none of these questions, though. He pacifically accepts this as a clear addition to the account of

[171] This does not mean that the whole passage is Socrates' invention. The εικών is between the sun and the good, because the sun mirrors features of the good.
[172] Cf. *Phaedo* 105b5-c7; see Ch. 1, sec. 8.

the sun. The new information about the sun also raises a question about how the sun's products are connected to each other. There is at least a temporal order: coming-to-be, nourishment, growth, although the power to be seen seems to be present all along. There is also an ontological priority implied, where coming-to-be is the most basic, since without it the others cannot take place. This reference to natural order as a product of the sun, reminds us of how *nous* is related to ordering in the *Phaedo* (see Ch. 1, sec. 4).

Consider now the good itself. Socrates says it produces the possibility conditions for the intelligible objects to be known, and these objects take from the good its existence and being. We are not told how this is possible. But notice how the good is not said to *produce* the existence or being of intelligible objects, but that *they take from the good its existence and being*. The purpose of this change in the formulation is to account for the fact that intelligible things are not generated or destroyed. Without the good, however, there is no other form. The good is metaphysically prior to the forms.

This implies that intelligible things are not self-sufficient. If the good is the αἴτιον of these things, it seems it is some kind of *sustaining cause* (to borrow from Stoic terminology, see Ch. 5, sec. 6), an αἴτιον that needs to be present all along for its effects to exist. The good, in contrast, does not appear to need anything else. That the good is metaphysically prior and responsible for the existence of other intelligible things, is enough to consider it more powerful and with more dignity. Notice, however, that this does not answer why the good itself seems to have two productive roles. Even if it does not literally produce forms (and the text never says so), the good itself still is said to beget the sun, and indirectly everything else in the visible part of the world. The good itself, then, has a double function: as metaphysically prior and explanatory of forms, and as producer of the sensible things and their connections with the intelligible things. This seems to break responsibility into two different versions, one that has to do with agency, and the other with metaphysical priority. The text, nevertheless, only presents this as a puzzling suggestion.

The last claim about the form of the good (3) and the last claim about the sun (2), which are analogous, could be read in various ways. The relevant part of the text says: 'the sun […] is not itself coming-to-be […] the good is not being, but moreover, farther than that it is what excels being in dignity and power.' The first thing to note is the additional explanation about how the good excels being. If the analogy is complete, then we are bound

to understand that the sun excels coming-to-be in dignity and power too. This could be construed, however, in at least three different ways: [173]

1. Just as the sun is not a case of coming-to-be at all, the good is not a case of οὐσία at all.
2. Just as the sun is not the particular coming-to-be that it produces, the good is not the particular οὐσία of the other intelligible things.
3. Just as the sun is not coming-to-be taken universally, the good is not οὐσία taken universally.

The main problem with option (1) is that it is uneconomical. It requires a new ontological category to accommodate the good, and it is not clear what that would be, or what difference it would make (after all, as I have shown, the good is still intelligible). Besides, if the sun is not a case of coming-to-be, how could it be the child of the good? The fatherhood relation implies generation, and if the relation between the sun and the good cannot be taken literally, what is it? Even if 'produces' and 'takes' are metaphorical in relation to the good and the forms, the good is still the sun's father. If this is ignored we risk ending up with a two-world reality where there is no causal connection between the intelligible and the sensible things. According to option (2), the claim differentiates the entity responsible from its effect, and is neutral as to whether the form of the good is a case of οὐσία or not. But since there is no good reason to think it is not a case of οὐσία, it could be taken as saying both things. The difficulty with this reading is that it would have been easy for Socrates to have specified that in the text. Instead, he chose this ambiguous formulation, which allows a third option still. This last version (3) is a conceptual differentiation that perhaps stresses again the metaphysical priority of the good. The text cannot be said to rule out any of these options. So we remain in puzzlement.

7. All this is either inconceivable or ridiculous

Glaucon's remarks, after *Republic* 508d10-509a5, and after 509b1-9, are criticisms, if not explicit objections. Glaucon reaction is first of mockery and then of laughter. He is not only unimpressed, but considers what Socrates says utterly ridiculous. But what he considers ridiculous is not the account of the sun, which goes by without complain, but that it is analogous to the good. The first problem is epistemological. In Glaucon's words:

[173] My three readings follow closely and benefited from distinctions originally found in the manuscript version of the minutes of the Yale-KCL *Republic* 6, seminar held in 2012. The leader of the session was Brad Inwood.

> You say something inconceivably beautiful, he said, if on the one hand it produces knowledge and truth, and on the other it is above them in beauty. For I presume you do not call it pleasure[174] (*Republic* 509a6-8).

Glaucon's first criticism could be put as an objection. His remark would go against the idea that the good is an object of knowledge but is more beautiful and valuable than knowledge and truth, which are nonetheless goodlike. Glaucon, then, may be implying something like the following argument:

1. If the form of the good is an object of knowledge but is more beautiful and valuable than knowledge and truth, which are nonetheless goodlike, then the good is inconceivably beautiful.
2. It is not the case that the good is inconceivably beautiful.
3. Therefore, it is false that the form of the good is an object of knowledge but is more beautiful and valuable than knowledge and truth, which are nonetheless goodlike.

Why does Glaucon think it would be inconceivable? It could be that he is just disagreeing with the claim that it is possible to discern the source of knowledge and truth. But that is supposed to be explained by the case of looking at the sun, which is the source of sight. Glaucon might think that the analogy does not work in this case, or that having a glance at the sun does not really count as a successful sight of it.

The analogy might be used on Glaucon's behalf. It may be that just as no one can have a proper sight of the sun, no one can have a proper grasp of the good. And Socrates' own remarks about not knowing what the good is will be evidence of this, and the reason why Socrates reacts by silencing Glaucon. Socrates, nonetheless, has an answer to this problem. An answer that has to do with the method to 'look' at the sun, and to think about the good. This could also explain why the Line image, which is supposed to explain the analogy of the sun, emphasises method. Glaucon, however, after the extension of the analogy of the sun, ends with a different criticism:

> And Glaucon laughing aloud,[175] said, "by Apollo, superiority belonging to a daimon!"
>
> You are responsible, I replied, since you forced me to tell my opinions about it (*Republic* 509c1-c4).

Glaucon laughs because Socrates seems to be introducing either a new God or a conception of the good that is completely abstract, options that sound ridiculous to him. If it

[174] The reference to pleasure goes back to the beginning of the discussion about the good, where knowledge and pleasure were the two options considered.

[175] The phrase μάλα γελοίως, literally, 'very comically', could be inside Glaucon's comment, in which case it would be translated as 'by Apollo, a very comical superiority…' This point was made in the Yale-KCL *Republic* 6 seminar, 2012.

is taken to be introducing a new God, this connects with Socrates' accusations, and reminds the reader that other people will find that introducing new gods is more threatening than funny. Socrates seems to agree that it sounds crazy, or that laughter was what he was expected from the situation (see *Republic* 506d). But Glaucon's concerns are not properly addressed here. The inconceivability objection, we shall see in the next chapter, reappears in the *Parmenides*.

Glaucon's mocking attacks Socrates' idea that the good produces not only the power to be known but also forms take from it existence and being, but it is not itself being, but what excels being in dignity and power. Glaucon seems to imply that:

1. If (a) the good produces the power to be known, (b) forms take from it their existence and being, (c) it is not itself being, but (d) what excels being in dignity and power, then the good's superiority is daemonic.
2. If the good's superiority is daemonic, then the good's superiority is ridiculous.
3. The good's superiority is not ridiculous.
4. Therefore, (a-d) are false.

Socrates, however, does not deny the charge that this is daemonic, nor does he correct what Glaucon has understood; he only laments that it sounds comical to Glaucon, and puts the responsibility on him. The theme of force recalls various stages of the *Republic* that begin in book 1. It seems that forcing people to tell their opinion without the right conditions and "impulse" leads to their appearing ridiculous, and to their being the object of laughter (in the best case scenario).

8. Continuity and innovation in the Sun analogy

In this chapter I have highlighted how the analogy of the sun in *Republic* 6, reflects about causality and responsibility, making references to the discussion in the *Phaedo*, and highlighting the interrelation between the epistemology, metaphysics, methodology, and ethics, but exploring new aspects and puzzles. I have shown that although the argumentative structure of the passage is an inference from analogy, the passage insists on fostering discussion as to whether the good is a divine agent or an unchangeable structure. On setting the analogy, the text continues the discussion about how necessary background conditions relate to the causal/responsibility process. Moreover, it suggests that the relation of causality and responsibility is transitive when it is a good action, and intransitive when it is an evil one. This could be expressed in the following way:

If *X* is responsible for *Y*, and *Y* for *Z*, *X* is responsible for *Z*, iff *Z* is a good effect, elsewhere *X* is not responsible for *Z*.

One question that arises from this, one that is not explored in the passage, is how transitivity affects the assignation of praise and blame. In the case of good deeds, it would mean that praise gets distributed through the whole chain of responsible agents. This would suggest that when we see a good action we should praise the good person who did it, but also God, and any relevant intermediate agent between them. In the case of bad actions, however, the responsibility lies with the wrongdoer alone. I will come back to this model to compare it with the Stoic conception of causality (see Ch. 5, sec. 7).

The *Republic* passage also explores the connection between agency, and responsibility. One of the suggestions is that the link between intelligible things and *nous*, affects how stable and secure the connection is. Truth is stable and secure, what is mixed with generation and destruction is not. This creates a normative outlook for thinking. According to the passage, thinking is an activity that can be done better or worse, and this seems to track better or worse ways of acting. Thinking in the right way leads to the right type of actions. This of course was also a prominent topic in *Phaedo*. A difference between *Republic* and *Phaedo*, however, is that the former introduces a single *nous*, the sun, which is said to be responsible for most background conditions in the visible world; not only with respect to sucessful seeing, but in general to human action. But notice that if responsibility is transitive, this does not rule out the action of other agents.

Plato revisits his discussions of responsibility and causality in various places. Some of these passages seem to agree or be closely related to things defended in the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*, others seem to add in similar directions, and others to modify it. Yet, other texts seem to criticise their main assumptions. In particular, one objection against forms, the so-called ‘greatest difficulty’ (*Parmenides* 133a11-135c4) seems to pose a significant challenge against the agreements reached before.

CHAPTER 3. The greatest difficulty in *Parmenides* 133a11-135c4

In this chapter, I analyse and evaluate the merits of the greatest difficulty in the *Parmenides*. My purpose is to show that its structure is more complicated than traditionally assumed, and for this reason it poses challenges at different levels. My reconstruction shows that there is a dialectical, epistemological and an ontological layer in the difficulty, and that all of them need to be addressed to escape the terrible consequences it implies. The chapter is divided into eight sections. In the first one, I offer the context of the present text and its connection with the previous passages. The following sections offer a detailed analysis of the text, and I finish with a brief discussion of the significance of the difficulty for the understanding of causality and responsibility in Plato.

1. The last of many difficulties

The *Parmenides* is a dialogue whose contents are framed by a complex prologue that reminds us of the beginning of the *Phaedo* (see Ch. 1, sec. 1). The main narrator is Cephalus, who at his arrival to Athens, runs into Plato's brothers Adeimantus and Glaucon (two of the main interlocutors of the *Republic*), and asks them about Antiphon, their half-brother, who is said to have memorised the discussion that Socrates, Zeno, and Parmenides once had. The brothers confirm that when Antiphon was young he memorised the discussion to perfection, meeting many times with Pythodorus, one of Zeno's friends who was present when the discussion took place, and still can recite it from memory even many years later. Cephalus and the two brothers ask Antiphon to recite the discussion, and although he hesitates at first he finally agrees to do it. Antiphon then tells them that a venerable Parmenides, and a mature Zeno came to the Panathenaea in Athens once. A young Socrates and some of his friends came to see Zeno to listen to him read his book. When Zeno was finishing his reading, Parmenides, his host Pythodorus, and Aristotle (who later became one of the thirty Tyrants) arrived, and listened to the final part of the reading.

Once Zeno had finished, Socrates asked him to read again the first hypothesis of his book, and then he asked him whether he has understood the main argument. Socrates summarises Zeno's proposal by saying that if things are many, then they are like and unlike, but this is impossible because neither can unlike things be like nor like things unlike (cf.

Phaedo 101a5-b3, and 103c7-8; Ch. 1, sec. 7.2.2). Zeno confirms that Socrates understood him, and explains that his argument opposes pluralism. Socrates then, says that Zeno and Parmenides defend the same view, since Parmenides' poem argues that the all is one, whereas Zeno argues that the all is not many. Zeno agrees, but tells Socrates that his book is just defending Parmenides' argument, claiming that the premise that there is plurality is itself an absurdity and also entails further absurdities than the ones the pluralists criticise in Parmenides. But then, Socrates puts an objection to Zeno's view.

Socrates asks Zeno whether he does not believe that there is a form, itself by itself, of likeness, and another of unlikeness; and that we and other things get a share of these forms, and by partaking in both, things are like and unlike themselves, which was exactly what Zeno argued was impossible. This is the same case, Socrates thinks, as what happens with the one and multiplicity, and the things that partake in both. Socrates tells Zeno that he would be astonished if someone were to show him that the forms or kinds have in themselves these opposites, but that there is nothing to be surprised about if someone demonstrates that particulars are one and many (cf. *Phaedo* 103a4-c9; Ch. 1, sec. 8.3). However, Socrates argues, he would be surprised if someone could distinguish the forms, which are grasped by reasoning, as separated entities, themselves by themselves, and then show they can mix together and separate.[176] After Socrates' brief account of forms, Parmenides takes over and questions him, putting forward various challenges against his conception of forms. The last one is what occupies me in this chapter.

The connections between the *Parmenides* and both the *Phaedo* and *Republic* are multiple. Here I just want to point out two links that matter for the present research. The first one is the reference to the existence of forms. This, as I have shown, is a crucial building block of Socrates' arguments in both previous dialogues (see *Phaedo* 100b1-7, Ch. 1, sec. 7.2.1; and *Republic* 6.507a7-b10, Ch. 2 sec. 3), and even if there are differences between how forms are presented in these discussions, the formulation of the *Parmenides* is general enough to apply to both versions of forms. An important part of the greatest difficulty consists in challenging first the cognoscibility, but later also the existence of forms. The second connection is, precisely, the emphasis on how access to forms is crucial to explain the causal process and the assignation of responsibility. As in the previous passages, this turns also into a discussion about method, and the moral requirements of philosophical inquiry.

[176] This is what the Eleatic Stranger tries to do in *Sophist* 251a-257a. Socrates in the *Parmenides* never says that to show this is impossible, only that he will be astonished to see someone doing it. See Ch. 4, sec. 7.

2. A multi-layered challenge

How to understand the 'greatest difficulty' in the *Parmenides* is a contentious topic. Scholars have construed the objection in radically different ways, disagreeing about the structure and soundness of the arguments, as well as about its conclusions.[177] Recent discussion agrees the difficulty poses an important threat to Socrates' account of forms, and focuses on whether the greatest difficulty is an objection that assumes complete separation between particulars and forms, or whether the separation is only partial.[178] The two sides of the debate, however, start from different assumptions about the purpose of the passage, and what kind of person would raise the main objection. I argue, however, that the discussion has played down the dialectical aspect of the discussion, and has misrepresented the structure of the objections in relation to their consequences.

The passage can be divided in six sections:

A. Presentation of the difficulty (*Parmenides* 133a11-c1).
B. A first explanation of the difficulty (*Parmenides* 133c2-d5).
C. The example of the master-slave relationship (*Parmenides* 133d6-134a2).
D. Distinction between knowledge itself and knowledge among us (*Parmenides* 134a3-c3).
E. Discussion about the knowledge of God (*Parmenides* 134c3-e8).
F. Conclusions (*Parmenides* 134e9-135c4).

The main argument, however, has three objections layered one inside the other:

1. *Dialectical objection*: Socrates' account is unconvincing for people posing the epistemological objection.
2. *Epistemological objection*: if forms are themselves by themselves, then they are unknowable.
3. *Ontological objection:* if the epistemological objection is right, then forms may not even exist.

Parmenides, however, plays a double role in the passage. He makes the dialectical objection, but also talks on behalf of the people who would make the other objections,

[177] Compare for instance Cornford (1939, 99), Cherniss (1962, I.284), Runciman (1962, 159), Forrester (1974, 233-237), Prior (1985, 75-76), Gill and Ryan (1996, 46), Allen (1998, 193), McCabe (1999, 91), and Duncombe (2013).
[178] For the first line of argument, the most recent publication I am aware of is Gill (2012, ch.1). Duncombe (2013) argues, instead, that the separation is only partial, restricted to reciprocating correlations between forms and participants. See also Turnbull (1998, 34).

people who are absent from the conversation. Notice this is a conversation about a possible conversation. Parmenides is asking Socrates to imagine what it would be like to talk with people who are absent from the scene. A similar if somewhat more complex situation occurs in the *Sophist*'s gigantomachia (see Ch. 4, sec. 2).[179] Additionally, Parmenides evaluates the consequences that would follow from accepting these objections, and agrees with Socrates that they are unacceptable:

4. The consequences that would follow from (1-3) are unacceptable.

Finally, Parmenides concludes with Socrates that:

5. Since (4), then something must be done.

The conclusion opens the way for the second half of the *Parmenides*, which is a training to be able to stop the consequences of premise (4). This means that the main argument of the passage is an instance of practical reasoning. Parmenides is persuading Socrates to do something with him to address the greatest difficulty. Let me now give a more detailed analysis of the difficulty.

3. Forms: a public relations disaster

After previous objections against Socrates' account of forms, Parmenides warns Socrates:

> Be sure then, he said, that you do not yet fully grasp how great is the difficulty if you are going to assign one form in each case every time you make a distinction among beings.
>
> How so? —He asked.
>
> There are many other difficulties, he said, but the greatest is this: if someone were to say that if the forms are such as we say they must be, it does not even belong to them to be known. If someone says this, no one would be able to show him that he is mistaken—unless the dissenter[180] happens to be of great experience and not without natural talent, willing to follow the one who is giving the proof while treating of very many arguments and from a distant point[181]—Otherwise, he who thinks that they are necessarily unknowable would be unconvinced (*Parmenides* 133a11-c1).[182]

Parmenides believes that Socrates, even after listening to many other objections against his account, has not yet understood, in general, the dimension of the task he faces. Parmenides says there are still many difficulties for Socrates' account of forms, but he only

[179] For missing people in Plato more generally, see McCabe (2004, 16).
[180] The person who denies that it belongs to forms to be known.
[181] This can be read as a reference to *Republic* 6.506d7-a5 when Socrates laments that he does not have enough impulse to talk about his views of the good, nor do his interlocutors have adequate skills to follow. See Ch. 2, sec. 3.
[182] See also *Parmenides* 135a3-5.

tells him about the one he considers the greatest. If we look carefully at the way Parmenides phrases the problem, we can construe the claim as follows: if a person *P* says 'If the forms are as Socrates says they must be, then they are necessarily unknowable,' then no one would be able to show *P* she is mistaken, and *P* will remain unconvinced, unless *P* happens to be experienced, talented and willing to follow a long proof.

Note that what I have called the epistemological objection is not the main problem here. Even if the epistemological objection is flawed, it might still pose a threat for the convincingness of Socrates' account, if its flaws are very difficult to show, for instance. This difficulty, then, is most generally a public relations problem. It is a dialectical objection that Socrates' account faces while dealing with people making an especially difficult objection. The dialectical layer of the difficulty has nothing to do with whether Socrates is right about forms, but with the complexity and length of the proofs and arguments it requires, and the experience, willingness, and talent needed from the people involved.

The epistemological objection is a conditional: if a form is itself by itself, then it must be unknowable. This objection, although difficult to refute, *is not by itself the greatest difficulty*. In fact, Parmenides thinks that the epistemological objection is wrong, and the people who propose it are mistaken.[183] The *real problem* is that it is impossible to disprove a person who holds to that objection, unless a very difficult and rare set of requirements is met. Given how difficult it is to meet these requirements, there is *a catastrophic problem for the persuasiveness of Socrates' account*. It is an argument that asks for almost impossible conditions.[184] This is what Socrates has not fully grasped. He is about to embark, inadvertently, on a tragic enterprise. Parmenides wants at least to warn Socrates of the risks he is about to take. Moreover, we might consider this objection in relation to the arguments in the *Phaedo*: there the existence of forms was considered the strongest argument (see *Phaedo* 100a3-7, Ch. 1, sec. 7.1), but here, and after the greatest difficulty, that argument looks far from sound.

The dialectical problem will always be there since it does not only depend on what Socrates and Parmenides can do, but also on the people dissenting. Here, like at the beginning of the sun analogy, and in the *Phaedo*, the responsibility for the conversation is a shared business. Even if Socrates is able to become an experienced and skilled dialectician,

[183] When Parmenides says 'no one would be able to show him that he [i.e., the dissenter] is mistaken' (*Parmenides* 133b6-7), he is taking sides with Socrates, and conceding that he is right.
[184] It also recalls Socrates' reluctance to talk about the good itself with Glaucon and company in the *Republic* 6.506d, because the conditions then, were not ideal; see Ch. 2, sec. 1.

some people will always remain unconvinced (like Simmias at *Phaedo* 107a8-b10; see Ch. 1, sec. 1). The existence of this set of people is in itself a difficulty. Since there are three different requirements the interlocutor has to meet, namely, great experience, natural talent, and willingness to follow a long proof, the variety of people who could dissent is extensive, and some of them will have great influence and intellectual stature. The following table shows the different alternatives:[185]

Type of dissenters in *Parmenides* 133a-134e

Type of person	Great experience	Natural talent	Willingness
Ideal dissenter	Yes	Yes	Yes
Dissenter who has none	No	No	No
Dissenters who have one	Yes	No	No
	No	Yes	No
	No	No	Yes
Dissenters who have two	Yes	Yes	No
	Yes	No	Yes
	No	Yes	Yes

According to Parmenides only what I have labelled 'the ideal dissenter' could understand her mistake and be persuaded of Socrates account of the forms (provided that the person offering the proof does a good job too). All other people represent a nightmare for the account's popularity and persuasiveness. Notice that the problematic dissenters could include very talented, experienced, or willing people. Socrates could be rejected by some of the smartest, some of the most experienced, and even some of the people who are willing to give him a chance to make his case (and some combination of those). Moreover, assuming there are not many people who satisfy the ideal dissenter's characteristics, the people who will remain unconvinced seem to be not only a simple majority but also a majority in each of the three groups of people, that is, the majority of talented, experienced, and willing people. But this means that the ratio of dissenters that Socrates will be able to

[185] More specific alternatives have been suggested. Seligman (1974) proposes the atomists, McCabe (2004, 16), thinks they are Zeno and Parmenides, and De Waal (2009, 64), identifies them with the sight-lovers from *Republic* 476a11, who are also compatible, she suggests, with the materialists of the *Sophist* gigantomachia at 246a4-6 (see Ch. 4, sec. 4). I think the text in the *Parmenides* does not refer to any of these groups specifically, but to a wider set of people, which may include all the previous options.

persuade will always be very small. At this moment one might ask what kind of person could make the epistemological objection.

It seems that the person making the epistemological objection (τις at 133b4), is someone who would have at least listened to Socrates' basic description of forms. It is not someone who simply rejects all immaterial entities more generally; she does not need to be a materialist, but someone unconvinced of the description Socrates gives of the forms. Even if wrong, it is not a stupid objection. In fact, he makes a very good point, since it demands consistency from Socrates' account by asking how forms could be intelligible objects if from their description it seems to follow that they are unknowable.[186] The epistemological objection consists just in one claim, but the argument implied behind it can be understood as a *modus tollens:*

1. If the forms are themselves by themselves, then forms cannot be known.
2. But forms can be known.
3. Therefore, it is false that forms are themselves by themselves (*MT* 1, 2).

Socrates is in trouble because he is committed to the antecedent of premise (1), namely that forms are themselves by themselves (*Parmenides* 128e-129a), and to premise (2). If Socrates were to accept the dissenter's conditional premise (1), Socrates will contradict himself both by accepting and denying that forms are themselves by themselves, and accepting and denying that forms can be known. If Socrates wants to avoid contradicting himself he should either retract one of his claims, or reject premise (1).[187] Socrates is unwilling to retract his claims, so Parmenides, seeing that Socrates asks for elaboration, explains why there are some good grounds to accept premise (1).

Additionally, there is a question about what exactly it means to say that it does not even belong to forms to be known, and that they are necessarily unknowable. The dissenter is worried about Socrates' description of forms, not directly about whether they exist or not.[188] The dissenter advances his objection from the assumption that forms exist, and can be known. The objection is mainly a worry about the consistency of what Socrates is proposing. The objection against Socrates is independent of whether or not one admits unknowable objects into one's ontology.

[186] Cf. Ch. 1, sec. 8.3.
[187] Cf. Ch. 1, sec. 4.
[188] Although later we will see Parmenides suggesting that there is a small step from unknowability to denying the existence of forms; see sec. 8 below.

4. Correlative forms and particulars

Socrates asks for some elaboration, and Parmenides answers by explaining the scope and grounds for the epistemological objection:

> How, Parmenides?—asked Socrates.
>
> Because I think not only you, Socrates, but also any other who posits that there is for each case some being itself by itself, would agree in the first place that none of them are in us.
>
> How could it possibly still be itself by itself?—asked Socrates.
>
> You are right—he answered.
>
> And then, all of the ideas[189] that are what they are in relation to one another have their own being itself in relation to themselves, but not in relation to the things among us—whether one assigns them as likenesses or in some other way—from which we, by partaking of them,[190] are named. These things among us, which have the same name as those being by themselves, are, on the contrary, themselves in relation to themselves,[191] but not in relation to the forms, and [have their own being in relation] to themselves but not in relation to those who in turn are called in this way (*Parmenides* 133c2-d5).

The first thing Parmenides highlights is that the epistemological objection affects not only Socrates' account of forms but also any account which proposes there is some being itself by itself. This is explained as follows:

(A) For each case of *X* where there is some *X* itself by itself, the *X* itself by itself is not in us.[192]

Socrates accepts this description, and also agrees with Parmenides' claim that forms are not in us, since otherwise, he thinks, it would not be possible for them to be themselves by themselves. This implies that:

(B) For any *X*, *X* is itself by itself if *X* is not in any particular.

This implies a problem about the participation of particulars in forms.[193] Although this does not mean there is no relation between them (since they may still share, for instance, the same name) it may block causal relations if these depend on participation. Parmenides, however, worries about something more specific. He explains that if Socrates agrees with his claim that forms are not in us, then some consequences will follow both for a specific group of forms and particulars, namely any pair of reciprocal forms, and any pair

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[189] Gill and Ryan (1996) translate τῶν ἰδεῶν as "characters." I translate 'ideas', but here ideas and forms are synonyms.
[190] Here ἕκαστα refers to the things among us, τὰ παρ' ἡμῖν.
[191] Meaning, 'in relation to one another in the physical part of the world.'
[192] Cf. Ch. 1, sec. 8.3.
[193] See Allen (1997, 195).

of particulars in a reciprocal relation.[194] We may understand what Parmenides describes as follows:

> *Reciprocal forms:* a pair of forms *X, Y,* is reciprocal when *X* is what it is in relation to *Y*, and vice versa.
>
> *Reciprocal relations among particulars:* a pair of particulars *a, b* is in a reciprocal relation when *a* is what it is in relation to *b*, and vice versa.[195]

Reciprocal forms can be themselves by themselves even if what they are (their essence we may say), is in relation to another form. Introducing these definitions, Parmenides says that from (A) two further claims can be inferred:

> (C) Any reciprocal form has its being in relation to its correlative form, and not in relation to particulars.
>
> (D) Any reciprocal particular is in relation to its correlative particular, but not in relation to forms.

The logical structure of the argument up to now is the following:

1. B, then A.
2. B.
3. Therefore, A (*MP*, 1, 2).
4. A, then C and D.
5. Therefore, C and D (*MP* 3, 4).

This argument precludes reciprocal relations across the intelligible and the visible part of the world. In addition to this, Parmenides also claims that:

> (E) Any reciprocal particular has the same name as its corresponding reciprocal forms.
>
> (F) Humans partake in the reciprocal particulars, and we are named after them.[196]

This restricts the relation between the two parts of the world to one of mere synonymy one. Claim (E), however, is left unexplained. How could we explain that even if (C) and (D) are the case, there is still synonymy between pairs of reciprocal ideas and pairs of reciprocal particulars? In the case of (F) the idea behind it could be that since we are

[194] See Duncombe (2013).
[195] Cf. *Republic* 438a-c.
[196] See Gill (1996, 47).

particulars, we can be one of the relata in a reciprocal relation between particulars. But presumably, the fact that we are named after them makes a puzzle about why (E) should be true in the first place.

5. The master-slave dialectic

Socrates seems baffled by Parmenides' argument (*Parmenides* 136d6), and requires some help. Parmenides, seeing this, offers an example of a coordinated pair of reciprocal ideas and their corresponding reciprocal particulars, and explains how premises (C) and (D) will work in the example. Notice, however, that the example is not part of the grounds for the epistemological objection, but Parmenides' pedagogical addition. Parmenides' example, the pair master/slave, will turn out to be important later, so its introduction into the discussion is not innocent. The dissenters concerned by the epistemological objection, however, may not be aware or may not have worried about this specific example. In fact, it may be important that the dissenters have not noticed that their objection can be extended to non-epistemological cases like the master/slave case. The example starts with the pair of reciprocal particulars, and then with the forms:

> For example, said Parmenides, if any of us is master or slave of someone, I presume he is not slave of the master itself, of what master is; he is a slave of a specific person, but not of the slave itself, of what slave is, nor is the master a master [of the slave itself], but being human he is in both cases a slave or a master of a human being. On the contrary, mastership itself is what it is of slavery itself, and in the same way slavery itself is slavery of mastership itself, but things in us do not have power in relation to them [*i.e.*, forms], nor do they [*i.e.*, forms of relatives] have their power in relation to us; yet, like I say, they are by themselves of themselves and in relation to themselves, and those among us, in the same way, are in relation to themselves. Or do you not understand what I say?
>
> Certainly, Socrates said, I understand (*Parmenides* 133d6-134a2).

The first part of this quote gives a case to exemplify claim (D), and it establishes that:

> For any pair of human beings *a, b,* if *a* is master of *b, a* is not a master of the slave itself, but of *b*; and if *b* is slave of *a*, *b* is not slave of the master itself, but of *a*.

The predication remains in the human sphere. In contrast, the second part of the quote is the exemplification of claim (C), and establishes that:

> Mastership itself is what it is of slavery itself, and not in relation to particular slaves, and slavery itself is what it is of mastership itself, and not in relation to particular masters.

Parmenides also indicates two more things. First, he explains that *X* itself = what *X* is (see Ch. 2, sec. 3, esp. n. 148). This identifies forms with the essences of things. Second, Parmenides introduces a reference to δύναμις. When Parmenides describes reciprocal beings he claims that they are in relation to each other, but now he adds that it is not only their being but that they *have their power in relation to each other*. Notice that Parmenides presupposes that both, forms and humans, have power.[197] The problem, then, is that each group of reciprocal pairs has their power only in relation to things inside their own group, and there is no cross-group relation. Reciprocal forms have their power exclusively in relation to their correlative form, and people in a reciprocal relation have their power exclusively in relation to the person who bears the correlative of that relation.[198] These two points, then, can be expressed as follows:

> (G) Any reciprocal particular has its power in relation to its correlative particular, but not in relation to ideas.
>
> (H) Any reciprocal idea has its power in relation to its correlative idea, and not in relation to particulars.

The case of reciprocal particulars is clear. For example, Achilles, if Briseis is his slave, can master her, and order her to do as he wishes. In the case of forms, however, this sounds odd. The master itself has power in relation to the slave itself. What exactly does that mean if forms are unchangeable? What kind of power could a form have? Notice that claim (H) only applies to reciprocal forms, so there is no need to assume that all forms have δύναμις over others. Parmenides' point is that in case reciprocal forms have power, they will not have any power among us. This recalls the sun analogy in *Republic* 6. There, the good itself and the sun hold a reciprocal relation, that of father and child. In the analogy, however, the good does not only have relations to other forms, but to the sun, which is part of the visible part of the world. But if Parmenides is right about reciprocal relations, it puts a challenge to the causal connection between the two parts of the world, since it implies that the good itself cannot have any reciprocal relation with a particular (see Ch. 2, sec. 2-3). Notice how these arguments also challenge the *Phaedo*'s connection between *nous* and forms (see Ch. 1, sec. 5). But before talking about the consequences all this has for Socrates' account, Parmenides moves to another example: knowledge.

[197] Cf. Ch. 4, sec. 5, and 6.
[198] For a detailed discussion, see Duncombe (2013).

6. Knowledge itself vs. knowledge among us

Parmenides' second example of correlative terms is the pair knowledge and truth. This is the case that really concerns the dissenters:

> Surely then, also knowledge itself, he said, what knowledge is, would be knowledge of that of what truth itself is?
>
> —By all means.
>
> On the contrary, every case of knowledge, what it is, would be knowledge of each being, what each thing is. Or is not so?
>
> —Yes.
>
> Would not knowledge among us be of the truth among us, and, in turn, would it follow that every case of knowledge among us is knowledge of a particular being among us?
>
> —Necessarily (*Parmenides* 134a3-b2).

The case of knowledge is more complex than the master and slave example. The way in which Parmenides explains the example has two peculiarities. First, it is odd that the correlative of knowledge is truth, since in other dialogues, knowledge is accompanied by a different correlative.[199] In fact, even here truth itself does not seem to be the direct correlative of knowledge, but a side reference to the actual object of knowledge itself, which is each different form.[200] Notice, in addition, that for the example to work, knowledge has to be episodic. In the case of knowledge among us, it is knowledge of particulars truths, or more precisely of particular things. The passage establishes that:

> For any case *k*, and any particular truth *y*, *k* is a case of a particular knowledge, if *k* is knowledge of *y*.

In the case of forms the example is the following:

> Knowledge itself is knowledge of forms, namely that of what truth itself is.

Next, Parmenides explains, step-by-step and reminding Socrates of what has been agreed, how from this it follows that we cannot know the forms. The conclusion reveals that the epistemological objection cannot say, as one might have understood at the beginning, that forms are necessarily unknowable in general. According to Parmenides' argumentation, it is just that they are unknowable to us, human beings, here in the sensible part of the world. Parmenides explains it as follows:

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[199] See *Charmides* 168b2-3, and *Republic* 438c7-8.

[200] Like truth in *Republic* 6 (508d3-509a5, see Ch. 2, sec. 5), which is a link between *nous* and intelligible things. For a different interpretation see De Waal (2009, 61), who suggests it is knowledge of different branches of knowledge, and quotes *Republic* 438c8-e9.

> But we neither have the forms themselves, as you agreed, nor can they be among us.
>
> —No, they cannot.
>
> The kinds themselves, what each one is, are, I suppose, known with (ὑπ')[201] the form of knowledge itself?
>
> —Yes.
>
> A thing which we, at least, do not have.
>
> —No, we do not.
>
> Then, we know none of the forms, because we do not partake of knowledge itself.
>
> —It does not seem so.
>
> Then, also it is unknowable to us what the beautiful itself is, and the good, and everything else we take as being ideas themselves.
>
> —Probably (*Parmenides* 134b3-c3).

Parmenides agrees with Socrates on two claims about the relation between particulars and forms that are implied in what Socrates already accepted in claim (B): humans do not have the forms themselves, nor are the forms in any other particular. Notice that Socrates' claim (B), from *Parmenides* 133c3-6, was made before restricting the conversation to reciprocal relations, so it covers all the forms. Neither humans nor particular things, then, have any of the forms in them.[202] Socrates agrees that this is what follows from the way he has presented his account. Perhaps someone may think that even if we do not partake in any of the forms (since they are not in us), we can still know them. But here is where the previous agreements about reciprocal relations pay off. To be able to know the forms, Parmenides explains, we would need to partake in knowledge itself, something that Parmenides and Socrates agreed is impossible for humans. But according to this, what humans don't know and never will is what forms are, not that they exist. Humans cannot have knowledge of what the kinds themselves are, what each one is. Parmenides argument can be understood as follows:

1. Forms are known by partaking in the form of knowledge itself.
2. If humans do not partake in the form of knowledge itself, nor can knowledge itself be among us, then humans cannot know the forms.

[201] The contracted preposition ὑπ' is normally translated as 'by' but that seems to cause self-predication. But if taken as 'with' the only thing the text is saying is that to know the kinds themselves one needs to partake in the form of knowledge itself. And only God does that. Another option is to take ὑπ' as 'from.'

[202] This does not mean that particulars do not hold likeneses relations to the forms (or many other relations), but it means that those relations are not a result of participation. Likeness could be a result of the accident. Contra Duncombe (2013).

3. Humans do not partake in the form of knowledge itself, and knowledge itself cannot be among us.

4. Therefore, humans cannot know the forms (*MP* 2, 3).

5. Therefore, humans cannot know the beautiful itself, nor the good itself, … (Inst. 4).

This argument supports the epistemological objection of the dissenters. If Socrates accepts premise (3), which is implied in claim (B), it follows that humans cannot know forms. This is the end of the epistemological objection, and it constitutes in itself a difficult challenge for Socrates view, and any other view with the same commitments.

7. The knowledge of God

Parmenides' concerns go beyond the epistemological objection. He points out some consequences 'still more terrible' (*Parmenides* 134c4), than the fact that forms are unknowable for humans, and that also follow from what has been accepted about reciprocal beings. But these consequences are bad news not only for Socrates but, since they are so radical, they could also be bad news for some of the dissenters. These consequences could also be reasons not to accept the epistemological objection. They are a warning that if Socrates (or anyone else) is persuaded by it, she might be accepting inadvertently claims that will sound 'exceedingly surprising' (λίαν… θαυμαστός, at *Parmenides* 134e7). Parmenides is presenting Socrates with a puzzle: his account is in great trouble, but, as he will also show, if we draw the consequences of the epistemological objection it turns out to also be highly implausible, let alone unpopular and politically dangerous, so it cannot be accepted either. Parmenides explains this saying:

> You would say, I suppose, that if in fact there is some kind itself of knowledge, it is much more genuine[203] than knowledge among us, and beauty, and all other things in this way.
>
> —Yes.
>
> Then, if, indeed, anything else partakes of knowledge itself, surely you would not say that anyone more than God has the most precise knowledge?
>
> —Necessarily, I would not.
>
> Then, will God, in turn, having knowledge itself, be able to know the things among us?
>
> —Why not?

[203] Here ἀκριβέστερον cannot mean 'more precise,' since then it would seem as if the difference between the knowledge itself and the knowledge of particulars is not of different objects but of difference in degree. But if so, then God would be able to know us, and the particulars in a more precise way than we know ourselves, and the things around us. But that goes against what the epistemological objection is trying to prove.

> Because, Parmenides continued, it was agreed by us, Socrates, that neither do those forms have the power they have in relation to the things among us, nor the things among us in relation to them, but each group in relation to themselves.
>
> —It was agreed.
>
> Surely then, if this most precise mastership and this most precise knowledge belongs to God,[204] his mastership cannot master us, nor could his knowledge know us or any other thing among us; but in the same way we do not govern those things with the authority among us, nor do we know anything of the divine through the knowledge belonging to us. They, in turn, by the same reasoning, are neither our masters nor being gods know human affairs.
>
> But I am afraid, he [i.e. Socrates] said, that the argument is too surprising, if one is going to deprive God from knowing (*Parmenides* 134c6-e8).

The argument in this passage can be understood as follows:

1. There is some kind of knowledge itself.
2. Knowledge itself is much more genuine than knowledge of particulars.[205]
3. If God partakes of knowledge itself, then he will not know the things among us (because forms have no power in relation to things among us, nor do things among us have power in relation to them).
4. God partakes of knowledge itself.
5. Therefore, God will not know the things among us.

But if premise (2) depends on a more general claim, and can also apply to the master/slave example, then:

6. If the most precise mastership and the most precise knowledge is in God, (a) his mastership cannot master particulars (like us), (b) nor could his knowledge know particulars (like us).

But in the same way:

7. If only particular mastership and particular knowledge is in humans, (c) they do not govern gods, (d) nor humans know gods.

The crucial premise for the argument is (2). Knowledge of the forms is more genuinely knowledge, than knowledge of particulars. For the argument to work, Parmenides needs this to mean that knowledge of particulars is not genuine knowledge, otherwise it could be answered that God partakes of both, knowledge itself, and knowledge among us. There must be something wrong about knowledge of particulars that makes Parmenides

[204] Cf. *Republic* 6. 507c6-8, Ch. 2, sec. 4.
[205] This kind of knowledge resembles the description of opinion in other dialogues. See, for example, *Republic* 6.508c3-d9. Ch. 2, sec. 5.

think that God will only have the first one (later we get a hint: it has to do with mutability, and universality). It seems that Parmenides is assuming that God will only have the more genuine knowledge, and he cannot have fake knowledge. This makes the point that if knowledge of particulars is knowledge at all, it is not the real thing, but just a fakery. If so, why should we care that God does not partake of that knowledge? Someone might reply, that no matter how degraded particulars are in the ontological picture, humans and the things we care about are in that domain. The problem is that God's power, both as a knower and as a master, if authentic, is then ineffective in our world of particular things. However, this might be giving us a hint of what is wrong about the epistemological objection, namely that it takes opinion of particulars as if it were knowledge. It might be true that fake knowledge is not connected with God's knowledge, but that is not necessarily to say that it is impossible for humans to partake in knowledge itself. Socrates, however, would have the burden of the proof on this.

8. Terrifying consequences

From what has been said so far, there are six undesired consequences:

Dialectical conclusion

A. Socrates' account of forms is utterly unconvincing for some of the most talented, experienced or willing to listen.

Epistemological conclusion

B. Forms cannot be known by us.

But as Parmenides' evaluation of the epistemological objection showed, it has some more terrible consequences:

Unexpected consequences of the epistemological objection

C. Gods are not our masters.

D. Gods do not know human affairs.

E. Humans cannot master gods.

F. Humans cannot know gods.

In the final section of the passage, Parmenides goes back again to tell Socrates about the only possibility of solving the difficulty, which requires a lot from the dissenter and the one giving the proof. Parmenides summarises all this in the following lines, while adding new concerns:

> To be sure, Socrates, said Parmenides, the forms necessarily have these [difficulties] and many others in relation to them, if there are those ideas of beings, and someone will determine each form as something by itself. Therefore, the one who listens is doubtful and argues that they do not exist, and even if they do, that it is absolutely necessary that they are unknowable to human nature, and saying this he both seems to say something significant, and, as we were just saying, he is extraordinarily hard to convince. Only a man of a very gifted nature will be able to understand that for each thing there is a kind, just being itself by itself, but [it will take someone] more wonderful still to discover it and to be able to teach another who has elucidated all these things adequately.
>
> I agree with you Parmenides, Socrates answered. For you say very much what I think (*Parmenides* 134e9-135b4).

Parmenides tells Socrates that some dissenters could not only argue that forms cannot be known but that they do not exist. This subgroup of dissenters uses the epistemological objection as a step to an ontological objection. It could be that if humans cannot know something, then it does not even exist. If this conditional is accepted, the following consequence follows:

Ontological conclusion

G. Forms do not exist.[206]

With this in mind, Parmenides could have proposed abandoning the idea that forms are themselves by themselves, in favour of a different description of forms. Instead, he insists that this is what has to be taught but that it requires a very gifted person. But Parmenides warns Socrates of what would happen if consequence (G) were the case:

> But on the other hand, said Parmenides, if someone in fact, on the contrary, in regard of all the present difficulties and others such as these, will not allow that there are forms of the beings, and will not distinguish a form for each one, then he will not have a direction in which to turn his thought, since he will not allow that there is a form of each of the beings, always the same, and, in this way, he will destroy entirely the power of conversation. But in fact you are well aware of such a thing.
>
> —You speak truth, he said (*Parmenides* 135b5-c4).

The argument in the passage is the following:

1. If forms do not exist, there is no thought.
2. If there is no thought, conversation has no power.
3. Forms do not exist (G).
4. If forms do not exist, conversation has no power (*HS* 1, 2).
5. Therefore, conversation has no power (by *MP* 3,4).

[206] Cf. Ch. 5, sec. 5.

The conclusion is the last of the terrible consequences of the greatest difficulty. As with consequences C-F, the dissenters might not be aware of it:

Unexpected consequence of the ontological objection:

H. The power of conversation is entirely destroyed.

Parmenides and Socrates have a realist conception of knowledge where the objects of thought are independent of *nous*. If there are no forms, there is no thought, and therefore no knowledge. This ultimately destroys the power of conversation. Parmenides, however, does not explain what does he means by the power of conversation. One possibility is that he means conversation would be impossible. This, nevertheless, cannot be so because he has accepted that particulars would still have names, so some sort of talk is still possible. What is destroyed seems, instead, to be the power to communicate universal knowledge. That kind of knowledge is what gives purpose to philosophical conversation, and it requires, in Parmenides opinion, the existence of certain beings, which are always the same and play an explanatory role in the existence of particulars. But without forms (or anything to substitute them) there is no objective universal explanation.

Moreover, since forms include notions like justice, the good, and so on, without them, there seems to be no secure foundation for practical reasoning, and therefore no way to know whether there is moral progress or not. If that were the case, however, then dialogue and conversation would have no transformative power, since people would be aware that everyone has their own opinion, no one better than the other. This will make conversation trivial. In the end, if the ontological objection is right, not only is Socrates' account of forms a public relations problem, but any account that tries to transform our conduct will be as well.

The greatest difficulty affects the arguments about causality and responsibility in two ways. First, it challenges the theory of forms, which is a central assumption of the models of the relation advanced in *Phaedo* and *Republic* (see Ch. 1, sec. 7.1, and Ch. 2, sec. 3). However, it is also a more direct challenge to the possibility of universality in causal/responsibility relations. If left unanswered, the difficulty threatens any possibility to find stable and secure ways to establish who or what is responsible for what. The situation is a puzzling one, and the only clear thing is that something must be done. However, the very fact that Parmenides persuades Socrates of this is in a way a pragmatic answer to the last of the difficulty's consequences: conversation does have power. Socrates accepts there

is a puzzle to be solved. The problem is to explain how, and under which conditions conversation has power.

According to my analysis, there is no flagrant flaw in Parmenides' argumentation. The objections are good ones, and Socrates is in trouble at every layer of the greatest difficulty. There are metaphysical, epistemological, and ethical implications involved. As in *Phaedo*, and *Republic*, the greatest difficulty makes clear that methodological decisions are crucial, and always interrelated with the metaphysics and epistemology. If Socrates wants to retain his forms, and his models of causation and responsibility, some amendments or clarifications are needed on all fronts. Otherwise, the causal/responsibility relation is limited to particular instances where no generalisation is ever possible (which would set things back to the problems of natural inquiry criticised in the *Phaedo*, see Ch. 1, sec. 3).

CHAPTER 4. Thinking again about the greatest difficulty in the *Sophist* 245e6-249d5

This chapter analyses and discusses *Sophist* 245e6-249d5. The passage contains many types of interconnected arguments, all of which are indispensable for the full understanding of the passage, and its connections with the wider discussion on causation and responsibility. My aim is to show how the argumentation is an attempt to reflect again the possible consequences of the greatest difficulty, and to offer the groundwork for a way out of it. The *Sophist's* gigantomachia begins in a post-greatest-difficulty scenario. At the heart of the discussion there is, I shall argue, an attempt to rescue the power of conversation, and an examination of the crucial role *nous* plays in causality. In particular, the necessary conditions for *nous*, its nature, and its relation with forms. In contrast with the previous chapters, causality here starts as something detached from responsibility, making reference to a wider conception of acting and being affected. The passage will show, eventually, that the agency of *nous* is needed, and with it comes knowledge and responsibility. The chapter is divided in seven sections. The first one explains the place of the passage within the dialogue, and its connection with the other dialogues discussed here. The remaining sections offer an analysis and evaluation of the passage.

1. Context, and relation with *Parmenides*

It is unclear whether Plato's dialogues even offer an answer to the greatest difficulty or not. First, because the objection might pose no real threat, as some scholars suggest.[207] Others think that, if not the greatest difficulty alone, the objections in the *Parmenides* as a whole pose an unsolvable challenge that lead to Plato's abandonment of the theory of forms.[208] Recent scholarship has argued that answers to the *Parmenides*' objections can be found in the second half of that dialogue, the *Sophist*, the *Philebus*, the *Statesman*, and sometimes the *Timaeus*.[209] There is, however, huge disagreement about how to interpret these answers. In this chapter, I analyse one of these options, the one found in the second half of the *Sophist*, and proposed by Plato's Eleatic Stranger. The main passage is known as the gigantomachia (245e-249d).

[207] See Cornford (1939, 95-98), Forrester (1974), Lewis (1979), Mueller (1983).
[208] See Ryle (1966).
[209] See, for example, Prior (1985), Turnbull (1998, 36), Silverman (2002), Rickless (2006). For an introduction to the problem see Gill (2006).

This passage is in the middle section of the *Sophist*, where the Eleatic Stranger (ES) and Theaetetus examine various puzzles to show that being is as difficult to elucidate as not-being. The last of these puzzles is concerned with the question about *what sort* of beings there are, and discusses the views of two groups of predecessors that have been arguing this topic for a long time: materialists, and idealists. The ES compares the dispute with the mythical battle between the Olympic Gods and the Giants,[210] and cross-examines them by imagining a dialogue where Theaetetus plays the role of the predecessors' spokesman.

While the greatest difficulty starts as a challenge to Socrates' account of forms that threatens to destroy the power of conversation, the *Sophist's* gigantomachia is set up as a conflict where conversation has no power, and there is only an endless dispute. From there, the discussion builds slowly, and through a sophisticated cross-examination, the agreements necessary to reconstrue the road to philosophical conversation, which includes a discussion of the method, ethical requirements, and metaphysics of causation.

This passage has received significant attention in the scholarly debate. It is considered key to understanding Plato's late philosophy,[211] and its repercussion on Stoicism.[212] The text has proven, however, to be an interpretative challenge that has given rise to radically different readings. There is no consensus about what exactly are the purpose, structure of the arguments, and conclusions the reader is supposed to draw from it. One of the reasons which explains this is the lack of a detailed analysis of the structure of the passage, and its argumentation, often in favour of emphasising only one aspect of the many interconnected themes found in the passage.[213] In what follows, I try to offer a reading that captures all these elements by looking closely first to the structure of the passage.

2. Fiction within fiction

The gigantomachia comprises a series of conversations nested inside each other and it appears that this complex structure is no accident. I shall show that these conversations

[210] Compare the use of the myth in the *Sophist* with *Republic* 2, 378b-c, where Plato's Socrates bans this type of stories from *Kallipolis*. For an antecedent of the *Republic*'s concerns see Xenophanes Fr. B1.21. The giants should not be confused, then, with the Titans, the name used for the sons of Uranus and Earth, some of which ruled the world before the Olympian Gods (cf. *Theogony* 617ff.). Since late antiquity, people have mixed or confused both stories, and more recently Brown (1998, 181), and Vogt (2009, 142) refer to the Sons of the Earth as Titans. But in fact, as I have suggested, the decision to use Giants here might be a deliberate reference to the Titan Atlas in the *Phaedo* 99c3-4 (see Ch. 1, sec. 5).

[211] See Moravcsik (1962), Owen (1966), Keyt (1969), and Brown (1998).

[212] See Brunschwig (1988), Vogt (2009), and Sellars (2010).

[213] Some recent examples are Silverman (2002, 153-6), Miller (2004), Von Wolfgang (2004), Politis (2006), Leigh (2010), Crivelli (2011, 86-95), and Strawser (2012). More sensitive approaches to this aspect, although still too general, are those of Brown (1998), Notomi (1999), and McCabe (2000, 73-92).

constitute different levels of argumentation. Each level is a reflection on the next one, which adds, redirects, and modifies its understanding. In this way, the passage is simultaneously concerned with first order arguments about metaphysics and epistemology, and with second order arguments that reflect how and why people argue in the way they do, and reflecting on reflecting on argumentation.

I think the various levels of reflection do not make a separate point, but support the idea that, for Plato, a truly philosophical conversation about being should reflect on a wider set of elements than is normally assumed appropriate. Apart from the first order arguments, the reflection includes a consideration of the attitudes, qualities of the speakers, argumentative methods, epistemological assumptions, and metaphysical implications (cf. the argumentation of the passages discussed in Ch. 1-3). In their portrayal the ES includes, for example, a broad range of attitudes that the two groups have towards their own theories and those of their adversaries. This includes attitudes regarding their assertiveness, beliefs, desires, commitments, and emotions. They reveal why the different interlocutors believe, argue, and behave in the way they do. The ES also includes his own evaluation of the dispute, and the examination of their views. I shall defend the view that according to the gigantomachia, it is essential to reflect on all these elements in order to understand the logical progression of the discussion.

My thesis is that the different arguments in the passage, although doing different jobs, fit together in a single and general argumentative strategy, which reveals an *organic and systematic conception of philosophy*.[214] In it, metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and argumentation, are not only continuous but also fundamentally interdependent, and amalgamated. This robust connection between the different parts of philosophy is achieved by an iterated reflection that comprises the first and second order arguments. Moreover, this conception of philosophy leads to establishing a list of necessary conditions required for a proper philosophical account of being, and any other topic. These conditions include: a non-dogmatic approach, comprehensiveness, internal consistency, and explanatory power. The goal of the passage is, then, to propose a tentative answer to the question of what sorts of being there are by reflecting on the necessary conditions any philosophical account should meet, and how they impact the discussion about being.

[214] This anticipates the Stoic conception of philosophy (see Ch. 5, sec. 8), which is known for explicitly comparing the relation between philosophy and its parts with a living being (LS26B; DL7.39-41), and arguing that these parts are inseparable (LS26D; Sextus Empiricus, *Against the professors* 7.19; Posidonius fr. 88), and that they teach them together (again LS26B; DL7.39-41).

The gigantomachia has different parts, presents different dialogues, and involves various characters with different roles. The passage has three main parts, one in which (i) the dispute between the materialists and idealists is presented, another (ii) with the examination of each view, and a final section where (iii) some conclusions are reached. Each part is divided into subsections as can be seen below:

(i) Presentation of the dispute (*Sophist* 245e6-246c4)

(i.1) Introduction of the question (245e6-a3)

(i.2) Comparison with the gigantomachia (246a4-5)

(i.3) Description of the materialists (246a6-b5)

(i.4) Description of the idealists (246b6-c2)

(i.5) Portrayal of the conflict (246c2-4)

(ii) Examination of each side of the conflict (246c5-249b4)

(ii.1) General diagnostic (246c5-d1)

(ii.2) Examination of the materialists (246d1-248a3)

(ii.2.1) Hypothetical improvement of the materialists (246d1-e4)

(ii.2.2) Cross-examination of the improved materialists (246e5-247d7)

(ii.2.3) The ES's proposal to solve the puzzles and the agreement with the improved materialists (247d7-248a3)

(ii.3) Examination of the idealists (248a4-249b4)

(ii.3.1) Attempted agreement with the idealists on the grounds of (ii.2.3) (248a4-c9)

(ii.3.2) The idealist's conception of knowledge (248c10-e5)

(ii.3.3) The ES's objection to (ii.3.2) (248e6-249b4)

(ii.3.4) Rejection of theories that make *nous* disappear (249b5-c9)

(iii) Conclusions (249c10-d4)

The passage also establishes four main dialogues: (a) an indirect dialogue between Plato and the reader, (b) the conversation between ES and Theaetetus, (c) the dispute between materialists and idealists, and (d) the cross-examination of both sides of the dispute by the ES and Theaetetus. Each dialogue has different characteristics in term of how it is

presented, in what tone it is set, and how it relates to the other dialogues. Plato, of course, speaks to the reader entirely through the other dialogues, but just as he creates the whole dialogue, the ES and Theaetetus, inside their conversation, set out dialogues (c) and (d). This creates one dialogue nested inside another, like a set of matryoshka dolls. The passage, then, goes from dialogue (b) to (c) and (d), and ends back in (b).

There is an elaborate relation between the characters' presence or absence, their participation as speakers or as silent audience, and whether they talk in *propria persona* or represent someone else. Plato is present in dialogue (a), but absent in the other dialogues (like in the rest of his writings, but he could, after all, have included himself as speaker or in the audience of his fiction). The ES is present throughout all dialogue (b), leading the conversation, and almost always speaking in *propria persona*. Theaetetus is also present in all of dialogue (b), and is also active during the passage, mainly answering the ES's questions. He not only talks for himself but also as the materialists' and idealists' spokesperson, one at a time. In addition, Socrates, Theodorus, and Young Socrates are also present in the conversation (b), but only as silent witnesses. The materialists and idealists are not present with the ES, and Theaetetus in (b), but they are the leading characters in their own dispute (c), where they stand alone, fighting.[215] At least in a sense, however, the ES's thought experiment gives them some voice during dialogue (d). Finally, the reader of the dialogue is present, and silent witness throughout (a). As I shall argue below, her presence in the passage is alluded to in the text, and not merely a consequence of the fact that the *Sophist* is a written text. The reader, of course, remains absent from the rest of the dialogues.

The structure and elements of the passage raise two main questions. The first one is about its complexity and number of elements. Why does the gigantomachia have the structure it has? Why not something simpler and straightforward, with less elements? The second question is about the function and relation of its dialogues, and characters. What purpose does each dialogue and section of the passage fulfil? In which way is each dialogue, character, and element related to the others?

Many dialogues and other parts of the *Sophist* approach difficult philosophical puzzles without so much complication. Even in the immediately previous section of the *Sophist*, where monists and pluralists are examined, the structure is simpler, since these

[215] Note that both the ES and Theaetetus, despite considering the materialists and idealists as their predecessors, have met members of these groups. See *Sophist* 246b4-5, and 248b6-8.

groups of predecessors are not discussing with each other (*Sophist* 243d-245e). Here, in contrast, the ES describes a dispute in which he and Theaetetus will act not only as examiner and spokesman, but also as improvers, and mediators.[216] If the purpose of the passage were only to reject two mistaken ontologies, or even to fix some problems with the theory of forms, why does Plato seem to take the longest route to the answer?

There are three different ways we might explain this, none of which persuades me. One is to say that the complex structure and elements of the passage are only part of Plato's rhetorical style that aims to persuade the reader into philosophizing, and so dispensable for understanding the philosophical content. Secondly, we could interpret these elements merely as pedagogical devices on how to be better philosophers. A final option would be to say that these elements make insightful philosophical points, which, nevertheless, are unrelated to the main arguments of the passage. If any of these options, separately or together, gives an exhaustive explanation of the structure and elements of the passage, recent scholars would be justified in ignoring them for the purposes of getting the main philosophical content of the passage right. I think, however, that throughout the passage there is clear textual evidence to show that, independently of whether some of these explanations have some truth, each element fits all the others and contributes arguments to the main philosophical discussion. I deal with the evidence in the following sections of this chapter, but on top of that, there are some reasons to reject the alternatives mentioned above as exhaustive answers to the structural complexity of the passage.

My worry with the rhetorical reading is that the complexity of the passage does not seem to work in favour of persuasion. On the contrary, the text is so full of different features that the reader might end up more confused than persuaded. And if a first time reader is persuaded of something, it is more about avoiding unnecessary paraphernalia in a philosophical text than anything else. The pedagogical reading has a stronger case since it has some textual support (see *Sophist* 242c4-243d8). The examination of the predecessors takes the form of imaginary dialogues because otherwise it is difficult to follow their train of thought. Other elements, like the comparison with a myth and the colourful portrayal of the dispute might also be read as didactic resources to engage, highlight, reinforce the reader's memory, and to invite her to think for herself instead of just giving the right

[216] For the comparison between the two sections see Notomi (1999, 213-214). There are various places where Plato complicates the structure of the passage in terms of nesting one conversation in another. See, for example, *Crito* 50a-52d, *Meno* 82a-85c, *Republic* 358c-361e, and *Parmenides* 133a-135c (see Ch. 4, sec. 2). But there is no other place, as far as I am aware, where the main interlocutor talks about a discussion of absentees, proposes modifying their views, and imagine they are present to be able to discuss, and negotiate with both parts.

answer. All this may be right, but I suspect it might just be a side effect, and not the central reason for introducing those elements into the text.

Plato teaches philosophy by presenting us with philosophical conversations, not by patronising and treating the readers as children (which is the complaint the ES has against the predecessors in *Sophist* 242c8-243b1). Finally, although it is plausible that the dialogue addresses different philosophical topics at the same time, if they are completely unrelated that might compromise the unity, cohesion, and intelligibility of the passage. This would see the dialogue as an artificial blending of topics thrown at the reader.[217] In sum, I think that the rhetorical, and the unrelated philosophical explanations are wrong, and that the pedagogical explanation, although plausible, gives no full answer to the question. Even if this latter option is defensible, I think we can do better.

The *Sophist*, as I have said, is an attempt to imagine a scenario where conversation has no power, and leads to an endless dispute, but also one that presents the ES as a talented dialectician who will try to teach the necessary conditions for a philosophical conversation, and in doing so, he will engage in the topics and puzzles discussed in the greatest difficulty of the *Parmenides* (see Ch. 4, sec. 8). This leads to the question about the function and relation of dialogues and elements in the passage. It seems that each dialogue has a different function, and that each nested dialogue tries to contribute to the topic discussed on the dialogue in which it is nested. The following sections of the chapter will make this clear with dialogues (b) to (d), and their interrelation. But first I will say a few things about the dialogue between Plato and the reader (a), and its relation with the conversation between the ES and Theaetetus (b).

Since dialogue (a) is the widest, the reader's exegetical decisions have a determinant role and a direct impact on the understanding of the entire passage. Although this is no easy task due to Plato's indirectness, the gigantomachia makes some allusions exclusively directed to the reader, which shows that Plato is conscious about the reader's presence. That is the case of some inter-textual and historical references, as well as the invitation to reflect on argumentation and the philosophical method. Some phrases, for example, strongly recall passages in *Phaedo*, *Republic,* and *Parmenides*, although none of those dialogues feature the ES or Theaetetus.[218] The reader, however, might wonder if she is supposed to supply information from those dialogues, or to assume Plato is talking about the same things, or, as

[217] Owen (1966, 337-338), and Brown (1998, 195-197), for instance, do not find unity in the passage.
[218] Compare, for instance, *Sophist* 247a with *Phaedo* 100c-e*, Sophist* 249a with *Republic* 5, 477a, and *Sophist* 249a-d with *Parmenides* 133b4-133c1. Cf. also *Sophist* 247d8-e4 with *Phaedrus* 270c1-d7.

I take it, to critically continue discussions and offer alternative routes to answer philosophical problems.[219]

Although I am not going to elaborate on all these topics since many of them are common to all of Plato's dialogues, I want to highlight, however, one of the most fascinating aspects of the gigantomachia. This is the fact that the ES and Theaetetus mirror some aspects of what Plato does as author of the *Sophist*. In both cases, Plato, and the ES, are modelling fictional dialogues with philosophical purposes, and are imagining how a cross-examination of their predecessors would look. Plato might be reflecting here on his own practice, and the rationale behind it. If this suspicion is right, the gigantomachia is one of the few places where Plato reveals his own motivations and purposes in writing in dialogue form. Before jumping to any conclusion, however, let me analyse what exactly is the ES's motivation for what he is doing. This is given some pages before the gigantomachia, when he and Theaetetus first decide to analyse their predecessors' views:

> ES. —It seems to me that Parmenides, and everybody else who ever rushed into a judgement to determine how many and what sorts of beings there are, spoke to us carelessly.
>
> Th. —How?
>
> ES. —Each of them appears to me to describe some tale, as if we were children. […] It is difficult to say if any one of them spoke the truth in all these things or not, and it is wrongful to censure such famous and ancient men. But this can be declared without reproach.
>
> Th. —What?
>
> ES. —That they have overlooked and esteemed very little the many of us. For they argue without considering whether we follow them or are left behind, each of them drawing their own conclusion (*Sophist* 242c4-b1).[220]

[219] Similarly, the characterisation of the people in the dialogue invites us to reflect if they correspond or not, and to what extent, to historical figures or Plato's contemporaries. The answer has been widely discussed. I do not think that anyone is a source for Plato. Rather, I believe he is conducting a conscious reflection on some aspects of his predecessors' and contemporaries' accounts, methods, and attitudes. The set up of the dialogue invites us, for instance, to reflect about the role of fiction, indirectness, and whether it is possible or pertinent to identify Plato's own views. In any case, determining the references, and what exactly are the arguments at this level are tasks that Plato leaves open to the reader's decision, as the indeterminacy of these cross-references confirms. Scholars propose different candidates to fit the descriptions. For the materialists, Protagoras, Aristippus, Antisthenes and Democritus, or some of his extremist followers, have been proposed. Although some scholars agree that the passage depicts some of the views held by Democritus, various fragments prove that there are significant differences between the materialists and the atomists. The materialists of the *Sophist* say something similar to what Democritus states in his Frag. 9 (Sextus. *M* 7.136, 4-7). But, on the other side, what they say is incompatible with Democritus's views in Frags. 11, 125, DK 67A6 (Aristotle's *Met*. 1.4, 985b4), and Aristotle: *Met*. 4.4, 1009b7. Some believe there is no allusion to a specific thinker, like Cornford (1935, 231-2), Friedländer (1969, 159; 489, n.28), and McCabe (2000, 76-7). Boys-Stones (2010, 36-39) thinks the materialists represent a family of views where Heraclitus and Empedocles are included. The idealists are normally identified with earlier Platonic views—see Brown (1998, 194, n. 2)—or some extremist understanding of them, see Leigh (2010, 72). Some have identified them instead with Parmenides (Proclus, *In Parm*. II 149.), and the Pythagoreans (like Campbell 1867). In the case of the ES's proposal, some have suggested Hippocrates as the origin of the doctrine; see Diès (1963, 22-25), and Apelt (1891, 77).

The ES is not only criticising the metaphysics of their predecessors, but their entire way of doing philosophy and interacting with other people. The ancient wise men rushed their judgements, had a careless attitude, are condescending with their audience, and the truth of their tales is difficult to assess. In their accounts there might be jumps in the argumentation, false assumptions about the audience's capacities and their shared beliefs,[221] misunderstandings, and inaccuracies. People held them, however, in high esteem, so it would not be right to ignore what they said, both because of their influence and because they might be saying something true. The main problem is that their arguments go on without considering if their audience understands or agrees, which means that they might end up talking alone, being the only ones convinced of their own conclusions (this reminds us of the autobiographical passage and the complaints Socrates makes about natural inquirers in *Phaedo* 96a5-102a3; Ch. 1, sec. 3-6). But what kind of mistakes are they making? And are those mistakes connected? The answer lies in the gigantomachia. They are mistakes of different types, all interconnected, and unless we are able to overcome them, there will be no philosophical account of being properly speaking (*i.e.*, of forms and particulars).

The wise men constitute a double challenge. The ES should avoid falling into the same mistakes that they made, but at the same time he should take their contribution into account. To achieve this, the ES proposes a single solution to both problems. He declares it by saying to Theaetetus that "here we must make our investigation (μέθοδος) by inquiring as if they [i.e. the predecessors] were present" (*Sophist* 243d6-8). The idea of talking with the ancient predecessors seems a reference to Odysseus' descent (κατάβασις) to the underworld, in which, following Tiresias' advice, the hero talks with various illustrious dead people (*Odyssey* xi).[222] But the ES—instead of offering a sacrifice to make dead people talk—attracts the predecessors by questioning their accounts, and asking Theaetetus to answer on their behalf. The comparison with the myth is evident, but at the same time it is clear that the interlocutors are conscious of the fictional character of the exercise.

Imagining a dialogue with ancient thinkers is, then, neither a rhetorical dramatization nor a didactic measure, but a philosophical approach to overcome the limitations of

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[220] Cf. *Republic* 7.527e-528a.

[221] McCabe (2000, 65-66) suggests that when someone tells a story and treats the audience as children, she assumes an attitude on the part of the audience of suspension of critical disbelief, in particular, about ontology. She notes, that in contrast, the arguments made by the ES in what follows are highly critical.

[222] This can also be compared with *Apology* 40e-41c, the beginning of the *Republic*, the Cave analogy (see especially 516d4-7), and the Myth of Er in *Republic* 614-621.

previous ways of arguing.[223] It is presented as a valuable and fruitful way to do philosophy, one that replaces the mythological and monological approach. This reveals that for the ES, face-to-face and imaginary conversations are the proper way to do philosophy. Philosophy, then, requires full attention to each step of the argumentation (as well as good disposition, see *Sophist* 217c1-d3),[224] the willingness to clarify what has been said loosely, to reflect on your own assumptions and beliefs, and to be able to place oneself into the other's shoes to try to imagine their attitudes, and the conditions in which a rational agreement could be reached. This not by merely agreeing with the wise men, but by picturing what they, as speakers with a wide range of attitudes and qualities, would answer in a cross-examination. This, of course, also invites the reader to take a critical stance as the audience of the dialogue.[225]

Apart from the 'descent method' and all the innovations it implies, the ES's program uses some philosophical strategies well-known to Plato's readers: a question-based examination, production of aporia, proposing and testing of hypotheses, arguments and counterarguments, and the comparison with myths.[226] In a couple of pages, the discussion will include some reflections about argumentation, ethics, metaphysics, ontology, and epistemology. All this reinforces the feeling that the passage is like a miniature version of a standard Platonic dialogue. There are, however, some differences. Most notorious is the fact that the ES keeps taking part in the dialogue in *propria persona*, while Plato never does that. In this aspect, Plato seems closer to Theaetetus playing the role of a spokesman. Just as we would not identify Theaetetus' views with those of the predecessors, we cannot ascribe so easily the ES's views to Plato.[227]

Now, it is not just that Plato might be using the ES to present views he does not share, but that the setup of the dialogue compels the reader to consider the accounts from different

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[223] It has also been said to be a history of philosophy. This would be true if we make the clarification that Plato is doing, to use Cohen's & Keyt's (1992, 195, 199-200) distinction, not a 'retrospective interpretation,' but a sophisticated mode of 'prospective interpretation' of some ideas and practices of his predecessors.

[224] Cf. *Phaedrus* 276e-77a.

[225] Remember that Socrates, Theodorus, and Young Socrates are also silent witnesses of the conversation. Unlike the reader, they, in principle, could intervene in the discussion at any time, but they decide not to do so. Are they agreeing with all that has been said, or are they just waiting to see what happens? Agreement is a recurrent topic throughout the dialogue, and recalls the first line of the *Sophist* at 216a1.

[226] This makes clear that his problem with the predecessors is not that they use myths *per se*, but the way they use them. What changes is the way we are asked to think about the myths, from taking them at face value to reflecting about specific comparisons and similarities, but clearly distinguishing their fictional status. This also implies, of course, that there is no reason to exclude myths from the philosophical account. What changes is their purpose in the account.

[227] For this exegetical assumption, sometimes called the 'mouthpiece principle,' and its influence in current scholarship on Plato, see Wolfsdorf (2008, 19-25). For scholars assuming it see, as an example, Kraut (2006, Ch. 1), and in the *Sophist*, Leigh (2010, 64), and Bailey (2014, 260).

perspectives. This includes perspectives about being, but also perspectives about perspectives. The reader, for example, gets to know the materialists' and idealists' viewpoint only through the ES's own perspective, since these groups are absent, and the reader may wonder if the portrayal is fair. In addition, some of the perspectives are impersonations. Theaetetus, apart from talking in *propria persona*, pretends to be a materialist and an idealist for the moment, which in turn personify the giants and the Olympic gods.

3. Dispute is a powerless conversation

Let me turn now to the analysis of each part of the passage. At the beginning of the gigantomachia, the ES introduces the materialists and the idealists, explaining why he wants to include them in their inquiry, and why there is a dispute between them comparable with a mythological battle. The passage also informs us that the conversation between the materialists and idealists is a dispute "about being" (περὶ τῆς οὐσίας, at *Sophist* 246a5); meanwhile the ES and Theaetetus are discussing that "it is not easier to speak about what being is than of what not-being is" (τὸ ὂν τοῦ μὴ ὄντος οὐδὲν εὐπορώτερον εἰπεῖν ὅτι ποτ' ἔστιν, at *Sophist* 246a1-2).[228] The conversation of the latter is not *directly* about being, but about comparing the ease of *speaking* about two different topics (being and not-being). But in what sense could speaking about something be easy or difficult? The verb Plato uses is εἰπεῖν, whose sense could be very broad. The difficulties of speaking, then, can include not only the soundness of the arguments but also the attitudes and qualities of the speakers, their argumentative strategies, and other actions performed by language. Note how the ES makes the transition from the previous examination of predecessors to the materialists and idealists:

> ES. –Well then, we have not gone through all those who inquire minutely (διακριβολογουμένους) about what is and what is not, but let this be enough (ἱκανῶς ἐχέτω). Moreover, we have to look at those who speak in a different way, to know from all sources, that it is not easier to speak about what being is than speaking of what not-being is.
>
> Th. –Well, it is necessary, to conduct a search upon them (245e6-246a3).[229]

[228] In the gigantomachia the verb εἶναι has an existential value, although we must have in mind that it is a complete but further completable verb. It can move from 'x *esti*' to 'x *esti* F,' without any change in its meaning. See Brown (1986, 63-64) and (1998, 185), and Burnyeat (2003, 10-13). For a more recent discussion of this topic see Malcolm (2006), and Leigh (2008).

[229] The change from one group to the other is surprising. If they have not yet examined all those who inquire minutely, why should they move on to a less meticulous group? It seems a lack of thoroughness from the ES. The ἱκανῶς ἐχέτω at e7 is more an unexplained decision, than something that logically follows. Is the problem that there is not enough time to go through all the predecessors? If this is the case, it will be an indication of the provisional character of the conclusions and agreements reached. It also shows that the ES prefers a variety of

The use of διακριβολογουμένους at e6 makes an implicit judgement about the materialists and idealists. It excludes them from those who inquire meticulously.[230] The word expresses an attitude with both ethical and epistemic implications. It implies that being careful is good, and that inquiry is necessary for knowledge. But what exactly is the negation of 'inquiring minutely'? Is the problem with the topic of the inquiry, with the way the inquiry is done, or with both? Could it be that the new group does not inquire but just talk as if they already knew the truth, or is that they inquire but without proper care or detail, or are they both dogmatic and careless? In any case, it is also telling that the ES is willing to include them in the examination, since even a group with such limitation could contribute something to the discussion.

If the materialists and idealists are both dogmatic and careless, at least in comparison with the other predecessors, that could explain why they are in a violent discussion of cosmic proportions:

> ES. –And it seemed that between them, like the gigantomachia, there is a dispute against each other about being (*Sophist* 246a4-5).

And a bit later:

> There is always, Theaetetus, an immense battle going on between both of them about this (*Sophist* 246c2-3).

What does the comparison with the gigantomachia tell us? In the Greek myth, the giants, encouraged by their mother Earth, challenge the hegemony of Olympian deities. The powerful rebels attack, throwing rocks and trees towards Olympus. One of them, Alcyoneus, was immortal as long as he remained in his birthplace, which is why he seemed invincible. Along with this problem, an oracle told the gods that they would not defeat the giants unless a mortal aids them. At the end, the Olympians accomplish their victory with the help of Heracles, a demigod who dragged Alcyoneus away from his native land and killed him.[231]

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sources of information rather than exhaustiveness from few sources. The reason might be that his aim is to get a philosophical account of being, rather than a comprehensive history of thought on this topic.

[230] They are not real philosophers; see *Sophist* 249c10-d4, and this chapter's sec. 9. Cf. Ch. 1, sec. 8.1.

[231] References to the giants in Greek mythology have two stages. In Homer, giants are a savage and autochthonous race that is expelled or destroyed by the gods as a result of their insolence (*Odyssey* vii 58-60, 206; x 120). Hesiod considers them divine beings, sons of Uranus and Earth (*Theogony* 182-7, 675-715). Neither Homer nor Hesiod talks about a battle between the gods and the giants. In later accounts, the battle is presented as an imitation of the rebellion of the Titans, and it is said that Earth, unhappy with the fate of her former children, gave birth to the giants (Apoll. 1.6.1-3). They made an attack upon heaven, being armed with huge rocks and the trunks of trees (Ov. *Met*. 1.151ff). The reference to Alcyoneus, his immortality, the oracle, and the participation of Heracles can be found in Schol. *Ad Pind. Nem*. 1.100; Eratosth. *Catast*. 11; Pindar *Pyth.* 8.19. See also Euripides *Ion* 205-18, *Heracles* 177-80; Pindar *Nemean* 1.67-9. For a summary of the evidence and a brief comparison with similar myths, see March (1999, 169-70). For Plato's use of Hesiod see Boys-Stones & Haubold (2010).

In the *Sophist*, the ES uses this myth to compare the idealists with the gods and the materialists with the giants. The comparison runs throughout the description of both materialists and idealists (i.3-4, see below). The conflict is presented as a 'boundless battle' (ἄπλετος... μάχη, at *Sophist* 246c3), as if the battle were still in need of a decisive intervention. Although Plato does not talk about Heracles, the ES plays his role.[232] The description of the materialists is always more negative than that of the idealists, who are depicted in a friendlier way. In addition, the ES, to deal with the materialists, will need to drag them out of their original doctrine (in this case to improve them), as Heracles does with Alcyoneus to overcome him. But in contrast with the myth, the ES does not defeat the giants; he first, improves them, and then, reaches an agreement with them. Then he goes with the idealists and questions them with what was agreed with their adversaries. The ES's attitude is more like the one of a skilful diplomat rather than that of a crucial aid to any of the sides.[233] The comparison with the myth is here an argumentative strategy. It raises some expectations about where the discussion is going, but by not fitting perfectly it also makes us wonder which element of the myth is being compared and which one is not.

When the ES describes the materialists and idealists, the comparison with the myth helps to build the portrayal of their attitudes, and the ways they voice their views. The ES describes the materialists in the following way:

> ES. –Some of them [*i.e.*, the materialists] drag down to earth all from heaven and the invisible, embracing rocks and trees simply with their hands. For they, laying violent hands upon all, affirm confidently that only what produces contact and some touch exists, defining as identical body and being; and if others would say that <something> which has no body exists, they despise them absolutely and will not hear another word.
>
> Th. –In fact, you have spoken about terrible and clever men. I have also already met many of them (*Sophist* 246a6-b5).

Let me focus for now not on the content of their view but on the description of their personal qualities, and attitudes. The materialists are like the giants in their violent character. They both drag down (ἕλκουσι) all, laying violent hands (ἐφαπτόμενοι) upon things. When the ES describes the giants again in 246c9-d1, he says that they "drag everything down to body by force" (εἰς σῶμα πάντα ἑλκόντων βίᾳ).[234] This image suggests that the materialists, who deny the existence of forms, wish to challenge the established

[232] This idea is reinforced by the comparison of the ES with god, and his subsequent description as godlike. See the beginning of the *Sophist* at 216a-c. For a discussion of a 'philosophical' Heracles in Plato, see Loraux (1985), Morgan (2000, 246-7), and Jackson (1990).
[233] See also Morgan (2000, 247).
[234] Compare this with the violent reactions in *Republic* 1.327c and 5.473e6-474a4.

viewpoint, which seems to be idealism, just as in the myth, the giants are rebels against the established order imposed by Zeus.

The ES says that the materialists "affirm confidently" (διισχυρίζονται, *Sophist* 246a9-10), "determine" (ὁριζόμενοι, *Sophist* 246b1), "despise" (καταφρονοῦντες, *Sophist* 246b2), and ignore ("will not hear," οὐδὲν ἐθέλοντες … ἀκούειν, *Sophist* 246b3). This means that their attitudes towards what they think are pretty strong, maybe arbitrary (they just affirm and determine, not suggest, or argue for), and closed to different ideas. The materialists are also shameless (*Sophist* 247c4-5), and in need of improvement (*Sophist* 246d4-e3). In the *Theaetetus,* Socrates had already talked about similar people with Theaetetus. He describes them as "those who believe that no other thing exists except what they can hold tight in their hands" (*Th*. 155e4-5), and also portrays them in negative terms: they are stiff (σκληρός, *Th*. 155e7), obstinate (ἀντίτυπος, *Th*. 156a1) and rude (ἄμουσος, *Th*. 156a2).

In contrast, the idealists are portrayed in a better light. The ES expresses the way they argue and defend themselves from the materialists as follows:

> ES. –For that reason, those who disagree with them defend themselves very cautiously (εὐλαβῶς) from some place above and invisible, arguing vehemently (βιαζόμενοι) that genuine (ἀληθινὴν) being consists in some intelligible and incorporeal forms. And in their arguments, they break down into small pieces the bodies of their opponents and the truth spoken by them, calling it, instead of being, some moving becoming (*Sophist* 246b6-c2).

The idealists are not attacking, only defending themselves. They do not throw rocks, they argue, and are cautious, and "gentler" (ἡμερώτεροι, *Sophist* 246c9). The ES addresses them as "the best of all men" (ὦ πάντων ἄριστοι, *Sophist* 248b2), and he reveals that he knows what they think 'because of his acquaintance with them' (διὰ συνήθειαν, *Sophist* 248b8). But not everything is fine with them. They argue vehemently, even obstinately (see ἰσχυρίζηται at *Sophist* 249c7). This seems to lead them to dismiss their opponents too fast. The ES says that they break into pieces the truth spoken by the materialists, as if their obstinacy prevented them from seeing that their opponents have a good point. We should not forget that they, after all, fit the negative description of the predecessors (*Sophist* 242c4-b1). Thinking back again to the *Parmenides*, the gigantomachia presents a group of idealists that have not noticed the greatest difficulty and that do not seem as experienced and talented as the situation would require.

The text is loaded with ethical language, but what, if any, is its connection with the discussion about being? The answer is threefold. First, the descriptions suggest there are some ethical requirements for philosophical inquiries. If the parties do not have the appropriate personal qualities and attitudes, at least in a minimum amount, the search, in

this case about being, gets blocked, even if the interlocutors are partially right. If someone defends a view obstinately, no one would be able to disabuse her. But even if she is right about a specific point, but does not have the correct qualities and dispositions, she might not get the rest of the picture right. Second, it seems that metaphysics and epistemology could have an effect on one's qualities and attitudes. The dismissive attitude of the materialists towards those who think differently seems to be based on their beliefs about being. Finally, personal qualities and attitudes seem also to affect the method of inquiry and argumentation. If a person were not cautious and gentle, but careless, overconfident, or stiff that would definitely affect the quality of her method, and her arguments in different ways.

After these ethically loaded descriptions, the ES invites Theaetetus to start the descent method again, and make the predecessors speak:

> ES. –Well then, on both sides, let us get from each kind an explanation of the being they propose.
>
> Th. –How we will get it?
>
> ES. –Easier from those who put it in the forms, for they are gentler; difficult and even nearly impossible from those who drag everything by force into the body (*Sophist* 246c5-d1).

There is a worry that the method will not work with the materialists. The idealists, in turn, are easier to handle (which recalls *Sophist* 246a1-2). Given the description of the materialists, how to act as their spokesman? Should Theaetetus throw a rock at the ES's face? Perhaps that would take the comparison with the myth too far, but it seems that, to be faithful to their description, Theaetetus' job would only consist in affirming the same view very confidently over and over. Moreover, if the method consists in making the predecessors talk by asking them questions, it seems that the materialists would not listen, and then would not answer. Notice that the ES is reflecting on how moral character affects a metaphysical discussion. The reader, in turn, is also invited to reflect whether that is true or not, and to note that we are seeing the dispute through the lens of the ES, who is offering evaluative and descriptive claims.

Let us go back to the ES and Theaetetus. To solve the difficulty of cross-examining the materialists, the ES proposes:

> ES. –If it were somehow possible, the best option would be to make them better in deed; but if this is not possible, let us make it in the discourse, assuming they will be now more legitimately (νομιμώτερον) disposed to reply. For an agreement between better men is more valid than an agreement among the worse men. However, these are not who we care about, since we seek the truth.
>
> Th. –That is right.

> ES. –Request them, now that they have become better, to answer you, and speak as their interpreter (*Sophist* 246d4-e3).

The problem with the materialists is their attitude. They need to be willing to speak, and to listen, which refers back to *Sophist* 246b2-3, in order for the cross-examination to happen.[235] The ES is assigning a negative value to their attitude of despising others, and their voluntary deafness. But at the same time, he recognises that those qualities are an essential part of who the materialists are. If we go back to their portrayal in *Sophist* 248a4-249b4, it seems that their despising is a consequence of their beliefs about being. The materialists, however, are not deaf. It is only *if* someone states that an incorporeal exists, that the materialists will despise him and will not hear another word (see *Sophist* 246b1-3). The point is that the materialists think they should stop listening to people when they start talking about incorporeal things.

A metaphysical principle has here a methodological, and behavioural consequence. But why would ignoring the idealists be wrong? It gives the materialists a "field advantage," which reminds us of the myth. As long as the materialists stay true to their account, they will be as irrefutable as Alcyoneus was invincible in his native land. It does not seem that someone would let this advantage go very easily. Moreover, the materialists form a bloc of people who agree with each other on theory, method, and attitudes. But the impact of these three aspects on each other is not only one-way. Once someone has the materialist attitude, it builds an impenetrable wall against external influence, which guarantees the stability of the doctrine. With this, they seem able to form a full and exclusive community of inquiry. They have what the ES labels as "an agreement amongst the worse men." But even with this negative description, they are considered terrible and clever men (δεινός, *Sophist* 246b4), which is why they are so difficult or impossible to handle.[236]

If from the beginning one knows that the materialists would not listen to certain types of argument, trying to argue with them with those very arguments is just a waste of time. This is something the idealists do not realise since otherwise they would ignore them and do not even try to defend themselves. But the reason to consider the materialists worse men cannot just be that they do not listen, because they might have good reasons to behave in the way they do. Just like the ES's concluding remarks of the passage, one of which is exactly that philosophers should not listen at all to certain types of accounts (see *Sophist* 249c10-

[235] Remember that one of the requisites for a successful conversation in the *Parmenides* is that the dissenters need to be willing to listen. See Ch. 3, sec. 3.

[236] This reminds us of the dissenters who advance the ontological objection, but also those who are talented but unwilling to listen (see Ch. 3, sec. 3, and 8).

d4). There is no problem, then, with ignoring certain arguments, but it is crucial to have considered them first, and have good grounds to stop listening.

There are then, two possibilities. Assuming the materialists are wrong, their attitude would be obstructing any chance to correct their mistakes, which clearly is a disadvantage for their own interests, and a drawback of any account, even if it is irrefutable. But assuming they were right, why should they listen? The reason might be that even if we are right about something that does not mean we know that we know, or that we are right about everything else. Even if they are right in being materialists, from that it does not *necessarily* follow that we should be dismissive and aggressive with those who think otherwise; that is a jump the materialists are taking. But there is no real need to be rude. This is one of the reasons why the materialists are described as careless (see *Sophist* 242c4-b1), unable to inquire minutely (see 1.i; *Sophist* 246e6), and meet the general description of the predecessors: they are condescending and "have overlooked and esteemed very little ordinary people like us" (*Sophist* 243a6-b1). But the fact that someone is wrong or gives a mistaken argument is not enough reason to treat her in this way, or to presuppose she is worthless. The difference between the materialists and the ES's concluding remark is that the latter has already listened, and examined the others' accounts. He decides to stop listening after careful consideration. The materialists, in turn, decide not to listen from the beginning. They believe they are too smart, but in fact they are assuming an awful lot about their opponents. The ES's complaint is that intellectual arrogance is wrong (and negative for the inquiry), no matter if you are right or not about a specific point in the discussion (cf. Ch. 5, sec 8).

The materialists might think, nevertheless, that their moral character is irrelevant for the discussion. They might think that the discussion is *only* about being right on a specific point. But if we consider their dispute with the idealists from the third person perspective, like the ES and Theaetetus, the materialists' account of being seems far from satisfactory. In fact, it looks like a complete failure. The materialists are absolutely unable to settle the dispute. They are incapable of putting themselves in the idealists' shoes. They do not understand why these people believe differently, and their attempts to persuade them are ineffective. So their irrefutability comes with the price of being as persuasive as a conspiracy theorist. *Their conversation is powerless*.

From the third-person perspective, and with the full description of both sides, the dialogue includes in its reflection the two worldviews, the character of their exponents, and reasons to believe them. Only in that way is the reader in a position to understand why other

persons think differently. But this knowledge is not an accessory. It is an essential part of understanding a subject matter, since it allows you to explain why one account is right and others are wrong, it allows you to explain, teach, and learn from others; something the predecessors cannot do. The passage conveys, then, that the aim of a philosophical account of being is not *only* to get the right answer about a specific topic, but also to be able to understand the wider picture, where there is an ethical, and methodological component essential to what it is to understand or have an account of something. Only in this way, perhaps, can someone claim that she knows, which might be, indeed, the only way to escape from the greatest difficulty.

If the problem is with despising others, and that does not necessarily follow from the materialists' criterion of existence, then they might still be right about it. Even if the materialists are drawing the wrong conclusions, and are mistaken about other essential elements that prevent them from having a philosophical account of being, they might have something true to contribute. The lesson, then, is that one needs to consider all views even if they come from pedantic, arrogant, obstinate people, who may not even want to talk to us, since despite their attitude they might still be partially right. When the ES says that the materialists "will be now more legitimately disposed to reply," he means that the improvement of the materialists is not in their metaphysics, but in their attitude and argumentative method.

The discussion still needs to examine if what produces touch and sense is the right and only criterion of being. The problem with the intellectual arrogance of the original materialists is that it creates a worldview that from the inside seems perfectly rational, with internal cohesion, which allows them to agree with like-minded people, and gives them every reason to believe that the idealists are not worthy of any attention. They are unable, however, to put into question their own dogmas, to explain their view to other people apart from those who already agree with them, and to learn from others. But this makes philosophy impossible, since there is no genuine philosophy with unquestionable dogmas, without explanatory power, and blinded by arrogance (all these characteristics remind us of the contrast between natural inquiry and Socrates' method of hypothesis in the *Phaedo*, see Ch. 1, sec. 4, and 7).

4. Materialism

Consider now the metaphysical and epistemological claims of the materialists (see *Sophist* 246a10-b1). They make two claims: (1) that "only what produces contact and some

touch exists," and (2) a definition establishing body and being as identical. From these claims the materialist definition of body can be inferred. The argument can be constructed in the following way:

Materialism (M)

M1. Only what produces contact and touch exists (*Sophist* 246a10-b1).

M2. Body and being are identical (*Sophist* 246b1).

From this follows:

M3. Every body produces contact and some touch.

The account is a special kind of materialism: a corporealism (M2) based on contact and touch (M1). It considers that reality is made out of tangible individuated bodies (in contrast with, for instance, a materialism based on passive matter). M1 implies two thoughts: (Ma) the criterion for something to exist is to show it causes touch and contact, and (Mb) there is no other criterion (see μόνον at 246a10). In this way, if a materialist wishes to test if a candidate for existence *X* really exists, she drags the candidate and examines if it offers touch and contact. If it does not, it dismisses the candidate even if other senses or sources of information tell her a different story. M2 establishes a formal identity, but reveals nothing about the content of the concepts of body and being. It is the implicit claim M3, which makes clear that this type of materialism bases its concept of body on contact and touch.

The dialogue gives no explanation of why the materialists think what they think. A possible answer is that they believe the sense of touch is the only one which is infallible. This idea could depend on the immediate nature of this sense, in contrast, for instance, with the mediated nature of vision (if the ES has a similar view to the one discussed by Socrates in *Republic* 6; see Ch. 2). What is offered by other senses—they may think—is not always enough to know if something exists. This happens, for example, with visual illusions. This, however, does not mean touch needs to be the only criterion. But the materialists seem to apply Ockham's razor and discard other criteria since their criterion suffices. This does not necessarily mean that touch is their only source of information about the world. It just means it is the only trustworthy source to decide whether something exists or not.[237] It is an

[237] McCabe (2000, 85-89), in turn, makes materialism a problem about the recognition of other minds, as part of "the conditions for engaging in any kind of mental interchange." In her interpretation, the materialists do not recognize other minds in their ontology and that is the main reason they can despise others and refuse to talk. The ES's objection, then, could be construed as a charge of self-refutation (89). See also Silverman (2002, 155). As I have argued, however, the attitude of the materialists does not

empiricist requirement that arguments should be grounded on 'hard data,' or otherwise they sound just like fairy tales. The drawback of this position is that touch and contact requires proximity with the objects, and that is why the materialists need to drag down everything and grab it with their own hands.

In touch, the materialists may think, there is a special kind of relationship between subject and object. Plato uses the words προσβολή and ἐπαφή (*Sophist* 246a10), which involve an active and a passive role of the object and the perceiver. There is a mutual resistance in the act of touching, where the touched object also touches the subject. These words could be understood as "what we can affect" and "what can affect us," and the materialists' claims could be construed as a causal theory of perception.[238] In addition, the materialists could see touch and contact as a guarantee that the object is individuated. Perhaps the materialists just want to insist, with common sense on their side, that they will not accept the existence of something that has no palpable power, and, consequently, cannot affect or harm us directly.

Once the ES enhances the materialists, at least by word,[239] he and Theaetetus are able to cross-examine their metaphysical claims (*Sophist* 246e5-247d7). The ES does this by checking the scope of beings the materialists are able to accept in their ontology. First, the materialists accept the existence of mortal animals (246e5), surely because they can be touched and offer some contact. Then, they accept that animals are ensouled bodies (e7), perhaps because they can move, and thus, they accept the existence of souls (e9). However, one may wonder why the materialists accept the existence of souls if they are imperceptible. But they might be applying a principle of sufficient reason; they do not accept effects without causes. If an effect is perceived but its cause is not evident, they can conjecture that the cause exists but is hidden (see τιθέντες, *Sophist* 246e9). From that, however, here is no need to think that souls are incorporeal. Materialists could think souls cannot be seen because they are a part inside animals, and if dissected they will be perceptible. They can affirm that if souls exist, they must be corporeal (see *Sophist* 247b8).[240]

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necessarily follow from their materialism. In section 6, in addition, I argue that the doctrine of change that makes *nous* disappear in *Sophist* 249b5-c5, is not the same as the one represented by the materialists of the first part of the passage.

[238] See McCabe (1999, 203; 2000, 74). This theory would be causal, however, in a broader sense than in the previous passages, since there is no indication of a *Nous* Closure Principle.

[239] Brunschwig (1994, 120) calls this modification of the giants a 'verbally' and 'by hypothesis' improvement. The ES suggests the improvement in *Sophist* 246d4, and in 247c3-4, he says that the giants have become better men (βελτίους γεγόνασιν ἄνδρες). See also Diès (1963, 18-20).

[240] Brunschwig (1994, 120) instead, thinks that this is evidence that the materialists are accepting the existence of the invisible and intangible, although they are bodies. But the materialists have no need to

Following this, the ES asks two closely connected questions. First, whether souls can be just or unjust, and second whether the presence or absence of justice is what makes them just or unjust:

> ES. –And what? Do they not say that a soul is just or unjust, and intelligent or foolish?
>
> Th. –Yes certainly.
>
> ES. –And each soul becomes such[241] by the possession and presence (παρουσίᾳ) of justice, and the opposite by the contrary?
>
> Th. –They say so
>
> ES. –But no doubt they would say that something which is able to be present or away from a thing exists.[242]
>
> Th. –They certainly affirm it (*Sophist* 247a2-10).

According to what they agree, justice and souls are different things, and the first one has a productive power over the latter, producing qualities in them.[243] The materialists accept that souls are just or unjust *because* of the presence or absence of justice.[244] The materialists, however, could give a corporeal explanation to all this. As Moravcsik (1992, 59-60) notes, "one can use words like 'justice' and still have options among a variety of ontological interpretations." For example, he argues, one may think that justice is like a "virus" or that "the various manifestations of justice are part of one mass."[245] If they accept souls in their ontology even without direct contact with them, but as a conjecture applying the principle of sufficient reason, they might do the same with virtues. Someone trying to defend her materialism at any cost would do this, and would say, for example, that virtues come to the corporeal soul through food or drink, and depend on the soul's corporeal composition. So if dissecting souls were possible one would find tangible bits of virtues.

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accept the incorporeal realm here. From present imperceptibility does not necessarily follow an invisible and intangible nature.

[241] Here 'such' (τοιαύτην) refers to 'just' (δίκαιος) in 247a2.

[242] Cf. *Gorgias* 497e1-2.

[243] Notice that the ES asks for properties of the soul using adjectives: δίκαιος (just), ἄδικος (unjust), φρόνιμος (intelligent), and ἄφρων (foolish) at 247a2-3; but then, he uses nouns: δικαιοσύνη (justice) at 247a5, and φρόνησις (intelligence) at 247b1. This use of the language, Leigh (2010, 66, 75) notes, recalls the distinction made by the ES in 245c1-3, between possessing a property and talking about the property itself. When, discussing unity the ES says: "if being is not a whole because of having that property, but it is a whole by itself, it follows that being lacks of itself" (245c1-3).

[244] Fiona Leigh (2010, 75)—following Sedley's (1998) analysis of *Phaedo*—suggests that παρουσίᾳ at 247a5, is a causal dative. According to my reading of the *Phaedo*, however, it could also be that it is an instrumental dative (see Ch. 1, sec. 7-8). The real question here, as in the *Phaedo*, is who or what is responsible for the presence of a form in a particular.

[245] The language of the gigantomachia here, however, strongly recollects *Phaedo's* passages about forms. The becoming of the quality 'just' in the soul, by the presence of justice, can be compared with *Phaedo* 100c-e (see Ch. 1, sec. 7.2.1-2). But if the ES is trying to introduce the same forms here he is missing some of their characteristics, since we don't have all the elements of a complete argument for their existence. For example, here justice is not described as unqualified or above all other manifestations of justice, and without these specifications, the viral and mass interpretation of it will still be possible. See Moravcsik (1992, 71-74).

The discussion, however, does not go that way. When the ES asks, "do they say that any of these is visible and tangible or are they all invisible?" (*Sophist* 247b3-4), the materialists recognize that "hardly any of these things is in fact visible" (b5), but they think that souls possess certain kinds of bodies. They are, nevertheless, confused about virtues. They "are ashamed to agree that they [i.e. the virtues and vices] do not exist, or agree to affirm confidently that they are all bodies" (*Sophist* 247b9-c2). Here the attitudes play an important role again. The materialists now understand that to affirm something confidently or agree with a claim, you need good reasons to do it. The problem is that they are unsure about both options. The lack of convincing reasons to either side makes them feel ashamed. On the one hand, they are ashamed because they do not want to contradict what they have already said.[246] On the other, it seems they have doubts about the tangibility and general perceptibility of virtues.

Notice, however, that the belief that virtues cannot be bodies is not something that necessarily follows from the conversation.[247] The examination is not directly aiming to refute materialism but to find if materialists believe in something that contradicts their account. Perhaps the idea of corporeal virtues, although defensible, might go against the predecessors' common sense or intuitions. They may think that virtues are properties of bodies, and that means they cannot be bodies themselves. In this case, the ES's strategy might consist in showing that some people are materialist until someone makes them reflect about things like virtues, since then, they would realise that their criterion of existence cannot explain things they accept exist, but would not consider bodies.

The ES and Theaetetus are hoping that the idea of corporeal virtues will sound absurd to the materialists, and that they will be open to hearing other options, instead of trying to defend their views stubbornly. Of course, if the materialists do not share the intuition that virtues cannot be bodies, then the discussion will remain unsolved.

This means that the invincibility of the materialists does not only depend on their unwillingness to listen to others. Even were they to listen, if they do not share any of the intuitions of their critics, then they will not feel any shame in disagreeing and remaining

[246] This is a good sign if compared, for example, to the way Dionysodorus and Euthydemus discuss with Socrates in the *Euthydemus*.

[247] Even if they are ashamed to agree any of the options, from a dialectical point of view, the materialists are not defeated. There are a variety of responses that someone in their position could give. They can reply, for example, that they do not know how to answer, but that is no reason to abandon their whole theory of reality; they can say that the issue will be solved in the future with the progress of science (for example with the invention of tools to enhance our perception, like microscopes or telescopes); they may recognize a problem in their account, but ask for time to think about it; or they might reconsider some detail of their account before discarding their core theses.

materialists (see *Sophist* 247c3-7).[248] The structure of the passage and the dialogue form allow the reader to understand that the limitation of this (and perhaps any) criticism against materialism is that the effectiveness of many objections and counterexamples requires some shared beliefs or intuitions between the interlocutors. The ES may think that it is impossible to refute materialism once and for all, since some people could remain materialists if they are willing to accept all the consequences (something that also applies to the dissenters of the *Parmenides*). But it is possible to show their explanatory limitations, and to change the mind of those willing to listen, sharing certain beliefs, and open to the possibility of being mistaken. This is something a full-hearted follower of the materialist criterion will not do since even if they find themselves believing something different from what the criterion dictates, they will dismiss that belief. The ES, however, hopes that some materialists will allow some of these beliefs to override their criterion of existence, or at least that that they will stop thinking that it is the only trustworthy criterion.

If tangibility and perceptibility cannot always be a criterion for existence, the materialists may be open to change their criterion (Ma) or allow more (Mb), but not to withdraw their identification between bodies and being (M2). They could, for example, change their materialism to include all the senses as criteria. Alternatively, they could think that virtues are completely imperceptible to naked senses, but still bodies. Perhaps because of the tiny size of their particles we cannot feel them, but they offer contact, and thus have the same nature as every other body. The materialists could deny that imperceptibility implies incorporeality. Perhaps for this reason, the ES insists:

> Well, let us question them again; for if they would accept that something, even small, is incorporeal, it will be enough (*Sophist* 247c9-d1).

This time, however, instead of waiting for the materialists' agreement that there is something incorporeal, the ES continues his reasoning, as if they responded and agreed that, in fact, there are some bodiless beings (see *Sophist* 247d2-4). One may think that the ES is just avoiding the repetition of a question he has previously asked, but if so, why would the materialists answer differently this second time? In *Sophist* 247b9-c2, they are 'ashamed to agree' *either* that virtues exist *or* that they are bodies. It is a suspension of judgment; the materialists are in *aporia*. The ES gives no new argument to change their views here; he just pretends that they accept the existence of incorporeal beings.

The ES's proposal that virtues are incorporeal, then, is a tentative hypothesis (hence εἰ in *Sophist* 247e9). The introduction of the incorporeal realm is not by proof but by

[248] This is a new requisite for philosophical conversation not considered in the *Parmenides* passage.

suggesting that it is a tentative solution to the nature of virtues. The materialists, if they go along with this, have no strong commitment to the proposal. They will only carry the burden of proof if it gives a better explanation of virtues than materialism. That is, of course, no proof of the existence of incorporeal beings. In the best case, it is presented just as a better account of virtues than touch-based materialism.[249]

Assuming that incorporeal entities *might* exist, the criterion of existence must be modified to be open to this option. The ES asks the materialists for an answer:

> They must tell us now this: what is connatural to both these things [*i.e.* the incorporeal] and those which have body, that looking into them, they can say that both are. Then, perhaps, they will be at a loss for an answer (ἀπορεῖν). If something like this happens, look if they would also agree with our suggestion that being is as follows (*Sophist* 247d2-6).

The ES assumes the materialists will be in aporia *again* (ἀπορεῖν, *Sophist* 247d4), this time about the request for a criterion open to the existence of the incorporeal. The ES, then, takes this opportunity to give his *own* suggestion to solve the problem.[250] This new proposal, to be successful, must offer something "connatural" (συμφυές, in 247d3, reinforced by πεφυκός, in 247e1) to both the incorporeal (if it exists) and the corporeal. Touch failed to meet this requirement, at least for the ES's and the improved materialists' taste. The request, however, presupposes that every existing thing possesses a nature,[251] and that nature has an explanatory role that reveals what something really is, not in a specific time or condition but in all cases. It is what underlies change. If the criterion of existence can mark off a common natural note of each being this will guarantee in all cases that if something exists, it possesses the criterion, and vice versa.

5. The power of being

The ES proposes a criterion that incorporates the concerns of the materialists, and meets the requirement announced above. His attitude is of someone who has listened to the materialists and is seeking an agreement, rather than one who is trying to refute his adversaries. The ES recognises that the materialists have a point in their complaints against the idealists, but that it needs to be reformulated to account for things like virtues. The ES,

[249] Compare this with the method of hypothesis as described in the *Phaedo* 101d3-102a3 (see Ch. 1, sec. 7.2.3).
[250] That the ES is expressing his own ideas is clear by the use of ἡμῶν in 247d5 and λέγω in 247d8. See Leigh (2010).
[251] This does not mean that each thing's nature has no relation with other things. For many Platonic characters, the cosmos is an organic whole, which is more than a sum of its parts. See Harte (2002, 273) who remarks that in wholes "parts get their identity only in the context of the whole they compose."

then, redefines the criterion only in terms of power, avoiding the reference to the senses, bodies, and incorporeal beings:[252]

> ES.–I suggest that that which possesses [any] power (δύναμις) of any kind, either to produce (τὸ ποιεῖν) anything of any nature or to be affected (τὸ παθεῖν) even in the least degree by the slightest thing, even if only once, all this really is. For I set up as a mark of [to determine] being, that it is nothing else but power (*Sophist* 247d8-e4; see also 248c4-5).[253]

Theaetetus, as the materialists' spokesman, agrees with the proposal: "since they do not have in the present circumstances something better to say, they accept that" (*Sophist* 247e5-6). This means that the materialists, who were silent through the last part of the conversation, reappear to agree with the ES. The proposal, however, is held as a provisional agreement, open to the discovery of a better answer (*Sophist* 247e7-8a2). The ES does not offer any explanation about why this power to produce or be affected is something shared by all beings. In the *Republic,* however, this power was linked to the sun's light, and truth (see *Republic* 508a4-8, Ch. 2, sec. 4).

The ES's proposal means no commitment to the existence of the incorporeal. It just establishes a criterion open to the possibility of any sort of entities. Whether some body or some incorporeal exists will be decided by whether it possesses some power or not. People who are only certain about the existence of bodies, then, can accept the proposal. The materialists take the *decision* to agree with the ES's proposal *because* it suits their concerns best, and it implies no commitment with the existence of the incorporeal, only a commitment to the possibility of its existence.[254] The materialists and the ES could disagree about the existence of the incorporeal, and nevertheless agree that any existing being has a power to produce or to be affected. The advantage of the proposal is that it can include virtues in the ontology, even if no one has yet a definitive argument whether they are incorporeal or not.

In accordance with the request at *Sophist* 247d3, the proposal assumes that every existing thing possesses nature (see 247d3), what possesses nature has some power, and that

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[252] This proposal seems to have had an enormous impact on later Academics and Hellenistic philosophers; compare, for instance, Cicero's *Academica* I 19-23, Lucretius I.419-44 (LS 5B), and DL 7.134 (SVF 2.299; LS44B). See Ch. 5, sec. 2.

[253] The last sentence is ambiguous (τίθεμαι γὰρ ὅρον [ὁρίζειν] τὰ ὄντα ὡς ἔστιν οὐκ ἄλλο τι πλὴν δύναμις). Is not clear if the subject of ἔστιν is ὅρον or τὰ ὄντα. The construction of the sentence is discussed in Cornford (1935, 234), Brown (1986, 192-3), and Robinson (1999, 150).

[254] I think the materialists accept power as the criterion of existence not because it follows as the conclusion of an argument, but more as a decision in the dialectic motivated by the advantages of the proposal to avoid the problems of the former criterion. Even if it were reconstructed as an inference, the only conclusion possible would be that *if* virtues are incorporeal, then the definition to determine being is power. The materialists are only compelled to accept that *if* there is no other form to explain virtues, then the ES is right.

nature is manifest through its powers.[255] These three claims are ontological,[256] but the last one is also epistemological (the only way to know about nature is by looking at the powers of things).[257] The ES gives no further explanation of the connection between δύναμις and φύσις here, but this recalls *Phaedrus* 270c1-d7:

> Socrates. –Now, do you think that it is possible to understand any estimable account of souls without *the account of the nature of the whole man*?
>
> Phaedrus. –If, at any rate Hippocrates the Asclepiad must be trusted, without this method it is not possible even about bodies.
>
> S. –That is right, my friend; however, in addition to Hippocrates' view, we need to examine closely if our reason agrees.
>
> Ph. –I say so too.
>
> S. –Therefore, consider what Hippocrates and true reason about nature can say. Thus, is it not necessary, about the nature of anything, to have in mind: first, whether it is simple or multiform with respect to what we want to be skilful at and make others skilful too, and then, if it is simple, inquire about *its power,*

[255] See Souilhé (1919, 36), and Cornford (1935, 235).

[256] Not only linguistic or formal as Moravcsik and Owen thought. Moravcsik (1962, 37), advocates a reading in which the criterion is extremely broad: "anything which can be a subject or a predicate in a genuine assertion exists." Owen (1966, 337) has a similar interpretation. He says about the proposal that "The requirement to be met if X is to be said to do something to Y, or to have something done to it by Y, seems to come to no more than this: there should be statements in which the name of X stands as subject to some active or passive verb, and the name of Y stands accordingly as object or the instrumental case; and that these statements should be at some time (but not timelessly) true." These readings were challenged by Brown (1998, 191), who gives a counterexample to this kind of interpretations: "Not-being is pondered by Theaetetus." The statement, thinks Brown, satisfies Moravcsik's and Owen's readings of the proposal, but, if it does, then even the not-being would be accepted as an existent. But, of course, this would collapse the proposal as a criterion of existence. Brown's counterexample fails, though. The subject is either senseless or an ellipsis for "the topic of not-being." If the first one is the case, the sentence will not count as a true statement, and if is an ellipsis, then it will be a true statement but with an existing subject. Indeed, the topic of not-being is real (I thank MM McCabe for showing me this point). It is right, I think, that all true statements satisfy the ES's proposal, but that is trivial. The formal readings assume that truth-values are known for all these statements, and that is exactly what is in dispute between materialists and idealists since the beginning. The truth of the sentence depends on the concept of nature. If something has no nature it cannot be used as a genuine subject or predicate. What is important about the ES's proposal is the ontological relation with the concept of nature. Without nature, meaning and truth would be impossible. Moreover, although all true statements satisfy the ES's proposal, that does not mean that the syntactical structure of the sentence always informs us which part is affected and which one is acting. Besides, there are some verbs that imply a two-way relationship between the subject and the predicate. For example, in 'Hector fights Achilles', the verb implies not only that Hector is acting but also Achilles. Other examples are the verbs 'to discuss,' or 'to dance.' In other verbs, it is not clear who is acting and who is receiving the action. For example: 'to contemplate,' 'to see,' or 'to know.' In section 6, I suggest that 'to know' implies a complex relationship, where the object being known acts on the subject, and the subject not only is affected but also acts in himself, and other things.

[257] This does not imply that power is identical with being. the ES's proposal does not state that power is the *only* common natural feature of all things, or that power is identical with existence, like the giants do with contact and touch in *Sophist* 246a7-b5. If the ES had meant that, the search for being would finish here. Nevertheless—as Cornford (1935, 239) remarks—, in 249d-ff. this question is put by the ES as still unanswered. For these reasons, I agree with Cornford's translation of ὅρον as 'mark' in 247d3. Power is not an exhaustive definition of being, but just a criterion of inclusion. To emphasize this point, Cornford (1935, 238, n.3) stresses the difference between λόγος and ὅρον. He says that the first one is an "explicit statement of a complex content or meaning," whereas the other means definition only in an extensional sense, it is "to draw a boundary-line marking off something from other things" (cf. *Gorgias* 470b9-10). See, however, Leigh (2010, 81-83). This is, in any case, not enough reason to think that the ES simply discards the proposal at the end of the passage.

> *what natural ability* (πέφυκεν) *to be active* (τὸ δρᾶν) *it has, or to be acted upon by something and by what,* and if it has many forms, count them, and then see in each case, as we did in the case of the unity, what it produces and how it acts, and how it is affected and by what?

In this passage Socrates offers some new ways of thinking about ideas already present in ancient medicine:[258] a holistic approach to understanding reality,[259] and a naturalistic account of causation.[260] The difference is that Socrates proposes this method not to find the explanation of a physical disease, or to understand only the body, but to give an account of what things are as a whole. The medical approach is tested by true reason (ὁ ἀληθὴς λόγος, *Phaedr.* 270c10), and used in a wider context; in *Phaedrus* to give an account of men as a composite of soul and body, and in the *Sophist* to give an account of what marks off being.[261] In the *Phaedrus* the method presents δύναμις as the key to understanding nature. From the simplest reality to the most complex, this method can be used to give an account of them. It can be expressed in the following way:

Holistic-analytic method (HA)

To understand *x*:

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[258] The author of the Hippocratic treatise *The Sacred Disease* (18.6-7), for example, states: "each [disease] has *its own nature and power* (φύσιν δὲ ἔχειν ἕκαστον καὶ δύναμιν ἐφ᾽ἑωυτοῦ), and none is impossible to discover or beyond therapy." The author attributes a nature and power to all diseases, and launches a research agenda based on the assumption that the nature of diseases can be discovered (see also *The Sacred Disease* 1.1-5, 18.1-4, and 18.16-20). Alcmaeon of Croton (DK24 B4, and A5) might have influenced this treatise but that depends on the dating of this author; see Huffman (2008). Diès (1963, 22-25), following Apelt (1891, 77), believes that *power* is a definition of being that can be attributed to Hippocrates. This attribution is, however, extremely problematic. There is no text to attribute to Hippocratic medicine the *general* version of power as a criterion of all what exists. Besides, of course, there is the problem that none of the treatises of the *Corpus Hippocraticum* are securely ascribable to Hippocrates himself, and the ideas contained in the treatises have disagreements with each other. For the 'Hippocratic question' see Lloyd (1975), and Smith (1979). What can be said is that Plato is reflecting on some ideas that can be found in some medical treatises and even in the very beginning of medicine as a rational enterprise, but using them for different aims and with a wider scope. Plato seems to be consciously elaborating this previous material, even with a little sarcasm. It is well known that some medics took what was believed to be Hippocrates' words as unquestionable dogmas, which explains why Socrates insists on examining his opinions carefully and rationally, instead of taking them as an authority. I already suggested that Plato extrapolates other disciplines' frameworks for philosophical profit. See Ch. 1, sec. 6.

[259] See, for example, *Epidemiae* I, 3.10, 1-16, which makes clear that to make a judgment about any disease, doctors should attend to all the elements involved, and their respective nature: "with regard to disease, the circumstances from which we form a diagnosis of them are, by *studying the common nature of all*, and the specific nature of each thing: from the disease, the patient, and the applications."

[260] Medicine emerges as the result of scepticism about religious causal/responsibility accounts of disease. See Hankinson (1998, 52). Regardless of whether the diseases have a divine origin or not, their causal explanations can be analysed in a naturalistic way. They do not appear by chance or by a capricious decision of gods. Plato's portraits of doctors and medicine always include this naturalism, which is clearly recognized in *Gorgias* 465a3-5. In other words, doctors understand the causes and explanation of disease, because they study nature. In *Laws* 4, 720d3, the Athenian explains that the freeborn doctors "inquire from the origin and according to nature." See also *Laws* 4, 720b2-6; In *Laws* 9, 857d3-4, doctors inquire into "the whole nature of bodies."

[261] Moreover, the Hippocratic treatises built no theoretical system with these notions beyond medical therapy. The term δύναμις occurs only sporadically and without any general pretension through the medical literature. See Plamböck (1964, 65).

a) Consider *x* as a whole.[262]
b) Identify if its nature is [1] simple, or [2] composite.
c) If [1], then [1.1] inquire about its power [i] to produce/to be active, or [ii] to be affected.
d) If [2], then [2.1] count the parts, and then [2.2] follow step (b) and (c) for each case.

The inquiry is an exhaustive analysis that ends in the scrutiny of each power that a thing has. Phaedrus and Socrates postulate this method as a way to find an estimable account for either perceptible (bodies) or imperceptible (souls) entities. It also makes a distinction between simple and composite beings, but all have in common the possession of a power. As in the *Sophist*, the *Phaedrus* presents *dunamis* as a disjunction. This is a central aspect of the proposal in both dialogues. It establishes two basic options for beings: what produces-acts (τὸ ποιεῖν, in the *Sophist*, and πέφυκεν, τὸ δρᾶν in *Phaedrus*) and what is affected (τὸ παθεῖν).

The specific feature of the *Sophist* is that these two options for beings are used to characterize all that exists. Read as an inclusive disjunction this can be analysed as follows.

The ES's proposal (P)

P1. Something possesses power if and only if it either acts or is affected (247d8-e3).

P2. Every being has power (247d8e3-4).

This implies:

P3. There is no being that does not act nor is affected (Equiv. 1).

P4. Every being acts or is affected (Equiv. P3; 247d8-e3).

In order to exist, a thing must be able to interact in some causal process, as an agent, a patient, or both. This does not mean that there are in fact beings in each of the three categories. The proposal only says that there could exist entities in any of these categories, regardless of their having body or not. What is highlighted, though, is the impossibility of beings that are both inactive and unaffected (P3).

The ES also gives a list of qualifications to the central claim of the proposal. A thing will exist regardless of three main factors: Pa) the intensity of the power, Pb) the scope of

[262] Cf. *Charmides* 156b4-c6, and *Laws* 10, 903c5-d1. The medical account of wholes is not only a sum of parts, but involves also a structural relation between them. See *Phaedrus* 270d6-7, where Socrates remarks that the analysis includes not only counting the different parts, but also studying "*what it produces and how it acts, and how it is affected* and by what?" For an analysis of whole and parts in Plato, although without direct reference to these passages, see Harte (2002).

application, and Pc) the number of times it happens. This means that, although we can distinguish many degrees of power, anything within these qualifications will equally count as an existent. Something with an intense power, with a wide scope and with the capacity to interact all the time will not be more existent than something with a weak power, a narrow application and that only interacts once. The proposal is just a criterion of inclusion and establishes no hierarchy of importance or intensity; it is what I call an egalitarian ontology, where all beings are equal and there are no degrees of existence.

6. With friends (of the forms) like these, who needs enemies?

Consider now the metaphysical and epistemological claims of the idealists. From *Sophist* 246b6-c2 we know that they think that "genuine being consists in some intelligible and incorporeal forms," and they call bodies, "instead of being, some moving becoming." After the discussion with the materialists, the ES gets more details about the idealists' account:

> ES. –I suppose, you distinguish between becoming and being and speak of them as separate, right?
>
> Th. [*as spokesman of the idealists*] –Yes.
>
> ES. –And you say that we share (κοινωνεῖν) by the body through sensation with becoming, and by soul, through reasoning, with the real being, which always stays the same in the same manner, while becoming is different at different times.[263]
>
> Th. –In fact we say so (*Sophist* 248a7-b1).

The idealists think that there are two completely different and separated sorts of entities: forms, and becoming. These two sorts are degrees of being.[264] Forms are in a higher rank, and they are called genuine (246b8), real (248a11), and absolute being (248e7-8), but sometimes simply being (τὸ ὄν or οὐσία).[265] To avoid confusion I shall call this degree always "genuine being" [GB]. Becoming, on the other hand, is a qualified, lower, and derivative degree, which is never simply called being, but always becoming. Each degree possesses characteristics that distinguish it from the other. Forms are intelligible,

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[263] Cf. *Th.* 184c6-9.

[264] The traditional reading equates γένεσις with not-being. See, for instance, Keyt (1969). But the idealists never say so. The ES only reports that the idealists call bodies, instead of being, some moving becoming (γένεσιν ἀντ' οὐσίας φερομένην τινὰ, 246c1-2). The word φερομένην implies motion, but also that something is carried. I think that becoming is not being in an absolute sense, but derives from or partakes in it. In this way, becoming is a derivative or lower degree, but it is also being.

[265] Making in this last case a metaphor from the genus to the species (to call a species not by its proper name but by the name of its genus; see Aristotle's *Poetics* 1457b9-11). If the genus is 'being' and the two degrees (species) are 'forms' and 'becoming,' what happens in the passage is that the idealists call the 'forms' with the name of the genus, *i.e.,* 'being.' The reason they use such a metaphor could be to emphasize that forms are the higher degree of being, and, perhaps, to make clear that the final explanation of becoming lies in the forms.

incorporeal, and stay the same, whereas becoming is sensible, corporeal, and changes over time. The idealists' metaphysics, then, is formed by the following claims:

Idealism (I)

I1. If something is a GB it is a form, otherwise it is becoming.

I2. Forms are intelligible and incorporeal.

I3. GB and becoming are separate.

I4. Human beings share with both becoming, and with GB.

I5. Every GB stays always the same in the same manner.

I6. Becoming is different at different times.

The account shows a tension between separation and sharing: GB and becoming are separate yet human beings share with both. Notice how separation here seems to imply like in the *Parmenides*, that forms are not in us (see Ch. 3, sec. 4; cf. Ch. 1, sec. 8.2). If I1 and I3 are the case, I4 seems inconsistent. The ES's cross-examination will start exactly with this point, asking for an explanation of the notion of sharing: "But, best of all men, what then shall we say you mean by this sharing in both?" (248b2-3).[266] He then asks if it can be explained by what has been said about power; if sharing is "an affection or a product of some power generated from intercourse between each other" (248b5-6).[267] A positive answer would mean that sharing is either some kind of power, or the outcome of some interaction. This is a crucial question at the end of the passage since this is going to be one of the implicit metaphysical conclusions. But at this point, the ES explains that the idealists reject the proposal. They accept the existence of powers, but "they say that becoming shares in the power of producing and being affected, but the power of neither of these fits with being [i.e. GB]." (248c7-9). It follows, then, that no incorporeal or intelligible being shares with power. Therefore, power cannot explain how humans share in GB, and consequently cannot solve the tension in their account nor count as the criterion of existence. This thesis differentiates the idealists from the theory of forms as argued in the *Republic*, where knowledge is clearly described as a kind of power (see *Republic* 477c1-d9). It also contrasts with the section of the sun analogy that stresses the good's agency (see Ch. 2, sec. 6), and with the active capacity of *nous* in the *Phaedo* (see Ch. 1, sec. 7.2).

[266] There is a discussion about the connection of κοινωνεῖν with the combination of forms in *Sophist* 251e-ff. See Cornford (1935, 239, n.1), and McCabe (2000, 85, n.89). See also *Phaedo* 100d6, *Republic* 5.476a7, *Parmenides* 152a2, and *Gorgias* 507e-508a.

[267] This is something that would establish a reciprocal relation between forms and their participants, see Ch. 3, sec. 4.

The idealists hold the contradictory position to the ES's proposal. They affirm:

I7. Some being does not act nor is affected (cf. P3-4).

Even if humans manage to share[268] in the two realms of being because of their composite nature, the idealists would have to explain how humans constitute a unified organism. Moreover, even if they think that humans are their souls, and GB has the description above (I1), it is not clear what kind of sharing souls would have of it. The only thing they declared was that souls are in connection with GB "through reasoning" (διὰ λογισμοῦ, *Sophist* 248a11; cf. Ch. 1, and 3, sec. 6). The ES will press that point and ask the idealists whether knowing (τὸ γιγνώσκειν) and being known (τὸ γιγνωσκόμενον) are an action, an affection, or both (ποίημα ἢ πάθος ἢ ἀμφότερον, *Sophist* 248d4-5). The question allows many responses,[269] but the idealists accept none of them. In support of their view, they argue:

> If knowing is to produce something, being known is necessarily in turn to be affected. Being, under this account, since it is known by reason, as far as it is known, changes because it is affected, which we say cannot happen to what is at rest [*i.e*. being] (*Sophist* 248d10-e4).[270]

This answer rejects the claim that knowing is an action. To answer the ES's question it takes for granted two ideas. First, it takes it as absurd to think that knowing is an affection, since the idealists completely ignore this possibility. They might think knowledge is not something that happens without the active intervention of the subject. If knowing were passive, acquiring knowledge will be easy, without effort, and will not depend on us. But this is counterfactual—they may think—at least for intellectual knowledge. Second, they assume that explaining knowledge as power implies that there is a causal relationship between knowing and being known: if one of them is an action, the other necessarily is an affection (see *Sophist* 248d10-e1). The argument can be understood in the following way:[271]

Idealism on knowledge (IK)

IK1. Every GB stays always the same in the same manner. (=I5; see *Sophist* 248e4, 248a11-12).

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[268] If, as seems to be accepted in *Sophist* 247a2-8, when *X* shares in *Y*, then *X* has the character of *Y*.
[269] This allows up to nine options: (a) both are productive actions; (b) knowing (K) is a productive action, being known (BK) an affection; (c) K is a productive action, BK is both an action and an affection; (d) BK is a productive action, K is an affection; (e) both are affections; (f) K is an affection, BK is both; (g) BK is a productive action, K is both; (h) BK is an affection, K is both; (i) both are productive actions and affections. Cf. Brown's (1998, 196) list of five alternatives.
[270] Not everybody agrees this passage belongs to the idealists. See Mackenzie (1986, 142-4).
[271] Cf. Brown (1998, 197), Mackenzie (1986, 143-4), Keyt (1969, 2), and von Wolfgang (2004, 311).

IK2. If knowing is a productive action, then being known is to be affected (248d10-e1).

IK3. GB is known (246b7-8, 248e2).

IK4. To be affected is to be changed (248e3-4).

IK5. Knowing is an action (Supp.; 248d10-e1).

IK6. Being known is to be affected (2, 5 *MPP*).

IK7. GB is affected (3, 6 *HS*).

IK8. GB is changed (4, 7 *HS*).

IK9. But IK1 and IK8 cannot be both true.

IK10. Therefore, it is not the case that IK5.

The idealists accept premises (IK1-4), and suppose (IK5) to show that from its acceptance can be deduced its negation (IK10). It is important to stress, however, that the idealists give no positive explanation of what knowledge is, nor a full justification for their thesis that GB does not fit with the ES's proposal (which was stated in 248c7-9). The question asked at *Sophist* 248b2-3, about the communication between humans and GB, remains unanswered. The challenge, we may think, is that this version of idealism does not hold together, like Anaxagoras' proposal in the *Phaedo* (see Ch. 1, sec. 5). Moreover, the ES sees in IK a remedy that is worse than the problem it tries to solve. He interrupts the descent method and asks Theaetetus not as spokesperson of the idealists but in his own mind:

> ES.—What, by Zeus? Shall we be so easily persuaded (πεισθησόμεθα) that change, life, soul, and intelligence (φρόνησις) are truly not present in absolute being, and that it neither lives nor thinks, but solemn and pure, has no *nous*, is changeless and stands still?
>
> Th.—We would assent indeed to a terrible account, Stranger (*Sophist* 248e6-249a3).

This opens again the tensions found in *Phaedo* and *Republic* between the description of forms as changeless, and the puzzle about *nous*'s agency. The reason to reject IK is—the ES warns—that it will concede that *nous* is not present in GB, here called absolute being (τὸ παντελῶς ὄν).[272] The ES points out an implication chain between change and the other elements: Change→Life→Soul→Intelligence→ *Nous*.

[272] That τὸ παντελῶς ὄν is the same as GB is clear because it is described twice as changeless and at a standstill (249a2, and 10), which is the main characteristic of GB. See Politis (2006, 150).

According to this, without change, life is impossible, and without it, there is no *nous*. This can be understood as follows:

The ES's counterargument (CA)

CA1. If IK1, then there is no life, soul, intelligence, or *nous* in GB (*Sophist* 248e6-249a3).

CA2. But there is change, life, soul, intelligence, and *nous* in GB (*Sophist* 249a4-b4).

CA3. Therefore, ¬IK1 (*MTT* 1, 2).[273]

The argument goes against one of the fundamental claims of idealism (I5=IK1). The strength of the argument lies in premise CA2. The ES and Theaetetus agree that denying it seems "irrational" (249b1). Taking this for granted, the ES determines that it must be conceded that change and what implies change is present in GB (see *Sophist* 249a4-b4). If this is true, changelessness is not a mark of all GBs, and cannot be a criterion of distinction between them and becoming. The argument, however, is not collapsing the distinction. It just implies that the realm of GB is composed not only of changeless forms, but also of *nous* (which implies intelligence, soul, and thus, change), and perhaps some forms that have some type of change. For instance, later in the *Sophist*, it is said that the form of change seems to necessarily be changing (see *Sophist* 250a8-250b6). What is clear is that this argument never implies that all forms change.

If CA is right, then the conclusion IK10 does not follow. IK was an argument designed to explain the idealists' rejection of power as an explanation of how the soul shares with GB (see *Sophist* 248d4-5). Since IK is ineffective, that leaves open the door to explain the human soul's sharing in GB as some kind of power. But if the soul has a power relation with the other GBs that means forms have some power either to act on or to be affected by the soul (which goes against I6). This would give support to the improved materialists and the ES in claiming that power is a criterion of existence,[274] since power will be connatural to both GB and becoming. Moreover, it means that GB and becoming are connected through souls, and that in this way it is possible for one side to have power over the other. This means that, although the distinction between GB and becoming survives, it

[273] See also *Sophist* 249c11-d1. Against this reading see Diès (1963, 39-88). Cf. von Wolfgang (2004, 312).

[274] Although the ES will not talk again about power in the gigantomachia, the concept is used afterwards in *Sophist* 251e7-9, which supports the idea that it was accepted by both the materialists and the idealists. See Leigh (2009).

is modified from a question of degrees of being to one of sorts of being which can participate in causal processes. Instead of degrees where one is more being than the other, there are two sorts equal in terms of being although different in other respects. This can be read as the *Sophist's* solution to the epistemological objection of the greatest difficulty.

The text, however, gives no explicit answer to what are the specifics of the power relation between the soul and the forms. Is it implied that knowing is a productive action? If so, it follows that forms are changed by being known. Some scholars have thought so,[275] but that conclusion does not follow from any of the agreed premises nor it is stated anywhere in the text (see IK9). Moreover, it seems to be rejected at *Sophist* 249b8-10. Another option is, in contrast, to think that forms are unchangeable, and knowing is to be affected by forms.[276] A completely passive description of knowing, however, is problematic. As I have mentioned, it will make knowing something acquired accidentally, without effort, and involving no action from the subject. But there is no reason to think that the ES has that conception of knowledge. When the idealists offer IK, they ignore this option, and the ES seems tacitly to concur.[277]

There is, however, one plausible way out. It is possible that when the soul knows it is *both* affected by the forms, and performs an action, but not an action that affects the forms at all. Instead, *the soul's action may affect something different, for example, the person's attitudes, actions, and words.* This leaves open the possibility that forms can be both active and not be affected, nor changed by anything. This is not only compatible with what has

[275] Moravcsik (1962, 38-40) and Owen (1966, 290-292), who following their formal interpretation of the passage, think that all forms are affected in being known, since forms can be predicates of 'knowledge'-attributing sentences (*X* knows *Y*). They think the gigantomachia concludes that in a sense everything changes, and in another, nothing. The argumentation in *Sophist* 248e6-249b4, however, only concludes that *some* GB change and not necessarily all of them. Moreover, the grammar of the sentence is not going to solve the problem of which thing is acting and which one is being affected. In cases of perception or knowledge a sentence like '*X* sees *Y*,' could be an ellipsis of '*Y* imprints an image in *X*.' McCabe (1999, 144, 260), and Reeve (1985, 61), suggest that the way in which the forms change is only a 'Cambridge change.' But if the argument does not conclude that all forms change, there is no motivation for this interpretation. Sure all things change in a Cambridge sense, but I do not see any textual evidence to think that Plato is referring to change in that sense. If some GB change, and they change in a non-Cambridge sense, in what sense could it be? There is no explicit answer in the gigantomachia either. One possibility, however, is to think that some GB are immaterial self-movers (like *nous* or souls). For souls as self-movers see Silverman (2002, 296). See also Ch. 1, sec. 4.

[276] See Brown (1998, 199).

[277] Leigh (2010, 67-72) also rejects Brown's reading but for very different reasons. She argues that the criticism against the idealists is designed to "undermine the equivalence, assumed by the friends, between relations of actions and affection and relations of changing and being changed, and so to further clarify the proposal about being." The problem with this reading is that it is false that the friends assume the equivalence between production/affection and change/changed. The text only establishes a one-way relation. Something changes because it is affected (see κινεῖσθαι διὰ τὸ πάσχειν at 248e3-4, IK4).

been agreed, but it is the only option that has not been directly or tacitly rejected.[278] According to this picture, knowledge would be a complex phenomenon that involves at least two productive relations: from forms to souls, and from souls to other things. The activity of the soul could include actions before and after the action of forms on it. To be affected by the forms the soul, perhaps, needs to turn her attention to the right place (similar to what is said in *Republic* 7.515c-d, and *Parmenides* 135b8; see Ch. 3, sec. 8), ask the right questions, and examine false opinions, among other things. But after being affected by them, knowing may also imply acting in accordance with the forms, for instance, behaving justly in the case of knowing the form of justice.[279]

Specifically, if the passage implies the complex conception of knowledge I am suggesting, then it goes against the idealists' separation of GB and becoming (I2). There would be at least one active connection between forms and becoming: knowledge done by souls which can become and change, and which are affected by what they know. Note, however, that the connection between souls and forms belongs to GB, so the real connection with becoming does not come until a soul, affected by a form, acts and produces an effect in the realm of becoming; *there is no direct link here between forms and becoming, other than via the souls that are affected by knowing them.*

Human beings, then, are the gatekeepers and link between the two sorts of beings. This is possible, it seems, because human *nous* has a double nature. It is incorporeal like the forms, but it is affected and changes like bodies.[280] This is supported by a discussion a couple of pages after the gigantomachia, where the ES and Theaetetus agree that there are things that function like bonds which communicate things that cannot communicate directly, like vowels that link consonants to form words: 'the *vowels* spread differently through all the other [letters] like a bond, so [that] without one of them it is also impossible for the others to fit together one with another' (*Sophist* 252e9-253a2). In the same way, the soul is a bond between the intelligible and the visible part of the world. This, in addition, answers the *Phaedo*'s question about how *nous* was able to connect forms and particulars (see Ch. 1, sec. 9).

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[278] Consider the nine options of note 269 to answer *Sophist* 248d4-5. As I have explained, the idealist and the ES seem to take for granted that knowing is not completely passive, and if one of the options is active, the other has to be passive, and vice versa. This excludes, on the one hand, options (d), and (f), and on the other hand, options (a), and (e). From the five remaining options there are four in which being known will be in some way affected (b, c, h, and i). Nevertheless, choosing either of them will entail that all GB, and with this all forms, are affected, and change, which goes against *Sophist* 249b8-10. The only option left is (g), which considers being known as a productive action, and knowing as both, an action and an affection.
[279] Note that in all of these actions, the soul can become better over time.
[280] This, again, recalls the myth, and Heracles as a demigod who shares in both the earth and the heavens, and is responsible for deciding the battle.

There is a last argument against the idealists. There might be some of them that accept the ES's argumentation, and embrace power as the criterion of existence. After all, they are more civilised and used to argumentation than the original materialists. But there might be others that remain stubborn even if their arguments have been rejected. Remember that they defend their views vehemently. But if they remain unconvinced because they are stubborn, there is not much the ES can do for them. Nevertheless, it still seems necessary to argue against their account, because they may be, for instance, misleading other people. For that reason, the ES addresses his last argument not to the idealists but to Theaetetus. It explains why people should reject not only these stubborn idealists but more generally, any account that makes *nous* disappear:

> ES. — In fact, it turns out that (1) if <all>[281] beings are changeless, there is no *nous* for anybody anywhere.
>
> Th. —Exactly.
>
> ES. —And, on the other hand, if we agree that everything is moving and changing, by this argument, the very same thing [*i.e*., *nous*] will be also removed from the beings.
>
> Th. —How?
>
> ES. —Do you think that, without rest, something at some time could become constant with respect to the same thing and towards the same thing?
>
> Th. —Never.
>
> ES. —And what? Do you think that without these a *nous* could *be* or take place (ὄντα ἢ γενόμενον) anywhere?
>
> Th. —Not at all.
>
> ES. —Well then, at any rate, with any argument, we must fight against him who, while removing knowledge, thought or *nous*, maintains strongly any claim about anything (*Sophist* 249b5-249c8).

The argument gives an account of the conditions of existence of *nous*. The ES seems to talk about *nous* in the two different realms: in relation to the immaterial and in relation to becoming (that will explain the distinction between ὄντα ἢ γενόμενον in *Sophist* 249c3). A *nous* can *be* or take place anywhere. But the conditions for its existence are the existence of rest, constancy, and change. Without these three things, *nous* is impossible. But *nous* cannot disappear because it is the link between forms and particulars. The problem with an account that makes *nous* impossible is that it is self-defeating. If someone expels *nous* from her ontology she performs a contradiction, since her account implies that giving and understanding an account—which is something only *nous* can do—is impossible (this also

[281] For Badham's addition of πάντων to line 249b5 see Robinson (1999, 153), and Cornford (1935, 241, n.1).

works, I believe, as a refutation of the dissenters from the greatest difficulty who make the ontological objection).[282]

7. The children's wish

The ES ends the gigantomachia with this concluding remark:

> As it seems, indeed, for the philosopher and for someone who most values these things, it is absolutely necessary for these reasons to reject those who say that the whole is at rest whether as one or even as the many forms, and on the other hand, nor must he listen at all to those who say that being is changing everywhere, but like the children's prayer, he must say that being and the whole is both, that which is unchanging and that which is changed (*Sophist* 249c10-d4).

The passage seems to establish a treaty between those who have accepted power as the criterion of existence (see *Sophist* 249c10; and Ch. 5, sec. 2, to see how the Stoics fit into this group). The ES's Herculean intervention in the dispute between materialists and idealists does not achieve absolute peace. The ES makes alliances with the moderates from both sides, and now rejects any party who remains an extremist—including not only the materialists but also the monists. Note how, again, a metaphysical and epistemological outcome has led to specific attitudes and actions. The ES draws a practical conclusion (reject and fight certain people) from a theoretical discussion.

In relation with the dialectical objection of the greatest difficulty, this concedes that a philosophical account might never reach unanimous approval, but tries only to reject the extreme views. The moderates, however, may disagree in many things but they all accept in their ontology the existence of bodies, virtues, *nous*, and the appropriate attitudes and skills to have a philosophical conversation and seek the truth. The ES's final recommendation is that philosophers should be as children who desire everything.[283] They should desire a comprehensive account of being, able to include change and rest, and an account able to explain how this is possible without separation.

The specific metaphysics and epistemology agreed at the end of the passage is a complex work–in-progress picture. First, it seems that power stands as *a* valid criterion of

[282] Note that those who maintain that everything changes might not be the materialists who have been arguing here, since they never directly state that the world of perceptible things is a "moving becoming." This is only idealists' talk. The materialists can complain this is no accurate representation of their view since, for them, bodies might already imply individuation, and permanence. They might think, for instance, that even if bodies are always moving, some of them are eternal, like the sun and the stars. This means that this last argument only rejects stubborn idealists, and the idealists' understanding of materialists, which reduces materialism to the thesis that everything changes. Cf. Plato's understanding of Heraclitus in *Cratylus* 402a. See also Aristotle's *Metaphysics* 4.5, 1010a10-15 (DK 22B91). But since the idealists are misidentifying the materialists, the idealists accidentally bring to the discussion another account of being. The ES seems aware of this, since he said the idealists "break down into small pieces the bodies of their opponents and the truth spoken by them" (*Sophist* 246b9-c2). However, the ES includes this new account among the doctrines to be rejected.

[283] This looks back to *Sophist* 242c8-243b1.

existence, which allows three possible sorts of being: what can only act, what can only be affected, and what can do both. In addition, it rules out the existence of anything that has no power at all. As subsets of these, there are, on the one hand, bodies, all of which have the power to act and be affected. Here are included ensouled bodies, and perhaps souls (since there is no agreement about soul's nature). All bodies seem able to change, but since the possibility of eternal bodies is not ruled out, it is not necessary to think that all of them come to be. Therefore, it seems that becoming and bodies are only two sets, although these share an intersection. On the other hand, there are what the idealists called GBs. Although they are no longer a "higher degree" of being, they still form a different set from that of bodies, so they all are incorporeal. Here are included changeless forms, but also other elements that can change, including some changing forms, and life, soul, intelligence, and *nous*. In the case of life, soul, intelligence, and *nous*, it may be that they can both self-move and be affected by something else.

Human beings have *nous*, and mortal bodies. It is unclear whether human *nous* comes to be or not, but it has access to the forms, and is part of GB, but can also produce change in particular things. This means that GB and becoming are communicated by the actions of the knower, who is the thing responsible for whatever is done. The concept of sharing, then, is an active one. Sharing is, as the ES suggests at *Sophist* 248b5-6, an affection or a product of some power. If a *nous* shares in a form, that means it is affected by it (cf. Ch. 1, sec. 7.2, and 8.6).[284]

The gigantomachia offers, however, no definitive account of being or about what sorts of beings there are. As I have tried to show, if the analysis takes into consideration the structure of the passage and includes all the parts of the text, it becomes clear that its aim is more ambitious. It is a wide-ranging reflection on what counts as a philosophical account of being, what aspects should be included for a full understanding of it and why, and which mistakes a philosopher should avoid to escape giving a reductive or mistaken account.

Many of these considerations have a general application. The text shows that the practice of philosophy is not about being right or irrefutable on a specific topic, but about seeking and understanding the truth in a holistic way, since otherwise the explanatory power would be partial, and the consistency with other beliefs and decisions self-defeating. The passage shows that a discussion of a topic is accompanied not only with arguments, but also with metaphysical and epistemological assumptions, argumentative strategies, and a heavy ethical component. It also shows that these aspects are all interdependent, and thus,

[284] This reveals much more of what Aristotle is willing to accept in *Metaphysics* 2.6, 987b10-ff.

inseparable.[285] And if that is the case, then, the suggestion is that *philosophy must include a reflection of all of them.* This means that according to the gigantomachia, any philosophical discussion should include a careful examination of the following five aspects and their interrelations:

- Ethical aspect: attitudes, personal qualities, behaviour, etc.
- Argumentative strategy: method, valid and invalid moves, types of arguments, use of myths, etc.
- Epistemological assumptions: about the conception of knowledge, knowledge acquisition, justification, etc.
- Metaphysical assumptions: about ontological status, nature, cause, etc.
- Main topic of discussion: arguments, examples, counterexamples, evidence, etc.

Since any account or speech includes all these interconnected aspects, even if people ignore one or more of them, that does not change the fact that they still affect the discussion. The gigantomachia tries to make this point clear. It is firmly against the idea that we can do metaphysics (or seek the truth in any other subject) by only considering the first-order arguments. Reflecting on all the aspects is no easy task, but Plato, by writing in dialogue form and designing the nesting of different dialogues into each other, is able to include and distinguish all of them in his argumentation. It is through the dialogue form that Plato shows how attitudes, strategies, and assumptions impact the first order arguments, and vice versa. In this way, Plato invites the reader to consider the first order arguments about being, but also to take a step back and reflect about the other aspects that guide the discussion.

It is only by considering all these aspects and their connections that it is possible to understand how a conception of being affects and is affected by the way people conceive reality, knowledge, argumentation, their actions, and attitudes, among other things. Understanding and testing if they are consistent with each other is essential to articulating a philosophical account of being. Then, to the metaphysical-epistemological picture, the agreements and decisions made in the other aspects should also be added.

A philosophical account of being, then, should include change and changeless beings, and how they are connected. It should be an account that makes knowledge and *nous* possible; that is not dogmatic, but open to mistakes, reformulations, and new information; an account that is able to explain the fundamental nature of all the pieces of reality we accept, including virtues, and intelligible entities. It should be an account that knows why

[285] One of the mistakes of the predecessors is to ignore many of these aspects. This would not be a problem if it were not for the fact that they affect each other.

other arguments and theories fail, with what level of confidence the different theses are affirmed, and under what conditions that confidence is modified. It should be, most of all, an account under constant and careful scrutiny of all its aspects.

This is also a way out of the dialectical puzzle of the greatest difficulty (see Ch. 3, sec. 2, and 8). Socrates' account was unable to address a dialectical difficulty that involved two objections, an epistemological one and an ontological one based on the first one. Parmenides explained to Socrates how the objections had terrible consequences that should be rejected, but it is until we read the discussion in the *Sophist* that we get an explanation of how *nous* has to have a *bonding nature* able to link the intelligible with the sensible. But more importantly, Plato's way to deal with the dialectical objection is to reflect and discuss the requirements, context, and different aspects interrelated in a discussion about being. It might not be possible to persuade everyone, but we can advance in the understanding of why exactly that is the case.

CHAPTER 5. The Stoic solution to Plato's Greatest Difficulty

This chapter analyses Stoic philosophy through the light of Plato's discussion about causality and responsibility. The aim is to show that Plato's dialogues and arguments were carefully interpreted and discussed by the Stoics, and that this Platonic background explains the interconnections and starting points of some of the most important aspects of early Stoic philosophy. Moreover, through an analysis of the evidence as both building a coherent system, and responding to Plato's dialogues, I show that it is necessary to rethink the nature of the relation between Plato and the Stoics. Clarifying this point leads, moreover, to rediscovering the Stoics as more engaged with and more charitable to Plato's dialogues.

The chapter is divided into eight sections. First I discuss the evidence to decide what type of access the Stoics had to Plato, especially to the *Sophist*. In sections 2-3, I discuss Stoic corporealism, and the inclusion of incorporeals in their ontology. In section 4, I evaluate the Stoic notion of the highest genus, and in section 5, their rejection of forms, and their notion of concepts. In sections 6-7 I discuss the Stoic conception of causality and responsibility. Finally, in the last section I discuss the Stoic proposal to explain the power of conversation.

1. The Stoics' relation with Plato

1.1 The Stoics reading Plato

Most scholars are careful in recognise that Stoicism is in debt to Plato's philosophy. The nature and extent of this impact, however, has been portrayed in different ways.[286] Besides, their reception of Plato was undeniably informed by the philosophical production of Plato's predecessors, contemporaries, and two generations of successors and critics.[287]Given the lack of detailed evidence, it is a common practice to point out passages in the Platonic *corpus* as antecedents to the Stoic account, without elaborating too much on

[286] See Hahm (1977), and Gourinat (2009), and Sellars (2010).

[287] The Stoics had, apart from Plato and the Academics, a wide interest in their predecessors, and contemporaries, especially Heraclitus, the Cynics, and the Megarian school. They, above all, saw themselves as heirs of the philosophical tradition initiated by Socrates. See Philodemus, *De Stoicis* XIII 3, and Sedley's (2003, 11) remarks about it. For the impact of Heraclitus on the Stoics, see Long (1975-6); the case of the Stoic engagement with Aristotle is complicated. For the discussion see Hahm (1977), and Sandbach (1985). Modern scholars tend to favour Sandbach's thesis that the Stoics had no or very limited access to Aristotle's works.

how to understand the connection.[288] Some works devoted to exploring the relationship between the Stoics and the Platonists have made a huge progress in our understanding of the topic. These works, however, have focused mainly in analysis of the ontology, and cosmology, often assuming a dogmatic and unitarian reading of Plato's dialogues.[289]

The debate about Stoic causes and responsibility has centred, in turn, around showing how it fits with the Stoic system, and how it helps to understand other areas of it.[290] Only a handful of papers devote their attention to the Stoic reception of Plato's account of causation and responsibility.[291] This research has helped to reconsider some passages previously neglected, and to advance our understanding of the close relationship between the first Stoics and the Old Academy. These studies, however, privilege the *Timaeus* as the main connection with the Stoics, and tend to understand the *Sophist* mainly as an ontological discussion. This presents the Stoic reception of Plato as mostly engaged with Plato's late constructive passages. But this leaves out the possibility of a more complex picture, assuming that the Stoics were superficial readers of Plato, or that their access to his work was very limited.

There are good reasons to think the early Stoa had direct access to Plato's dialogues. It seems that Zeno, the founder of the school, was interested in Plato's philosophy since he was a young man. Even before migrating to Athens, Zeno was an avid reader of Socratic dialogues, probably including some of Plato's works. According to Themistius, for example, the reading of an *Apology* of Socrates triggered Zeno's voyage from Citium to Athens.[292] In his *Republic*—an early work probably written during his time with the Cynic Crates—Zeno proposed a political project which examined numerous topics also discussed

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[288] For the Stoics alluding to the *Phaedo* see, for instance, Stobaeus, *Eclogae* 1.138, 14-139, 8 (SVF 1.89; 2.336; LS55A; FDS 762; BS 14.10); Clement, *Stromata*, 8.9.25.1.1-27.5.3; 31.1-33.9 (SVF 1.488; 2.344-351; LS 55C-D, I; FDS 763-764; BS 14.11); DL 7.135-7 (SVF 1.102 and 2.580; LS46B; BS 15.3); DL 7.87-89 (BS 23.1); Eusebius *PE* 15.20.1-7 (SVF 1.128; 141;519; LS53W; FDS 423); Gellius 7.1.1-13 (SVF 2.1169-70; LS54Q); DL 7.135-6 (SVF 1.102; LS46B); Sextus Empiricus *AM* 9.98. For connections with Plato's *Republic* see Plutarch *CN* 1034E (LS31L); Aetius 1.7.33 (SVF 2.1027; LS46A); Stobaeus *Eclogae* 1.213, 15-21 (SVF1.120; LS46D); Stobaeus *Eclogae* 1.25, 4-27, 4 (SVF 1.537; LS54I); Pseudo-Galen, *De Historia Philosophica* 35, 24-29 (BS13.5); Tertullian, *De anima*, 5, 2-6 (SVF 1.518; 2.773; FDS 426; BS 13.8). For *Parmenides* see Stobaeus, *Eclogae* 1.136, 21-137,6 (SVF 1.65; LS30A; FDS 316; BS4.1); Aetius 1.10.3-5 (SVF 1.65 and 2.360; FDS 317); Syrianus, *in metaph*. 105, 19-30 and 106, 5-8 (SVF 2.364 & 3 Arch. 13; LS30H; FDS 318A). For the *Sophist* see Seneca, *Ep*. 58.11-15 (SVF 2.332; LS27A; BS2.1); Cicero, *Acad*. 1.39 (SVF 1.90; LS45A; BS 2.10). Most scholars agree that the Stoic doctrines remind us and often have their origin in debates initiated by Plato and their successors. See, for example, the seminal remarks in Long & Sedley (1987, 158-437), and Brunschwig (1988); more recently Sedley (2002), Gourinat (2009), and Vogt (2009).

[289] Thus, touching on causality and explanation only incidentally. See, for example, Reydams-Schils (1999).

[290] See Duhot (1989), Bobzien (1999), Hankinson (2000), Meyer (2009), and Totschnig (2013).

[291] See Frede (1987), Sedley (2002), Bénatouïl (2009), and Salles (2013).

[292] Themistius, *Orat*. 23.295d (SVF 1.9). See also Sandbach (1975, 20).

in Plato's *Republic.*[293] After studying with Crates, and Stilpo, he then studied in Polemo's Academy,[294] where he surely studied Plato's works in more detail.[295]

Zeno interest in Plato's works did not diminish when he started teaching his own philosophy at the Stoa. According to Plutarch, Zeno "continued to write against Plato's *Republic*, solving sophisms, and urging his students to undertake dialectic since it is able to do this."[296] But the first Stoics were interested in other dialogues too. Persaeus, one of Zeno's and Cleanthes' closest associates, for example, followed his advice by writing a reply to Plato's *Laws* in seven books.[297] It seems that the dialogue form profoundly impressed Persaeus, since he even wrote dialogues featuring himself and Zeno.[298] One of Persaeus's students, Hermagoras of Amphipolis, is said to have also written dialogues.[299] Herillus of Chalcedon, another Stoic from the first generation, was even criticised for agreeing more with Plato than with Zeno.[300]

There is also linguistic evidence that Zeno read other dialogues. Apart from parallels with the *Timaeus,*[301] in Stobaeus' report, for example, Zeno's (and also Chrysippus') definition of τὸ αἴτιον as 'that because of which' (δι' ὅ)[302] echoes *Cratylus* 413a3-4: 'for that because of which something comes to be is the αἴτιον.' In the same report, Zeno's examples of how an αἴτιον acts echo the formulation of Socrates' safe answer at *Phaedo* 100c-d. Compare Zeno's 'because of prudence "being prudent" takes place,' with statements like 'it is by the beautiful that beautiful things are beautiful' at *Phaedo* 100e2-3.[303] Zeno and other Stoics also have in mind Plato's texts when they use the word μετέχειν

[293] For the agreements and disagreements between Zeno's and Plato's *Republic,* see DL 7.32-34 (SVF 1.226; LS67B; BS30.12); Plutarch, *De Alexandri magni fortuna aut virtute* 329a-b (SVF 1.262; LS67A; BS30.7); DL 7.121-125, 130-131 (SVF 3.355; 3.642; 3.697; 3.757; 3 Apollodorus 17; LS66H; 67P; BS30.20); Athenaeus *Deipnosophistae* 561c (SVF 1.263; LS67D; BS30.33); Plutarch, *De Stoicorum Repugnantiis* 8, 1034F (SVF 1.260). See also Schofield (1999, 756-760), Erskine (1990, ch. 1), Schofield (1991, ch. 1), Dawson (1992, ch. 4).
[294] See DL 7.2; Cicero, *Academica post.*, 1.35 (SVF 1.13).
[295] Arcesilaus' disagreements with Zeno started, it seems, as a difference on how to interpret Plato. See Numenius *apud* Eusebius, *Preparatio Evangelica* 14.6.9 732B (SVF 1.12). See also Brittain (2006, xiii), Alesse (2000, 115), and Long (2006, ch. 5).
[296] Plutarch, *De Stoicorum repugnantiis* 1034E9-F1 (SVF 1.50; 1.78; 1.260; LS31L; BS 5.10).
[297] DL 7.36.
[298] See Athenaeus 162e-d (SVF 1.452).
[299] See *Suda*, s.v. (SVF 1.462).
[300] Cicero, *Academica Pr.* 2.129 (SVF 1.413).
[301] The Stoic relation with Plato's *Timaeus* has been discussed widely. See Sedley (2002), D. Frede (2005), and Reydams-Schils (1999).
[302] Stobaeus, *Eclogae Physicae et Ethicae* 1.138, 14-139, 8 (SVF 1.89; 2.336; LS 55A; FDS 762; BS 14.10).
[303] See also Sextus Empiricus *AM* 9.98.

('to partake'), when they say that while ideas are unreal, we partake on concepts (I will come back to this later).[304]

It seems that subsequent generations of Stoics continued studying Plato, and the history of philosophy more generally. Cleanthes, for example, wrote four books on interpretations of Heraclitus, one against Democritus, and some of his works like his *Statesman* possibly engaged with Plato's dialogue of the same name. There are also reports where Chrysippus discusses Plato's philosophy. Proclus, for example, states that Chrysippus compared mathematical theorems with forms.[305] He thought that one of Plato's motivations for the introduction of forms was a reflection over linguistic conventions, as Syrianus' criticism attests: 'the forms were not introduced by these divine men [Plato, the Parmenideans, and Pythagorics] for the use of linguistic convention, as Chrysippus, Archedemus, and many of the later Stoics thought.'[306] Chrysippus also discussed the ontological status of forms, a context in which he offered his famous 'not-someone' argument.[307]

1.2 The scholarly debate about the Stoics' relation with the *Sophist*

All this evidence makes very plausible that the Stoics have also read and discussed Plato's *Sophist*. Moreover, thanks to Jacques Brunschwig's seminal paper, '*La Théorie Stoïcienne Du Genre Supreme et L'ontologie Platonicienne,*' most scholars nowadays agree that the Stoic doctrine of the highest genus emerged from a critical reading of the *Sophist.*[308] Brunschwig considers especially relevant the gigantomachia passage, and *Sophist* 237d, although he was careful not to claim the Stoics engaged directly with Plato's text (1988, 118). He is right, however, in noting various echoes of the language used and the themes discussed in the *Sophist*. There is, for example, a linguistic parallel between the Stoic use of τὸ ποιοῦν and τὸ πάσχον[309] and Plato's discussion of δύναμις in terms of τὸ ποιεῖν and τὸ παθεῖν at *Sophist* 247d8-e4 (see Ch. 4, sec. 5). Another parallel is Zeno's choice of 'prudence' and later 'being alive' when he uses the safe answer formulation (see Stobaeus' report above), which could be a reference to how the safe answer formula is used in the *Sophist*'s gigantomachia, when the ES uses the same examples in his cross-examination of the materialists (see *Sophist* 247a2-247b4; see Ch. 4, sec. 4-5).

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[304] Stobaeus, *Eclogae Physicae et Ethycae*, 1.136, 21-137, 6 (SVF 1.65; LS 30A; FDS 316; BS 4.1).
[305] Proclus, I*n primum Euclidis Elementorum Librum Comentarii* 395, 13-18 (SVF 2.365).
[306] Syrianus, *in Metaph*. 105, 21-23 (SVF 2.364; LS 30H; FDS 318A; BS 4.5).
[307] Simplicius, *in Cat.* 105, 7-21 (SVF 2.278; LS30E; FDS 1247; BS 4.4).
[308] See also Brunschwig (2003); Reesor (1989, 13); Sedley (1985); and Aubenque (1991).
[309] DL 7.134.

Brunschwig's suggestion was so eloquent that some scholars were more enthusiastic about the outcome of his paper than Brunschwig himself. To give an example of how his paper was received, consider how Caston (1999, 179, n.73), a decade later, describes the situation. He claims that Brunschwig '*conclusively demonstrates* how the Stoic distinction between bodies and incorporeals rests on a very precise response to the arguments in the battle between the Giants and the Friends of the Forms' (my emphasis).[310] Again, a decade after Caston's paper was published, Cooper (2009, 96) linked the *Sophist* to the Stoic doctrine of the two principles by writing 'It is well-known, I hope, by now that Zeno developed this theory of principles through a very close, critical reading of the Eleatic Visitor's discussion, with Theaetetus in Plato's *Sophist*, of a so-called battle between some philosophical "gods" and some unphilosophical "giants."'

Following a similar line, Katja Vogt (2009) argued that the Stoics are 'sophisticated Sons of the Earth' who developed a complex notion of corporeals from their philosophical reading of the *Sophist*. Behind the agreement that the Stoics critically engaged with Plato's *Sophist*, however, there is a debate regarding the nature and extent of the Stoic engagement with the dialogue. Vogt (2009, 143), for example, disagrees with Brunschwig, and argues that the Stoics were not interested in Plato's ES's question about what being is, but instead, were concerned with the question about what nature is, understood in corporealistic terms. She thinks this is the reason why they rearticulated the materialist position of the giants in the first place. But if Vogt is right, the Stoic engagement with the *Sophist* was more superficial than initially assumed, since in her reading, the Stoic use of Plato's dialogue is instrumental, partial, and piecemeal, rather than a careful engagement with the detailed philosophical debate Plato was fostering. But even before deciding which type of engagement the Stoics could have had with Plato's *Sophist*, a little bit of caution might be necessary.

It may be that scholars have overstated the Stoic connection with the *Sophist*, so let me consider a possible objection. One may think that although there are linguistic echoes and thematic parallels, it is far from clear that the Stoics had a direct access to the dialogue, let alone a more sophisticated philosophical engagement. John Sellars (2010, 198-199), for example, argues that there is no direct evidence to prove that Zeno or later Stoics read the *Sophist* (or the *Parmenides*). Therefore, he thinks, there is no need to assume the *Sophist* is the direct source of Stoic materialism and ontology, and that suggestions of a connection with the *Sophist* cannot be demonstrated conclusively (contra Caston). The Stoics, in this

[310] See Sellars (2010, 188-193).

'deflationary' view, could have developed their philosophy by discussing not directly Plato's dialogues but the contributions of the Old Academy, especially those of Zeno's teacher Polemo.

This objection makes two good points. It is true that there is no surviving evidence saying that any of the Stoics read or discussed the *Sophist*. It is also important to highlight that late fourth-century Academic philosophy must have had a great impact on the development of Stoicism. Although the evidence from this period of the Academy is scarce, studies like those of Sedley (2002), and Gourinat (2009), have shown that there are some Stoic doctrines which had Polemo's philosophy as its most immediate inspiration, even if the *Timaeus* was the background of these developments. But it will surely be wrong to jump, like Sellars does (2010, 201), from there to the conclusion that we should suspend judgement about whether the Stoics read the *Sophist*.

Demanding from the evidence either the certainty of a conclusive demonstration, or else the suspension of judgement, is a false dilemma. There are plenty of other options and attitudes towards evidence, including judgements of plausibility, feasibility, and reasonable conjectures. Provided that one makes explicit the degree of certainty of a judgement, avoids unnecessary assumptions, and offers sound arguments to support one's decisions, it is far more explanatory to try to reconstrue, and make sense of the evidence, than just to advocate a suspension of judgement. The problem with the deflationary view is that it is difficult to see how it can explain the linguistic and thematic parallels that do appear in the Stoic evidence. But 'deflationary' views like Sellars' do not only have less explanatory power, but for the sake of economy they may end up trading some assumptions for other less charitable ones.

Consider the *prima facie* evidence I just offered about the Stoics' access to other Platonic dialogues. Why would it be more plausible to doubt they knew the *Sophist* rather than to assume they did, unless proven otherwise? Even if there is no explicit evidence to prove they read this specific dialogue, we do have evidence that they read other dialogues, that they showed a sustained interest on Plato's philosophy, and that there are linguistic pieces of evidence and thematic parallels between the *Sophist* and the Stoic ontology. Concerning the Stoic relation with Polemo and the Old Academy, on the other hand, why should we have to assume that in this case the Stoics' engagement with them trumps or was more basic than the one they had with Plato?

Apart from the testimonies that Zeno studied with Polemo, there is no evidence to show the Stoics had a direct and sustained interest in him or other Academics as they had

with Plato's dialogues (and not only with Platonism more vaguely). The fact that these Academics were more proximate in time than Plato is not in itself enough to guarantee they had a more significant impact on Stoicism. Many of my views, for example, are certainly more a result of my direct reading and analysis of Aristotle's and Plato's works than a consequence of my temporal and institutional proximity with MM McCabe, Peter Adamson, or Raphael Woolf, even if I have learnt a lot from them. It would be a mistake to think the history of philosophy is a linear process of teachers and students where students have no direct access, and exegetical autonomy to engage with the works of distant generations (unless, of course, there is evidence that the texts were not available, or that they are uncritically following someone's interpretation). It is uncharitable to assume that a student's understanding of a predecessor has to be exclusively through the lenses and interpretations of her teachers. This, in any case, is what would need to be proved by the evidence, and not the other way around.

The charitable assumption is to conceive the Stoics as independent thinkers able to articulate their own views about their predecessors, unless there is evidence to show otherwise. Again, this is not to deny the importance of other philosophers in the formation of Stoicism. The Stoic interpretation of Plato and the development of their philosophy is undeniably informed by the philosophical production of Plato's predecessors, contemporaries, two generations of successors and critics, as well as their own contemporaries.[311] There is, however, no other surviving text like the *Sophist* that can offer the context for the emergence of various connections in the Stoic ontology which appear otherwise disparate points. Under these circumstances the most sensible approach to the evidence we have is to suppose that the Stoics had direct access, and genuine interest in the *Sophist*, and its philosophical contribution.

For that reason, in this chapter I will take as my working hypothesis that the Stoics did read the *Sophist*. But this hypothesis, which is at least *prima facie* plausible, does not only explain the Stoic doctrines of the highest genus, and the development of their corporealism. I shall show that it also explains the Stoic assessment of forms and concepts; and more importantly, it explains why these topics are so complexly interconnected for the Stoics. This last point means that the complexity of the argumentation in the *Sophist* constitutes evidence to explain the complexity of the Stoic ontology, showing continuity in

[311] The Stoics above all, saw themselves as heirs of the philosophical tradition initiated by Socrates. See Philodemus, *De Stoicis* XIII 3, and Sedley's (2003, 11) remarks about it. This includes not only the Academy but also the other Socratic schools, specially the Cynics and the Megarians. But the Stoics also showed an interest in Heraclitus, and other presocratics. For the impact of Heraclitus in the Stoics see Long (1975-6).

the philosophical debate initiated by Plato. Therefore, in addition to the linguistic echoes and thematic parallels, there is an argument from complexity that links the *Sophist* with the Stoic philosophy.[312]

Contrary to what is often assumed, I argue that the Stoics do not take the giants' banner because they are corporealists, but that they became corporealists by engaging in solving the philosophical puzzles present in the *Sophist*, which means that their engagement with Plato explains their corporealism. Let me now link this thought to the scholarly debate.

I think we can be more confident than Brunschwig about the connection with the *Sophist*. But, while accepting Sellars' point that it is impossible to conclusively demonstrate it, as Caston imagines, or to take it for granted, as Cooper does, it is also not necessary to fall back to a 'deflationary' view. Instead, by taking it as a hypothesis, it is possible to explain the development of the complexity and cohesion of the Stoic ontology. From looking closely to the texts, however, it will emerge that the nature of the relationship between the Stoics and the *Sophist* is not that of a reactionary response as often assumed, nor just a partial engagement as Vogt defends. But this will become clear at the end of this chapter. Before that, I will first analyse and compare three main topics in the Stoics that are also present in the *Sophist*: corporealism, the highest genus, and the debate concerning forms and concepts. By putting all these pieces together, the Stoic conception of causation and responsibility will emerge as their answer to and continuation of the philosophical debate initiated by Plato.

2. The complexity of the Stoic corporealism

2.1 Defining Stoic bodies

The Stoic ontology is committed to a set of claims that sound inconsistent. They think that only bodies exist. They also argue that souls and virtues are bodies, and that there are no forms.[313] However, the Stoics do not reduce everything to bodies, since they accept in their ontology that there are certain incorporeals. They also think that incorporeals have no causal capacity but that they can be thought, and more importantly, that they are essential for explanation, and knowledge. But how could incorporeals be part of Stoic ontology when they explicitly say that only bodies exist? How can they be called corporealists if they include these incorporeals as essential for their ontology and their account of knowledge? During antiquity, critics of Stoicism like the Academics, Neoplatonists, and Christian

[312] I thank MM McCabe for helpful discussion on this aspect.
[313] See, for example, Nemesius, *De Natura Hominis*, 16, 12-16 (SVF 2.773; FDS 420; BS 13.17).

apologists, enjoyed pointing out these and many other alleged contradictions and inconsistencies of Stoic philosophy.

In reality, however, the Stoics defend a sophisticated and systematic corporealism, which although peculiar, is a consistent account carefully put together, refined and improved through various generations. The complexity of their corporealism, which gives to this view an explanatory power never seen before in a corporealist position, has also been a source of astonishment in the sense that it is not entirely obvious how and why the Stoics developed this type of corporealism in the first place. It seems that they are committed to too many theses that are far away from common sense, pre-theoretical intuitions (ancient and modern), and previous philosophical accounts.

This means that even if their corporealism is consistent it is difficult to see why someone would commit to a set of fundamental tenets that sound more obscure than what they are trying to show. The Stoics believe, among other unusual doctrines, that god is a body, that two different bodies can be in the same place at the same time, and that the world is destroyed in a conflagration only to be formed exactly in the same way over and over. This leads to two different questions. The first one is why Stoicism has the starting points it has, and why is committed to so many awkward claims, and second, why their position is so complicatedly intermingled. Let me first start with Stoic corporealism, and see whether seeing the Stoics as readers of the *Sophist* can help us answer these two questions.

The Stoics describe bodies as whatever has 'threefold extension[314] together with resistance (τὸ τριχῇ διασταστὸν μετὰ ἀντιτυπίας),'[315] and, they consider contact as crucial for bodies' interaction.[316] It is important that bodies present both characteristics, three-dimensionality (length, breadth, and depth) *and* resistance, since on the one hand, void, which is not a body, is also extended,[317] and, on the other hand, because three-dimensionality seems a necessary condition for something to have contact with other bodies, and present resistance. However, resistance needs to be carefully differentiated from two similar concepts: impenetrability and limitation. For the Stoics, resistance does not imply impenetrability since two Stoic bodies can occupy exactly the same place while still

[314] See also DL 7.135 (LS45E; SVF 3 Apollodorus 6).
[315] Galen, *De Qualitatibus Incorporeis*, 19.483, 13-15 (SVF 2.381; LS45F). See also Plotinus, *Enneads* 6.1.26 21-3; DL 7.135 (SVF 3.6; LS 45E; BS 2.3); Cf. *Theaetetus* 155e; *Laws* 896d; Aristotle's *Physics* 3.5, 204b20-22; and Lucretius, *De rerum Natura*, 4.419-44 (LS 5B).
[316] Although some distance interaction is also possible. See Sextus Empiricus *AM* 8.409-410 (SVF 2.85; LS 27E; BS 2.4).
[317] See Cleomedes *De motu circulari corporum caelestium* 8,12-14 (LS49C, SVF2.541). I shall come back to the ontological status of void in a moment (see this chapter's sec. 3.3).

claiming to be resistant,[318] and, it does not imply any type of limitation to be acted upon, since there is at least one body (matter) that while resistant, offers no restriction whatsoever to what can be imposed on it.

From other reports, we also get a description of Stoic bodies that makes no reference to three-dimensionality, but focuses on their causal power. According to this description, a body is anything able to produce something and/or be affected. In Pseudo-Galen's report, for example, we get that bodies are what can 'produce or be affected (τὸ … ποιεῖν ἢ πάσχειν).'[319] These two Stoic descriptions of body could have been different definitions held by different Stoics. They could also be complementary descriptions of corporeality.[320] There is, unfortunately, no evidence of what exactly the Stoics understood by resistance. However, it is possible to speculate that resistance is divided into the bodies' capacity to produce, or be affected. To offer resistance, then, would be to either produce a change in another body, or to be able to suffer a change due to the action of another body. Note that both to act and to be acted upon presuppose some resistance, since otherwise there is no agent or patient to be changed. If this conjecture is right, then the Stoic definition of body could be expressed in the following way:

Body: for any *X*, *X* is a body iff *X* is extended, and produces something and/or is affected.

The types of bodies that this definition allows can be divided in the following way:

1. Simple bodies:

    1.1 Exclusively productive.

    1.2 Exclusively passive.

2. Bodies that can both produce and be affected.

But the Stoics add another thought. According, for instance, to Plutarch's reports, the Stoics 'call "beings" (ὄντα) only bodies, since it belongs to beings to produce something and be affected.'[321] The Stoics argue that bodies and beings have the same extension. This should be compared with the original materialists at *Sophist* 246b1, and with the *dunamis* proposal (see Ch. 4, sec. 3-5). The Stoic argument seems to be the following:

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[318] Stoic bodies do not imply impenetrability. See Alexander *On mixture* 216,14-218,6 (LS48C; SVF2.473). Two or more bodies can occupy exactly the same place when they are mixed.

[319] Pseudo-Galen, *De historia philosophica* 23, 2-6 (BS2.11). See also Cicero, *Academica* 1.39 (SVF 1.90; LS 45A; BS 2.10), and DL 7.134 (SVF 2.300, 2.299; LS 44B; BS 14.1).

[320] See Boeri & Salles (2014, 37-38). But see Reesor (1954, 57, 77-78), and Hahm (1977, 21). For a detailed discussion on the Stoic definition of body see Gourinat (2009, esp. 55-58).

[321] Plutarch, *De Communibus Notitiis Adversus Stoicos* 1073E (SVF 2.525; BS 2.6). Pseudo-Galen, *De historia philosophica* 23, 2-6 (BS2.11). See also Cicero, *Academica* 1.39 (SVF 1.90; LS 45A; BS 2.10), and DL 7.134 (SVF 2.300, 2.299; LS 44B; BS 14.1).

1. For any *X, X* is a body iff *X* produces something and/or is affected.

2. For any *X, X* is a being iff *X* produces something and/or is affected.

3. Therefore, for any *X*, *X* is a being, iff *X* is a body.

Note that premise (2) is equivalent to the ES's *dunamis* proposal in the gigantomachia (*Sophist* 247d8-e3; Ch. 4, sec. 5), but that conclusion (3) is one of the premises held by the original materialists (see *Sophist* 246b1; Ch. 4, sec. 3). What is different from both views in the *Sophist* is the Stoic definition of body, which prevents them from accepting any incorporeal entity that can produce or be affected. This, oddly enough, is in agreement with the idealists' conception of bodies, since they think that becoming shares in the power of producing and being affected (*Sophist* 248c7-9; Ch. 4, sec. 6). In addition, the Stoic conception of bodies, unlike the materialists of the *Sophist*, makes no reference to perception, but that does not mean, as in the case of the ES's *dunamis* proposal, that they are open to the possibility of incorporeal beings. But if the Stoics do not completely agree with any of the views in the gigantomachia, how to explain their partial agreements?

2.2 Stoic principles, and elements

The Stoics think there is only one exclusively productive, and one exclusively passive body. They call these two bodies the principles of all things, and identify the active one with god, and the passive one with matter. The most complete account of this is found in Diogenes Laertius:

> (i) They think there are two principles of all things, what produces and what is affected.[322] So, then, what is affected is the unqualified substance, matter; what produces is the order in it, god. For this [*i.e*. god] is everlasting, it produces each thing through all of it [*i.e*. matter]. (ii) Zeno of Citium establishes this doctrine in his *On Substance*, Cleanthes in his *On Atoms*, Chrysippus at the end of his first book of *Physics*, Archedemus[323] in his book *On Elements*, and Posidonius in his second book of *Physical Account*. (iii) They say that principles and elements differ. For the former are ungenerated and indestructible, whereas the elements are destroyed by the conflagration.[324] The principles are also bodies[325] and without form, but the elements have a form.[326]

[322] What produces and what is affected are principles of τά ὅλα. But this does not mean all things in an absolute sense, since there are things that are not produced by the principles, like void (see Sextus Empiricus *M* 9.332=LS44A, SVF2.524, part). Translating it as 'the universe' like in Long and Sedley does not clearly show that the principles are producing a plurality of objects. The interaction of the principles produces the plurality of bodies that constitute the universe. Therefore, here we should understand 'all things' as the set of all bodies, and all their interactions. See also Alexander of Aphrodisias *De mixtione* 224.33-225.1 (LS45H only in vol. 2; SVF 2.310): 'They say there are two principles of all things, matter and god, one of which is productive and the other passive,' and Aristocles *apud* Eusebius, *Evangelical Preparation* 15.14.1 (LS45G; SVF I.98).

[323] See also DL 7.40, 55, 68, 84, 88.

[324] Except for Chrysippus who argued that the elements are not destroyed by the conflagration. See the discussion in Salles (2009).

The leading figures of the early Stoa and two later members of the school share a basic account of the principles. Diogenes reports no disagreement between them as he does with other Stoic doctrines (*e.g.* the conflagration, the unity of virtue, and the division of philosophy). His report of the principles is the mainstream account for the early, and perhaps for the middle Stoa.[327] There is a lot of information in this passage but for now I will focus on what it tells us about bodies.

Since the principles are bodies, then, this means that, in general, the notion of body does not necessarily imply materiality nor an ordered arrangement. God is never affected, nor can matter produce anything. These two aspects are exclusive for each principle. This has some odd implications. The principles are non-material bodies, since god 'is *in* matter, but there is no matter in *it*' and matter 'is *matter*, to be sure, but not a *material body.*'[328] This is why the Stoics are best described as corporealists rather than as materialists.[329] But the same can be said about order (λόγος). God and matter are non-ordered bodies, which explains why they lack form. Matter receives order, but there is no intrinsic order in it, whereas god *is* order, but is not an *ordered body*.

The principles, however, are inseparable, and co-dependent.[330] They are permanently interacting in a special kind of through-and-through mixture which forms what they call substance (οὐσία). As Alexander puts it 'They say that god is mixed in matter, pervading all of it and shaping it, and forming it, and producing it into the cosmos.'[331] This type of mixture, the Stoics think, implies that God and matter occupy exactly the same place. The only thing that effectively distinguishes them is their capacity to act or to be affected. Now, according to the texts, it seems there is no restriction at all to what God can do to matter. Matter seems to offer no restriction to what God can impose on it.[332] There is no physical

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[325] σώματα codd.: ασωμάτους *Suda*. See LS vol. I, pp. 273-4, and vol. II, p. 266; also Mansfeld (1978, 162-3). See also Cicero *Academica* 1.39. Against this reading see Lapidge (1973, 242-246, 248), and Todd (1979,139-143).

[326] DL 7.134 (LS44B only secc. i, and iii; SVF 2.300, and 2.299; BS 14.1). Section (i) also appears as the first part of SVF 1.85, which gives two further fragments for this doctrine: Aetius 1, 3, 25, and Achilles Tat. 124E. See also Simplicius *in Aristot. Phys*. 25, 15 (SVF 2.312). This is complemented by Sextus Empiricus: 'Indeed also those of the Stoa speak of two principles, god and the unqualified matter; they think god produces, and matter is affected and changes.' Sextus Empiricus *M* 9.11 (SVF 2.301).

[327] The central claims of the doctrine are reported in a similar way also in Seneca's later account. See *Letters* 65.2 (LS55E).

[328] See Cooper (2009, 100).

[329] See Weil (1964, 560), and Gourinat (2009, 47).

[330] See Calcidius 292 (LS44D; SVF 1.88), and 293 (LS44E); and Sextus Empiricus *AM* 9.237-240 (LS72N; BS 14.12).

[331] Alexander of Aphrodisias *De mixtione* 225.1-3 (LS45H; SVF 2.310). See also Alexander *On mixture* 225,1-2 (LS45H; SVF2.310).

[332] See Cooper (2009, 98).

restraint to God's power and matter's passivity. That does not suggest, however, that it is not necessary to make an effort to impose it, nor that god is almighty in an absolute sense.

In fact, the principles are co-dependent. If that were not the case, God would not need matter to create the world. But God acts on something, and there is no reason to think that he is able to act on himself since that would suppose he can be both the active and the passive object. This makes the principles two very special bodies. Although the active principle is extended, one part of it cannot act on another since that would make it passive, and the converse can be said about matter. This explains why there must be two principles and not only one, and why their separate existence is impossible.[333]

2.3 Mixture of bodies

The interaction between the two principles explains the production of all other bodies and interactions of the cosmos. The Stoic conception of mixture has a central role in this explanation. It is the Stoic answer to the puzzle of sharing and separation. Instead of arguing that *nous* links two unrelated parts of the world, like the *Phaedo* and the *Sophist* (see Ch. 1, sec. 7.2; and Ch. 3, sec. 4), or that God is indirectly responsible for the sensible part of the world, like in the *Republic* (Ch. 2, sec. 6), the Stoics think that God is mixed through-and-through in everything.

There is, however, no information about how Zeno or Cleanthes thought of mixture. Alexander of Aphrodisias conserves Chrysippus' theory of mixture *of composite bodies* that are already pervaded by breath (a combination of two elements). This means that Chrysippus' theory does not entirely explain the mixture of the two principles and elements of the cosmos. Besides, it is uncertain whether this theory was a standard formulation that can be traced back to Zeno or whether it constitutes an innovation in line with Chrysippus' changes to other parts of Stoic physics. But by analysing Chrysippus' theory we can infer in what kind of mixture the Stoic principles have to be to create the cosmos.

Chrysippus distinguished three kind of mixture: juxtaposition, fusion, and blending.[334] The first case is like placing beans and grains of wheat side by side; each body of the mixture preserves its own substance and quality, and they can be easily separated. Both fusion and blending, however, are through-and-through mixtures. This means that the

[333] In contrast to this picture, Sorabji (1988, 93-98) thinks that both principles refer to the same body (substance, which is the intelligent ruler), but they denote different levels of existence (or categories). This will need an emendation to DL to read σῶμα instead of σώματα. I suspect that reading, however, leads to an abstract version of the principles that compromises their corporeality.
[334] See Alexander *On mixture* 216, 14-218,6 (LS48C; SVF 2.473).

bodies being mixed are extended in the same place, and no division will be able to separate them.[335] Fusion occurs when the bodies being mixed are destroyed, and a new body is generated, with new powers. In the case of blending, the original substances and their qualities are preserved, and can, at least in principle, be separated.[336] In both cases, the result of the mixture is something different from its original components, which implies that only bodies can be components of mixtures, since any component in a mixture must add something to it. Assuming each body has a different set of powers, the three different types of mixtures can be schematised as follow:

Juxtaposition:

$\alpha + \beta = (\alpha, \beta)$ (α side by side with β), where $\alpha \neq (\alpha, \beta)$ and $\beta \neq (\alpha, \beta)$, and both α, and β are preserved, and can be separated again by division.

Through-and through mixtures:

Fusion: $\alpha + \beta = \gamma$, where $\alpha \neq \beta$, $\gamma \neq \beta$, $\gamma \neq \alpha$, and both α, and β are destroyed after the fusion, which means that the fusion cannot be separated again into its original components.

Blending: $\alpha + \beta = \alpha\beta$, where $\alpha \neq \alpha\beta$, $\beta \neq \alpha\beta$, both α, and β are preserved, and can be separated again (but not by simple division).

The problem with the mixture of the two principles, which is a through-and-through mixture, is that it does not fit Chrysippus' definition of fusion or blending. The mixture of God and matter is *sui generis*. The principles are not destroyed after the mixture, nor do they lose any of their qualities, as in blending. But the principles are inseparable, like fusions. Moreover, the mixture of the principles cannot be a blend since blends do not generate new bodies. The outcome of a blending, unlike the case of fusion, is not a new body. To understand the way principles are mixed together we need to express their through-and-through mixture as follows:

Mixture of the principles: God + Matter = Substance, where God ≠ Matter, Substance ≠ Matter, Substance ≠ God, but both God and Matter are preserved in Substance (and occupy exactly the same place), but cannot be separated ever.

Only describing the mixture of the principles in this way can the Stoics account for the characteristics of the two principles, and at the same time explain the creation of a new

[335] See Alexander *On mixture* 3-4, and Galen *On containing causes*, 5.2-3.
[336] See also Stobaeus 1.155,5-11 (LS48D; SVF 2.471), and Plutarch *On common conceptions* 1078E (LS48B; SVF2.480).

body, substance (οὐσία). Since substance is a body that can act and be affected, it can act in itself, and produce from that action a new body. But since substance is the inseparable mixture of the two principles, it must also be preserved in the new bodies it produces, namely the four elements (fire, air, water, and earth). Whether the elements were indestructible or not was a matter of disagreement between the Stoics.[337] Through a complex process, the Stoics explained how each thing in the world came to be.

Fire was considered the active, and constructive element, the one containing λόγος. When mixed with air, fire forms a warm breath the Stoics called πνεῦμα. This breath acts as the cohesive force that holds things together, and directs them. Depending on the concentration of fire in the mix, πνεῦμα manifests as a tension which holds inanimate things together, as life in vegetables, and as animal soul, including the rational soul, or *nous*.[338] It is through πνεῦμα that humans have the power of judgement. But notice that according to the Stoics, it is through being mixed with God, that humans can act, and they can act in the way they do (rationally) due to the high concentration of the active principles in the human souls.

2.4 The four genera of bodies

The Stoics do not normally subdivide bodies by their composition[339] but into four different genera:[340] (1) substrates, (2) qualified individuals (which can be commonly and peculiarly qualified), (3) individuals disposed in some way, and (4) relatively disposed individuals. But these are not different types of bodies but rather different descriptions or aspects that the same body can have. In this way, when they describe a body, they can refer to it as a subject of predication without adding any other quality (this or that being, and also the unqualified principles), to its permanent qualities, some of which it has in common with other bodies (human, prudent), and some which distinguish it from any other body (Socratesness). A body can also be disposed in some non-permanent way (sitting in jail), and also disposed in relation to other bodies (friend of Glaucon, master of Coriscus).

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[337] For a detailed discussion about the creation of the elements, and their characteristics, see Cooper (2009), and Salles (2009a).

[338] Philo, *Quod deus sit immutabilis*, 35-45 (SVF 2.458; LS47Q; BS 12.7), and *Legum Allegoriarum* 2.22-23 (SVF 2.458; LS 47P; BS12.8).

[339] But see Galen, *On sustaining causes*, 1.1-2.4 (LS55F).

[340] See Simplicius, *In Aristotelis Categorias Commentarium*, 66, 32-67,2 (SVF 2.369; LS27F; FDS 832; BS 3.1), Plotinus, *Enneads* 6.1.25 (SVF 2.371), and Plutarch, *CN* 1083a-1084a (LS28A). See Long (1971, 89), and Boeri & Salles (2014, 58). Against the view that these are four genera of bodies see Bréhier (1970, 43) who thinks that only the first two genera correspond to bodies and the other two to incorporeals. See also Menn (1999, 224-5). But as Boeri & Salles explain (2014, 58), this cannot be since disposed and relatively disposed individuals are manifestations of πνεῦμα (a body), and therefore are corporeal.

It has been suggested that this doctrine originates with Chrysippus, as a response to Academic attacks.[341] There is, however, good reason to think that it has Plato's dialogues in the background, even if the full doctrine does not predate Chrysippus. Take, for instance, the second and third genera. With these distinctions the Stoics can explain that souls and virtues are bodies. A soul is a body in the sense that it is a qualified individual, a portion of natural breath, and virtue is also a body, since it is a soul disposed in some way. If we compare this with the *Sophist*, however, there the ES makes the materialists accept that virtues are something different from the qualities in the souls, and that it is by their presence in them that they are virtuous (see Ch. 4, sec. 4). The Stoics, in turn, do not accept that virtues are anything beyond the souls disposed in certain way. The reason is that otherwise virtues would not have causal power, or be present in an individual (they worry about the separation puzzle from the *Parmenides*).

The Stoics explain that even if souls are not tangible but subtle entities, they are bodies. Consider, for example, an argument put forward by Cleanthes to prove that the soul is a body:

> No incorporeal interacts with a body, and no body with an incorporeal. But the soul interacts with the body when it is sick and being cut, and the body with the soul; at least when the soul is ashamed the body becomes red or pale when is frightened.[342] Therefore, the soul is a body.[343]

In the case of virtues, Chrysippus even says that virtues and vices can be seen by the wise.[344] For him, virtues are qualified bodies.[345] However, not all the Stoics thought that virtue was a fixed feature of the soul, since Seneca describes virtue as the mind disposed in certain way.[346] But some of the arguments to show the corporeality of virtue are based on their causal capacity. A passage from Seneca attests this:

> Or do you not see how much the virtue of courage may cause sturdiness in the eyes? How much prudence may cause attention? How much reverence may cause moderation and tranquility? How cheerfulness may cause serenity? How severity stiffness? How much leniency forgiveness? Therefore, *these* are corporeal, since they change the colours and appearance of bodies, exercising power in their own kingdom.[347]

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[341] See Long and Sedley (1987, 165-6, 172-176, 177-179).
[342] The example of shame could be picking up the reference to the shame of the improved materialists of the *Sophist* 247b9-c2; Ch. 4, sec. 4.
[343] Nemesius, *De Natura hominis*, 2.136-140 (SVF 1.518; LS45C). Chrysippus offers a similar argument, see Nemesius, *De Natura hominis*, 2.164-7 (SVF 2.790; LS45D; BS 13.16). See also Brunschwig (1988, 133).
[344] See Plutarch, O*n Stoic Self-contradictions* 1042e-f.
[345] See Galen, *De Placitis Hippocratis et Platonis* 7.1.12-15 (SVF 3.259, LS29E).
[346] See Alexander, *De anima* 2.118, 6-8 (SVF 2.823; LS29A).
[347] Seneca, *Epistulae Morales* 106.7-10 (SVF 3.84; not in LS nor BS). See also Simplicius, *in cat.* 212, 12, 213, 7 (SVF 2.390; LS 28N; BS 3.8); Seneca, *Epistulae Morales*, 113.2 (SVF 3.307, LS29B);

The strategy is, in general terms, the same as in the case of soul. If something has causal power, then it is a body. Notice, however, that bodies' causal power is due to God's physical presence in them. The Stoics use the *Sophist's dunamis* proposal in exactly the opposite direction to the ES. They use it as a criterion of inclusion for bodies. The move seems to be the following: if to produce and/or to be affected is the criterion of inclusion for bodies, then it does not matter whether a body is directly perceptible or not; if it makes some difference in an interaction, their corporeality is inferred. If they perceive the effects of something, even if they cannot perceive the agent directly, the Stoics assume it is a body. In the case of souls, they can be perceived in the sense that when we see a human being we see the through-and-through mixture of a soul and a human body. The only thing that we may not see is the soul alone, unmixed, since it is a breath that could escape our notice. In the case of virtues, they are perceptible in the sense that we can see virtuous individuals. In this way, the Stoic four genera help to establish finer differences. Things are bodies in different senses, which allows the Stoics to include in their somatology even relations, since the fourth category seems to make relations exclusively corporeal.

3. The Stoic inclusion of incorporeals

3.1 Motivation for the inclusion of incorporeals

Stoic corporealism is not a deflationist ontology but an inflationist somatology.[348] As I have explained, instead of rejecting the existence of virtues or considering them incorporeal, they include them in their ontology as bodies. Their criterion for inclusion, however, is clear. For something to be an existent (that is a body) it has to have three dimensions, and resistance. It has to be able to interact in a causal chain making a difference, and so be able to produce something or to be affected. But when the Stoics are thinking about bodies they also worry about how to deal with some things that not even they can describe as bodies, while it still seems absolutely necessary for their account of reality. There are, for example, some things that are necessary conditions for the existence of bodies, like void, and others that seem to be caused by bodies while they are not bodies themselves, like propositions.

The fact that they accept they need more than bodies means that if we see them as readers of the *Sophist*, what they do first when they are thinking about ontology is compromise between the idealist and corporealist positions of the gigantomachia. Notice

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Stobaeus, *Eclogae* 1.138, 14-22. See also Brunschwig (1988, 123). For the idea that virtues are perceptible bodies: Plutarch, *SR* 19 (SVF 3.85). Cf. Simplicius, *in cat.* 209.2-3, 217. 32-218.2.

[348] See Brunschwig (1988, 123).

that the Stoics and the two groups of corporealists from the *Sophist* have less in common than one might imagine. They take the point of corporealism, and are able to rearticulate their position avoiding the challenges raised by the ES, and even using his *dunamis* proposal to work on behalf of corporealism. But the Stoics are also paying attention to the idealists, and the ES, and they are rethinking the arguments also from these points of view. The way the Stoics compromise materialism and idealism is different to that of the ES, who has an epistemological agenda the Stoics reject, but it is done in the same methodological terms. The Stoics critically revised the arguments of the different groups of people in the *Sophist*, but they are also interested in the ES's project, to the point that they are walking in the footsteps of the ES, revaluating each of the arguments, and decisions made.

If the Stoics accept that there are incorporeals, it is not because of the ES's arguments (since he argues that incorporeals have power), but by reflecting on the idealists' conception of incorporeals. Although the Stoics reject forms, they accept there are other incorporeal things that have some of the features the idealists saw in forms. In particular, Stoic incorporeals are essential to explain knowledge, and becoming. But here any reader of the *Parmenides* and the *Sophist* is going to wonder whether the Stoics would not be vulnerable to an epistemological objection similar to the one in the greatest difficulty. The Stoic definition of incorporeals tries to answer this worry.

3.2 Definition of incorporeals

The Stoics accept in their ontology some incorporeals. But since 'an incorporeal is not of a nature either to produce something or to be affected'[349] they do not call them existents, as with bodies, but subsistent (ὑφιστάμενον).[350] But incorporeals are real. The corollary of this is that for the Stoics there are some realities that do not exist. It seems that when the Stoics talk about subsistence for thought,[351] that is anything that can be grasped by the mind. Notice that this does not mean that subsistent items are mind-dependent, but that their reality can be grasped by the mind, if there is any. An incorporeal is a way of being real that although it is not a body, it can be understood by minds. Under this account, then, bodies subsist also.

What seems to distinguish incorporeals from everything else, however, is reported by Sextus Empiricus when he writes that incorporeals constitute 'a πρᾶγμα that can be thought

[349] Sextus Empiricus, *AM* 8.263 (SVF 2.363; LS45B). See also Cicero, *Academica* 1.39 (SVF 1.90; LS45A; BS 2.10).
[350] See Plutarch, *Adversus Colotem*, 1116B7-C2 (FDS 721; BS 2.7); Galen *De methodo medendi libri* 10.155, 1-8 (SVF 2.322; LS 27G; FDS 236, 717; BS 2.9). Also 'what subsists' (τὸ ὑφεστός), see Galen, *Meth. med*. 10. 155, 1-8.
[351] See Proclus, *On Plato's Timaeus* 271D (LS 51F).

by itself.'[352] The translation of the word πρᾶγμα here is difficult. It can translate to 'state of affairs,' 'event,' or 'fact,' the problem is that all these words are loaded philosophical terms, and whatever is chosen should be used carefully. The important aspect is that πρᾶγμα is contrasted with corporeality. Even if incorporeals make reference to bodies, since they have no causal power they cannot be reduced to or incorporated as corporeal. In addition, a πρᾶγμα cannot mean what is actually the case, since there are more things that have subsistence to the mind that those which are the case (the Stoics think that false propositions are incorporeal and thus subsist). This suggests that—to put it in anachronistic language—for the Stoics all possible worlds are real, even if only one of them is instantiated.

But let us now turn to the other part of Sextus' report. While Socrates' forms in the *Parmenides* are 'themselves by themselves,' Stoic incorporeals are less ontologically demanding. They are not said to have an autonomous existence with causal powers, separate from the corporeal reality. The only thing the Stoics claim is that an incorporeal 'can be thought by itself.' One suggestion on how to understand this is as meaning that incorporeals, although unable to act or be acted upon, are mind-independent, and accessible to the mind without the need of any extra assumption. This means, on the one hand, that the mind does not give them their reality (they are not an invention of the mind); but on the other hand, that minds have access to them. In this way, the definition of a Stoic incorporeal can be stated in the following way:

Incorporeal: X is an incorporeal iff *X* neither produces nor is affected, and *X* is a πρᾶγμα that can be thought without positing the existence of anything extra.

This could still sound vulnerable to epistemological objections like the one in the *Parmenides*. The Stoics, however, could respond that incorporeals are accessible to the mind not because we share in their incorporeal subsistence (as the idealists claim), but because incorporeals make reference to bodies' interaction, and those bodies can make impressions in the soul. In other words, incorporeals are known through bodies, and not vice versa.

3.3 List of incorporeals

Despite the similarities I highlighted between the Stoics and the idealists of the *Sophist* in the previous section, there is a huge difference in terms of what each of them include as incorporeals. But they do not mean by becoming the same thing as the idealists mean. As

[352] Sextus Empiricus *AM* 10.218, 7 (SVF 2.330; BS 2.4).

Clement reports, for the Stoics becoming is incorporeal.[353] The Stoics mean by becoming, not generated, corruptible, and perceptible bodies, but their changes, and activities. With their characterisation of the incorporeal, the Stoics can include various things, and the reports offer a list of otherwise unrelated things. The Stoics' incorporeals include, at least in its orthodox list, time (χρόνος), place (τόπος), sayables (λεκτά),[354] and void.[355]

All incorporeals but void derive from bodies and their interaction and thus depend on their existence.[356] For the Stoics, the notions of both time and place, presuppose the existence of bodies. Place is what is occupied by a body,[357] and time is the dimension or interval (διάστημα) of motion,[358] which cannot occur without bodies.[359] In addition, sayables are effects of bodies interacting with each other.[360] Void, however, is an incorporeal which is not produced by bodies, but is necessary condition for their existence, since it is described as what 'neither has figure nor takes on figure, and neither is affected nor produced by anything, but is simply the sort of thing which receives body.'[361]

4. The highest genus

At this point we may wonder how the Stoic ontological picture is supposed to work, since on the one hand there are bodies, which are the only entities that exist, and on the other hand there are incorporeals, which are items that subsist. The answer to this question is what the Stoics call the highest genus. They argue that body and incorporeals

[353] Clement, *Stromata*, 8.9.26.3-4 (LS55C).
[354] As such, Cleanthes seems to be the first Stoic who talked about sayables (λεκτά). See Clement, *Stromata* 8, 9, 26.
[355] For the list of incorporeals see Sextus Empiricus, AM 10.218 (SVF 2.330; LS27D; BS 2.4), and Plutarch *Against Colotes,* 1116B7-C2 (FDS 721; BS 2.7). For a possible alternative list, which seems to include limits, see Cleomedes, *Caelestia*, 1.1, 141-142, and Brunschwig's (1988, 28-29), and (1994, 96-103), and Robertson's (2004) discussion of limits. See also Long & Sedley (1987, vol. I, 163, 165, 301). For time as an incorporeal see Proclus, *On Plato's Timaeus*, 271D (LS51F), For void, and place, see Stobaeus 1.161,8–26 (LS 49A), and Sextus Empiricus, *AM* 10.3–4 (LS 49B). For sayables, see Sextus Empiricus, *AM* 8.11–12 (LS 33B), and Seneca, *Ep*. 117.13 (LS 33E).
[356] This has been recently made clear by Totschnig (2013), following Bréhier (1997). They, however, see this aspect of the Stoic doctrine of incorporeals as a huge problem.
[357] See Stobaeus *Eclogae* I, 161, 8-26 (LS49A; SVF2.503, part), and Sextus Empiricus *M* 10.3-4 (LS49B; SVF2.505, part).
[358] See Simplicius *In Ar. Cat.* 350, 15-16 (LS51A; SVF2.510, part); and Stobaeus *Eclogae* I, 106, 5-23 (LS51B; SVF2.509). For a discussion of the Stoic notion of time see Bréhier (1997, 54), Schofield (1988, 355), and Totschnig (2013, 134-137).
[359] Interestingly, the Stoics consider space and time as incorporeal because they have an absolute notion of these terms. Otherwise, they could have thought about space and time as corporeals in the fourth genera.
[360] See Sextus Empiricus *M* 9.211 (LS55B; SVF2.341).
[361] Cleomedes *De motu circulari corporum caelestium* 8,12-14 (LS49C, SVF2.541). This of course, makes clearer the similarities of this doctrine with the *Timaeus*. Is the void a Stoic version of the receptacle?

are the only two species of the highest genus 'something.'[362] This doctrine, however, caused outrage in antiquity, and puzzlement thereafter. The Stoics do not place 'being,' which is reserved only for bodies, as the highest genus; but surely everything that counts as something is a being? In fact, the *Sophist* makes this very point:

> ES.—Also this is surely manifest to us: that we also apply on each occasion the <word> 'something' on a being; since it is impossible to apply it alone by itself, as if it were naked, and isolated from all beings; is it not?
>
> Th.—It is impossible (*Sophist* 237d1-237d5).

If according to the ES and Theaetetus, it is necessary that every time someone uses the word 'something' they refer to a being, and if the Stoics read the *Sophist*, why did they disagree, and on what grounds? If one looks at the way not the ES, but the idealists distinguish between 'being' (τὸ ὄν, οὐσία) and 'becoming' (γένεσις), (see *Sophist* 246b6-c3, 248a11, 248e7-8; Ch. 4, sec. 6), it is possible to draw a parallel with the Stoic use of 'being' (or 'existent') and 'subsistent.'[363] Ignore for a moment the extension of these concepts. In both cases, there is a set of items that monopolises the term 'being.' But in the case of the idealists that is not to say that the items which belong to 'becoming,' are not-beings in an absolute sense.

As I noted in the previous chapter, I argued that the idealists have an elitist ontology, where there are two degrees of being, and they reserve the name 'being,' or 'genuine being' for forms, which have the highest degree of existence, and refer to bodies as mere becoming. For the idealists, becoming shares in forms' being, but is separated from them, always changing. At the end of the gigantomachia, however, the ES's arguments lead him to modify this distinction from one about degrees of being to one about two different sorts of beings, since otherwise the existence of *nous* is at risk. This solution, however, assumes that incorporeals must have some power to exist. The ES's ontological account at the end of the gigantomachia can be understood as placing being, marked off by the *dunamis* proposal, as the highest genus, where incorporeals (forms, and *nous*) and bodies are its species.

The Stoics, however, agreeing with one of the idealists' views, reject the *dunamis* proposal as a criterion that exhausts reality. They insist that there are items that cannot produce nor be affected, but are, nevertheless, real. The Stoics consider bodies and incorporeals as two different species of things, and keep the use of 'being' for those entities which monopolise the active power. Instead of talking about two degrees of being, they

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[362] See Alexander, *In Top*. 359.12-16 (SVF 11.329b, FDS 709). See also Alexander, *In Top*. 301.19-27; Philo, *Leg. alleg.* 2.86, 3.175, *Quod det. pot.* 118; Sextus *PH* 2.86, 223; *M*, 10.234; *Scholia in Arist. Categ*., 34b8-11; Plotinus, *Enneads* 6.1.25. 3-6, 26, cf. 6.2.1.22.

[363] The parallel was already noted by Plutarch, *Adv. Colot*. 1116b-c (FDS 721). See also Brunschwig (1988, 116).

propose two different types of reality.[364] They are two different ways of being real. It is not that Stoic bodies are better or more genuine than subsistent things, they are completely different, and complementary. The corollary of this is that for the Stoics there are items that are real even when they do not exist.

5. Concepts, and ideas

5.1 Fictions of the soul

The Stoics are known for rejecting forms, and for talking about concepts instead. Take for example the following report of Zeno's and his associates' views in Stobaeus:

> They say that concepts are neither something nor qualified, but are fictions of the soul,[365] as if they were something and as if they were qualified.[366] And these are what the ancients call ideas. For the ideas are of that which falls under the concepts,[367] like of humans, of horses, and in general are said of all the animals and of many other things of which they say there are ideas. But the Stoic philosophers say these [*i.e*., ideas] are unreal, and that we, on the one hand, partake of the concepts, and, on the other hand, we bear what they call 'appellatives.'[368]

In this passage, the Stoics replace what the 'ancients' call ideas with concepts.[369] They are not the same thing, but for any idea in the ancients' philosophy, there is a corresponding concept in Stoicism. In other words, ideas and Stoic concepts are extensionally equivalent, since each thing that counts as a participant of a specific idea in the ancients' philosophy is a participant of an equivalent concept in the Stoic philosophy. This can be expressed in the following way:

> Extensional equivalence ideas/concepts: for any *a*, if *a* partakes in the *F*-itself according to the ancients' philosophy, then it will be the case that *a* partakes in the corresponding concept of *F* according to the Stoic philosophy.

The difference between Stoic concepts and ideas is their ontological status and role in the causal process. The evidence on this matter, however, is compressed, and

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[364] This point has not been sufficiently noted. Species do not presuppose degree. Contra Totschnig (2013, 125).

[365] For the notion of 'fiction of the soul,' see DL 7.49-51 (SVF 2.52, 55, 61; LS 39A; FDS 255; BS 6.1); Aetius 4.12.1-5 (SVF 2.54; LS 39B; FDS 268; BS 6.2); Aetius 4.111-4 (SVF 2.83; FDS 277; BS 6.4). For the use of φαντάσματα in Plato see *Phaedo* 81d2 'ψυχῶν σκιοειδῆ φαντάσματα,' ('shadowy apparitions of the souls').

[366] Cf. also DL 7.60-1 (LS 30C; FDS 621; BS 6.13).

[367] Cf. Pseudo-Plutarch, *Epit*. 1.10.5; Eusebius, *Prep. Ev*. 15.45.4, ii. 413, 8 Mras. And, according to Caston (1999, 149), derived from these also Pseudo-Galen, *De hist. philos*. 25.

[368] Stobaeus, *Eclogae Physicae et Ethicae,* 1.136, 21-137, 6 (SVF 1.65; LS 30A; FDS 316; BS 4.1).

[369] A distinction here might be useful. When discussing ideas/forms in this context there is, on the one hand, a description of ideas according to idealists (*v.g*., they are themselves by themselves), but there is also a description of ideas according to the Stoics (*i.e*., they are unreal).

there is disagreement about how to understand it.[370] Let me start with concepts. Apart from the evidence from Stobaeus, we have Diogenes Laertius' report:

> But a concept is a fiction of thought, and which is not something nor a qualified [individual], but as it were something which is and as it were a qualified [thing], in the way a mental image of a horse comes to be even when none is present.[371]

Using these reports to complement each other, we can establish three characteristics. A Stoic concept is (1) a fiction of the rational soul, (2) not something nor a qualified individual, (3) as if it were something, and as if it were a qualified individual, as when a mental image of something arises even when nothing is present. But to understand all this we need some background.

The Stoics distinguish between impression (φαντασία), impressor (φανταστόν), imagination (φανταστικόν), and fiction (φάντασμα). According to Aetius' report,[372] Chrysippus—probably clarifying Zeno's doctrine—explains that an impression is an affection in the soul which reveals itself and its cause (τὸ πεποιηκός). The πεποιηκός of an impression is an impressor, an external body that activates the soul.[373] They say that impressions, then, derive from what exists. Imagination, in turn, is an affection in the soul which arises without impressor, and thus, they call it an 'empty attraction.' A fiction is that to which imagination is attracted.

Imaginations, however, are not produced *ex nihilo*. For the Stoics, everything has a cause, and all causes are bodies. We can infer from there that an imagination is produced by the action of the soul in itself (or perhaps the body?), and not from the action of external bodies. But imaginations are a kind of affection of the soul that instead of revealing its real cause, reveals a pseudo-cause, the fiction. But fictions are not mind independent, although they appear to be. For that reason, sometimes having fictions in one's soul is a symptom of madness or melancholy (if one takes fictions to be real). As in Diogenes Laertius, a fiction can be a hallucination of a horse. In Aetius' report, the example is that of Orestes' hallucinations.[374] But a fiction is also that of what we see in dreams. In this same set, the Stoics include concepts as a type of fiction. The main difference seems to be that there are fictions of particulars, whereas concepts are fictions of pluralities. This, however, does not explain the ontological status of fictions quite yet.

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[370] See Brunschwig (1988), (2003); Sedley (1985); Caston (1999); Sellars (2010), and Boeri and Salles (2014).
[371] DL 7.61, 1-3; DL 7.60 (LS 30C).
[372] See Aetius 4.12.1-5 (SVF 2.54; LS 39B; BS 6.2).
[373] Notice that knowledge, for the Stoics is a complex activity that requires the action of the body in the soul to produce an impression, but also the activity of reason to assent or not to that impression. Cf. my discussion in Ch. 4, sec. 6.
[374] See Aetius 4.12.1-5 (SVF 2.54; BS 6.2).

Things get even more complex. In one of Simplicius' reports we learn that fictions of the soul are called οὔτι, sometimes translated as 'not-something,' or as 'nothing,'[375] and, according to Sextus' report, not-somethings have no subsistence for thought,[376] which was a necessary condition to be a Stoic incorporeal. The puzzle here is that fictions are not bodies, since they are not impressors, nor incorporeals, since—apart from their name—they do not present subsistence for thought. But if that is the case, fictions have no place in the Stoic ontological map since bodies and incorporeals are the only two species of something, which is the highest and exhaustive genus in the Stoic ontology. From the description of fictions, and their other ontological claims, it seems that the Stoics face a possible charge of inconsistency. There is, nevertheless, a way round the problem.

There is a corporealistic explanation of fictions without the Stoics conferring on them any new ontological status. It is possible that what the Stoics deny about fictions is not their existence or subsistence *simpliciter*, but their being and subsistence as such. The reason could be that fictions are not really unified items. When we talk about Pegasus, the Stoics will say that strictly speaking, Pegasus is not one thing, but the pastiche of two (a white horse and two wings). But the pastiche is artificial, without subsistence for thought, just for imagination.[377] Even when someone hallucinates a horse, she sees one specific thing when there is none. On the other hand, in the case of concepts, strictly speaking the concept of, for instance, beauty, is not a thing, but an artificial abstraction of the common qualities of many similar things. But as with Pegasus, the Stoics would be saying that the concept of beauty is a creation that has no subsistence for thought, just for imagination.

The idea that not-somethings are so because they are not unified, could derive from a Stoic interpretation of *Sophist* 237e1-2. There, the ES says: Τὸν δὲ δὴ μὴ τὶ λέγοντα ἀναγκαιότατον, ὡς ἔοικε, παντάπασι μηδὲν λέγειν. If one reads μηδέν literally, not as 'nothing,' but as 'not-one-thing,' then, the claim translates as 'Then, it is absolutely necessary, it seems, that someone who says not-something, says *not-one-thing* at all.' Taken in this way, the Stoics agree with the claim, since it allows them to say that talking about not-somethings is possible, just that when someone refers to not-something, she really refers not to one thing, but none or to many. A fiction, then, is an artificial pastiche, a mental construct which does not meet the standards to be considered a Stoic something in its own right, since it is a mind-dependent fabrication. But in a

[375] See Simplicius, *In Cat.* 105. 11.
[376] See Sextus Empiricus, *AM* 1.17 (SVF 2.330; LS27C; BS 2.12), quoted below.
[377] Brunschwig (1988, 99) says something similar when he explains that concepts are fictitious individuals and not real individuals. But Brunschwig (127) thinks that concepts are fictional individuals *because* they are universal, whereas I am arguing that they are fictitious because they are not unified.

corporealistic cosmos like the Stoics', these fabrications are part of a condition of the soul (the part of an imagination that seems to be its cause, but it is not). What bodies and incorporeals have in common that distinguish them from fictions is that they are mind-independent.

But fictions are not necessarily problematic. The peculiar thing about them is that although they are not unified, they seem to be. Remember that fictions seem as if they were something, and as if they were qualified individuals. But if someone is fully aware of the fictional character of a fiction, then there is no problem, like when we dream and we know we are dreaming, or we wake up and we are able to distinguish between dream and reality. The difficulty begins when someone takes what is fiction as real, namely as something or a qualified individual; a person who has hallucinations and takes them for real, or that thinks that concepts exist independently from their mind. This is exactly what the Stoics seem to think about ideas. An idea is a concept taken at its face value, as if it were a real mind-independent thing.[378]

An idealist for the Stoics is someone who confuses fiction with reality. In the specific case of ideas, the idealist not only thinks they are mind-independent, but separated, explanatory, able to play a part in the causal process, among other things. For Zeno, things do not partake in ideas, but in concepts. This participation, however, is a construct, and has no effect in us beyond being called by a common name (cf. *Parmenides* 133c2-d5; see Ch. 3, sec. 4.). Take the following example. The Stoic system claims that things like the good have no existence or subsistence *as a form*, since forms are merely unreal fictions some people take as real. Any good in the world is either corporeal or a state of affairs resulting from the interactions between bodies.

With all this, it is now possible to classify the different types of fictions in the following way:

Fictions	**Taken as real**	**Taken as fictions**
Particulars	Hallucinations	Dreams, fictional characters taken as such (*e.g.* Mickey Mouse)[379]
Universals	Ideas	Concepts

[378] Take, for example, *Phaedo* 102b1 when Socrates says 'each of the forms is something' (εἶναί τι ἕκαστον τῶν εἰδῶν). See Ch. 1, sec. 8.1.

[379] There is a puzzle about where to put universals of fictional characters (like Centaur). The Stoics do not seem worried about explaining this possibility, but they would be some kind of pseudo-concepts.

Let me go back to the greatest difficulty. Parmenides warns Socrates about the challenges he or anyone else would face while trying to teach idealism. The main objections unconvinced people could make are that forms may not even exist, and if they exist they are necessarily unknowable to us. The Stoic criticism against forms reformulates these objections. The Stoics say (in their terms) that ideas do not exist, and, furthermore, they do not even subsist. The problem is not that they are unknowable but rather that they have no subsistence for thought. This does not mean, however, that they are inconceivable, but that they are mere follies of imagination.

The problem is not that ideas are absolutely nothing and that Socrates and other idealists not even make any sense when they talk. They do make sense, and what they say could even sound as if it were true, but the Stoics think that if someone tries to teach through not-somethings (ideas, and even concepts included), teaching is ineffective. This is well expressed by the following report from Sextus:

> If one teaches something, surely it will be taught through (διὰ) not-somethings or through (διὰ) somethings. But it cannot be taught through (διὰ) not-somethings, since, according to the philosophers from the Stoa, these are not-subsistent for thought.[380]

According to the Stoics, teaching *through* not-somethings is no teaching at all. Notice that this is a causal claim. Not-somethings as such cannot produce knowledge, because they are not bodies, so they cannot produce anything. This is not to say that they should be absolutely barred from philosophical discourse. In fact, the Stoics make widespread use of concepts. But the thought is that learning or whatever is learnt is not caused by not-somethings. This applies to not-somethings in general regardless of whether one is aware of their fictional character (concepts) or not (ideas). The Stoics think that wasting time on these fictions surely does not make us knowers or virtuous, since for them these are specific dispositions of the soul and are a result of pondering impressions, and therefore have a real link with the world outside one's own mind. The thought is that by only considering the concept or idea of virtue, a person will not become virtuous.

The use of fictions in discourse, however, has some advantages, provided that one understands their ontological status. For one thing, they serve conciseness. It is also important, however, to notice that concepts are not the same as mental representations, which the Stoics call conceptions (ἔννοιαι). Following the Stoic terminology,[381] conceptions are a kind of impression in the soul. A conception, then, is corporeal in the

[380] Sextus Empiricus, *AM* 1.17 (SVF 2.330; LS27C; FDS 710; BS 2.12). Cf. Sextus Empiricus, *AM* 10.238. Cf. *Cratylus* 439a1-b9.
[381] See Plutarch, *De Communibus Notitiis Adversus Stoicos* 1084F-1085A (SVF 2.847; LS 39F).

sense that it is the soul disposed in certain way by an impressor, which is a body 'commonly qualified.' But to refer to a collection of commonly qualified objects, the Stoics use concepts. But the use of a concept should be understood as a shorthand for the formula 'for any *x*, if *x* is *Y*,' or perhaps for a conjunction '*a* is *Y*, and *b* is *Y,* and *c* is *Y*…' A concept is an objectification of this process, which is allowed if people using them understand that they are just fictions without an ontological unity as such. This is similar to what happens when people in their daily language attribute human characteristics to objects. The use of anthropomorphic language does not commit them to anthropomorphic beliefs.

As we have seen, the Stoics reject ideas, and think that concepts are just fictions of the soul with no role in the causal process of anything. But their rejection of ideas is clever. Since they also accept the subsistence of incorporeals, they are immune to the ES's objection against the materialists and others who reject incorporeals (see Ch. 4, sec. 4). In the *Sophist*, the ES's objection assumes that the only incorporeal entities are ideas, and therefore that whoever rejects them is committed to the claim that everything changes, which makes *nous* disappear (see Ch. 4, sec. 7). But since the Stoics propose their own list of incorporeals, they can agree with the claim that some things change, and some others are at rest, without accepting that ideas are real.

5.2 A general map of the Stoic ontology

I am now in a position to offer a general picture of the Stoic ontology, according to what I have defended here:

Something (subsists for thought)
- 1. Bodies (exist, produce or are affected)
  - 1.1 Substrate
  - 1.2 Qualified (impressors)
    - 1.2.1 Commonly qualified (soul)
    - 1.2.2 Peculiarly qualified (Socratesness)
  - 1.3 Disposed (*e.g.*, sitting in jail; dispositions of the soul like: virtues conceptions, and imaginations—defined as attractions to fictions)[382]
  - 1.4 Relatively disposed (next to Coriscus, causes)
- 2. Incorporeals (subsist, do not produce, nor are affected)
  - 2.1Void
  - Effects (that obtain):
  - 2.2 Sayables
  - 2.3 Place
  - 2.4 Time
  - 2.5 (Limits)

[382] Fictions would be pseudo-intentional objects, part of having an imagination, and for the subject having the imagination they look like real things, but in fact they are products of the imagination without ontological unity. For this reason they do not have a place in the diagram.

Concepts and fictions are part of the phenomenology of having an imagination. They are a distinctive feature of a disposition of the soul, but they are nothing as such. The Stoics, as I have argued, are re-thinking the arguments of the *Sophist*, and compromising between materialisms and idealisms (both the one of the friends of the forms, and the modified version of the ES).

But at this point one may wonder why the Stoics are still identified as corporealists (and not as some type of dualists)? The answer cannot be that they reserve the label 'being' only for bodies. As I argued, bodies and incorporeals are co-dependent, and they are not two degrees of being, but rather two irreducible species of the highest genus something. But if so, then why do we insist on saying that the Stoics are more interested in bodies? In other words, why are the Stoics more interested in the *Sophist's* giants rather than in the friends of the forms?

The answer, one may think, is causation. After all, the Stoic doctrine of causation is one of the fundamental features of the Stoic philosophy, and is one of the central links between their physics, ethics, and logic. But looking closely, one may object, both bodies and incorporeals are essential pieces for understanding the Stoic account of causation. While it is true that for the Stoics, bodies monopolise the causal power, incorporeals are necessary conditions for the interaction between bodies, as well as their effects, since the Stoics think that the result of bodies acting on one another is a state of affairs, which is incorporeal. Another way to put this worry is to consider the case of the idealists, which are commonly described as dualists even when incorporeal entities hold an especial place and have all the causal power in their ontology. So why would it be different with the Stoics, if the only thing they are doing is changing the direction of fit of the causal process (that is, from bodies to incorporeals, and not the other way around)?

The reason why the Stoics are corporealists is that they place special importance on the items holding the causal power. They are interested in explaining who or what is responsible for each thing in the cosmos, and their interaction, since getting clear about that is explanatory. The Stoics, therefore, are engaged with the Platonic project of expanding the legal framework to explain the cosmos (as discussed in Ch. 1).

5.3 Knowledge

Since the Stoics reject forms, and argue that souls are bodies, they also offer a new account of knowledge. In doing so they reject *Parmenides*' idea that without forms knowledge is impossible. The Stoics consider, instead, that sensation (αἴσθησις) plays

an essential role in the acquisition of knowledge, since it is from this that humans get their first impressions in their soul.[383] Sensation, they argue, is πνεῦμα which goes like an octopus from the commanding-faculty of the soul to the different organs of sense-perception, and comes back with a perceptual impression that then is considered by the commanding-faculty.[384]

According to Diogenes Laertius' report,[385] however, the Stoics distinguish between sensory and non-sensory impressions. The first ones are those obtained through confrontation between impressors and the organs of sensation, the others are obtained through thought (διάνοια), not by confrontation but by processes like similarity, analogy, opposition, and transition. The soul is able to perform other actions, like transposition, combination, abstraction, diminution, and magnification, but these do not seem to generate impressions but fictions.

But the Stoics say that 'knowledge is a cognition (κατάληψις) which is *safe* (ἀσφαλής),[386] firm, and unalterable by argument.'[387] However, to fully understand this very technical definition it is necessary to briefly explain what is implied in a cognition, and all the qualifications the definition includes.

A cognition, according to the Stoics, is defined as assent to a cognitive impression (φαντασία καταληπτική).[388] The sources preserve, however, various accounts of what a cognitive impression is. The notion, originally from Zeno, seems to have evolved as a

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[383] Sextus Empiricus *AM* 8.56-61 (SVF 2.88; BS6.8).

[384] DL7.52 (SVF 2.71; LS40Q; FDS 255); Aetius *Placita* 4.21.1-4 (SVF 2.836; LS53H; FDS 441; BS13.13).

[385] DL 7.49-51 (LS39A, FDS 255; BS 6.1); for the source of this passage see Mansfeld (1986, 351-73), and Kidd (1988, 190). See also DL 7.53 (LS39D; BS 6.3).

[386] Cf. Socrates' 'safe' (ἀσφαλής) answers in *Phaedo* 100d8-ff. See Ch. 1, sec. 7.

[387] Sextus Empiricus *AM* 7.151-157 (SVF 1.67-69; 2.90; LS41C; FDS 370; BS7.8). See also Cicero *Acad*. 1.40-42 (SVF1.55, 60-61; LS40B, 41B; BS7.5); Stobaeus *Eclogae* 2.73, 19-74, 3 (SVF 2.112; LS41H; FDS 385; BS7.13), text I discuss in what follows; and Ps.-Galen *DM* 19.350, 3-10, where, as Boeri & Salles (2014, 172) point out, ἐγκαταλήψεων must be a synonym of κατάληψις.

[388] Sextus Empiricus, *AM* 7.151-7 (SVF 1.67-9; 2.90; LS41C FDS 370; BS7.8); *AM* 11.182-3 (SVF1.73; 2.97; FDS 336, 378; BS 7.12). For the impact of Plato's *Theaetetus* in the development of the notion of cognitive impression, see Ioppolo (1990), Long (2002), and Sedley (2002b). According to Sextus' report in *AM* 7.242-260 (SVF 2.65; LS39G, LS40E; FDS 273; BS6.5, 7.3), the Stoics distinguished various types and subtypes of impressions. The following table shows these distinctions and where the cognitive impressions are situated:

Φαντασία
1. Persuasive.
    1.1 True.
        1.1.1 *Cognitive*.
        1.1.2 Not cognitive.
    1.2 False.
    1.3 True and false.
    1.4 Neither true nor false.
2. Not persuasive.
3. Simultaneously persuasive and unpersuasive.
4. Neither persuasive nor unpersuasive.

response to a heated debate inside and outside the Stoa. To Zeno is attributed a three-part definition, although it is possible that these characteristics were proposed diachronically and were not supposed to be taken together as a definition.[389] He said that a cognitive impression: (a) 'arises from what is (ἀπὸ ὑπάρχοντος)' and (b) it is 'stamped and imprinted with that very thing which is (κατ' αὐτὸ τὸ ὑπάρχον ἐναπεσφραγισμένην καὶ ἐναπομεμαγμένην).' Later, after Arcesilaus' objections, he added that (c) it is 'of a kind that could not arise from what is not (ὁποία οὐκ ἂν γένοιτο ἀπὸ μὴ ὑπάρχοντος).'[390] Later Stoics took it as a definition and built upon it. This type of impression is—among other characteristics—self-evident, pulls us to assent, cannot arise from what is not, is a condition for knowledge, and when it has no impediment, it is the criterion of truth.[391] An impression, as I explained before, is an affection in the soul[392] which reveals itself and its cause.

In order for someone to have knowledge, then, two things are needed: an unimpeded cognitive impression, and an unalterable assent to that impression. Knowledge, then, is a complex activity, which, at least in that aspect, is similar to the notion of knowledge derived from the *Sophist*'s gigantomachia (cf. Ch. 4, sec. 6).

6. Causal interaction and responsibility

6.1 The background of the Stoic notion of αἴτιον in Zeno and Chrysippus

The Stoic doctrine of causality puts all the previous elements together. But it is also a highly peculiar doctrine. Stoic doctrine has often been understood as containing three relata: two bodies and a predicate.[393] It has been recently suggested that the Stoic causal process has four relata (two causes and two effects).[394] But before even discussing how many relata there are, we need to pay attention to how their notion of cause and causality developed.

At a cosmic level, God is the only source of active capacity (and thus of causal power), and it is only through being mixed with him that other bodies have active capacity (cf. Ch. 3). The way the active power gets expressed in each body, however,

[389] See Sedley (2002b).
[390] Sextus Empiricus *AM* 7.247-260 (SVF2.65; LS40E, K; FDS 273; BS 7.3). See also DL 7.45-46 (SVF2.53; LS40C; FDS 33; BS 7.1). For the translation of this definition I follow very closely Sedley's (2002b) commentary on this passage. But note that the term ὑπάρχον could mean 'what is' or 'what is the case.' For discussion see Schofield (1980, 248), Annas (1980, 89), Long & Sedley (1987, vol. 1, 250), M. Frede (1999, 300-311), and Boeri & Salles (2014, 133).
[391] Sextus Empiricus *AM* 7.253-60 (LS40K).
[392] For discussion about the debate inside the Stoa about what exactly this means, see Sextus Empiricus AM 7.227-236 (SVF 2.56; LS53F; FDS 259; BS7.10).
[393] See, for instance, Frede (1987, 137), Bobzien (1998, 19), Hankinson (2000, 484).
[394] See Totschnig (2013, 120-124).

depends on the nature of the specific body. Although Seneca calls God the cause (*causa*),[395] early Stoics do not refer to him as if he where the only αἴτιον. The early Stoic notion of αἴτιον has a more complex story. Look for example at the Stobaeus's report I was making reference at the beginning of this chapter in section 1.1:

> *About Zeno*. Zeno says that αἴτιον is 'that because of which' (δι' ὅ); while that of which it is an αἴτιον is a consequence (συμβεβηκός). And he says that the αἴτιον is a body, while that of which it is an αἴτιον is a charge (κατηγόρημα). It is impossible, then, for the αἴτιον to exist, yet that of which it is an αἴτιον not to be produced. What he says has this force: an αἴτιον is that because of which something takes place, for instance, because of prudence 'being prudent' takes place, because of soul 'being alive' takes place, and because of moderation 'being moderate' takes place.[396] Since it is impossible for something to have moderation [and] not being moderate, or [for it to have] soul [and] not being alive, or [for it to have] prudence [and] not being prudent.
>
> *About Chrysippus*. Chrysippus says that the αἴτιον is 'that because of which.' And, on the one hand, he says that the αἴτιον is a being and a body, <while that of which it is an αἴτιον is not a being nor a body;>[397] He also says that an αἴτιον is a 'because' (ὅτι), whereas that of which it is an αἴτιον is a 'because-of-something' (διά τι).[398] An αἰτία is the λόγος of the αἴτιον, or the λόγος concerning the αἴτιον as αἴτιον.[399]

Zeno and Chrysippus explicitly agree in two aspects of their doctrine. Both describe αἴτιον in the same way, and they also agree that only bodies can be αἴτια—something also clear from the way they define bodies. Since for the Stoics every αἴτιον is a body, this is a Corporeal Closure Principle:

For any *x*, if *x* is an αἴτιον, *x* is a body.

Notice, however, that this does not hold conversely. For instance, matter—the passive principle—is a body, and is never a cause of anything, since it is completely passive. Even if matter is the only body that cannot be an αἴτιον, ever, that means that being an αἴτιον is not part of the definition of bodies. What we have in Stobaeus' report, however, are two distinct accounts of causality that, although similar, show an interesting doctrinal development. But first we have to notice what is in the background, namely that the Stoic notion of αἴτιον recalls some Platonic passages.

In the first place, the way Zeno and Chrysippus describe an αἴτιον is practically the same we found in *Cratylus* 413a3-4, when Socrates says he learnt—from a doctrine amazingly similar to the Stoic physics—that δι' ὃ γὰρ γίγνεται, τοῦτ' ἔστι τὸ αἴτιον ('for

[395] See Seneca, *Ep*. 65.2 (LS55E; BS14.20).
[396] Note that prudence, soul, and moderation are bodies that produce (are the αἴτια of) the incorporeals 'being prudent,' 'being alive,' 'being moderate,' a predicate that takes place to another body (soul, human body, soul, respectively). See this chapter's sec. 2.4.
[397] Add. Wachsmuth coll. 139.
[398] In the codd. it says διατί. LS has διὰ τί ('why', 'because of which'). Here I follow BS, which follows Heeren with διά τι.
[399] Stobaeus, *Eclogae Physicae et Ethicae* 1.138, 14-139, 8 (SVF1.89; 2.336; LS55A; FDS 762; BS14.10).

that by which [something] comes to be is the αἴτιον').[400] In addition, as I advanced at the beginning of this chapter, the cases offered to explain Zeno's account seem structurally similar to Socrates' safe answer in *Phaedo* (100c-ff; Ch. 1, sec. 7), and are the same examples the ES used in *Sophist* 246d1-248a3 (see Ch. 4, sec. 4), to cross-examine the materialists.[401] Finally, Chrysippus' distinction between αἴτιον and αἰτία, has often recalled Plato's use of these terms in *Phaedo*.[402] All this makes it very plausible that the background of the Stoic discussions of causality is Plato's passages. The Stoics are reflecting and proposing their doctrines with Plato's dialogues and their puzzles in mind. I will come back to these points of contact with Plato later, but for now let me first analyse in which way Zeno and Chrysippus offer two different doctrines.

6.2 Zeno's notion of αἴτιον

Despite their agreements, in Zeno's account we have a conceptual distinction not mentioned by Chrysippus. Zeno distinguishes between αἴτιον, and συμβεβηκός, as two of the relata involved in causation. For Zeno, these two relata are correlative terms: an αἴτιον is that thing *because of* which a συμβεβηκός takes place, whereas a συμβεβηκός is that thing *of* which something is an αἴτιον. This description also makes clear the direction of fit of the causal relation. An αἴτιον produces a συμβεβηκός, and not vice versa.[403] Zeno adds to this that the αἴτιον is a body whereas the συμβεβηκός is a κατηγόρημα (which I translated as 'charge,' but is often rendered as 'predicate').

Zeno also proposes a thesis of causal sufficiency, which establishes that it is impossible for something to be an αἴτιον, without the corresponding συμβεβηκός being produced. This could be explained with the general formula:

For any *X*, and *Y*, if *X* causes *Y*, then whenever *X* occurs, *Y* occurs.[404]

According to the structure of two of the three examples in the fragment, it is possible to substitute *Y* for 'being *X*,' and understand that the effect occurs 'in something,' which, to be consistent with the Stoic physics, must be a body. Therefore, Zeno's thesis is that:

> For any bodies *X*, and *Z*, if *X* is an αἴτιον of the συμβεβηκός 'being *X*', it is necessary that if *X* exists in *Z*, then 'being *X*' takes place in *Z*.

[400] For the relation between *Cratylus* and Stoicism see Ademollo (2011, 201-223).
[401] The examples, however, are not a direct quote but an exegesis of Zeno's account. For that reason, they do not offer definitive evidence to link Zeno with the *Phaedo* and the *Sophist*. But there is, in turn, no conclusive evidence of the contrary.
[402] See M. Frede (1980, 222-223).
[403] See Cicero, *Acad*. 1.39 (SVF 190; LS 45A; BS2.10).
[404] See Hankinson (1998, 242).

There is no αἴτιον without συμβεβηκός. Stobaeus offers two instantiations of this principle. They can be spelled out as follows:

1. Since prudence is the αἴτιον of 'being prudent,' it is necessary that if prudence exists in a soul, 'being prudent' takes place in that soul.[405]
2. Since moderation is the αἴτιον of 'being moderate,' it is necessary that if moderation exists in a soul, 'being moderate' takes place in that soul.

In these two examples there is certain synonymy preserved between the αἴτιον and the συμβεβηκός. Zeno's account offers a safe answer to 'why?' questions just as Socrates' answer in the *Phaedo* was safe. Zeno, however, uses a corporealistic framework to avoid the *Parmenides'* objections. Moreover, Zeno uses the word αἴτιον, something Plato never uses to refer to the forms or the safe answer. In the *Phaedo*, as discussed in chapter 1, the safe answers are the αἰτίαι, not the αἴτια. If Zeno's decision to use αἴτιον is intentional, he could be trying to modify *Phaedo's* point. There, forms are the instruments of *nous*, and causation and responsibility are closed under *nous*. That is, only *nous* is an αἴτιον. But thanks to the Stoic theology, where God is mixed through-and-through in every thing, the Stoics can include all bodies as αἴτια.

The example of the soul, however, is different:

3. Since soul is the αἴτιον of 'being alive,' it is necessary that if soul exists in a body, 'being alive' takes place in that body.

The difference could be explained by the fact that the example assumes that we know that 'being ensouled' always implies 'being alive.' This will mirror the strategy followed by Socrates in the *Phaedo*, when he talks about his sophisticated answer, but it also makes reference to *Sophist* (see Ch. 1, sec. 7.2, and Ch. 4, sec. 4). But this is not the only difference between the examples about virtues and the one about the soul.

In the case of soul and body, Zeno is talking about two different bodies that can blend, and form a living animal, but can be separated later (see sec. 2.3 of this chapter). The animal's body is alive when it is blended with a soul. But the case of virtues is different, since virtues are nothing else but the soul qualified or disposed in certain way, so there is no blend of two bodies there. If this is right, then the examples mean that the reason why a soul is prudent or moderate is because it is a soul disposed in a virtuous way. In fact, Zeno argues for the unity of virtue, which means that prudence and

[405] For Zeno's definition of prudence, see Plutarch *VM* 440E-441D (SVF 1.201, 3.255; LS61B; BS26.23).

moderation refer to the same soul disposed in the same way (virtuously) but with respect to different sorts of actions. Then, when Zeno claims that prudence is the αἴτιον of 'being prudent' in a soul, it means that the αἴτιον of a soul's 'being prudent' is the soul physically disposed in a virtuously way with respect to actions in a specific domain. The corporeal disposition of the soul is what brings about a certain state of affairs. These examples establish the direction of fit of the causal process.

If no one can be prudent or moderate if his soul has no prudence or moderation, it means that the source of prudence or moderation is not a person's actions but the quality or disposition of her soul. It is the condition of the soul which determines the evaluation of the actions, and not vice versa. This, which might sound extreme, fits perfectly with the Stoic conception of virtue and the image of the wise. The problem for Zeno's example, however, is that it does not explain how prudence and moderation exist in the soul in the first place. The explanation must be corporeal in nature, so it has to be about bodies acting in the soul. But what kind of bodies would dispose the soul in this way? Zeno explains this with his notion of fate, which I discuss later. But Chrysippus offers a different answer.

6.3 Chrysippus' notion of αἴτιον

Let me look at the modifications introduced by Chrysippus. According to Stobaeus, his account keeps Zeno's notion of αἴτιον, adding that it is a ὅτι (because). Instead of using the term συμβεβηκός, however, Chrysippus calls the other relata in the causal process a διά τι (because-of-something). The reason for this move might be that Chrysippus found problematic Zeno's use of the terms συμβεβηκός, and κατηγόρημα. Since κατηγόρημα—which Zeno takes as the genus of συμβεβηκός—can mean 'charge' or 'accusation,' Chrysippus might worried that Zeno put the συμβεβηκός under the wrong genus, since one thing is the effect of the αἴτιον, and another the account of the αἴτιον as αἴτιον.[406]

Chrysippus' solution, perhaps using Plato's *Phaedo*, is to highlight the distinction between αἴτιον, and αἰτία, saying that the latter is the λόγος of the αἴτιον, or the λόγος concerning the αἴτιον *qua* αἴτιον, which is different from the effect (διά τι). Chrysippus, then, talks about three elements in the causal process:

(1) a body *X* (αἴτιον),

(2) an effect *y* (διά τι), and

[406] Chrysippus in fact understands συμβεβηκός, and κατηγόρημα in a very specific way. See Stobaeus 1.106,5-23 (SVF 2.509; LS51B4).

(3) a λόγος of *X* qua responsible for *y* (αἰτία).

But Chrysippus' account assumes that the effect takes place in another body, since only bodies can be affected. Therefore, an additional element is implied: (4) a body *Y* which receives *y*. The problematic element, however, is (3), since it is not completely clear what ontological status it has.

Chrysippus' distinction between αἴτιον and αἰτία has often been understood as a distinction between a body responsible for an effect (αἴτιον), and a causal explanation or some sort of propositional item (αἰτία).[407] It has been pointed out, however, that there are good reasons to reject such interpretation.[408] Let me briefly explain the thought. In a different passage, Stobaeus reports Chrysippus' uses of the word αἰτία at the (macro)cosmic level. According to this passage, αἰτία is coextensive with λόγος. In this context, however, λόγος consists in πνεῦμα, the active body which pervades the universe and every thing in it. Αἰτία—we learn from Stobaeus—refers to the same substance (πνεῦμα) but from a different perspective than λόγος.[409]

Although this is said at a cosmic level (the cosmic-λόγος and the cosmic-αἰτία), it can be applied to individual cases of causation if we have in mind that every body in the cosmos is mixed through-and-through with πνεῦμα. The suggestion is, then, to understand Chrysippus' αἰτία as referring to the portion of πνεῦμα in a body that makes it the αἴτιον of a specific effect (as opposed to a portion of πνεῦμα that makes something else). Identifying the αἰτία of the αἴτιον, then, is indispensable to understanding how it was possible for the αἴτιον to produce its effect. The relation between cosmic-αἰτία and individual αἰτία also explains why the Stoics think that all causes are interconnected.

6.4 An orthodox account of Stoic causality

Various sources report what seems to be an orthodox account of the Stoic doctrine on causality, and which seems a development from Chrysippus' version. This orthodox account is preserved, for example, in Sextus Empiricus:

> <The> Stoics say that every αἴτιον is a body which becomes[410] the αἴτιον of something incorporeal for a body, for instance, a scalpel, a body, becomes the αἴτιον for the flesh,

[407] M. Frede (1980, 222), Long and Sedley (1987, vol. 1, 333), and more recently Boeri and Salles (2014, 357-358). Frede offers a fragment of Diocles of Carystus (*ap*. Galen, *Alim. fac*. 6.455-6K; fr. 122 Wellman) to support his claim. But as Bobzien (1999,199) points out, that is 'insufficient to establish that *for Chrysippus* αἰτία was a propositional item or a kind of causal explanation.'

[408] See Bobzien (1999, 198-202).

[409] Stobaeus *Eclogae* 1.79.5-12, quoted and discussed at Bobzien (1999, 200). She also offers Seneca *Ep*. 65.2 as evidence for this view.

[410] At some moment of time, it seems. For γίνεσθαι see Clement, *Stromata* 8.9.26.3-4 (LS55C), where it says that γίνεσθαι is an activity and hence an incorporeal. But in that passage seems to refer to what

> another body, of the incorporeal charge 'to be cut.' And in turn, a fire, a body, becomes the αἴτιον for the wood, another body, of the incorporeal charge 'to be set on fire.'[411]

According to this report, the Stoics establish that an αἴτιον has a relation with two things. One is the action performed by the αἴτιον, what we may call the effect, and a body receiving the action. This could still be read with the legal sense: there is a culprit, a charge, and a victim. The Stoics mark the difference by saying that the αἴτιον is an αἴτιον *of* something (the effect) and *for* something (a body).[412] This model sounds much less awkward if we notice that the Stoic use of αἴτιον tracks the legal origin of the terms, since the αἴτιον can be said to be the culprit (a body) of a charge (a predicate) against a victim (a body). Thus, the two examples in Sextus' map out in the following way:

Culprit (body)	**Victim (body)**	**Charge (incorporeal)[413]**	**Time**
Scalpel	Flesh	To be cut	Today
Fire	Wood	To be set on fire	Yesterday

Thus, a body *becomes* an αἴτιον by acting on another body and thus producing an effect on that body. An αἴτιον is the agent of a causal relation.[414] The Stoic notion of αἴτιον, then, could be expressed as follows:

> Stoic αἴτιον: *x* is an αἴτιον, if *x* is a body, and *x* becomes at some time t_1, the agent of an incorporeal *y*,[415] for a body *z*.

But this also means that 'αἴτιον' is an appellative that bodies acquire at a specific moment in time. The sense in which an αἴτιον is a body, then, is the Stoic fourth genus, that is, an αἴτιον is a relatively disposed individual, since it is relatively disposed towards another body. This is made explicit in Sextus's report when he writes: 'Well then, the αἴτιον, they say, belongs to what is relative; for it is an αἴτιον of something and

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happens to the passive body. But then, how to take the γίνεσθαι in the second sentence of the quote? One option is to accept that even the active part in the relation, by being active, also is somehow affected at least in terms of its relative being.

[411] Sextus Empiricus, *AM* 9.211-212 (SVF2.341; LS55B; BS14.16).

[412] A similar version is preserved in Clement, where an αἴτιον is 'of something' (the effect) and 'in relation with something' (a fitting body). Note, however, that a body can act in itself. See Clement *Stromata* 8.9, 25.1.1-27, 5.3; 32.1 (SVF 2.334-351; LS55C-D, I; FDS 763-764, 766, 768-770; BS 14.11). For convenience, in what follows I refer to this passage just as BS 14.11.

[413] The Stoics disagreed about what exactly constituted the charge. Some of them talk about a predicate, others of a complete sayable, and some others about a name (the verb).

[414] In the text this is expressed in different ways terms and expressions: ἐνεργητικῶς; ἐν τῷ δρᾶν; ἐνεργοῦν; ποιητικόν; δραστήριον; see BS14.11.

[415] Alternatively, to use Zeno's and Chrysippus' terminology: '…*x* becomes at some time t_1, the agent *by which* an incorporeal *y* is produced for a body *z*.'

<for something>, for instance, on the one side, the scalpel is the αἴτιον of something like the cutting, on the other side, [it is the αἴτιον] for something like the flesh.'[416]

The sources make two further annotations to the Stoic doctrine of causality. The first one is that not every 'that because of which' (δι' ὅ) is an αἴτιον, which is made clear with a colourful example about Medea—preserved by Clement.[417] This means that this doctrine either modifies Zeno's and Chrysippus' definition of αἴτιον, or that when they say that an αἴτιον is a δι' ὅ, they never intended it to be a definition, but only as a classification into its genus. According to the example, there are many things that count as 'that because of which' Medea killed her sons, but only Medea is the αἴτιον of their death, since Medea was the agent of their death in strict sense. Only Medea is responsible and guilty for the death of her sons, since someone else in the same situation but with a different character would have acted differently. So in a strict sense a body is an αἴτιον of something, if the body produces the effect in an active way.[418] This distinction derives in the Stoic analysis of different types of αἴτια, but I will get back to that in a moment.

The second thing to note is that the Stoics think that the passive body in the causal interaction needs to have certain fitness or aptitude (ἐπιτηδειότης) for the specific effect to take place.[419] The example they give to explain this is with fire and wood. If the wood is wet, the fire will not burn the wood (although it could make it fit for something else). The wood needs to be dry for the active capacity of the fire to actually burn the wood. But the fact that the passive body needs to be fit, does not subtract any responsibility from the αἴτιον, nor make the passive body an αἴτιον in a strict sense (because it is not active), but becomes part of the causal explanation. So, when Clement reports that the scalpel is the αἴτιον to the flesh of being cut, and the flesh is the αἴτιον to the scalpel of cutting, the flesh is not the αἴτιον in an active strict sense, but only insofar as it is in a fit disposition to be cut.[420]

6.5 Types of causes

So far I have restricted the analysis to what the Stoics often call the αἴτιον in a strict sense. The Stoics, however, were also sensitive to many other elements involved in the causal process. The Stoic approach, at least from Chrysippus onwards, seems to make a

[416] Sextus Empiricus *AM* 9.207-208 (BS 14.15). For the scalpel/flesh example, see also BS14.11.
[417] See BS14.11.
[418] See Boeri & Salles (2014, 350).
[419] Sextus Empiricus *AM* 9.237-245 (LS72N), and BS14.11.
[420] This means that Stoic causation in a strict sense is triadic and not a tetradic relation, as Totschnig (2013, 122-123) wants it to be. See Boeri & Salles (2014, 350-1) who point out to DL 7.63.

compromise between the views of some natural philosopher and those of Plato's Socrates. In the *Phaedo*, and *Republic*, Plato's Socrates distinguished between αἴτιον and necessary conditions, criticising his predecessors for failing to do so (see Ch. 1, sec. 5; and Ch. 2, sec. 4-5). The Stoics, follow this distinction, but introduce various types of αἴτια.

According to Cicero, Chrysippus distinguished between two main groups of causes (*causae*). One group is of 'perfect and primary' (*perfectae et principales*)[421] causes, while the other is of 'auxiliary/accessory and proximate' (*adiuvantes et proximae*) causes.[422] The main difference explained in Cicero's report, is that the perfect and primary causes are contemporary to the effect, while the others are antecedent to it.[423] The distinction is made in the context of a discussion of fate and human action to which I will come back later. But first let me show how this account seems to have developed into a more complex version found in Clement.

According to Clement's *Stromata*, the Stoics distinguished between two main senses of the word αἴτιον. In a legitimate or proper (κυρίως) sense, an αἴτιον is a body whose activity produces an incorporeal for another body. This is called in Clement's report the sustaining (συνεκτικόν) αἴτιον. This type of αἴτιον is also called 'perfect' (αὐτοτελῆ), and active (ποιητικός), and is self-sufficient to produce its effect. The sustaining αἴτιον, then, corresponds to the sense of αἴτιον analysed in the previous section, and which Chrysippus calls the 'perfect and primary' causes. This is the sense in which only Medea is the αἴτιον of the killing of her children. It is the legitimate use of the term because it signals who or what in the causal process is responsible for the effect. This is important in a moral or legal context because no matter how complex the causal process is, it allows the Stoics to point out unambiguously who or what is to blame for each thing. Other elements may be part of the explanation of the causal process, and might play a crucial part for one's understanding of *how* the αἴτιον produced its effect, but the legitimate αἴτιον will tell us who or what is to blame. To understand *why* a sustaining αἴτιον produced its effect, however, a better understanding of its nature will be needed. But first let me turn my attention to the other sense the term αἴτιον.

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[421] I agree with Boeri and Salles's (2014, 352) suggestion that with *principlaes* Cicero may be translating the Greek κυριώτατον, which refers to the αἴτιον in a strict sense.

[422] See Cicero *Fat*. 41-45 (SVF 2.974; LS 62C; BS14.28). See also Plutarch *SR* 1056C (SVF 2.937; BS19.10). These perfect and primary causes seem to correspond to συνεργά and προκαταρτικά. See LS vol. 1, 342; and M. Frede (1980, 240-1).

[423] Plutarch seems to add that the perfect αἴτιον is stronger than the others, but it is not clear in which sense. See Plutarch *SR* 1056C (SVF 2.937; BS19.10).

In a looser or improper sense (καταχρηστικῶς) the Stoics recognise that other elements could also be called αἴτιον,[424] perhaps, as I suggested, because they also play a role in the causal process, and are needed for a full account of the causal process. In this sense, the Stoics include what is 'preliminary' (προκαταρκτικόν), 'auxiliary/accessory' (συνεργόν), 'jointly-responsible' (συναίτιον) for the effect, the necessary conditions, and even the incorporeals.[425] Instead of completely discarding these elements, the Stoics make an effort to understand why they have a role in the causal process. Based on Clement's and Pseudo-Galen's report,[426] we have information about how the Stoics understood these other elements as αἴτιον in an improper sense. The texts focus on three of these: the preliminary, the auxiliary, and the jointly-responsible.

A *preliminary* αἴτιον is that which, primarily, offers the starting point for the generation or destruction of something else. Thus, it is antecedent to the effect, and, if once the effect has been produced it is eliminated, the effect remains. The preliminary αἴτιον, however, does not always generate its effect; it is a necessary condition, then, but not a sufficient one. An example is learning, where the father of the pupil is the preliminary αἴτιον of learning. In this case it is clearer that, *ceteris paribus,* the death of the father will not eliminate the pupil's learning. The example also makes clear that the preliminary cause should not be identified with the (Aristotelian) proximate cause. The father is not the most proximate cause of the learning of the pupil, but is qualitatively the most important.

An *auxiliary* αἴτιον is described as something that collaborates or aids the sustaining αἴτιον and makes a difference in terms of the intensity or power of the effect. By itself, however, it is incapable of producing the effect. The auxiliary αἴτιον, however, is similar to the sustaining αἴτιον in the sense that it needs to be contemporaneous with the effect to make a difference, and if it is eliminated, the added power or intensity disappears. Note, however, that in Cicero, Chrysippus is said to consider the auxiliary αἴτιον as antecedent to the effect.

There seem to be two different versions of the συναίτιον (jointly-responsible). Both agree that this is an active αἴτιον that produces its effect in conjunction with another thing or things. This means that when all the jointly-responsible causes needed to produce the effect are present, there is no need for a sustaining cause. But in Clements's version, a συναίτιον is not self-sufficient to produce its effect without its partner. In

[424] See BS 14.11.
[425] BS14.11.
[426] BS14.11; Pseudo-Galen, *Introductio sive Medicu*s, 14.691, 13-692, 13 (BS14.14).

Clement we learn that this type of αἴτιον is sometimes called reciprocal (ἀλλήλων),[427] and the example he gives is of a teacher and a pupil as reciprocal causes of the predicate 'making progress.'[428] Without either the teacher or the pupil, the effect does not take place.

In Pseudo-Galen, however, we have a different story. There, a Stoic συναίτιον is capable of producing its effect by itself, just like a sustaining αἴτιον, but there is another συναίτιον which is also capable of producing the same effect, and if both are present they are said to jointly produce the effect. Ps-Galen's version, then, is a case of over-determination. The example he gives is that of a stone in the bladder and inflammation as causes of retention of urine. These two things, he explains, can each alone cause retention of urine, but they can also both be present and be jointly-responsible for the effect. Notice that this sense of συναίτιον assumes that an effect could have two completely different αἴτια, something that is not assumed in the other senses of αἴτιον.

At this point we are in a position to offer a table of the types of causes and their characteristics, according to the Stoics:

<table>
<tr><th>Senses</th><th>Type</th><th>Time in relation with the effect</th><th>Role with respect to the effect</th><th>Necessity/ sufficiency [429]</th></tr>
<tr><td>Strict</td><td>Sustaining</td><td>Contemporaneous</td><td>Active</td><td>Not necessary, sufficient</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="5">Improper</td><td>Preliminary</td><td>Antecedent</td><td>Passive</td><td rowspan="2">Necessary, not sufficient</td></tr>
<tr><td>Necessary conditions</td><td rowspan="4">Antecedent and/or contemporaneous</td><td>Passive</td></tr>
<tr><td>Auxiliary</td><td>Passive</td><td>Not necessary, not sufficient</td></tr>
<tr><td>συναίτιον (reciprocal)</td><td rowspan="2">Active or passive</td><td>Necessary not sufficient</td></tr>
<tr><td>συναίτιον (overdetermination)</td><td>Not necessary, sufficient</td></tr>
</table>

According to this table, a causal process involves some necessary and optional elements. Any causal process involves, necessarily four elements: (a) antecedent causes (necessary conditions, including one preliminary cause); (b) active cause(s) (either a sustaining self-sufficient cause, or sufficient συναίτιον); (c) an incorporeal effect; (d) a

[427] Clement also reports that 'reciprocal cause' has also other senses. Cf. BS14.11.
[428] See BS14.11.
[429] Here I mean the normal contemporary sense of these words. The Stoics have their own modal terminology, which differs form this one. See DL 7.75-76 (SVF 2.201; LS38D; BS19.22).

patient(s) receiving the effect. Optionally, it can also involve (e) auxiliary causes (either antecedent, contemporaneous with the event, or both). But we have to remember that only the active causes track responsibility, namely the sustaining and the συναίτιον (reciprocal), and in the case of a συναίτιον the responsibility is shared between the participants. In terms of their formal properties, these αἴτια have one difference. The active and preliminary αἴτια seem to be intransitive, but the necessary conditions are transitive. The other cases seem indeterminate.

7. Fate and moral responsibility

The Stoics, at least from Chrysippus onwards, also argue that there is an unalterable concatenation of αἴτια that includes all events and states[430] in the cosmos—what they call fate (εἱμαρμένη). This thesis goes hand in hand with the Stoic idea that the cosmos is a living rational animal; for them, the cosmos is a continuous body whose parts *hold together*, and are directed by the cosmic πνεῦμα which permeates everything.[431] But not only that, the Stoics claim that everything has a preliminary αἴτιον, and that all causal relations are necessary.[432] These two theses amount to a strong causal determinism. The Stoics, however, are also compatibilists.[433] They think that their determinism is compatible with moral responsibility. How many of these ideas are already present in the first generations of Stoics is difficult to know.

According to Hippolytus, Zeno (and Chrysippus) affirmed that 'everything is fated' (καθ᾽εἱμαρμένην εἶναι πάντα), and explained this by an analogy of a dog tied to a cart.[434] If the dog wants to follow the cart, its action coincides with necessity, but if does not want to follow it, the cart will compel it anyway. And the same can be said of men. Even when they do not want to do something, they will be compelled to do what is destined.[435]

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[430] Here I agree with Salles (2005, 3-9), that for the Stoics events are reducible to states. For a different view see Bobzien (1998).
[431] See DL 7.142-3 (SVF 2.633, 3 Apollodorus 9; LS53X; BS12.13); Sextus Empiricus AM 9.78-80 (SVF 2.1013; BS12.9). See also Hierocles, *Elementa Ethica*, 3.56-4.36. (BS13.10).
[432] For a detailed analysis see Salles (2005).
[433] For the discussion on determinism and compatibilism, see Sorabji (1980), Botros (1986); Sharples (1986) and (2006); Boeri (1997a), (1997b) and (2000); Bobzien (1998) and (2005); and Salles (2005) and (2007).
[434] Cleanthes himn has also many lines where he assumes that fate is inescapable.
[435] Hippolytus, *Ref*. 1.21.2 (SVF 2.975; LS62A; BS28.8). See also Cleanthes *ap*. Epictetus, *Ench*. 53 (LS62B); Seneca Ep. 107.11. The authority of this report, however, is contested. Bobzien (1998, 345-57) argues that Hippolytus report has been overestimated in its value as a testimony for early Stoic determinism, and she argues that the analogy cannot be ascribed to Zeno or Chrysippus. See, however, Sharples (2005), and Boeri & Salles (2014, 703, 708).

It has been suggested that Zeno and the first generation of Stoics probably held a notion of fate closer to the traditional Greek version—where fate is predicated over big life-changing events—than the one developed by Chrysippus. Thus, even if Zeno really claimed that everything is fated, he may have just meant that the external events in one's life are so. In other words, the scope of πάντα may only include external events, but not things like one's attitudes.[436] If this is true, even if all external events are fated, agents have control over how to take those events, which could very well be the main point of the analogy of the dog and the cart.[437] Zeno, then, may not be committed to determinism. But he certainly does not deny it either, leaving the door open for Chrysippus more explicit doctrine.

Zeno was, however, committed to the idea that fate is a concatenation of all the causes in the cosmos—an idea not necessarily implied in a traditional conception of fate. According to Eusebius, Zeno explained his doctrine of the eternal return in the following way:

> Then, [Zeno] also affirms that the whole cosmos is subject to conflagration (ἐκπυροῦσθαι) according to certain fated intervals, and then is again reordered anew. Indeed, he says that the primary fire is exactly as a seed, which has (ἔχον) the λόγος of all things and the causes (τὰς αἰτίας) of what happened, what happens, and what will happen. And the concatenation and succession of these things is fate, knowledge, truth, and it is an inevitable and inescapable law of what exists. In this way everything in the cosmos is excellently administered, as in a well-ordered city.[438]

Apart from the theses of the conflagration and eternal return,[439] there are four claims relevant for the Stoic doctrine of causality. The first one establishes an analogy between the primary fire and a seed. The primary fire is to the λόγος and causes of past, present, and future events of the cosmos, as the seed is to the leaves and branches of a full-grown plant. The identity of relation of the analogy is not explicit. However, it can be noted that it has to do with the sense in which ἔχον is used. To spell out the analogy: a seed *has* the information to generate all its leaves and branches and the causes of every state of development of a plant, in exactly the same way the primary fire *has* the λόγος of all things and the causes of past, present, and future events.

There are two features that seem to be important about the use of ἔχον. First, it is an organic, natural way of having something; and second, it is used in two senses. A seed

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[436] See Long and Sedley (1987, vol. 1, 392-4). The analogy does not necessarily imply a deterministic position (if, for instance, the cart stands not for any possible event, but only for those that are completely beyond the control of the dog). For the traditional Greek notion of fate see Adkins (1960).
[437] For the discussion in Chrysippus' case, see Bobzien (1998, 354), and Boeri and Salles (2014, 703).
[438] Eusebius, *PE* 15.14.2 (SVF 1.98; LS46G; FDS 327A; LS46G; BS19.5). Cf. *Republic* 508b6-8; Ch. 2, sec. 4).
[439] See Alexander Lycopolis 19,2-4 (LS46I; BS18.1). See also Salles (2009).

and the primary fire—what Zeno calls λόγος[440]—have in actuality the information to generate their outcomes (leaves and branches, and every thing, respectively). They literally have the *genetic information* of their outcomes.[441] In a potential sense, however, they *have* the causes, the seed and the fire will produce the αἴτια over time (remember that something becomes the αἴτιον of an effect in a specific moment of time). We have to remember that the αἴτια are bodies. A suggestion, then, on how to read the analogy would be to say that: the primary fire already *has the information to generate all things, and it has the natural capacity to produce* all the αἴτιον of past, present, and future events; just as the seed *has the information to generate all of its leaves and branches, and it has the the natural capacity to produce* all the αἴτια of its events and states.

Zeno's second claim is that the λόγος and αἴτια are concatenated and form a succession that he calls fate, knowledge, and truth. He calls it fate, since it determines past, present, and future events. He also calls it knowledge because by understanding the concatenation and succession one gets universal knowledge, and by the same token it is the source of truth. But this is only explained by a third claim. The concatenation and succession of causes is considered a law of nature with an inescapable and inevitable force. The necessity of fate is what makes it a source of knowledge, in the sense of secure unalterable knowledge, and of necessary truth.

The last claim of the passage, which affirms that everything in the cosmos is excellently ordered, again could make us think that Zeno is committed to a causal determinism. But again, it is unclear what is the scope of πάντα, and how deterministic this law is. It may only order the cosmos at some general level, allowing certain indetermination as part of the general administration of the cosmos.

Chrysippus, however, defends a full fleshed, and explicit causal determinism, which seems to build upon Zeno's doctrine. For Chrysippus, all things—all states and events—come about through fate by antecedent αἴτια, which in his case are the auxiliary and precedent (preliminary) αἴτια.[442] Following Zeno's notion very closely, for him fate is 'a certain natural everlasting organisation (σύνταξις) of the whole: some things follow on and destroy others, and the concatenation is unalterable.'[443] Fate is, then, the

[440] It is also what contains the λόγοι σπερματικοί. See Aetius 1.7.33 (SVF 2.1027; LS46A; BS17.3); DL 7.135-6 (SVF 1.102, 2.580; LS46B; BS15.3). Cf. Eusebius, *Prep. Ev*. 15.19.1-2 (SVF 2.599; LS52D; BS19.8).

[441] Meaning 'the information to generate', which, of course, has nothing to do with genes, or contemporary biology.

[442] See Cicero, *On fate* 39-43 (SVF 2.974; LS62C; BS 14.28).

[443] Gellius 7.2.3 (SVF 2.1000).

necessary concatenation of αἴτια, the nexus and succession of all things and the αἴτια of past, present and future events.[444] By calling it a σύνταξις, Chrysippus seems to recognise that fate is not a linear concatenation of causes, but a complex arrangement or composition (cf. Ch. 2, sec. 4).

According to Plutarch's report,[445] Chrysippus also says that, although the preliminary cause is weaker than the perfect one (because it is not sufficient to bring about its effect), fate is an invincible (ἀνίκητον), unhindered (ἀκώλυτον), and inflexible (ἄτρεπτον) αἴτιον. This means that for Chrysippus, the organisation of antecedent αἴτια as a whole is inescapable. This is explained by the thesis that every effect has an αἴτιον and every effect is necessitated by antecedent αἴτια.[446] If there is a movement without cause, the whole cosmos would collapse,[447] so nothing is causeless[448] or in the positive, everything has an antecedent αἴτιον.[449] Note, however, that this is not to say that the chain of antecedent αἴτια alone determines the effect *simpliciter*. What is determined is that if there is an antecedent αἴτιον there is going to be *an* effect (otherwise the αἴτιον would not be an antecedent of anything). This is something that is possible to infer from the fact that αἴτιον and effect are two correlative terms. If there is one of them, that, by definition, implies the other. But the fate as the law of nature does not tell us what the effect would be, it only tells us that every effect has some antecedent αἴτιον. When Chrysippus says that the preliminary cause is not sufficient to bring about the effect, he means that it is not sufficient to bring about a specific effect. The specificity of the effect depends on the active αἴτιον. To know what exactly the effect of a preliminary cause will be, we also need to know what is the active αἴτιον in play.

Chrysippus explains this with the famous example of the cylinder and the cone:[450] these objects cannot start moving by their own, since they need an external push. But once this happens each object moves in virtue of its own nature: the cylinder moves in straight line whereas the cone moves in a circle. Therefore, Chrysippus concludes, the external push gives these objects the beginning of movement, their antecedent αἴτιον,

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[444] See Aetius 1.28.4 (SVF 2.917; LS55J); Stobaeus *Eclogae* 1.79.1-12 (SVF 2.913; LS55M); Cicero *On divination*, 1.125-6 (SVF 2.921; LS55L).
[445] Plutarch, *SR* 1056C (SVF2.937; BS19.10).
[446] See Plutarch, *SR* 1049F-1050B (SVF2.937; BS19.9), 1056C (SVF 2.937; BS 19.10), 1056D-E (SVF 2.935; BS19.11); Stobaeus, *Eclogae* 1.138, 14-139, 8 (SVF 1.89; 2.336; LS55A; FDS 7620); Sextus Empiricus *AM* 9.237-245 (LS72N; BS 14.12); Galen, *Adv. Iul*. 18.279, 12-280, 4 (SVF2.355; BS14.13).
[447] See Alexander, *Fat*. 191, 30-192, 14 (SVF 2.945; LS55N; BS19.14); Aristocles *apud* Eusebius, *PE* 1.5.14.2 (SVF 1.98; LS46G).
[448] See Alexander, *Fat*. 191,30-192,28 (SVF 2.945; LS55N).
[449] This is based on the principle of bivalence: Simplicius, *in cat*. 406, 34-407, 5 (SVF 2.198; FDS 881; BS 19.1); Cicero *Fat*. 20 (SVF 2.952; LS38G; FDS 884; BS19.2). Explicitly used to argue that everything has a cause: Cicero, *Fat*. 26 (LS70G; BS19.3).
[450] Cicero, *On fate* 39-43 (SVF 2.974; LS62C; BS14.28).

but not their specific rolling capacity. The rolling capacity is the sustaining cause of the circular movement of the cone, and the straight movement of the cylinder. So the responsibility for the way they move lies in each body's specific nature (which in turn is specified by its portion of πνεῦμα). With this example, Chrysippus also explains how humans are accountable for their actions. For Chrysippus, humans are not externally determined, even if one's actions are a result of impressions, since impressions are only the preliminary αἴτιον of a human action. It is a person's commanding-faculty that determines whether she will assent or not to the impression (and more specifically, the disposition of the commanding-faculty). And that, Chrysippus argues, is in the person's control. This, however, does not contradict Chrysippus' deterministic commitments.[451]

According to Stoic psychology, in order to act, a person receives an impression from a body, which constitutes the preliminary αἴτιον of the action. But the impression requires an act of assent (or dissent), which is entirely up to the agent. The assent is what leads to an impulse that has as an outcome an action.[452] The concatenation of preliminary αἴτια and its necessity is never broken. It just includes the internal life of the person, which for the Stoics is, of course, something they explain in corporeal terms. The Stoics, in this way, can both maintain their causal determinism and claim that agents are responsible for their assents or dissents, and therefore, for their actions. The following report by Clement puts it clearly:[453]

> I know that many, incessantly attacking us, say that what does not prevent is an αἴτιον. For they claim that the αἴτιον of the theft is the one who did not keep her guard or did not prevent it, like the one who did not extinguish a terrible fire from the beginning, or like a pilot who did not set out the sails [were the αἴτιον] of the wreck. Those responsible for these things are immediately punished by the law, because the αἰτία of what happened also applies to the one who was able to prevent it. We answer them that the αἴτιον is discovered (νοεῖσθαι) in what produces, namely in the acting and doing. Not preventing, according to this, is inactive. Besides, an αἴτιον happens in the activity, like the shipbuilder engaged in building a ship, and the builder engaged in building a house. What does not prevent, however, is separated from what is produced. For this reason, then, it could act, because what is able to prevent does not act nor prevent.

If we think about this in terms of the example of a rape the Stoic point is even more revealing. Many communities, shockingly, punish and blame women for not preventing their own rape. This makes them the causes of their own rape. They brought it on themselves, some people say. Perhaps these people would tell women and society that rape was caused by the women's dress, alcohol consumption, lack of a clear and loud

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[451] See Nemesius (*N* 105, 6-14; 106,1-4, and 10610-11), and Alexander (181,14-23). See also Salles (2005, 52-54; 74).

[452] See Stobaeus, *Eclogae* 2.88, 8-99, 13 (SVF 3.378, 389, 394; LS 65A, C, E; BS25.2). If the assent does not take place, like in the case of an involuntary reaction, there was no agency from the rational part of the soul, and therefore the person cannot be held responsible for the action.

[453] Clement *Stromata* 1.17.82.1-6 (SVF 2.353; BS 14.17).

no, and so on. But the Stoic answer, according to Clement's report, would be that what does not prevent rape cannot be its active αἴτιον. And only active αἴτια track responsibility. The only αἴτιον of rape, in the strict sense, is a rapist (or a gang of rapists). Even if the primary αἴτιον is one of the woman's qualities (like being around a rapist), that is obviously not sufficient for a rape to happen, and generates no responsibility in the victim. It is the active αἴτιον that is the one responsible. If we were to understand, however, why the rapist raped the women, we would need to be clear about what disposition of a person's soul makes it possible to become a rapist (this will be Chrysippus' αἰτία).

What is, then, the Stoic response to Socrates' death? According to Cicero's report,[454] Chrysippus used Socrates' death as an example to explain the difference between simple and complex events, a central piece of his doctrine of co-fated events. For Chrysippus, 'Socrates will die on that day'[455] is a simple event, since regardless of what Socrates does or not, his day of dying is fixed. In contrast, he explains, a complex event is 'Oedipus will be born to Laius' since it is not possible to add 'regardless of whether Laius has intercourse with a woman or not,' since these two things are co-fated. The distinction has been understood in terms of unconditionally (simple) and conditionally (complex) fated events.[456] Chrysippus' selection of the examples, however, is no accident.[457] But if this is true, it is not clear why Chrysippus thinks his Socrates' example is a simple event.

Someone may think that Socrates death is a complex event *par excellence*: if Socrates had not decided to stay in jail, instead of running away to Megara, then he would not have died the day he did (see Ch. 1, sec. 5.1). But the example here seems to be saying exactly the opposite: regardless of Socrates' actions, he was destined to die the very day he did. So, how to understand the distinction between simple and complex event? One way of reading the example is by trying to find a suitable moment in which the example is a simple event. For instance, after Socrates drank the hemlock, his death was determined regardless of his actions. The oddity of the example could then be explained as a pedagogical resource. The example was perhaps designed to trigger surprise, and start a discussion. A different take, however, is by reference to the disposition of Socrates' soul. If he was a virtuous person, once he was sentenced, it was

[454] Cicero, *De fato* 30. (SVF 2.956; LS55S; BS 28.5).
[455] '*Morietur illo die Socrates*.' As Bobzien (1998, 200) remarks, *illo die* stands for either an indexical or for an actual date, but either way it refers to the day of Socrates' death.
[456] See Sedley (1993, 317).
[457] That the examples are Chrysippus' own is argued in Barnes (1985).

fated he was going to die, since regardless of his (virtuous) actions, he was going to die because running away was out of character. This would emphasise that the example would not work with someone else's case, since a vicious person could have acted differently. In this reading, Socrates is like the cylinder, once it has received a push, the way it will act is fixed.

A different interpretation would be to take the example to mean that Socrates will die on a specific day, regardless of what he does or not. In this case, even if Socrates decided to escape, it was fated that he was going to die the same day he would have died whether he decided to stay, perhaps because he was going to be reprehended or he was going to have an accident. But two further options are possible.[458] One is to consider simple events as an empty class, since every event is co-fated with something else. But this would require the disqualification of the example of Socrates' death. Or, it could be that the original example was something like 'Socrates will die' or 'you will die,' and was later corrupted by Cicero. Simple events would be then either those where no action forms a necessary condition, or those for which 'no externally induced change is a causally relevant necessary condition.'[459] A different option is to use Eusebius *PE* 6.8.35, and suggest that an event is simple in relation to a subject if and only if the event will happen to the subject, and the explanation of why it happens to her has nothing to do with the subject's actions. But it is difficult to understand Socrates' death in this way, so for this reading to work, the example should be changed to 'Socrates will die some day.'[460]

There is a way, however, a way to avoid assuming there was a corruption of the original example. First, the examples should be considered simple or complex with relation to what the text adds to each of them. In this way, 'Socrates will die on that day' is a simple event in relation to Socrates actions (assuming the context is after the Athenians have condemned him), and 'Oedipus will be born to Laius' is a complex event in relation to Laius' intercourse with women.

8. The Stoics' philosophical conversation

I am going to finish the chapter with three points related to causality, responsibility and the greatest difficulty. The first one is about the Stoics' conversation with Plato. The second one is about the Stoic conception of philosophy and its similarities with

[458] See Bobzien (1998, 218-220).
[459] See Sedley (1993), who offers Plato's *Crito* 44a-b as textual evidence.
[460] See Boeri and Salles (2014, 702, 706).

Plato's argumentation. Finally, I will say something about their conception of the sage and the power of conversation.

At the beginning of this chapter, I argued there is enough evidence to believe that the Stoics had direct access to Plato's dialogues. This makes relevant two questions about the Stoic reception of Plato; one is (1) how the Stoics *interpreted* Plato; and, the other is (2) how the Stoics *responded* to their interpretation of Plato. The answer to the first question determines how closely and carefully the Stoics studied and discussed the Platonic corpus, whereas the second one decides what kind of relation the Stoics had with Plato's philosophy. Due to the fragmentary and often mediated condition of the Stoic evidence, it is almost impossible to answer these questions for sure (as I noted in the Introduction). But then, which is the most charitable way to present the existing evidence?

Stoic scholarship often highlights the internal cohesion and strong explanatory power of Stoic philosophy, presenting it as a systematic body of doctrines. This downplays the fact that the Stoics were a philosophical school, primarily interested in discussing philosophical problems, rather than transmitting a set of beliefs.[461] This picture is also often combined with the assumption that the Stoics interpret Plato as a dogmatic unitarian—a reading probably mediated via the Old Academy—, and that their answer to him is confrontational. The Stoics' agreements with Plato, in this way, are explained as mere (unreflective) influences, shared assumptions, piecemeal borrowings, and appropriations where they have simplified, developed, or expanded doctrines discretely, to establish their own philosophical system. An example of this would be to say that the Stoics edited down the *Timaeus'* cosmos just omitting the bits they didn't like. The disagreements, in turn, are understood as straightforward rejections of Plato's central doctrines, where the Stoics just try to offer an original and rival answer to those of Plato. For instance, if someone says that the Stoics rejected Plato's theory of forms *because* they were materialists.

The overall traditional portrait emphasises the Stoic originality and innovation—a modern fixation more than a Stoic concern. But if Plato, as many believe today, was no dogmatic unitarian, this interpretation presents the Stoics as poor readers of his dialogues. Moreover, if the Stoics were only *competing* with Plato in an antagonistic way, then the Stoics were not very good readers either, in the sense that they would

[461] The fact that there is a core set of theses and theories that all the Stoics share at a certain moment of time is not enough as such to claim they were transmitting them *as doctrine*. This is true at least of the first generation of Stoics. The situation may have evolved in that direction; see Sedley (1989), and (2003).

have been more interested in ideology than in having a genuine philosophical debate, and inquiry. This would present the Stoics as primarily interested in proving that they were right, rather than in understanding and discussing philosophical problems. There is, fortunately, no need to assume that this depiction of the Stoic reception of Plato is right. The only ones that fit this description are the original materialists of the gigantomachia. They are rude and unwilling to listen (see Ch. 4, sec. 3). But as I have tried to show, the Stoics do not make the same mistake. They partially agree with these materialists, but also with the idealists and the ES. The complexity of their analysis is a reason to think that they understood Plato's dialogues as works to be analysed and discussed, and whose aim was to trigger philosophical debate.

In addition, there is no evidence to indicate the Stoics were personally hostile to Plato.[462] If, for instance, we go back to Plutarch's report about Zeno reading Plato's *Republic* (see sec. 1), we notice that the combative language comes from Plutarch, not from Zeno. Interpreters from antiquity onwards have imposed the Stoic's hostility towards Plato.[463] Plutarch's report, however, makes clear that Zeno engaged in detail *with the flawed arguments and puzzles* of Plato's *Republic*, and that he fostered this type of engagement among his students. But thinking that some of a person's arguments are flawed is not a sign of hostility. The interaction seems to be one of critical evaluation. Zeno's analysis was surely informed by the wider Socratic tradition, but that does not mean his rejection of the arguments was based on a superficial eclecticism or unreflective agreements with other schools, but on their rational assessment of the arguments.

Zeno's disagreements with the dialogues are primarily explained by his philosophical interpretation of them, and not by Zeno's alliances with other schools.[464] But disagreement about the soundness of arguments does not imply hostility. Zeno took it as his task to study Plato's works, and to decide whether the arguments were flawed and needed solution. The explanation of the disagreements is not that Zeno was, for instance, a Cynic in this or that point, but that he assessed an argument in Plato's *Republic*, and offered a solution closer to Cynicism. I cannot stress enough how

[462] The only evidence I can think of is Galen *PHP* 4.1.6, and *Calcidius In Tim*. 249, p. 296. 11-16 W. But these passages are far from definitive. See A. G. Long (2013).
[463] Take as a recent example Schofield (1999, 756-758). After presenting Zeno as having an 'implicit dialogue' with Plato's *Republic*, describes the relation more like a disputation, making the Stoics repudiate Plato's communism, and in 'stark contradiction' to Plato. See also Bailey (2014, 260).
[464] As recently described, for instance, in Schofield (1999), and Boeri & Salles (2014, 744-747). For the impact of Cynicism in Zeno's *Republic* see Sellars (2007).

important the direction of the explanation is in this case. One case makes the Stoics philosophers; the other turns them into ideologists.

From other sources we also know that Zeno was unashamed to make public his agreements with the Socrates of Plato's *Republic*[465] and other dialogues, as well as with other Platonic characters and distinctions. This makes the real picture more balanced than Plutarch allows. The Stoics, it seems, were also interested in the dialogues' positive contributions, and their evaluation of the arguments was often favourable. This means that the Stoics were critical interpreters of Plato's dialogues, and not only followers or detractors.

Zeno's main interest was, however, to propose a correct philosophical account, not to directly refute Plato. Zeno wrote his own *Republic*, not a work exclusively targeting Plato or anyone else (although by doing this, Zeno probably thought that he was implicitly refuting all he needed to refute from other philosophers). But Zeno's treatment of his predecessors is *far from agonistic*. On the contrary, his intense conversation with the philosophical tradition is understated. The Stoic passages, more generally, make clear allusions to other philosophers' works and arguments—they want their readers to recognise the dialectical context of their contributions—but their aim is to offer self-standing, coherent, and structured philosophical proposals. Later they will defend themselves from criticisms, but not necessarily in a dogmatic and closed-minded way. The way the Stoics argue with the sceptic Academy could be compared with the method of hypothesis outlined in the *Phaedo* (see esp. 101d3-102a3; Ch. 1, sec. 7.2.3), more than with a dispute like the one at the beginning of the *Sophist's* gigantomachia (see Ch. 4, sec. 3).

To sum up, there are good reasons to think that the Stoics were careful interpreters of Plato, and that their response to him was not reactionary but that of a more honest and constructive intellectual conversation. If this is so, the idea that their reception of Plato is that of either appropriation, if it suited them, or dismissive rejection, if they were influenced by other sources, has to be abandoned. The Stoic animosity against Plato is probably an invention that later sources introduced. This realisation opens the door to an entire unexplored area of research. Until now, the traditional assumptions have justified scholars to be content with only a thorough record of cross-references of

[465] For the agreements and disagreements between Zeno's and Plato's *Republics* see DL 7.32-34 (SVF 1.226; LS67B; BS30.12); Plutarch, *De Alexandri magni fortuna aut virtute* 329a-b (SVF 1.262; LS67A; BS30.7); DL 7.121-125, 130-131 (SVF 3.355; 3.642; 3.697; 3.757; 3 Appollodorus 17; LS66H; 67P; BS30.20); Athenaeus *Deipnosophistae* 561c (SVF 1.263; LS67D; BS30.33). See also Schofield (1999, 756-760), Erskine (1990, ch. 1), Schofield (1991, ch. 1), and Dawson (1992, ch. 4).

the antecedents of the Stoic philosophy. But if the Stoics were evaluating their predecessors' contributions, and picking up existing philosophical debates, their philosophy can be fruitfully construed as a continuation of those debates.

The Stoics are famous for their systematization of philosophy, and their different divisions of its parts. They are also well known for thinking that the different parts of philosophy are intertwined in an organic way, where there is a strong co-dependency between them. In Diogenes Laertius we also learn that some of the Stoics even transmit philosophy's parts mixed together. The Stoics explained the relation of the parts of philosophy by comparing it with an animal, an egg, or a city. Each of these images highlights something different,[466] but all of them present philosophy as a system which parts function in coordination as a single whole. One way to understand the interconnection between the parts of Stoic philosophy is to think that, for example, ethics assumes certain propositions from physics and logic, and that it is the same for the other two parts.

If we compare this to the way Plato argues in his dialogues the similarity is clear. Plato conceives philosophy as an enterprise where all the different aspects are strongly interconnected (as I have argued in Ch. 1-4). Moreover, Plato does philosophy mixing together all these parts, as some Stoics did. The difference is, however, that he shows no inclination to distinguish different parts of philosophy. It seems that for him, a philosophical conversation involves, more often than not, some methodological reflection, some epistemological discussions, some metaphysics, and ethics. The interrelation is also organic, since it maps the layout of reality.

The difference is that, for the most part, the Stoics teach one part of philosophy at a time. Zeno and Chrysippus, for example, taught first logic, then physics, and finally ethics. Cleanthes, in turn, divided philosophy in six parts: dialectic, rhetoric, ethics, politics, physics, and theology.[467] This implies not only a superficial difference in didactics of philosophy, but in philosophical method. Although the Stoics agree with Plato that philosophy must include all parts, and that they are organically interconnected, that does not imply they should be practiced all at once.

At this point, we can finally answer the question about how the Stoics solved the greatest difficulty. If we remember, there was a dialectical, an epistemological, and an ontological objection clouding Socrates' accounts (see Ch. 3, sec. 2). Even if my

[466] See Boeri and Salles (2014, 13-20).
[467] See DL 7.39-41 (SVF 1.45-46; 2.37-38 and 2.41; LS26B; FDS 1; BS 1.2); Plutarch, *SR* 1035A (SVF 2.42; LS26C; FDS 24).

reconstruction of the discussion about causality and responsibility remained unconvincing, it is true that the Stoic philosophy can be read as an answer to this difficulty, and as a development and reflection over the ideas offered in the *Sophist*. The Stoics' corporealism avoids Socrates' criticisms against other types of materialism, by incorporating incorporeals in their ontology. They, however, reject forms and propose that the causal capacity is exclusively in the hands of God, the active principle, who is mixed through-and-through with everything. Their theory of mixture gives them a way to explain how God could be both the cause for everything, and yet allow each body to be responsible for their effects in the cosmos. Thus, they offer an account with the advantages of the conceptions in *Phaedo* and *Republic* (universality, with explanatory power, and cohesion), but avoiding idealism, and the terrifying consequences of the greatest difficulty (see Ch. 3, sec. 8). Their corporealism also allows them to explain that conversation, understood as a body (a soul) acting in another (another soul) remains powerful. For the Stoics, the virtuous soul of the sage is causally responsible for a transformative conversation.

Conclusions

Let me recapitulate what has been said so far. First, I analysed two central discussions about responsibility in Plato's *Phaedo* and *Republic* 6. Chapter 1 discusses various models of causality and responsibility, and suggests the '*Nous* Closure Principle,' that puts responsibility in the exclusive hands of *nous* (understood as a universal). The responsibility of *nous*, Socrates thinks, arises from its capacity to choose, and order things in the best way it can. Socrates, however, discovered that Anaxagoras, and others have failed to satisfactorily explain how exactly a *nous* is able to connect with its alleged effects. A new attempt, then, is needed (the 'second voyage'). Thanks to the section about the real αἰτία and αἴτιον, however, Socrates makes clear that he never abandons the Closure Principle. Socrates developed his own tentative method of inquiry, which led him to say, in the reading I defended, that forms are the instruments of *nous*, although an action can also fail if *nous* proceeds carelessly and lacks adequate knowledge.

I dedicated chapter 2 to analysing the sun analogy in *Republic* 6. There I argued that the text proposes an inference from analogy to discover some features about the good, but that it leaves open a puzzle about whether to understand the good as an unchangeable structure or as an active God. In addition, I argued that the passage introduces a notion of causality and responsibility that is partially transitive, which is an innovation with respect to the *Phaedo*. This means that the goodness of something can be traced back to God, whereas evil things are traced back to specific flawed souls. These flaws, however, might be overcome by philosophical conversation, which has a transformative effect in the soul.

The discussions in *Phaedo* and *Republic* are distinct and independent from each other. There are some shared points, and some aspects in both discussions are compatible, but Plato seems to be testing similar but different solutions to the puzzles about causation and responsibility found in previous philosophies. Each discussion has its own set of unresolved puzzles, some of which Plato will discuss again in later dialogues.

In chapter 3, I analysed one of the difficulties for the arguments advanced in both the *Phaedo* and *Republic 6*. The puzzle, which was already hinted at by Glaucon in the *Republic*, is developed in the *Parmenides* and it is known as the greatest difficulty. I have shown that the structure of the difficulty is multi-layered, and it involves a dialectical, epistemological, and ontological objection. At the core of the difficulty, there is a challenge to the whole causal connection between the intelligible and the sensible parts of the world. This, if right, brings about shocking consequences. It would mean that souls (and, therefore,

nous) have no access to the necessary intelligible instruments to function successfully, and if that is the case, knowledge is impossible, and philosophical conversation loses all its power. The difficulty, in this way, poses a challenge for the previous discussions on responsibility. On the one hand, if there is no access to forms, then it seems there is no secure criterion to judge a good action from a bad one, and then no secure way to assign responsibility. On the other hand, it jeopardises the transitive notion of the responsibility of good things, since God has no power to intervene in human affairs, and humans do not have knowledge of him.

Chapter 4 focussed on the *Sophist's* gigantomachia as a reflection on the greatest difficulty. The passage presents a fictionalised dispute between materialists and idealists, two possible reactions to the greatest difficulty. Importantly, it is an altercation where conversation has no power, and there is only room for dispute. After modifying the materialists, the ES acts as a link, a peace negotiator, who cross-examines both views. He first persuades the materialists that they have to accept that at least virtues are incorporeal, and thus that not only bodies but also that anything with some power exists. Then, he cross-examines the idealists, and concludes that their views are inconsistent, and make *nous* disappear, which also make knowledge impossible. In the end, the ES's diagnostic of the situation is that a philosophical account able to include and explain the connection between both bodies and intelligible beings is still needed. For that, the ES proposes that kinds are like letters. Some of them mix with each other and some others do not, but vowels act like bonds. We can think there are some kinds, then, perhaps *nous* included, that link together two otherwise unrelated kinds. This offers no full account of how *nous* or anything else is able to act as a link, but suggests that it is possible, and natural, and therefore not entirely inconceivable.

Chapter 5 discusses whether Stoic philosophy engaged with the arguments and puzzles of the *Sophist*, and the previous dialogues included in this thesis. I showed evidence to suggest that the Stoics had direct access to Plato, and that they were careful readers interested in continuing the philosophical discussion fostered by him. The complex argumentation in the dialogues helps to explain, I argued, the complexity of the Stoic philosophy; specifically, their specific brand of corporealism, which could be understood as a solution to the greatest difficulty that does not have to accept the existence of forms. This gives rise to a theory of causality that takes into account plenty of the different aspects and possibilities involved in a causal relation. The main contribution here is the distinction between active and passive causes, and the idea that the cause in a strict sense is the active

one, which is the only one that tracks responsibility. The other senses of cause explain, in turn, how the notions of causation and responsibility began to grow apart.

This research has also shown that there is continuity in the topics being discussed, and the way philosophy is conceived. It is false that the Stoics are not interested in Plato's philosophical project and problems, and that they are anti-Platonic. I have argued that the engagement the Stoics had with Plato was not partial or instrumental but careful and respectful. The early Stoics were not ideologists but philosophers. They were not afraid to agree with Plato's dialogues, but they were also independent thinkers able to also criticise arguments they considered flawed. The Stoics, I have shown, were not hostile to Plato, but on the contrary, they were very keen on his dialogues. Moreover, they interpreted Plato in a sophisticated way, reflecting the arguments from different perspectives, and evaluating each contribution thoroughly. The Stoics were rightful heirs of Plato in the sense that they conceived philosophy in an organic and interconnected way similar to Plato's.

This thesis, however, has been unable to signal all the possible connections between the texts selected, or to include all the relevant texts for an exhaustive reconstruction of the debate about causality and responsibility. Some of the topics, especially in the Stoics, have only been briefly mentioned. Almost no other philosopher was included in the analysis. No Aristotle, or later Academics, no Epicureans, or other Hellenistic schools. This means that the outcome of this research is only a partial picture. For a full understanding of the Stoics a more comprehensive analysis of their influences, readings, and interchanges with other philosophers is needed. That, however, was never the intention of this project.

This thesis opens various lines of investigation where further work is possible. In general, the history of Greek philosophy might explore further the engagement between two different philosophers, or schools; a history not of the philosophers but of the philosophical debates. Methodologically, it also sets a precedent for analysing arguments in ancient philosophy. The idea was to respect the structure of the argumentation to see how each argument was linked and formed part of an interconnected whole. This, I believe, does more justice to the sophistication of the texts than focusing on one aspect and ignoring the rest. Analysing the argumentation in this way shows that what is often assumed as a digression in the text, is instead part of a complex network of arguments. I have shown that Plato, and in some cases also the Stoics, argue in a distinctive way that consistently incorporates, at the same time, methodological reflections, epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics. The moral is, then, to look for these connections and try to explain why ancient philosophers are interested in doing philosophy in this way. Perhaps by understanding that

this is the way philosophy should be done, we may find that conversation has a transformational power after all.

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