

DISSERTATIONES PHILOSOPHICAE UNIVERSITATIS TARTUENSIS

7

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7

TOOMAS LOTT

Plato on Belief (*doxa*)
Theaetetus 184B–187A



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Plato

Apology of Socrates	<i>Ap.</i>
Charmides	<i>Charm.</i>
Cratylus	<i>Crat.</i>
Euthyphro	<i>Euth.</i>
Euthydemus	<i>Euthd.</i>
Gorgias	<i>Gorg.</i>
Laches	<i>Lach.</i>
Laws	<i>Leg.</i>
Parmenides	<i>Parm.</i>
Phaedo	<i>Phd.</i>
Phaedrus	<i>Phdr.</i>
Philebus	<i>Phlb.</i>
Protagoras	<i>Prot.</i>
Republic	<i>Rep.</i>
Sophist	<i>Soph.</i>
Statesman	<i>Pol.</i>
Symposium	<i>Symp.</i>
Theaetetus	<i>Tht.</i>
Timaeus	<i>Tim.</i>

Aristotle

De anima	<i>De an.</i>
Metaphysics	<i>Met.</i>
On Memory and Recollection	<i>De mem.</i>

INTRODUCTION

I. Aim of the Dissertation

In dialogues of the middle period (e.g. the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*), Plato credits non-human animals, the body, and the non-rational parts of the soul with beliefs (δόξα). He thinks that when something *seems* large or beautiful, then this ‘seeming’ is already a kind of belief (*Rep.* 505D, 602C–603A). Since what seems or appears to us is more often than not outside the limits of our rational control, so are our beliefs also. In the middle period, Plato thinks that our belief formation does not necessarily require reasoning; beliefs can result directly from sense-perception, from what we find pleasant or interesting, or simply from what the people around us are accustomed to think. In many or even most cases, forming beliefs is simply a passive acceptance. What gets accepted is determined by the sort of character one has and the sort of environment one lives in. This is why it is of utmost importance to Plato, in his *Republic*, to invent a system that would instil correct beliefs about how one ought to live one’s life into those people souls who are incapable of acquiring knowledge and who operate solely at the level of beliefs. The line between knowledge and belief is sharp. In the *Republic*, the majority of people never acquire knowledge and therefore have to be provided with the right sort of environment for forming correct beliefs. Their characters have to be shaped in the right sort of way so that they will passively accept what, indeed, happens to be true. Only the ruling class, the philosophers, *know* that and why these beliefs are true. In some cases the beliefs instilled into non-philosophers’ souls by the educational system can even be false, what matters is that these (false) beliefs generate the kind of behaviour that benefits the *polis* (*Rep.* 378A, 414B).

In his later dialogues (e.g. the *Timaeus*, *Theaetetus* and *Philebus*), on the other hand, Plato begins to view belief formation as a capacity that necessarily involves the reasoning part of the soul (*Tim.* 37C, 77B). He abandons the view that non-rational parts of the soul, or the body or animals, hold beliefs. Furthermore, he assumes that beliefs are formed only when the soul engages in an inner discussion with itself, considers candidate answers to whatever question it asks itself and reflects about how things appear and whether things really are as they appear to be (*Th.* 189E–190A, *Phlb.* 38C–E). This suggests that belief formation in the later dialogues does not include passive non-rational acceptances, but requires the *activity* of the reasoning part of the soul. Since forming beliefs involves reason one can say that forming beliefs becomes, for Plato, a rational capacity.

Hence, there is a crucial difference between Plato’s middle and later dialogues: the later Plato takes belief formation to be a rational capacity. This in turn raises the problem of why Plato starts to view belief formation as a rational capacity. The aim of my dissertation is to offer a solution to this problem, which I will refer to as the ‘problem of the rationality of belief’; I shall account for

why Plato changes his mind about belief formation, and in what the rationality of a belief consists.

In elucidating Plato's notion of 'rationality', Michael Frede (1996: 6–14) points out that the Greek notion of reason and rationality differs from our modern conceptions in two important ways. The Greeks thought of reason first as endowed with pre-existing knowledge, and second as having desires and aims of its own (most notably the desire for truth and the desire for good). My solution to the problem of the rationality of belief will focus on the second aspect of the Greek notion of rationality. I will argue that belief formation becomes a rational capacity for Plato because he recognizes that belief formation is by its nature a cognitive activity that aims to find out how things are. As Plato states, in forming beliefs the soul 'yearns after being' (*Tht.* 186A). This desire for truth and learning (*Rep.* 581B) is what Plato takes to be the distinctive feature of reason in his middle dialogues. Hence it is natural for the later Plato to think that forming beliefs is an activity of the reasoning part of the soul. In forming beliefs the soul aims to believe truly, i.e. to represent how things are, independently of how they seem or appear to be. This is to say, when you form a belief that something is the case, you form a belief about something that would be the case regardless of whether or not it appears to be the case.

Thus, my interpretation suggests that in his later dialogues, Plato drives a wedge between appearance (seeming) and belief to the extent that he starts to view belief formation as an activity that aims at believing truly. Finding out how things are involves reasoning and considering candidate answers to whatever question the soul asks itself. This is why Plato says that forming beliefs requires inner dialogue. Since belief formation is taken to be intrinsically goal-directed, it is also sensitive to logical relations, such as contrariety and inconsistency. In the middle dialogues Plato sometimes pictures the soul as capable of holding contradictory beliefs. This is perfectly understandable, assuming that, for Plato in the middle dialogues, some beliefs *are* appearances, for at times sensory appearances conflict with what we think is the case (e.g. *Rep.* 602C–603A). In the middle dialogues, beliefs are formed in an atomistic manner, i.e. they do not need to be consistent with other beliefs we hold. In the late dialogues, beliefs are formed in a holistic manner, i.e. we form beliefs on the background of other beliefs we hold, in the attempt to maintain consistency. This contributes to the desired goal, i.e. to believe truly or, to 'attain being' (*Tht.* 186C–E).

Truth-directedness or truth-aimedness of beliefs is an important topic in contemporary philosophy. The truth-aimedness is often thought to be the distinctive feature of belief, although it has proved difficult to give this notion more precise content¹. Further, in contemporary philosophy the 'aim of belief' is often discussed in terms of whether mental states can be explained in

¹ A classic paper, where the expression 'belief aims at truth' originates is Williams (1970). An important paper that revived the discussion for contemporary epistemology is Velleman (2000). For an overview of the main positions in the 'aim of belief' discussion in contemporary epistemology, see Vahid (2009: 1–32)

naturalistic terms. If belief has truth as an aim, then ‘belief’ can be seen an irreducibly normative notion, which could be an argument against naturalizing beliefs *qua* mental states. Of course, this is not the reason why Plato discusses ‘attaining being’ as a goal for forming beliefs. As I will argue, Plato is interested in ‘being’ as a goal for belief formation because his new, teleological notion of belief plays an important part in the rejection of Protagoras’ relativism in the *Theaetetus* and justifying Socratic method against relativistic charges. If forming beliefs is aimed at grasping how the world is, independently from ourselves, then this makes us all anti-relativists. We all form beliefs and assume that the truth of a particular belief is dependent not on the mere fact that we hold it (Protagoras’ position) but rather on whether the belief that we are forming represents the world as it is.

My explanation as to why Plato starts to view belief as rational differs significantly from the accounts proposed in two important monographs by Christopher Bobonich (in his *Plato’s Utopia Recast*, 2002), and Hendrik Lorenz (in *Brute Within. Appetitive Desire in Plato and Aristotle*, 2006). Their proposals appeal to the first feature of rationality pointed out by Frede. Lorenz and Bobonich claim that in his later thought Plato realizes that a prior apprehension of Platonic Forms is required for predicative thought (Lorenz) or conceptualization (Bobonich). According to both Lorenz and Bobonich, Plato recognizes that apprehension of Forms is necessary for ordinary thinking and belief formation. Since only the reasoning part of the soul has access to Forms (*Phdr.* 247D), it then becomes natural for Plato to think that only reason can form beliefs.

This explanation (henceforth the ‘standard account’) answers the question of why belief becomes rational for Plato by invoking the Platonic Forms. The standard account maintains that, for the later Plato, apprehending Forms is necessary for forming beliefs. In forming a belief ‘*x* is *F*’ one apprehends the Form of *F* (Bobonich) or the non-sensible Being that connects *x* to *F* in the proposition ‘*x* is *F*’ or the nonsensible difference and oppositeness necessary for identifying the property *F* (Lorenz). The account that I am proposing in this dissertation (henceforth the ‘teleological account’) remains neutral as to the precise nature of the relation between belief formation and the Platonic Forms, e.g. whether there *can be* beliefs about Forms or whether Forms are apprehended only in knowledge. Unlike the standard account, the teleological account does *not* imply that Forms are apprehended simply in virtue of forming a belief ‘*x* is *F*’. The teleological account proposed here fits well with the idea that, for Plato, forming beliefs is a matter of perception, memory and perhaps some competence in speaking a language. Thus at least to a certain extent, Plato is an empiricist when it comes to explaining how non-philosophers acquire the concepts they use to form their beliefs. However, apprehending non-sensible Forms is a task for philosophers, a task that requires disregard for the empirical world. When it comes to explaining knowledge, Plato is a rationalist.

What is at stake here is the choice between two general conceptions as to how ordinary non-philosophical thinking relates to the famous Platonic Forms

in the late dialogues. In the middle dialogues Plato states (e.g. *Phd.* 81B, *Rep.* 484B) that only a very small elite of human beings has cognitive access to Forms, namely the philosophers. The rest of us, the non-philosophers, are doomed to spend our lives in a dream-like state (*Rep.* 476C), thinking that what we see and hear around us is all there is, whereas ‘truly real’, i.e. the non-sensible Forms, remain firmly outside of our cognitive reach. Grasping Forms, the fundamental building-blocks of reality, serves as the epistemic goal of human life. Without grasping Forms one cannot have knowledge (*Rep.* 476E–480A, *Tim.* 51B–E). Consequently, the majority of people, the non-philosophers, do not have knowledge (*Tim.* 51A). Non-philosophers hold beliefs, true and false, but they lack knowledge, since they do not recognize that the Forms exist. They make the choices in their lives believing that, for example, sexual attractiveness accounts for why things are beautiful or that being pleasurable explains why things are good. However, the non-philosophers are wrong – it is the non-sensible Form of the Good and non-sensible Form of Beauty that explain why things are good or beautiful. Consequently, the non-philosophers choose pleasant things over non-pleasant because they hold the (false) belief that pleasurable things are (the same as) good. Since non-philosophers are cognitively cut off from Forms they cannot live truly happy lives.

According to the first conception, Plato radically changes his mind about the relation between Forms and ordinary (non-philosophical) thinking in his later dialogues. He starts to view some sort of grasp of Forms as necessary for forming beliefs and understanding speech. Unlike the *Republic* or *Phaedo*, Forms explain how we acquire concepts, the concepts we use in our everyday thinking, as well as belief formation. According to the second conception, Plato never (not even in the late dialogues) thinks that the grasp of Forms explains ordinary thought. In a series of papers² Gail Fine has argued that the passages usually taken to express (what she calls) the ‘semantic’ view of Forms can plausibly be read in a different manner. Forms are not meant to explain how ordinary belief formation is possible. For the later Plato, just like for the Plato of the *Republic*, Forms are real explanatory properties of things, real definitions as opposed to nominal definitions. Just as someone with absolutely no knowledge of chemistry can have thoughts about water without any awareness as to its molecular structure, so non-philosophers can have thoughts involving the term ‘beautiful’, without understanding that the real definition of beauty expresses the non-sensible Form of the Beautiful. The beliefs of non-philosophers remain cognitively independent of Forms. For the later Plato (as for the middle period Plato), Forms are relevant in the epistemological and metaphysical, but not in the ‘semantic’ sense (in that grasp of Forms explains ordinary thought). It is highly controversial which one of these general conceptions

² These papers are now rewritten and published in a monograph, *On Ideas. Aristotle’s Criticism of Plato’s Theory of Forms* (Fine 1993) (see especially chapters II, IV, VII, VIII, IX and XI).

about Forms in the later dialogues is correct. I believe that the second conception is closer to the truth.

The problem of the rationality of belief is important in this context, since the standard account (which, for the moment, is the only one available in the literature) strongly suggests that later Plato views Forms as relevant for ordinary belief formation. Therefore, in order to maintain that Forms in later dialogues continue to play exclusively epistemological and metaphysical role (and that they are not meant to explain ordinary thought), an alternative account for rationality of belief in later Plato is required. This is the gap I wish to fill with this dissertation. I hope to show that the shift in Plato's notion of belief is not due to his radical rethinking of the relation between ordinary thought and Forms, but rather his recognition that in forming beliefs we aim to represent things as they are. This does not mean, of course, that Plato does not rethink other important issues in his later theory of Forms. He probably does. For example, he starts to put much more emphasis on how the Forms are interconnected with one another. For the same reason, highly abstract Forms such as Sameness and Difference become his focus of attention. But this aspect of his middle-period theory remains: grasp of Forms, even for later Plato, is not meant to explain ordinary thought. Grasp of Sameness and Difference, and that means the Forms in their interrelations, requires knowledge. It is not a cognitive precondition of forming beliefs. Plato indeed starts to think more highly of non-philosophers but this is because he recognizes that forming beliefs (which is what all adults do) is not just the question of accepting appearances, but rather as a genuine effort to believe truly, i.e. to 'attain being'.

2. *Theaetetus* 184B–187A

One way to argue for my claim is to go through all the relevant passages on belief in Plato's late dialogues. This is not the method I have chosen here. The reason is that although the passages in the later dialogues where Plato talks about belief clearly show that his notion of belief has significantly transformed, these passages do not tell us *why* this has happened. In that sense they lack explanatory value. However, there is one passage, *Theaetetus* 184B–187E (in what follows I will call this passage the 'Passage of the Commons'), where Plato does offer an explanation as to why belief should be regarded as a capacity or a state that involves reason. This passage is of the utmost importance for understanding Plato's later notion of belief. Yet, scholars have failed to reach a consensus about the exact meaning of the passage. In fact, the interpretation of this passage is highly controversial³. Consequently, most of

³ The most important recent discussions of this passage include: Bobonich (2002: 295–231), Bostock (1988: 110–145). Burnyeat (1976) and (1990: 52–64), Cooper (1970), Fine (1988), D. Frede (1989), M. Frede (1987), Gerson (2003: 204–212), Kahn (1981), Kanayama (1987), Lorenz (2006: 74–95), McDowell, (1973: 185–193), Modrak (1981), Sedley (2004: 105–114) and Silverman (1990).

this dissertation consists of a critical analysis of this rather difficult passage. I hope to show that the passage sheds a great deal of light on Plato's later notion of belief, and serves as an interpretative key to other relevant passages in Plato's late dialogues. Bobonich and Lorenz believe that *Theaetetus* 184B–187A supports the view that Plato starts to think belief as requiring prior grasp of intelligibles or Forms. In contrast, I will argue that the passage supports the teleological account of the rationality of belief. Plato's point is that in forming beliefs the soul aims at 'attaining being', it aims to believe what is objectively the case.

Socrates (the character in the dialogue) argues in *Theaetetus* 184B–187A against the *Theaetetus*' definition of knowledge as perception. He and Theaetetus reach the position according to which perception does not have access to 'commons' (τὰ κοινά), yet grasping commons is necessary for attaining truth, since attaining truth requires the grasp of the common 'being' (οὐσία). Therefore perception does not attain truth. Since attaining truth is necessary for having knowledge, Socrates concludes that perception is not (the same as) knowledge. Aside from this negative result, Plato also claims that the soul itself by itself tries to grasp commons (especially being) and not by means of the bodily senses. Theaetetus goes on to say that this activity of the soul itself by itself should be identified with forming beliefs (δοξάζειν).

The passage is fascinating for any student of Plato since it can be seen as a turning point from Plato's middle dialogues to his more mature thought in the later dialogues⁴. The topics and doctrines of the late dialogues are intertwined with the topics and doctrines of the middle dialogues. The crucial terms such as 'being' can be taken to refer to either as the 'truly real being' of the Forms of the *Republic* or as much more modest being as a copula of the late dialogues. It can also mean 'reality' in a rather non-committal sense (as I will argue). Of course, the argument according to which perception does not attain being and truth reaches a very different conclusion depending on where the emphasis is

⁴ Some philosophers think that the passage is crucial for understanding some aspects of the history of western philosophy in its entirety. For example, Bertrand Russell has this passage in mind when he says that the *Theaetetus* marks 'two and a half millennia of muddle-headedness about 'existence'' (Russell 1946/2004: 740). Martin Heidegger says that 'this is the essential and decisive section. Here also the turning point is particularly clear, where Greek thought turns away from its origin to go over into 'metaphysics', to ground thought in the doctrine of being as idea and truth as *homoiosis*' (Heidegger 2002: 233). For these two philosophers, coming from very different traditions, the influence of the Passage of the Commons on subsequent philosophy is mainly negative. Plato's mistake, from Russell's perspective, is to take 'existence' to be a (first order) predicate. For Heidegger, the error lies in Plato's shift towards the propositional understanding of truth, which thereby loses its historical origin as 'unhiddenness'. The scholars of ancient philosophy usually have a more positive attitude towards the passage: 'Plato's achievement [is] in arriving at the first unambiguous statement in the history of philosophy of the difficult but undoubtedly important idea of the unity of consciousness' (Burnyeat 1990: 58) and 'Plato's most important contribution lay in his dramatic narrowing of the content of perception, and his corresponding expansion of the content of belief' (Sorabji 1995: 9).

put: does perception not attain the being of Forms or does it lack propositional structure, or does it simply fail to represent objective mind-independent world?

One might think that even if the Passage of the Commons itself is ambiguous, then perhaps the context of the dialogue helps to determine which reading should be preferred. However, the reason why it has been so difficult to reach a consensus about this passage is precisely that the interpretation of the *Theaetetus* as a whole is very controversial (perhaps more so than the interpretation of any other dialogue of Plato). What makes the *Theaetetus* so difficult to interpret is the fact that it is singular in the group of late dialogues in that it resurrects the aporetic form of Plato's early, Socratic dialogues. The dialogue ends in an impasse and the definition of knowledge is not found. The main speaker, Socrates, holds back from making any positive claims, in striking contrast to the Socrates of the *Republic* and *Phaedo* who defended quite substantial metaphysical, epistemological, and ethical doctrines. Just like the Socrates from *Apology* (21D), Socrates of the *Theaetetus* claims to be barren of knowledge. Since the dialogue ends in an impasse and the chief speaker declares himself to be ignorant, it is difficult to say what, if any, positive doctrines the dialogue is supposed to express. The Platonic Forms are never mentioned (at least not by name, some think that 'the commons' might be Forms), which is especially striking since one would expect Forms to play a prominent part in the discussion about knowledge. The slightly earlier *Republic* (e.g. *Rep.* 476E–480A) and slightly later or contemporary *Timaeus* (*Tim.* 51B–E) tell us that Plato takes knowledge to be (exclusively) about Forms, it is therefore odd that Plato fails to mention them in the *Theaetetus*. How should one explain all this?

There are many different views about why the *Theaetetus* has this unique character⁵, but most contemporary scholars agree on one fundamental interpretive assumption – *Theaetetus* is a dialogue that has more than one dimension or level⁶. The *Theaetetus* should not be read as doctrinal in the sense of directly expressing Plato's views on knowledge⁷. This does not mean that there is

⁵ For an overview of ancient readings of the *Theaetetus*, see Sedley (1996), for modern readings Becker (2007: 390–400).

⁶ For example, Burnyeat (1990) and Sedley (2004) pursue each in their own different manner the multiple-level strategy of interpretation.

⁷ This applies to Plato's dialogues in general, not just to the *Theaetetus*. Very broadly speaking, there are three basic strategies of thinking about the relation between Plato's own views and the views put forth by the main speakers of the dialogues. Radical doctrinalism claims that all views expressed by Socrates (the main speaker in most dialogues), Timaeus or Parmenides (main speakers in the eponymous dialogues), the Athenian (main speaker in the *Laws*) or the Eleatic Visitor (the main speaker in the *Statesman* and the *Sophist*) express Plato's own views (the most recent defender of this view is Beversluis (2006)). The radical anti-dogmatist claims that *none* of the views expressed by the main speakers can be attributed to Plato (the most recent defender is Nails (1999)). Moderate dogmatism claims that although not all the views expressed by the main speakers of the dialogues are Plato's, one can still plausibly maintain that many of them are. Plato has various methods for indicating which views he takes seriously. One of the recent defenders is M. Frede (1992). I

nothing to be learned from the *Theaetetus*. It means that Socrates might be advancing Plato's views on knowledge, perception, and belief indirectly. What these views are is very much open to discussion and, more often than not, difficult to determine. But it is agreed on almost all sides that what Plato makes Socrates or Theaetetus explicitly declare in the *Theaetetus* can hardly be flatly equated with what Plato himself wants to express. This has been the predominant view of scholars on *Theaetetus* throughout the second half of the twentieth century, resulting in what might perhaps be considered a fundamental transformation of our understanding of the dialogue as a whole⁸.

The Passage of the Commons, however, has been quite immune to this approach. The prevailing opinion is that whatever the exact content of the argument in the Passage of the Commons might be, it certainly stands out from the rest of the *Theaetetus* in view of its directness. Here we hear Plato's own voice. Burnyeat expresses the point clearly: 'In 184A–186E the argument proceeds, for the first time in the dialogue, from premises Plato himself accepts as true' (1990: 53). This is the assumption that I wish to challenge. In the course of this dissertation I will argue that the 'doctrinal' reading of the Passage of the Commons is riddled with so many problems that it makes more sense to abandon it altogether. Not everything Socrates says in the Passage of the Commons should be taken to express Plato's own philosophical views. For example, when Socrates gives the impression that the 'commons' sameness and beauty are grasped in all beliefs that the soul forms about beauty or sameness, he is relying on what his interlocutor, Theaetetus, thinks about human cognition – namely, that cognition always involves a direct grasp of its objects. Thus I aim to show that the stretch of text that is usually been seen as evidence for the standard account of why belief becomes rational, actually contains nothing of the kind.

I will argue that Socrates' method of midwifery (*Tht.* 149B–151D) holds the key to a proper understanding of the first part of the *Theaetetus* and especially the Passage of the Commons. Socrates cannot attack directly the deep-seated assumptions of his interlocutors. This would conflict with his methodological barrenness (*Tht.* 150C, 157C–D, 179B, 210C). Socrates draws out the implications of these deep-seated assumptions and shows that these implications contradict other beliefs that the interlocutor holds. Socrates often has to speak in a way that (apparently) accords with his interlocutor's beliefs; he often seems to

believe that moderate dogmatism is the most fruitful way to read the *Theaetetus*, especially the Passage of the Commons.

⁸ For example, not many interpreters nowadays believe that the Heraclitean theory of perception developed in the first part of the dialogue is Plato's own. According to the contemporary majority-view, the Heraclitean model perception is introduced on dialectical grounds, in support of Theaetetus' first definition, 'knowledge is (the same as) perception' (Burnyeat's (1990) Reading B). Similar transformation (although to a lesser extent) has taken place concerning the puzzles of falsity in *Theaetetus* 187B–200D, which are often seen as a part of a *reductio* of Theaetetus' second definition, rather than an indication that Plato is incapable of explaining false beliefs (e.g. Fine 1979, Benson 1992, Adalier 2001).

share the assumptions of his interlocutors. However, this is only apparent, since Socrates goes on to show that some of the assumptions that, for instance, Theaetetus (unconsciously) makes, are false. In this way, Socratic method allows the interlocutor (and the reader) to become aware of their own unquestioned assumptions about knowledge (and belief and perception). Socrates does not authoritatively *tell* his interlocutors to let go of the assumptions but he enables the interlocutors understand the reason why they should do so. By noticing how questionable some of their assumptions are, Socrates' interlocutors acquire a better position for further inquiry.

It might seem that giving weight to the dialogical context distracts the interpretation from the proper, 'philosophical' topics, making Plato's dialogues seem too 'psychological' or 'pedagogical'. However, it is far from clear whether it is at all possible to make the sharp distinction between philosophical thinking 'proper' and dialogical, context-dependent thinking, at least when it comes to Plato's dialogues. I think that the possibility of taking into account the dialectical context of the conversation should be seen as an additional interpretative strategy that sets Plato scholars apart from the majority of historians of philosophy. In an essay concerning the methodological questions of studying Ancient Philosophy, Michael Frede (1987a: xii) makes the point that only when we, as interpreters, have exhausted all possible philosophically good reasons why a philosopher might hold or express a certain view, should we try and offer reasons that are not strictly speaking philosophical, for example, reasons that derive from cultural or social context, from errors in reasoning, etc. In Plato's case, however, there is an additional possibility – if some of the views expressed or premises of the arguments put forth in the dialogues seem to us to have no good straightforwardly philosophical reasons to support them, we can go on and ask whether they might be inserted in the dialogue for dialogical reasons – as something that the interlocutor might believe or something that serves as a premise for an indirect argument. Since there is no sharp distinction (or at least it is very difficult to draw the line) between properly philosophical and dialogical considerations in Plato, dialogical reasons offer an excellent interpretive resource if the text seems confused or to contradict itself. It is reasonable to assume (in accordance with the principle of charity) that the apparent confusion or contradiction can be resolved if one takes into account the dialogical context.

I hope to make plausible in this dissertation that even in the case of the Passage of the Commons, despite its somewhat doctrinarian air, one must ask whether the premises of the arguments put forth are accepted because they follow from the definition being tested (are part of a *reductio*) or are they accepted because Socrates' interlocutor believes them (which is justified by Socrates' method of midwifery), or both, or are they accepted because Plato puts them forth as his own philosophical views. I will show that if one takes the passage as a straightforwardly doctrinarian piece of reasoning it becomes almost impossible to make it cohere both within itself and with the rest of the *Theaetetus*. I will argue that if one takes into account the specific features of

Socratic midwifery, the Passage of the Commons contains a solution to the problem of rationality of belief.

3. Overview of the Dissertation

The dissertation proceeds as follows. Chapter 1 provides the background and motivation for a close examination of the Passage of the Commons that follows in the next three chapters. In the first section, I argue that there is a shift in Plato's conception of belief: belief formation becomes, in later dialogues, a rational capacity. I also introduce the standard account for this shift according to which Plato, in his later dialogues, comes to view cognitive access to Forms as a necessary condition for forming beliefs. The second section gives an outline of two main ways to explain the relation between Forms and ordinary thought and belief in the middle dialogues. The 'Optimistic View' takes some grasp of Forms to be necessary for concept-acquisition and concept-application. Even the non-philosophers have a humdrum apprehension of Forms inasmuch they use and understand general terms. The 'Pessimistic View', on the other hand, maintains that Forms remain outside the cognitive reach of non-philosophers. Grasping Forms is not necessary for conceptualization but for *knowledge* (understood in Plato's demanding sense). I give an overview of the most systematic account of Forms that denies that Forms are meant to explain ordinary concept-application, Gail Fine's reading of Forms as universals in the realist sense, as genuine explanatory properties. Section 3 offers an overview of the standard account of the rationality of belief. I will first argue that the standard account takes Plato to move from the Pessimistic View of Forms to the Optimistic View. I will point out that there are different versions of the standard account. In Section 4, I will turn to the assessment of the standard account. I will argue that, aside from the difficulties that are inherent in both Bobonich's and Lorenz's versions of the standard account, there is surprisingly little textual support for the standard account in the late dialogues. The main piece of support derives from the Passage of the Commons where Plato seems to be committing himself to the claim that grasping (at least some) intelligibles is necessary for forming beliefs.

Chapter 2 analyses and criticizes the 'conceptualist' interpretation of the Passage of the Commons (which is a version of the Optimistic View and which supports the standard account). According to this interpretation, the Passage of the Commons commits Plato to the claim that there are features of things, 'the commons', which are grasped in virtue of entertaining a thought involving a term that designates a particular common feature (the 'conceptualist assumption'). Conceptualist reading is committed to interpreting the crucial term 'being' as a copula. Consequently, I will ask whether the copula reading of 'being' is supported by the text. I will argue that it is not. In Section 1, I will give a general overview of the main conceptualist readings of the passage and what motivates them. In section 2, I will argue that reading 'being' as a copula

results in an unsatisfactory interpretation of the passage and conclude that the conceptualist reading is probably not the correct interpretation of the Passage of the Commons. In Section 3, I will present an alternative to the conceptualist reading, the realist reading. The realist reading takes ‘being’ to be equivalent to the notion of ‘reality’ or ‘objectivity’. I will argue that all the versions of the realist reading presented in the scholarly literature also fail, since they assume that the conceptualist assumption applies to ‘commons’ (especially the to the ‘common’ ‘being’). This sets the aim for the following chapter – to find an interpretation of the Passage of the Commons that does not commit Plato to the conceptualist assumption.

In Chapter 3, I will develop a reading of Socrates’ method of intellectual midwifery (*maieutics*). I will inquire into what the specific features of this method are, and how the method is carried out in discussion prior to the introduction of ‘commons’ at 185A. In Section 1, I will argue that midwifery is a constructive method for giving clear content to the definitions offered by the interlocutor and then submitting these definitions to criticism. The specifically Socratic aspect of all this is that Socrates, since he is methodologically ignorant, always relies on the beliefs of the interlocutor. His method thus remains dependent on interlocutor’s beliefs and on interlocutor’s understanding of the concepts involved. Further, Socrates’ midwifery also has an aim of uncovering mistaken assumptions that lead the interlocutor to giving their mistaken definitions. In section 2, I will demonstrate how this method is carried out in the first part of the *Theaetetus*. I will claim that Theaetetus’ definition ‘knowledge is perception’ should be understood as ‘knowledge is direct awareness’, where ‘awareness’ covers beliefs, desires, dreams, memory, cases of hallucinating and sense perception in the narrow sense. Theaetetus relies on what I call the ‘aesthetic model of cognition’: he takes all cognitive acts to involve a direct awareness of its objects. Section 3 develops an interpretation, according to which the introductory part of the Passage of the Commons (184B3–E7) is best understood as Socrates introducing a narrow notion of perception (sense-perception). This is, in effect, the *second* interpretation of Theaetetus’ first definition, this time: knowledge is sense perception. Furthermore, I will argue that the argument for the imperceptibility of the commons (184E8–185B9) relies both on this new notion of αἴσθησις as sense perception and other beliefs that Theaetetus has acquired during the discussion, most notably the belief that all senses are restricted to their proper objects (the ‘Proper Object Theory’). This premise is tacitly given up in the next section of the dialogue. Thus it is unlikely that the Passage of the Commons expresses Plato’s own theory of perception.

Chapter 4 develops a version of the realist reading that denies that ‘commons’ are grasped in all beliefs and thoughts, i.e. denies the conceptualist assumption. The realist reading of *Theaetetus* 184B–187A enables me to show that the passage contains genuinely novel claims about belief, *viz.* that it is by its very nature directed to being in the sense of obtaining states of affairs. I will also argue that this novel, teleological notion of belief explains why belief

becomes rational for later Plato. Section 1 is dedicated to analysing the maieutic aspect the Passage of the Commons. I will argue that (despite appearances) Socrates does not claim that in thinking the soul ‘grasps’ the relevant commons. The reason why he sometimes seems to do so is dialectical. Theaetetus’ framework of beliefs about cognition is largely governed by the aisthetic model; he thinks that all acts of cognition require a direct relation between the subject and the object. Socratic midwifery works within this framework of beliefs, hence Socrates has to rely on this model himself while posing questions and directing Theaetetus. This gives the (false) impression that ‘commons’ are concepts (grasped in all thoughts that contain the relevant terms). I propose that this stage two should be understood as abandoning the aisthetic model of cognition. Socrates stresses that, in order to be able to attain being (one of the commons), one needs a significant amount of education. I will argue that ‘being’ should be understood as ‘reality of something’. It is difficult and time consuming to learn the ‘comparing’ and ‘calculating’ that are necessary to determine whether a given property (e.g. beauty) is instantiated. Section 2 develops a notion of belief that accords with the realist reading of Passage of the Commons. I argue that in the Passage of the Commons Plato develops a conception of belief formation as an intrinsically goal-directed activity aiming to ‘attain being’. The grasp of being, sameness and difference is not a cognitive precondition of forming beliefs, attaining ‘being’ (objectivity, reality) is rather the cognitive end of belief formation. This is the why Plato starts to think of belief formation as necessarily involving reasoning. I suggest that Plato’s main motivation behind this novel account belief is his desire to offer a conception of belief that supports Socratic method (detecting inconsistencies in interlocutor’s framework of beliefs). The novel conception of belief can also be seen as a reaction to Protagoras’ relativistic notion of belief as a passive acceptance that does not involve reasoning. I will end with an account of how this ‘teleological’ notion of belief explains the differences between how Plato conceives of belief in the middle and late dialogues.

CHAPTER ONE.

The Standard Account

I. The Problem of Rationality of Belief

Between the middle and late dialogues⁹ there appears to be a significant shift in the manner in which Plato conceives of the notion of δόξα¹⁰. In the middle dialogues, most notably in the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*, Plato has a generous notion of δόξα. For example, in *Phaedo* Socrates assigns δόξαι to the body¹¹. Socrates says that philosophy should free the soul from the influence the body exerts on it, since the body

makes the soul corporeal (σωματοειδῆ), so that it believes (δοξάζουσιν) that truth is what the body says it is (ἀληθὴ εἶναι ἅπερ ἂν καὶ τὸ σῶμα φῇ). As it shares the opinions (ὁμοδοξεῖν) and delights of the body, I think it inevitably comes to share its ways and manner of life. (*Phd.* 83D)¹²

In the *Republic* X Plato attributes δόξαι to the inferior and non-rational parts of the soul: the spirit (θυμοειδής) and the appetite (τὸ ἐπιθυμητικόν). The argument against the imitative poets relies on the ability of non-rational parts of the soul to form δόξαι on their own. An oar half-submerged in water appears crooked, even when calculations and measurements indicate that it is, in fact,

⁹ The exact chronology of Plato's dialogues is a complicated issue. Different scholars divide the dialogues into three (early, middle, late), four (Socratic, transitional, middle and late) or five (Socratic, transitional from Socratic to middle dialogues, middle, transitional from middle to late, and late dialogues) groups. I have chosen the first option. The early dialogues are the *Apology*, *Crito*, *Euthyphro*, *Charmides*, *Laches*, *Lysis*, *Hippias Minor*, *Ion*, *Protagoras*, *Meno*, *Gorgias*, *Hippias Major* and *Euthydemus*. The middle dialogues are the *Phaedo*, *Symposium*, *Republic*, *Cratylus*, *Phaedrus* and *Parmenides*. The late group consists of the *Theaetetus*, *Timaeus*, *Critias*, *Sophist*, *Politicus*, *Philebus* and *Laws*. The dating of the *Cratylus* and the *Timaeus* is somewhat controversial. The exact dating of the *Cratylus* does not affect my argument. On the other hand, taking the *Timaeus* to be roughly contemporary with the *Theaetetus* is indeed important to my argument. However, it seems that the majority of scholars (with the exception of Bostock (1988) and Rickless (2007) who take the *Timaeus* to be contemporary with the *Republic*) have agreed on *Timaeus* being a late work (e.g. Silverman 2002, Bobonich 2002, Lorenz 2006).

¹⁰ Plato's notion of δόξα is an umbrella term for many different and sometimes incompatible things. Δόξα means, across the dialogues, 'thought', 'fame', 'honor', 'belief', 'judgment', 'appearance', 'opinion', among other things (Sprute 1962, Lafrance 1981). From a general point of view, the Platonic notion of δόξα can be split into two interrelated meanings: objective, when used to characterize a quality of things (i.e. fame or honour); and cognitive, when used to characterize epistemic states of the soul.

¹¹ This seems to be the view of the majority of scholars on this matter. Bobonich (2002: 486) presents an argument for 'body as a subject' and provides references to other discussions.

¹² Translations of Plato's texts (with the exception of the *Theaetetus*) in this dissertation are from Cooper's edition of Plato's 'Complete Works' (Hackett 1997). The passages from the *Theaetetus* are translated by McDowell (1973), with slight modifications. The Greek version of the text derives from *Platonis Opera*, Oxford (1995).

straight. Socrates makes it clear that in this case the soul has contradictory δόξαι.

Something looked at from close at hand doesn't seem to be the same size as it does when it is looked at from a distance. – No, it doesn't. – And something looks crooked when seen in water and straight when seen out of it, while something else looks both concave and convex because our eyes are deceived by its colors, and every other similar sort of confusion is clearly present in our soul. And it is because they exploit this weakness in our nature that *trompe l'oeil* painting, conjuring, and other forms of trickery have powers that are little short of magical. – That's true. – And don't measuring, counting, and weighing (μετρεῖν καὶ ἀριθμεῖν καὶ ἰστάναι) give us most welcome assistance in these cases, so that we aren't ruled by (μὴ ἄρχειν) something's looking bigger, smaller, more numerous, or heavier, but by calculation, measurement, or weighing? – Of course. – And calculating, measuring, and weighing are the work of the rational part of the soul (τοῦτό γε τοῦ λογιστικοῦ ἂν εἴη τοῦ ἐν ψυχῇ ἔργον). – They are. – But when this part has measured and has indicated that some things are larger or smaller or the same size as others, the opposite appears at the same time (ἕτερα ἐτέρων ἢ ἴσα τάναντία φαίνεται ἅμα περὶ ταῦτά). Yes. – And didn't we say that it is impossible for the same thing to believe opposites about the same thing at the same time (τῷ αὐτῷ ἅμα περὶ ταῦτά ἐναντία δοξάζειν ἀδύνατον εἶναι)? – We did. – Then the part of the soul that forms a belief contrary to the measurements (παρὰ τὰ μέτρα) couldn't be the same as the part that believes in accord with them (κατὰ τὰ μέτρα). Now, the part that puts its trust in measurement and calculation is the best part of the soul. – Of course. – Therefore, the part that opposes it is one of the inferior parts (φαύλων) in us. – Necessarily. (602C–603A)

The best part of the soul is 'ruled by' measurement and forms its δόξαι according to calculations, while the inferior parts of the soul are 'ruled by' how things look and believe that things are as they appear. It is very likely that the 'best part' of the soul is to be identified with the reasoning or rational part of the soul and, consequently, the inferior part as the appetite or spirited part or both together. Since spirit and/or appetite are capable of having δόξαι (in opposition to reason), it follows that Plato, at the time of writing the *Republic*, does not think of δόξα as necessarily involving the reasoning part of the soul (τὸ λογιστικὸν). The non-rational parts of the soul are capable of forming beliefs independently from the reasoning part¹³.

¹³ Some scholars have balked at this and searched for ways to avoid the conclusion according to which non-rational parts of the soul have δόξαι (e.g. Burnyeat 1997, Nehamas 1982/1999, Sedley 2004). The Greek of the passage at 602E4–6 is not at all straightforward (for different readings, see Adam 1902 vol. 2: 466–467). On the 'traditional reading' of the Greek, the text divides the reasoning part in two, one that has δόξαι according to measurements and the other that does not. This enables scholars to avoid the conclusion that the non-rational parts have δόξαι. Recently, however, Lorenz (2006: 65–69) has presented a powerful argument for accepting Adam's version of the text that in fact *does* commit Plato to different parts of the soul having δόξαι. This is Lorenz's take on the crucial sentence: 'What Sentence 1 is saying, in other words, is that (it often happens that) when reason is

The above passage also shows that δόξαι, for Plato in the middle dialogues, include both perceptual ‘seemings’ (in case of the appetite and/or spirit), i.e. the way things ‘look’, *and* explicit judgments based on deliberation and reasoning (in case of reason). These δόξαι can be held by a single subject (although by different parts of the soul), regardless of the fact that they conflict and the soul is aware of this conflict. This is why some commentators have taken δόξαι of the lower parts of the soul in the above passage to be only half-beliefs, since ‘A subject cannot consciously hold contrary beliefs ... We have to suppose that his argument really applies not to pairs of beliefs but to pairs that contain at least one half-belief.’ (Price 1995: 43). It seems that, in Plato’s middle dialogues, δόξαι are not necessarily formed in a way that makes conscious inconsistency intolerable.

Δόξαι can be true or false, but there is nothing in the nature of δόξα itself that ties it to truth. Most people form δόξαι simply on the basis of how ‘it seems’ or, as the passage above suggests, the seemings themselves simply are δόξαι. In another passage, Plato makes it clear that people do not care whether the δόξαι they form are true or not (*Rep.* 505D). That one ends up with some true δόξαι is more or less a matter of chance. It is for this reason that the δόξαι of most people will not ‘stick’. People are liable to abandon their δόξαι when so doing is useful or pleasant, or in the face of danger. Of course, one can be guided to acquire true δόξαι and be educated to firmly hold on to them. In fact, Plato’s Kallipolis is, among other things, designed to assure that the majority of people (especially the military class) who are incapable of acquiring knowledge would preserve their δόξαι in the face of fear or desire. The preservation of δόξαι is not due to their being grounded in reasoning but through external instilling of and habituation with correct δόξαι (*Rep.* 429B–430C).

Another peculiar feature of Plato’s middle period notion of δόξα is that this capacity is shared across species, since Plato says that other animals besides humans have δόξαι (e.g. *Rep.* 430B). That animals are capable of having δόξαι confirms that in the middle dialogues δόξα is taken to include automatic and non-reflective processes that do not require any reasoning or reflection, since Plato explicitly denies reasoning to animals (*Rep.* 375A).

In accordance with this broad notion of δόξα, Plato does not think of individual δόξαι as such as being epistemologically particularly valuable. Plato famously holds that δόξαι are in a kind of a cognitive twilight zone between knowledge and pure ignorance (*Rep.* 476E–478E and *Symp.* 202A). And it is often thought that in the *Republic* he also argues that the *objects* of δόξα are somewhere between ‘what completely is’ and ‘what in no way is’. Correspondingly, Socrates says that ‘δόξαι without knowledge are shameful and ugly things. The best of them are blind, or do you think that those who express a true

indicating this or that, what appears to reason are the opposites of the simultaneous sensory appearances about the things in question’ (Lorenz 2006: 68). Recent discussions of δόξα in the *Republic*, e.g. by Moss (2008), Ganson (2009), Wilberding (2012), also accept Adam’s version of the text, as I do.

δόξα without understanding are any different from blind people who happen to travel the right road?’ (*Rep.* 506C).

Matters are somewhat different in the late dialogues. In direct opposition to the *Republic* (and the *Phaedo*), the *Timaeus* stresses that the appetite is ‘totally devoid of δόξα, reasoning and understanding, though it does share in perception, pleasant and painful, and desires’ (*Tim.* 77B). The lowest part of the soul, a plausible agent of δόξαι of the middle dialogues, is explicitly said to lack δόξαι completely. Nor does the *Timaeus* ever attribute beliefs to the spirited part of the soul. Further, in the passage above, δόξα is listed together with reasoning and understanding, suggesting that these three capacities are somehow connected. This is remarkably different from what Plato used to think in the *Republic* X, where reasoning was only one possible means to arrive at a δόξα, there was nothing in the nature of δόξα that tied it to reasoning.

In fact, the *Timaeus* makes it fairly clear that it is first and foremost the immortal part of the soul, i.e., reason, that should now be considered to be the subject of δόξαι (37C). This accords well with another distinctive feature of the late dialogues. Namely, in the late dialogues δόξα comes to involve quite an impressive amount of deliberation. The few times when Plato attempts to give a definition of δόξα, he stresses that δόξαι are a result of the soul considering candidate answers and trying to figure out how things are. The amount of explicit reasoning involved in coming to a definite δόξα far exceeds the passive acceptance of sensory appearances in the *Republic* X. The most remarkable example of this comes from a very late dialogue, the *Philebus*:

And is it not memory and perception (ἐκ μνήμης τε καὶ αἰσθήσεως) that lead to a belief (δόξα) or the attempt to come to a definite belief, as the case may be? – Indeed. – Do we agree that the following must happen here? – What? – Wouldn’t you say that it often happens that someone who cannot get a clear view because he is looking from a distance wants to make up his mind (βούλεσθαι κρίνειν) about what he sees? – I would say so. – And might he then not again raise another question to himself? – What question? – ‘What could that be that appears to stand near that rock under a tree?’ Do you find it plausible that someone might say those words to himself when he sets his eyes on such appearances (φανταζόμενον)? – Certainly. – And might he not afterwards, as an answer to his question, say to himself, ‘It is a man.’ and in so speaking, would get it right? – No doubt. – But he might also be mistaken and say that what he sees is a statue, the work of some herdsman? – Very likely. (*Phil.* 38B–D)

Similar accounts of δόξα can be found in the *Sophist* (263E–264B) and the *Timaeus* (37A–C). Here, unlike in the *Republic*, perceptual appearances do not count as δόξαι. The δόξαι are formed only when there is something deficient about how things appear, e.g. when one cannot get a clear view of the thing that is appearing. Furthermore, forming δόξαι requires an internal dialogue of the soul, which seems to involve quite elaborate cognitive resources. This internal dialogue is stressed in another late dialogue, the *Theaetetus*.

And do you apply the word ‘thinking’ (διανοεῖσθαι) to the same thing I do? – What do you apply it to? – Speech (λόγον) which the mind itself goes through with itself (αὐτὴ πρὸς αὐτήν) about whatever it’s considering. Mind you, I don’t claim to know the truth of what I’m telling you. It looks to me as if, when the mind is thinking (διανοομένη), it’s simply carrying on a discussion (διαλέγεσθαι), asking itself questions and answering them, and making assertions and denials. And when it has come to a decision (ὀρίσασα), either slowly or in a sudden rush, and it’s no longer divided, but says one single thing, we call that its δόξα. So what I call δοξάζειν is speaking (λέγειν) and what I call δόξα is speech (λόγον); but speech spoken, not aloud to someone else, but silently to oneself. (*Tht.* 189E4–190A7)

Socrates is claiming that all δόξαι, as they are formed, are preceded by an antecedent act of *thinking* (διανοεῖσθαι). In other words, δόξαι are the results of thinking conceived of as an inner dialogue of the soul. Again, read in connection with the passage from the *Republic* mentioned above, this might be a good explanation of how the *reasoning* part of the soul acquires its δόξαι. However, the uncritical acceptance of the lower parts of the soul obviously would not fall under this description of δόξα¹⁴. Δόξα, in the later texts, is a result of a process of reasoning. Furthermore, in contrast to the *Republic*, in the *Theaetetus* (186C–187A) Plato seems to be advocating the view that non-human animals are not capable of forming δόξαι. Thus, there is a tendency for the later Plato to take the value of and the cognitive resources necessary for δόξα much more seriously than he had done earlier. Plato comes to think that δόξα is a capacity involving reason¹⁵.

Taking into account these features of the notion of δόξα, the question of how to best translate this notion becomes quite pressing. Translators usually vary between several English equivalents (depending on the context and the dialogue): ‘belief’, ‘opinion’, ‘judgment’ and ‘appearance’. None of these terms

¹⁴ There is another, perhaps terminological but, I think, still telling difference from the *Republic*. In the Analogy of the Line, in the *Republic* 509D–511E, Plato distinguishes understanding (νόησις) or knowledge (ἐπιστήμη), thought (διάνοια), belief (πίστις), and imagination (εἰκασία). The first two together are later (533E–534A) on identified as intellect (again, νόησις) and the second segment of the line is called δόξα. The first is concerned with ‘being’ (οὐσία) and the second (δόξα) with ‘becoming’ (γένεσις). Thought (διανοεῖσθαι) is, therefore, sharply distinguished from δόξα. The difference from *Theaetetus* seems to be overwhelming – the *Republic* attaches thought and δόξα to different realms, whereas in the passage last quoted thinking (διανοεῖσθαι), far from concerning a different subject matter, is actually a cognitive *precondition* of δόξα.

¹⁵ The amount of deliberation involved in forming δόξαι also explains why δόξαι tends to be more valued in the later than in the middle dialogues. Eleatic Visitor calls true δόξαι ‘divine’ and ‘more than human’ (*Statesman* 309C). The *Philebus* assigns true δόξαι the fourth place in the good life, just after reason and intelligence, and together with knowledge and arts (*Phlb.* 66B–C). In the *Laws* δόξα (and *not only* true δόξα) is called the ‘leading virtue’ (*Leg.* 688B), and the ‘natural ruling principle’ (*Leg.* 689B).

taken singly can encompass the meaning of Greek δόξα sufficiently¹⁶. I have opted for translating δόξα as ‘belief’ and δοξάζειν as ‘forming a belief’, for the following reasons.

‘Belief’ (unlike ‘opinion’ or ‘judgment’) is a sufficiently vague term to capture important aspects of Plato’s notion of δόξα. ‘Belief’, just like δόξα, can be conceived of as a conscious occurrence (for example, δόξα is used in the occurrent sense throughout the discussion of false belief in the *Theaetetus* (187D–200D)), or as a disposition or as a state (see, e.g. *Rep.* 429B–433D on the preservation of δόξα). In addition, some philosophers claim that beliefs are low-level cognitive states or dispositions, shared by humans and brute animals (e.g. Armstrong 1973: 25–31), yet other philosophers take holding beliefs to require language (e.g. Davidson 1982) or the ability to think rationally (e.g. McDowell 1994: 60). Sometimes perceptual representations themselves are taken to be (very closely related to) beliefs (e.g. Quine and Ullian 1970: 6–7), sometimes the ability to give *reasons* for holding a particular belief is taken to be necessary feature of belief formation (Williams 2001: 20)

As we have seen, Plato at different stages of his career wavers between the same options. Further, demarcating what beliefs are is not a terminological issue; it is a substantial philosophical problem, since it involves fundamental questions about the relation between thought and the world. I hope to show in this dissertation that Plato, too, comes to use the term δόξα in a different manner because of important philosophical and not terminological considerations.

To be sure, Plato’s notion of δόξα is to a certain degree different from the notion of ‘belief’. It sometimes carries an implication of being an inferior cognitive state (in this sense it is close to ‘opinion’ or *Meinung*) which Plato distinguishes sharply from knowledge (*Rep.* V–VII, *Tim* 51C–E). But the term ‘belief’ in English can be used in a similar manner, to express uncertainty¹⁷. And even if contemporary epistemology unanimously takes knowledge to be a kind of belief¹⁸, and Plato is usually thought to disagree (but see *Meno* 98A, where Plato defines knowledge as true belief bound by ‘account of the reason why’), this should not force us to conclude that δόξα and ‘belief’ are different *concepts* – it might simply be the case that Plato has a different philosophical theory of the relation between knowledge and belief. In general, it is extremely difficult (if it is at all possible) to tell the difference between *different* concepts being used in *similar* philosophical theories from the *same* concepts being used in *dissimilar* philosophical theories, especially when there is a significant

¹⁶ For some discussion on how to translate δόξα into German, see Szaif (1998: 309–315) and Ebert (1974: 37–40), into English: Bostock (1988: 156–157), and into French, Narcy (2005).

¹⁷ ‘This much is true: it is generally misleading to say ‘I believe’ when I could just as well say ‘I know’. If you ask me which way to go at a fork in the road it would be misleading for me to say ‘I believe we should go left’ when I have carefully checked the route and know which way to turn’ (Williams 2000: 18). Of course, this does have to mean that knowledge is not a kind of belief (as Williams quickly points out).

¹⁸ But see Hossack (2007), where this view is disputed.

temporal distance between the two theories. The above considerations are, of course, by no means conclusive for adopting ‘belief’ as a translation of δόξα. Hopefully the argument in this dissertation will ultimately justify the rendering of δόξα as ‘belief’.

The differences between the notion of belief in Plato’s middle and late works are the following.

In the middle works:

- (i) all parts of the soul and the body are capable of forming beliefs (*Rep.* 602C–603A; cf. *Phd.* 83D),
- (ii) non-human animals are capable of forming beliefs (*Rep.* 430B),
- (iii) beliefs include sensory appearances (*Rep.* 602C–603A, *Tht.* 152D–179D),
- (iv) beliefs include blind and non-reflective acceptances (*Rep.* 602C–606D).

Whereas in the late dialogues Plato is committed to the claims according to which:

- (i*) only reason is capable of forming beliefs (*Tim.* 37C, 77B),
- (ii*) non-human animals are incapable of forming beliefs (*Tht.* 186C),
- (iii*) beliefs differ from sensory appearances (*Phlb.* 38C–E),
- (iv*) belief formation necessarily involves reasoning and deliberation (*Tht.* 189E–190A, *Phlb.* 38C–E).

The differences between (i–iv) and (i*–iv*) raise the following question. Why does Plato, in the later dialogues, commit himself to (i*–iv*)? The standard account, presented in great detail by Christopher Bobonich (2002) and Hendrik Lorenz (2006), explains this shift in the following manner. For Plato, in the later dialogues, (i) belief formation is *rational* capacity because it involves predication or conceptualization, (ii) predication or conceptualization, in turn, necessarily involves awareness of (some) Forms.

The standard account takes a developmentalist stance towards Plato’s philosophy. It combines two possible ways of thinking about the relation between δόξα and Forms in the middle dialogues. The first way of thinking takes Forms as real properties or essences or universals conceived in realist fashion, and the beliefs of someone who is not aware of the existence of Forms (i.e., the non-philosophers) to be cognitively independent from Forms. Forms are Plato’s answer to epistemological (‘what are the objects of our knowledge?’) and metaphysical (‘what is the essence of F?’ or ‘what is (truly) F?’) questions¹⁹. Non-philosophers’ thoughts are cognitively cut off from what is real, since they do not recognize non-sensible properties, i.e. Forms. In what follows, I will call this the Pessimistic View. The second way of thinking about the relation between belief and Forms takes Forms to contribute significantly to the lives of non-philosophers enabling them to categorize and identify things. Forms function (among other things), very roughly, as ‘meanings’ or ‘concepts’.

¹⁹ Forms can also have semantic significance, but only if Plato thinks that Forms (or descriptions attached to Forms) are meanings of some words *and* assumes that non-philosophers are not aware of the the meanings of (some of) the words they use. This is the view defended in Bobonich (2002). See also below p. 30, p.45, fn. 60, and pp. 177–178, esp. fn. 229.

Therefore, the beliefs of non-philosophers, inasmuch as they involve the terms designating the Forms, are dependent on some, albeit dim and confused, awareness of Forms. In what follows, I will call this the Optimistic View, since it involves an (optimistic) assumption that the thoughts and concepts of everyone (regardless of their education) correspond somehow with the fundamental structure of reality.

The standard account of the problem of the rationality of belief, as presented by Bobonich and Lorenz, states that Plato moves from the Pessimistic View to the Optimistic View. In the middle dialogues, beliefs of non-philosophers are not dependent on any cognitive contact with Forms. In the late dialogues, however, Plato recognizes that the grasp of (at least some) Forms is necessary for forming beliefs. Now, it is uncontroversial that only reason has cognitive access to Forms. Thus, by making the cognitive access to Forms a necessary condition of forming beliefs, Plato commits himself to the view that reason has to be involved in forming beliefs.

There are important differences between the accounts of Lorenz and Bobonich of the rationality of belief. However, before assessing these accounts in somewhat greater detail, I think it is very useful to take a closer look at the two different conceptions of how belief and Forms are connected in Plato's middle dialogues since the standard account aims to connect these two views by claiming that Plato moves from one to the other.

2. Two Views on the Relation between Thought and Forms

First, I would like to issue a caveat. The following brief overview concerns only the following question – does Plato, in his middle dialogues, take cognitive access to Forms to be a necessary condition of belief? I will ignore some of the most substantial questions about Plato's middle-period epistemology and metaphysics. The first question is perhaps the most controversial issue in Platonic scholarship. What are the Forms? Are Forms definitions, essences, properties, universals, meanings, or some combination of these things? The second question pertains to the relation between *δόξα* and *ἐπιστήμη* in Plato's middle works, especially Books V–VII of the *Republic*. Namely, what is the difference between belief and knowledge? Are they distinguished because they take different objects (sensibles and Forms) or because they relate to the same objects in a different manner? Can there be knowledge of sensibles and beliefs about Forms? The third large question concerns the *kind* of cognition that belief and knowledge represent. Are we dealing with kinds of direct acquaintance or intuition or are belief and knowledge 'propositional attitudes'? Ignoring these three very large issues is justified by the fact that the distinction I aim to make simply cuts across these controversial matters. For example, as to the third question, one can be an 'intuitionist' about *δόξα* and *ἐπιστήμη*, but still claim

that δόξα involves a kind of ‘indirect’ intuition of Forms.²⁰ Or, one can be a ‘propositionalist’, but maintain that δόξα does not have to involve any awareness of Forms (unless the belief is explicitly about Forms)²¹. As to the first question, regardless of how one construes the exact nature of Forms, one can still adhere to either the Pessimistic or Optimistic View. Thirdly, even if one allows belief to be about Forms, this does not mean that all beliefs require ‘cognitive access’ to Forms, it might be that most beliefs do not (again, unless they are explicitly about Forms)²². Or, one can say that δόξα can never be about Forms (in the sense required in *Republic V*), but that it still requires some dim awareness (grasp, understanding) of Forms²³. With this in mind, let us turn to the two views.

The Optimistic View

The Optimistic View insists that some sort of cognitive relation to Forms is deeply embedded in ordinary thought. A version of this view was held already in the Old Academy by Xenocrates and in later Antiquity by Proclus²⁴. The general idea behind the Optimistic View is that in order to for anyone (philosophers and non-philosophers alike) to think ‘*x is F*’, one has to have some understanding or knowledge of the corresponding Form of *F*, i.e. some understanding of ‘what *F* is’. The Optimistic View claims that some understanding of Forms is necessary for *everyone* in order to use concepts and understand the meanings of general terms.

One of the ideas behind the Optimistic View is the following. In everyday life all (mature) human beings are capable of collecting sensible particulars into groups. We easily *identify* dogs, we *distinguish* chairs from tables and we *categorize* some things as beautiful and some as ugly. All this is very much a part of what people normally do when they think the simplest thoughts about their surroundings. Indeed, it seems quite reasonable to say that no thinking at all can occur without some identifying, distinguishing or categorizing being involved. When we think of objects, we usually (or always) think of them *as* something, as dogs, as chairs or as beautiful. Since we can think that ‘*x is F*’ in different contexts and about different things, it seems that we grasp something general, abstract or universal in thinking these thoughts, something that is independent from a particular situation or a particular token-thought, i.e. the universal *F*-ness. This idea is often expressed by saying that *meanings* of general terms are *universals*. This is, for example, how Russell understood the motivation behind Plato’s theory of Forms:

²⁰ This view is expressed by Gonzalez (1996).

²¹ See, for example, Fine (1990).

²² For example, Fine (1990).

²³ This seems to be the view expressed in Szaif (1998: 141–145).

²⁴ As to Xenocrates’ position of belief as a blend of ἐπιστήμη and αἴσθησις, see (Dillon 2003:124–5) and as to Proclus, see his commentary on the *Timaeus*, 248, 14–22.

Language cannot get on without general words such as ‘cat’, and such words are evidently not meaningless. But if the word ‘cat’ means anything, it means something which is not this or that cat, but some kind of universal cattiness. This is not born when a particular cat is born, and does not die when it dies. In fact, it has no position in space or time, it is ‘eternal’. (Russell 1946/2004: 137)

Secondly, it is reasonable to assume that if one can identify or categorize something as being *F* (as a dog, as harmful, etc.), one must be able to distinguish an *F* thing from not-*F* things, i.e., one must have understanding or knowledge of ‘what-it-is-to-be-*F*’ or *F*-ness. If *F*-ness is a universal feature, it follows that in order to identify, distinguish or categorize something as *F* one must grasp the universal ‘*F*-ness’²⁵, i.e. the meaning of a term or the content of a concept must be *transparent* to the speaker or thinker. Expressed in Platonic language (and assuming that Forms are universals), whenever one thinks (desires, fears) that ‘*x* is *F*’, one stands a cognitive relation to the universal Form of *F* (to *F*-ness, to the *F* itself). The exact nature of this cognitive relation can be left open: it can be called ‘awareness’, or ‘cognitive access’, or ‘apprehending’ or ‘acquaintance’, or ‘lower-level knowledge’. The central idea is that in order to use the term ‘*F*’ (or represent-as *F*), one must have *some* understanding of ‘what-it-is-to-be-*F*’, i.e. of the Form of *F*. For example, when one thinks that Helen is beautiful, one stands in a cognitive relation of ‘apprehending of’ or ‘acquaintance with’ the Form of Beauty. The central claim of the Optimistic View can be expressed as follows:

Optimistic View: In order to represent (identify, categorize, distinguish) *x* as *F*, one needs to be in cognitive contact with the Form of *F*.

It is important to note that the Optimistic View should not be confused with a semantic account of Forms. According to the semantic account, Plato’s Forms are responsible for general terms being meaningful, significant or informative. It is appealing to assume that all semantic accounts of Forms are committed to the Optimistic View, since we normally think that even non-philosophers

²⁵ This is how Evans interprets ‘Russell’s Principle’: ‘The principle is that a subject cannot make a judgement about something unless he knows which object his judgement is about’ (Evans 1982: 89). And ‘We may take a small step from our truistic starting-point, and say that in the case of a proposition of the form ‘*a* is *F*’, knowledge of what it is for it to be true must be the result of two pieces of knowledge, one of which can be equated with an Idea of an object, and the other with an Idea of a property, or more familiarly, a concept’ (ibid. 106). Evans says further that ‘It seems to me that the idea of how objects of a given kind, *G*s, are distinguished from each other and from all other things must enter our every conception of a state of affairs involving a *G*. For there is no thought about objects of a certain kind which does not presuppose the idea of *one* object of that kind, and the idea of one object of that kind must employ a general conception of the ways in which objects of that kind are differentiated from one another and from all other things.’ (ibid. 108). For an argument that Plato subscribes to (a form of) Russell’s Principle, see McDowell (1970).

understand the meanings of general terms²⁶. However, this might not be Plato's view, since the terms 'meaning', 'signification' and 'understanding' can be used in a more demanding sense than usual. For example, even if Forms are the meanings of (at least some) general terms (as is very often thought), it is not necessarily the case that non-philosophers have any understanding of the true meanings or significance of the general terms they use.²⁷ It may very well be, and Plato does suggest this (*Rep.* 515B) that only philosophers understand the meaning of the general terms, whereas non-philosophers do not. There is no obvious reason to think that the (true) meaning of a term is, for Plato, always *transparent* for the speaker who uses this term. That is, Plato might plausibly have a more demanding notion of understanding the meaning of a word than contemporary readers are accustomed to. For example, in the *Theaetetus* (147B), Socrates takes understanding a name of a thing and *knowing* the definition of a thing to be equivalent²⁸. It is for this reason that some of the passages in Plato's middle dialogues where he apparently connects words/names and Forms (e.g. *Phd* 78E, 102B, *Rep.* 596A, *Crat.* 423E) should not be taken to automatically support the Optimistic View. The Optimistic View concerns the cognitive preconditions for using general terms, rather than what makes the general terms meaningful.

Already in Plato's early, Socratic dialogues something like Optimistic View seems to be expressed. In the *Euthyphro*, for example, Socrates says that the eponymous character should refrain from offering examples of pious things or accidental properties that belong to pious things, but rather say what piety itself is, the form (τὴν ἰδέαν) of piety, so that Socrates can go on and use this form to identify pious actions and things.

Tell me then what this form itself is (τὴν ἰδέαν τίς ποτέ ἐστιν), so that I may look upon it and, using it as a model, say (φῶ) that any action of yours or another's that is of that kind is pious, and if it not that it is not. (*Euth.* 6E).

Socrates assumes that in order to *say* that 'x is F', one needs to grasp what F is, i.e. the form of F (so that one can use it as a model). Thus, Socrates, at least on one reading, requires that one should grasp a (Socratic) form of F in order to be

²⁶ Most of the defenders of the semantic account of Forms take 'meaning' and 'understanding' in the sense of 'linguistic competence' (presumably had by all mature human beings), thus in fact committing themselves to the Optimistic View. A good example of this is found in White (1976:7–9 and 75–77).

²⁷ An example of the reading that admits that Forms have a semantic role to play but nevertheless denies that this implies the Optimistic View can be found in Bobonich (2002: 305–312).

²⁸ At *Th.* 147B–C, Socrates implies that since he does not *know* what knowledge is, he does not *understand* the expressions where the term 'knowledge' occurs, such as 'knowledge of shoes'. Since Socrates (presumably) has linguistic understanding of the expression 'knowledge of shoes', he must therefore be addressing 'understanding the meaning of a term' in a stronger sense than simple linguistic understanding. For some discussion concerning this passage, see Burnyeat (1977a) and Sedley and Brown (1994).

able to represent things as being *F*. According to the Optimistic View, grasping Socratic forms explains what it means to possess a concept (or grasp the meaning of a general term).²⁹ Socratic form of, e.g. piety, is supposed to specify features that belong to all and only pious things. To articulate the Socratic form of piety is to give necessary and sufficient conditions for the correct application of the concept ‘pious’ (or the meaning of the word ‘pious’). The famous Socratic ‘what is *F*?’ question can thus be seen as aiming for clear articulation of the humdrum knowledge involved in the use of the concept *F*, knowledge possessed by anyone who possesses the relevant concept. However, the articulation of this humdrum knowledge of concepts can present major difficulties, as the Socratic dialogues show.³⁰

According to the optimistic view, Plato’s Forms, although different in some ways from Socratic forms (just how different is a matter of considerable controversy³¹), perform a similar task of enabling everyday non-philosophical conceptual thought, i.e. that cognitive access to Forms is necessary in order to possess (or acquire) concepts. The most important piece of evidence for this view derives from the first dialogue that introduces the Platonic Forms, the recollection passage in the *Phaedo* (72E–77A)³². In the *Phaedo*, Socrates argues for the soul’s immortality. He distinguishes the Equal itself from the many sensible equals. He says the following:

Whenever someone, on seeing something, realizes that that which he now sees wants (βούλεται) to be like some other reality (ἄλλο τι τῶν ὄντων) but falls short (ἐνδεῖ) and cannot be like that other since it is inferior (φαιλότερον), do we agree that the one who thinks this must have prior knowledge of that to which he says it is like, but deficiently so? – Necessarily. Well, do we also experience this about the equal objects (τὰ ἴσα) and the equal itself (αὐτὸ τὸ ἴσον), or do we not? – Very definitely. We must then possess knowledge of the Equal (τὸ ἴσον) before the time when we first saw the equal objects and realized that all these objects strive to be like the Equal but are deficient in this (ὁρέγεται μὲν πάντα ταῦτα εἶναι οἷον τὸ ἴσον, ἔχει δὲ ἐνδεεστέρας). – That is so. (*Phd.* 74C–75A)

²⁹ Margolis and Laurence offer the following summary of the classical theory of concepts: ‘The Classical Theory holds that most concepts – especially lexical concepts – have definitional structure. What this means is that most concepts encode necessary and sufficient conditions for their own application.’ (Margolis and Laurence 1999: 8–9). Then they go on to say that Plato’s *Euthyphro* can be seen as the first expression of the Classical Theory (ibid. p. 10).

³⁰ Vlastos (1981: 411) makes this point especially forcefully.

³¹ Aristotle (*Met.* 13.4) says that unlike Socratic definitions, Platonic Forms are not sensible and are separate. However, there is considerable controversy both about what Aristotle means by this and in what sense Platonic Forms are non-sensible and separate.

³² The number of defenders of this view is simply too numerous to provide references here. See, nevertheless, Scott (1999: 102) who provides a list of references to what he calls reading K (Kantian) of recollection.

Plato seems to think that to think of sticks and stones as equal ('x is F'), one needs to stand in a relation of explicit *comparing* of the sticks and stones with the Equal itself or the Form³³ of Equal (see also *Phd.* 76D–E). Comparison presumably requires cognitive access to both items compared – the equal sticks and stones and the Equal itself³⁴. Plato's point is, on this reading, that since the Equal itself is not accessible by means of perception, this means that the cognitive resources required for classifying things as equal have to be prenatal, i.e. that some concepts cannot be acquired by means of sense perception (*Phd.* 75B) and that these concepts have to be acquired before the soul enters the mortal body. The recollection argument mentions the Equal, Greater, Smaller, Beautiful, Just, Good and Pious (75D–E). Now, what is it about, e.g. the concept of 'equal' that makes it impossible to acquire it by means of sense perception? Here the answer depends heavily on what it is, exactly, that one takes the imperfection of the sensible equals to consist in. Presumably, one cannot acquire the concept of 'equal' by means of perception *because* of some deficiency in the equal sticks and stones. Namely, that 'equal stones and sticks, while remaining the same, appear [to one] to be equal and [to another] unequal (ἴσοι καὶ ξύλα ἐνίστε ταῦτα ὄντα τῷ μὲν ἴσα φαίνεται, τῷ δ' οὐ)' (74B).

The text of the *Phaedo* allows for several different readings of this deficiency of the sensible 'equals'. Is the verb 'appear' in the previous quotation veridical or not, i.e. does Plato mean that equal sticks and stones appear unequal or are they unequal? It is also unclear whether the equal sticks appear unequal *to* someone or *in relation to* something (to other sticks and stones)³⁵? The passages in other dialogues (most notably *Rep.* 523–5) do not help much to clarify the issue. Scholars have offered a wide range of explanations for the imperfection of sensibles. The most traditional explanation (going back to Aristotle, for example, *Met.* I, 6.) is that sensibles are in some sort of flux (either changing in all respects all the time or in some respects all the time or in some respects some of the time)³⁶ and are therefore not stably instantiating the

³³ In the recollection passage Socrates does not use the term ἰδέα or εἶδος, but talks about the 'Equal itself' or just 'Equal'. It is quite uncontroversial that he does have in mind the Platonic Forms.

³⁴ 'In that passage, Plato is emphasizing not so much the notion that we can and ought to compare sensible objects to Forms, but rather the idea that we *do* make such comparisons and that such comparisons are involved in our judgments about the sensible world immediately from birth (75B10–11)... He seems to believe that even in our first use of our sensory apparatus, we make some use of knowledge of Forms, which knowledge we must therefore have acquired prenatally (C8–10).' (White 1976; 76).

³⁵ The datives τῷ... τῷ... can be read either as neuter or masculine. The first option would then be that the stick appears equal to some sticks but unequal to others. If the dative is read as masculine, then the meaning would be that equal sticks appear equal to someone, but unequal to someone else. A variant text also gives the possibility of reading the text as meaning that the equal sticks 'sometimes (*tote men*) appear unequal and sometimes not (*tote d'ou*)'. For some discussion, see Bostock (1988: 66–100).

³⁶ Below, I will discuss a reading (stemming from Irwin and Fine), according to which flux means compresence of the opposites in types (not in tokens).

properties in question. More modern approaches include the claims that sensibles only approximately instantiate these properties (the sensible triangle is only ‘almost’ a triangle, unlike the Form of a triangle which is perfectly triangular);³⁷ or that the sensibles instantiate these properties incompletely (the sensible equals are always equal *to* something and unequal *to* something else, whereas the Form of Equal is completely equal)³⁸. Whichever way the imperfection of sensibles is construed, the distinctive feature of the Optimistic View is the claim that to be able to categorize, identify and to distinguish sensible things *as* equal or beautiful, one has to grasp (or has to have grasped previously) the ‘Standard Case’³⁹ – the Equal or the Beautiful itself. The defenders of the Optimistic View require that in order to acquire and use the concept of, e.g., ‘equal’, one has to be acquainted with something that bears this quality perfectly or completely. This, at least sometimes⁴⁰, goes hand in hand with construing Forms as perfect particulars that bear the properties in a more pure or complete sense than the ‘regular’ particulars (the so-called self-predication of Forms).

According to the Optimistic View, in order to learn a concept (of, e.g., equality) one has to be acquainted with a non-ambiguous (stable, complete, perfect, pure) instance of the property of which that concept is a concept. For instance, the non-ambiguous (stable, complete, perfect, pure) instance of the property of equality is the Form of Equal. At least some properties are instantiated in the sensible world ambiguously (unstably, incompletely, imperfectly, impurely) – a mouse is large compared with an ant but small compared with an elephant (the example derives from Irwin 1999: 162). Therefore, one cannot encounter an un-ambiguous (stable, complete, perfect, pure) instance of largeness in perception. Those concepts that are ambiguously represented by perception cannot be learned or abstracted from perception.

This leads to the theory of recollection. Plato thinks (according to the Optimistic View) that (at least) concepts of large and small, just and fine, are learned before our souls enter our bodies. Recollection is understood as a doctrine partly designed to explain how human being acquire the concepts they use. The philosophical reflection is a different matter, it proceeds only after recollection has taken place. This has been an extremely widespread view on how Plato thinks Forms play a role in ordinary thinking in the twentieth century⁴¹. I offer two samples.

³⁷ Nehamas (1975/1999: 139–142) provides some references for the ‘approximation view’.

³⁸ E.g. Owen (1957), White (1976: 66–69), Nehamas (1975/1999: 151–155).

³⁹ ‘Where a Paradigm is required for a predicate that is incomplete in its ordinary use it must indeed be (as the argument of P faithfully shows) a Standard Case, exhibiting rather than being the character it represents’ (Owen 1957: 119)

⁴⁰ Again, Owen (1957) is the classic example.

⁴¹ This was, in the twentieth century, an extremely widespread view. The adherents of this view include interpreters of Plato who are otherwise worlds apart, such as Heidegger (2002), Bostock (1986), Owen (1957), Natorp (1922/1961), Ross (1951) and Taylor (1928).

Again, the most important feature of the process of ‘being reminded’ is that sense-perception suggests standards to which they don’t themselves conform. The same visual sensations which suggest the notion ‘straight’ to me, for example, are the foundation of the judgment that no visual stick is perfectly straight. The ‘form’ is thus never contained in, or presented by, the sensible experience which suggests it. Like the ‘limit’ of infinite series, it is approximated but never reached. These two considerations, taken together, show that the theory does full justice to both parts of Kantian dictum that ‘percepts without concepts are blind, concepts without percepts are empty’. (Taylor 1928: 188)

Another concise expression of this view derives from David Bostock who says the following about the Form Equal in the *Phaedo*:

The suggestion is that what Plato is talking about is the meaning of the word ‘equal’. So when he claims, and expects us to agree, that there is such a thing as equality, what he is relying on is just that the word ‘equal’ does have a meaning. Similarly when he claims that we all know what equality is, what he is relying on is that we all know what it means. After all, the word ‘equal’ is not an especially difficult and *recherché* word: we all master that word perfectly easily, and use it in our talk without encountering any problems. So in an ordinary and common or garden sense we do indeed know what ‘equal’ means, and it is perfectly natural to say that what the word means is equality, and hence we know what equality is. (Bostock 1986:69–70)

Bostock then goes on to point out that Plato thinks that encountering the Form Equal is necessary for us to understand the term ‘equal’ and hence having ‘common or garden knowledge’ of meanings of (at least some) words presupposes a previous encounter with the Forms. He furthermore says that mastering the word ‘equal’ enables us to classify things *as* equal. That presumably means that representing something *as* equal requires a previous contact with Equality (which means that classification of perceptual ‘equals’ requires at least rudimentary linguistic competence). Thus, according to Bostock, the representations involving terms like ‘equal’, ‘just’ etc., require a previous encounter with the corresponding Forms.

It is difficult to say, on the Optimistic View, whether Plato intends grasping Forms to be necessary for all identification and categorization involving general terms, since it is unclear whether Plato countenances Forms for all general terms. The arguments that show that Forms are different from sensibles presented in the *Phaedo* 74B–E and in the *Republic* 523B–D seem to suggest that there are Forms for only properties that have opposites, such as equal and unequal, big and small, good and disgraceful.⁴² On the other hand, Plato says that there are Forms for ‘each of the many things to which we apply the same name’ (*Rep.* 596A). This suggests that there is a corresponding Form for every

⁴² See Annas (1981: 217–241) for an illuminating discussion of the ‘Argument from Opposites’ and what this argument establishes.

general term (in the *Cratylus* (389A) there is the Form of the Shuttle, in the *Republic* (597A) there is the Form of the Bed, in the *Timaeus* (51B) we encounter the Form of Fire). Yet, Plato also says that Forms correspond to natural kinds (*Phdr.* 265E), and terms like ‘barbarian’ or ‘number other than ten thousand’ do not have corresponding Forms (*Pol.* 262B). Thus it is difficult to determine whether Plato has a coherent and well-developed theory about the exact range of Forms. It may very well be that he does not. These complications notwithstanding, the Optimistic View commits Plato to the view that grasping (apprehending, being acquainted with) Forms is a necessary condition of categorizing and identifying things that actually *do* have corresponding Forms.⁴³

The Pessimistic View

On the Optimistic View, Forms play an important role in the cognitive lives of both philosophers and non-philosophers. Grasping the Form of *F* enables all human beings to identify and classify *F* things. It is quite difficult to make this

⁴³ There is another passage in Plato that has been taken to support the Optimistic View. This is the famous Allegory of the Sun in the *Republic*, where Plato says that ‘When it [the soul] focuses on something that is illuminated by truth and what is, it understands, knows, and apparently possesses understanding, but when it focuses on what is mixed with obscurity, on what comes to be and passes away, it opines and is dimmed, changes its opinions this way and that, and seems bereft of understanding.’ (*Rep.* 508D). Szaif, for example, says in the context of this passage that *δοξάζειν* is ‘eine defiziente Form der Kognition eines Erkenntnisgegenstandes’ (see also Heidegger 2002: 35–43). This claim seems all the more surprising, since the above passage clearly connects knowledge with Forms and belief with ‘becoming’. However, according to Szaif, both belief and knowledge stand in a (different) cognitive relation to the *same* object, namely the Form. Szaif argues as follows. A sensible thing is presented to the soul (in its state of belief) as a mixture (im *Modus der Vermischung und Veränderung*, p. 142) of a Form, or as an image (Abbild p. 144) of a Form. From this Szaif infers that *δοξάζειν* results in an incomplete representation of the Form or in an unclear grasp of the Form (144), presumably because mixtures and images are (ontologically) dependent on Forms. Thus, if one has a belief about an image, one stands in a cognitive relation to the thing that the image is an image of, i.e. the Form. However, Bobonich makes an excellent point against this sort of reasoning: ‘The idea here seems to be that the ontological relation between the Form and the sensible is so intimate that awareness of a sensible brings with it awareness of the Form. But this argument is not obviously persuasive. Consider the Morning Star and the Evening Star. The ontological relation between them is closer than that between Forms and particulars on any reasonable interpretation, since the Morning Star is identical to the Evening Star. But it is plausible to think that I can have all sorts of beliefs about the Morning Star, while having no beliefs about the Evening Star’. (Bobonich 2002: 497) The point is that one can have a *de re* attitude towards a thing (e.g. a Platonic Form), without any understanding (no matter how unclear or confused) of the thing under this particular description (i.e. as a Form). Just a child can have a *de re* belief (e.g. that ‘that thing is on the table’) about, say, a microscope, without any conception or awareness of what a microscope is so, for Plato, the non-philosophers can have beliefs about just things without having any understanding of the Form of Justice. Non-philosophers are ‘people who have never seen justice itself’ (*Rep.* 517D).

view cohere with the majority of the passages in Plato's middle works, where Plato seems to be expressing a much bleaker view of the relation between everyday (non-philosophical) thinking and the Forms. In (what seems to be a) contradiction to *Phaedo*'s theory of recollection, the Plato of the *Republic* thinks that one has to *become a philosopher* in order to grasp the Forms and the apprehension of Forms is supposed to explain how *knowledge* is possible. The concepts of the majority of people, who do not have knowledge, and who are unaware that the non-sensible Forms exist, are *not* derived from the (unconscious) awareness of Forms, but rather from sense-perception or tradition. This is the starting point for the Pessimistic View, which allows for significant disharmony between ordinary thinking and the structure of reality.⁴⁴

(Pessimistic View): The cognitive contact with the Form of *F* is not required to represent (identify, categorize, or distinguish) *x* as *F*, a cognitive contact with the Form of *F* is required in order to have knowledge of *F*.

For example, in this famous passage Socrates distinguishes philosophers from everyone else precisely because non-philosophers are *incapable* grasping the Forms:

Since the beautiful (καλὸν) is the opposite of the ugly (αἰσχροῦ), they are two. – Of course. – And since they are two, each is one? – I grant that also. – And the same account is true of the just and unjust, the good and the bad, and all the forms (δικαίου καὶ ἀδίκου καὶ ἀγαθοῦ καὶ κακοῦ καὶ πάντων τῶν εἰδῶν). Each of them is itself one, but because they manifest themselves everywhere in association with actions, bodies and one another, each of them appears to be many (φανταζόμενα πολλὰ φαίνεσθαι ἕκαστον). – That's right. – So, I draw this distinction: On one side are those you just called lovers of sights, lovers of crafts, and practical people (φιλοθεάμονας τε καὶ φιλοτέχνους καὶ πρακτικούς); on the other side are those we are arguing about and whom one would alone call philosophers (φιλοσόφους). – How do you mean? – The lovers of sights like beautiful sounds, colors, shapes, and everything fashioned out of them, but their thoughts are unable to see and embrace the nature (ἡ διάνοια τὴν φύσιν ἰδεῖν τε καὶ ἀσπάζεσθαι) of the beautiful itself (αὐτοῦ δὲ τοῦ καλοῦ). – That's for sure. – In fact, there are very few people who would be able to reach the beautiful itself and see it by itself (δυνατοὶ ἰέναι τε καὶ ὁρᾶν καθ' αὐτὸ ἄρα). Isn't that so? – Certainly. – What about someone who believes (νομίζων) in beautiful things, but doesn't believe in the beautiful itself and isn't able to follow anyone who could lead him to the knowledge (γνῶσιν) of it? Do you think he is living in a dream rather than in wakened state? Isn't this dreaming: whether asleep or awake, to think that likeness is not a likeness but rather the thing itself that it is like? (*Rep.* 475E–476C)

This passage expresses the Pessimistic View of the relation between ordinary thought and Forms. According to this view, it is only the philosophers who,

⁴⁴ Just like the Optimistic View, the Pessimistic View had its supporters in Antiquity. See, for example, Epictetus' *Discourses*, II. 17. 1–18.

after years and years of arduous education that Plato describes in detail (*Rep.* 522B–534E), come to have cognitive contact with the Forms, i.e. who understand what it is to be beautiful, just or good. Non-philosophers (e.g. the ‘sightlovers’) think that beautiful or just are the same as ‘many beautifuls’ (πολλὰ καλὰ) or ‘many justs’ (πολλὰ δίκαια) (*Rep.* 480E). According to the Pessimistic View, sightlovers think that beauty is identical with the *property* of being brightly colored and not that beauty is identical with brightly colored *things*. This means that, contrary to the Optimistic View, the non-philosophers are not capable of identifying beautiful things by comparing them to Beauty itself – rather, they apply their own criteria, in thinking that beauty is bright color or sexual attractiveness, thus believing that whatever is brightly colored or sexually attractive is beautiful. According to Plato, it is actually the Form of Beauty that accounts for why beautiful things are beautiful. Thus, the sightlovers believe many things to be beautiful (on the basis of *their* conception of beauty) that actually are not beautiful. They represent things as beautiful (on the basis of *their* conception of beauty) without any understanding of what Beauty itself is. Forms have nothing to do with how non-philosophers identify or categorize things.

The middle books of the *Republic* are replete with similar claims. For example, Socrates says that the sophist ‘applies all these names (ὀνομάζοι) [fine, shameful, good, bad, just, unjust] in accordance with how the beast [i.e. the mob] reacts’ and that ‘he has no other account to give of these terms (ἄλλον δὲ μηδὲνα ἔχει λόγον περὶ αὐτῶν)’ (*Rep.* 493B–C), since the majority cannot in ‘any way tolerate or accept the reality of the beautiful itself, as opposed to many beautifuls’ (*Rep.* 493E). The famous allegories of the Line and the Cave make it clear that the majority of people (i.e. non-philosophers) remain on the lowest cognitive level – the εἰκασία, i.e. in chains and facing the cave’s wall. The prisoners in the cave who are ‘like us’ (515A) think that the words they use refer to the shadows on the wall of the cave, when *in fact* they refer to the things outside the cave (their conception of, e.g. justice, does not correspond to what justice actually is): ‘And if they could talk to one another, don’t you think they’d suppose that the names they used applied to the things they see passing before them?’⁴⁵ (*Rep.* 515B) The middle books of the *Republic* leave a strong impression that Plato takes ordinary thinking to be separated from (and often in

⁴⁵ Following J. Adam (1902: 91, 179–180). For justification for accepting Adam’s version of the text, see Harte (2007). Harte thinks, however, that prisoners in the cave do have some cognitive access to Forms, they have ‘implicit conceptions’ of what it is to be *F*, which enables them to successfully classify the *F* shadows as *F*s. However, it seems possible (an option that Harte does not consider) to explain the prisoners’ (partial) success in identifying the shadows of *F* as *F*s (prisoners are cognitively successful, since they manage to identify the shadows of *F* as *F*s, they are unsuccessful or mistaken, however, since they think that the shadows of *F* are themselves *F*, whereas they are, in fact, only shadows of *F*), as based on the resemblance of the shadows of *F* to *each other*. The recognition of the resemblance between the shadows does not imply that there is some dim cognition of the thing that casts the shadows. See also p. 36, fn. 43.

conflict with) Forms⁴⁶ and that this is the crucial difference between philosophers and non-philosophers:

Since those who are able to grasp what is always the same and in all respects (τοῦ ἀεὶ κατὰ ταῦτὰ ὡσαύτως ἔχοντος) are philosophers, while those who are not able to do so and who wander among the many things that vary in every sort of way (ἐν πολλοῖς καὶ παντοίως ἴσχουσιν) are not philosophers, which of the two should be the rulers of the city? (*Rep.* 484B)

What about recollection in the *Phaedo*, then? According to the Optimistic View, the doctrine of recollection was meant to explain how (some) concepts are acquired. This would have to mean that even the un-philosophical majority of the *Republic* would need to have some awareness of the Forms of Justice and Beauty (since, in categorizing some things as beautiful, they would have to compare these things with the Form of Beauty). But Plato says that they are ‘unable to embrace’ the Forms. Has Plato come to change his mind? This assumes that the Optimistic View is correct as the interpretation of *Phaedo*. However, the Optimistic View has its difficulties even concerning recollection in the *Phaedo* and there are good reasons to think that the *Phaedo* does not support the Optimistic View. For example, in the *Phaedo* recollection explains how it comes about that ‘we’ are able to think that the sensible equals fall short of Equal itself (*Phaedo* 72A–B). This means that recollection in case of Equal always involves the explicit *recognition* that there is a Form of Equal. This is very difficult to explain if recollection is meant to explain ordinary concept acquisition and ‘we’ as covering all human beings, since presumably Plato is not inclined to think that concept acquisition involves explicit recognition that there are Forms. It is much more natural to take the ‘we’ as designating *philosophers*. Indeed, Dominic Scott (1995: 13–86) has argued at length that recollection is supposed to explain higher-level thought that abstracts away from sensibles and focuses on the non-sensible. Recollection is involved in philosophical thought and acquisition of knowledge, and it is not involved in the belief formation of non-philosophers. Gail Fine makes a similar point:

The theory of recollection, then, does not aim to explain concept acquisition. It aims to explain certain innate capacities and our ability to reason in various ways once concepts are at hand. There is much to object to in all this—for example, capacities need not be grounded in any sort of knowledge, innate or prior. But for us, the crucial point is that if the theory of recollection does not concern concept acquisition, or thought as such, then it does not concern BT [broad thought], and so it does not commit Plato to the Object of Thought Argument if that argument is read with BT. More generally, it does not commit him to the view that we need to grasp forms in order to understand the meanings of terms. It does not even commit him to the view that forms must

⁴⁶ Also, *Rep.* 523–5 suggests that even recognizing contradictions (let alone making simple judgments like ‘this is hard’) does not have to involve any awareness of Forms. See Bonich (2002: 498), Irwin (1995: 157–161) and Lorenz (2006: 88–91) for some discussion.

exist to confer meaning on general terms. Here as elsewhere Plato ignores questions of meaning and linguistic understanding; his concern is how we move from belief to knowledge. (Fine 1993:138)⁴⁷

According to the Pessimistic View, then, in the middle dialogues non-philosophical thought is cognitively independent from Forms in the sense that Forms do not contribute to the cognitive lives of non-philosophers – non-philosophers are simply ignorant that the Forms exist. Forms are the objects of *knowledge*. Of course, at first glance this is not that different from the Optimistic View, since the contemporary notion of knowledge is normally used in a much weaker sense (compare Bostock's 'common or garden knowledge' above). However, knowledge is, for Plato, a very demanding affair. Every human being is *capable* of attaining knowledge (*Meno* 85D–E, *Rep.* 518C) but only very few *actually* do attain knowledge about anything (e.g. *Phd.* 76B, *Tim.* 51E), since knowledge involves the ability to give an account or the ability to explain why 'x is F' and this involves the ability to say what F-ness is, i.e., to refer to the non-sensible Form of F (e.g. *Tim.* 51E). Therefore, according to the Pessimistic View, most of us do not come into cognitive contact with the Forms of Beauty or Justice or Equal, although we are capable of representing (categorizing) things as beautiful or equal (according to *our* conception of beauty or equality).

It was suggested above (p. 30–31) that, according to the Optimistic View, Socrates of Plato's early dialogues aims to articulate the content of concepts as they are used in everyday thinking. Does this mean that Plato's Forms are in this sense different from Socratic forms? The Pessimistic View denies this and takes the Socratic forms, just like Platonic Forms, to be necessary for knowledge of F, not for holding beliefs about F (or representing-as F). Socrates thinks that to *know* about anything that it is F, one needs to *know* the real definition of F⁴⁸. The fact that no interlocutor in any of the Socratic dialogue is capable of giving an adequate definition of any of the moral notion discussed, shows that the ability to use these notions (e.g. representing something as courageous, which all interlocutors are capable of doing) differs significantly from the ability to define⁴⁹ what the underlying moral properties *themselves* are.

⁴⁷ Fine is not completely consistent in her denial of the claim that recollection is meant to explain concept acquisition. In another paper she says that '...we can identify object in this world only because we knew PFs [Platonic Forms] in another world ... Though I think Aristotle is right to attack parts of the doctrine of Anamnesis, as he does, for example, in the *Posterior Analytics*, Plato at least sees that we do not first identify particulars, and only later apply general concepts to them; to identify anything, one must already possess general concepts. That is the core of truth in the doctrine of Anamnesis that Aristotle's simple account of concept acquisition ignores.' (1983/2003: 422)

⁴⁸ In the literature this aspect of Socratic epistemology is usually referred to as principle of the 'priority of definition'. For some discussion of this very large issue and for further references, see Benson (2000, Ch. 6).

⁴⁹ It is well known that one should be somewhat careful in attributing to Socrates the search for *definitions*. The term 'definition' (*horismos*) originates with Aristotle, and not all definitions accepted by Socrates have the Aristotelian pattern of *genus* and *differentia*. For

Socrates is not trying to articulate our ordinary use of concepts (e.g. of courage, friendship, or temperance)⁵⁰, he is rather looking to define the essence of the real moral properties ‘out there’, so to speak⁵¹.

He, furthermore, expects that the accounts given by his interlocutors not only give necessary and sufficient conditions of what it is to be *F*, but also that the accounts *explain* why *F* things have that property. For example, in the *Euthyphro* (10A–11B) Socrates rejects Euthyphro’s account of piety as ‘what all the gods love’. This account does succeed (by Socrates’ lights) in picking out all and only pious things. It is rejected because it is not sufficiently explanatory, it does not explain *why* gods love pious things, i.e. what makes pious things pious. (Irwin 2006). Thus, for Socrates, there is always the possibility that the descriptive content that a given interlocutor associates with a particular property-concept (e.g. that temperance is ‘some sort of quietness’ (*Charm.* 159B)) simply fails to pick out the instances of this particular property or that it fails to be explanatory. In both cases, the descriptive content fails to express the Socratic form. Therefore, Socrates does not assume that there is a one-to-one correlation between what we take a concept to entail and how we apply it, on the one hand, and what the properties in the world actually *are* and what instantiates them, on the other. Thus, the Socratic dialogues can easily be read so as to support the Pessimistic View.

What about Platonic Forms? In what follows, I will present the brief outline of the most thoroughly worked out⁵² and systematic version of the Pessimistic View, presented by Gail Fine⁵³. Fine takes (both Socratic and Platonic) Forms to be *genuine explanatory properties*. On Fine’s view Forms are properties corresponding to *real* definitions, as opposed to *nominal* definitions⁵⁴. To make

an overview of the requirements for definitions in Plato’s Socratic dialogues, see, e.g. Karasmanis (2006).

⁵⁰ ‘He asks about what *F* is, and what all *F*s have in common, not about what the word ‘*F*’ means’ Irwin (1995: 27).

⁵¹ An interesting argument, according to which Socrates (in the *Meno*) asks *two* different questions: (1) what does the term ‘*F*’ signify?, and (2) what is the property *F*?, is offered in Charles (2006). Charles thinks that Socrates ultimately confuses the two questions. For a reply to Charles, see Fine (2010). Fine argues that, despite appearances, Socrates asks, in the *Meno* and elsewhere, only the second question (and is consequently not confused).

⁵² Fine’s papers listed in the next note seem to me to imply the Pessimistic View (as do her papers on *Republic* V–VII and on the *Meno*, i.e. Fine (1978), (1978a), and (1990). Other versions of the Pessimistic View are those of Scott (1995) and Bobonich (2002).

⁵³ The following sketch of Fine’s account is based on a series of her papers where she defends her view of Forms as universals in the realist sense (Fine 1984, 1986, 1987) and, most thoroughly, in her monograph *On Ideas. Aristotle’s Criticism of Plato’s Theory of Forms* (Fine 1993, see note 2 above.). Some of Fine’s claims, most notably about the sensibles suffering the ‘compresence of opposites’ appear in Irwin (1977, 1995 and 1999). The term ‘compresence’ seems to be due to Owen (e.g., Owen 1957: 108), however, unlike Fine and Irwin, Owen thinks that Plato is worried about the compresence in tokens (sensible particulars) rather than compresence in types (sensible properties), like Fine and Irwin. Nehamas (1975/1999, 138–195) also refers to compresence in types, rather than in tokens.

⁵⁴ On the difference between the two types, see Irwin (1995: 25–26).

the difference between the two types of definitions clearer, compare, for example, the lexical meaning of ‘water’ (the nominal definition, e.g. ‘odourless liquid in rivers and lakes’) on the one hand, and the molecular structure of water (H₂O) on the other. The nominal definitions are easy to find from dictionaries, but understanding the real definitions requires extensive background knowledge (in the case of water, knowledge in chemistry). Real definitions capture (or express) the underlying structure of the properties defined, i.e. they offer an explanation as to what it is for a particular property to be instantiated.

Forms are explanatory just in case a Form of *F* explains what it is for a given thing to have the property *F* (and only this property). Plato assumes the following rule about successful explanation: ‘A property *G* cannot be the explanation of *x*’s being *F* if either (1) *G* is present in *y*, but *y* is not-*F* or (2) *G* is not present in *z*, but *z* is *F*’ (Irwin 1995: 155). For example, the property of standing firm in battle (*Laches* 191C–E) fails to explain what courage is since there are some token actions of standing firm in battle that are not courageous. This means that the explanation of courage in terms of standing firm in battle fails in respect to (1). Or, if there are token actions that do not involve standing firm in battle, the proposed explanation fails in respect to (2). Quite often the answers proposed by the interlocutors in Plato’s dialogues fail simultaneously in both respects, i.e. the answers are both too broad and too narrow (Fine 1993: 47). It is easy to understand why grasping Forms is, on this account, a very demanding affair, since it is quite difficult to come up with a successful real definition of, e.g. justice or beauty, a definition that would conform to this rule of explanation.

Fine suggests that when Plato talks about the Forms of Beauty and Justice, he has in mind corresponding explanatory properties, properties that make just things just and beautiful things beautiful, the inner structure shared by all the beautiful and just things. Correspondingly, one does not necessarily grasp the Form of *F*-ness (as a real, underlying property of all things *F*) when one understands a sentence or forms a thought involving the term *F*. One grasps a Form of *F* only when one knows the real definition of *F*, since, for Plato, all knowledge involves an explanatory account (e.g. *Phaed.* 76B, *Rep.* 534B, *Tim.* 51E). According to Fine, Forms are not introduced to serve semantic purposes; they are not meanings of words. Forms are, rather, introduced for epistemological (and metaphysical) purposes, to explain how knowledge is possible and to explain what is the single unifying property that makes all *F* things *F*, for example, the single property of Beauty that makes all beautiful things beautiful⁵⁵. This is how Socratic demand for definitions should be explained – Socrates requires real definitions in order to *know* (in the demanding sense) which action is pious and which is not (Fine 1978). Socrates and everyone else is capable of having beliefs about pious things (representing things as pious)

⁵⁵ Forms are universals in the realist sense. Fine’s account of Plato’s theory of Forms is influenced by Armstrong’s theory of universals (Armstrong 1978). According to Armstrong, too, universals should be conceived of in the realist fashion. Far from simply being the meanings of words, universals are real properties *discovered* by science.

without grasping the real definition of piety (the Socratic form), but in order to *know* whether *x* is pious, a grasp of the (real) definition of piety is necessary.

Now, the above rule of explanation was also assumed in Plato's Socratic dialogues but Socrates never claims that the explanatory properties he is searching for have to be non-sensible Forms. Why does Plato insist on Forms being non-sensible? The answer is that Plato thinks that no *sensible property* can conform to this rule of explanation since all sensible properties suffer from the *compresence of the opposites*. According to Plato, sensible properties are context dependent (Irwin 1999: 162). To use a well known example, being brightly colored cannot serve as an explanatory property of something's being beautiful, since there are objects that are brightly colored that are not beautiful, and there are objects that are beautiful that are not brightly colored. In Platonic language, this means that bright color (as opposed to the Form of Beauty) is both beautiful and not beautiful. Plato thinks that this is the case with all sensible properties; they can always, in different contexts instantiate properties opposite to the property that they are supposed to explain. According to Plato's rule of explanation, then, no sensible properties can serve as an explanation of what it is to be beautiful. When Plato claims that all the sensible 'many beautifuls' are (or appear) also at the same time not beautiful (*Rep.* 479A–E), he means that all the sensible properties cited as explanations for what it is to be beautiful fail since they all have not-beautiful instances. The non-sensible Form of Beauty, on the other hand, is perfectly beautiful (it is not also not-beautiful) since it is a property that has only beautiful instances. Plato therefore concludes that no sensible property can serve as an explanatory property and that explanation (of what makes *x* *F*) has to involve non-sensible explanatory properties, i.e. Forms⁵⁶.

I believe that, despite some of its difficulties (for a critique of Fine's view, see Silverman 2002: 127–131 and 299–309), this is a very plausible account of the role of Forms in Plato's middle dialogues. Fine's account of Forms does not make Forms perfect particulars that somehow *instantiate* the very same

⁵⁶ Compresence seems to apply to properties such as as bright color, which is both beautiful and not beautiful (in the broad sense of 'is'). However, as we saw (p.31), Plato also (at least in some passages) accepts that there are Forms corresponding to sortal- ('shuttle') and mass-terms ('fire'). Now it seems that nothing is both fire and not fire, or shuttle and not-shuttle. Does Plato have any reason to think that there are corresponding Forms? According to Fine, the sensible shuttle-types and sensible fire-types do not suffer what she calls 'narrow compresence, 'which requires something to be *F* and not *F* in virtue of some one and the same aspect of itself' but they do suffer from *broad* compresence: 'Let us then say that sensible samples of fire are fire and not fire in the sense of broad compresence. Something is *F* and not *F* in the broad sense just in case, in addition to being *F*, it is also not *F* in virtue of having features that are not essential to being *F* as such. If something is in narrow compresence it is also in broad compresence, but the converse is not true. Although square, for instance, is not both shape and not shape in the narrow sense, it is both shape and not shape in the broad sense. For it is shape and, since it has features that are not essential to the nature of shape as such, it is also not shape. Every *F* thing other than the property of *F* is *F* and not *F* in the broad sense.' (Fine 1993: 100).

properties that they are supposed to *be*⁵⁷. The so-called self-predication of Forms, on this account, means simply that the Form of *F* is *F* in the sense that it explains why all things *F* are *F*. The Form of *F* does not have the property of *F* in the ‘same way’ as all things *F*⁵⁸. Fine’s view is also strongly supported by the central passages concerning Forms in the middle dialogues that emphasize the necessity of education and claim that only philosophers apprehend the Forms.

Non-philosophers, on the other hand, do not recognize that the non-sensible Forms exist. Therefore they are incapable of explaining what makes all and only *F* things *F*. They are, nonetheless, capable of representing things *as F* and, at least to a certain degree, capable of identifying and distinguishing *F* things, they have beliefs about *F* things and some beliefs about what *F* is. Indeed, it might be the case that the things they identify as *F* on *most* occasions actually are *F*. This is presumably true in the case of large things, or bees (*Men.* 72B) or clay (*Tht.* 147C), for example (if there are Forms corresponding to the latter two). It is reasonable to think that non-philosophers on most occasions correctly identify large things (or bees) even though they do not apprehend the non-sensible explanatory property, the Form of Large. On other occasions, when beliefs of different non-philosophers vary greatly (*Euth.* 7B–D, *Phdr.* 263B), like in the case of things and actions that are just or beautiful, non-philosophers are capable of taking things to be just or thinking of them *as* just, but they are much more likely to do so erroneously. This is so because non-philosophers do not distinguish beautiful or just things from all other things on the basis of the Form of Beauty or Justice (like philosophers), but simply on the basis of the conception of beauty or justice that they happen to have, for example, that beauty is bright color or sexual attractiveness or that justice is benefiting one’s friends and harming one’s enemies. Since only Forms, being the non-sensible explanatory properties, allow one to *know* which things are beautiful or just and which things are not, non-philosophers are bound to take many things to be beautiful or just that actually lack the property of beauty or justice (and similarly with all the other Forms), i.e. they are bound to have false beliefs about beautiful and just things.

To recapitulate, the two views that I discussed in this section come down to the following two contradictory claims. The Optimistic View insists that, in the middle dialogues, some form of cognitive contact with Forms is necessary for

⁵⁷ Although there are some passages (esp. concerning the Form of Beauty, e.g. *Symp.* 211C–D) in relation to which it is very difficult to deny that Plato takes (some) Forms to be self-predicative in the sense that the Form of *F* is supremely *F* (e.g. that the Form of Beauty is supremely beautiful). See Vlastos 1981a: 262–264.

⁵⁸ ‘For example, any particular sensible object that is equal is equal in virtue of having the same measures as something. But when Plato suggests that the form of equal is equal, he does not mean that it has the same measures as something. He means that it is equal because it explains why particular sensible things are equal to one another; it does this because it is the non-sensible determinable property of equality. For Plato as for Socrates, that is, if *x* explains *y*’s being *F*, *x* is itself *F*, simply in virtue of its explanatory role. Since the property (form) of *F* explains the *F*-ness of *F* things, it is predicatively *F*, though *in a sui generis way*, simply in virtue of its explanatory role.’ (Fine 1993: 62, my emphasis).

everyday conceptual thinking (at least concerning the concepts that have corresponding Forms, like Justice, Beauty and Large). The Pessimistic View, on the other hand, claims that, in the middle dialogues, cognitive contact with Forms is necessary for higher level thought, more precisely, knowledge, and is *not* required for ordinary, non-philosophical thinking. Since Plato is committed to the claim that non-philosophers lack knowledge (they are not capable of giving an explanatory account of, e.g. what beauty is), he is also committed to the claim that non-philosophers do not have cognitive access to Forms.

I think that the Pessimistic View represents correctly Plato's conception of the relation between ordinary thinking and Forms, i.e. I do think that Plato (of the middle dialogues) is a pessimist and leaves Forms outside the cognitive reach of non-philosophers⁵⁹. And I also think that something close to Fine's is the best account of Forms available for Plato's middle dialogues⁶⁰. I have

⁵⁹ 'Once we have felt the full force of Plato's pessimism about the pre-philosophical state, we can begin to appreciate his enormous optimism about the ability of human understanding to transform itself. Plato was not a skeptic. In his view, if we now happen to be imprisoned in the mundane perspective, we are not condemned to remain so. And the greater the inadequacy of that perspective, the more remarkable is the power of philosophy to transform it.' (Scott 1995: 85).

⁶⁰ Fine denies that Plato's Forms are meanings. Perhaps this is not quite correct. Fine takes 'meaning' to be 'what any competent speaker of a language grasps in understanding the term' (Fine 2010: 126). It is obvious that if 'meaning' is understood in this manner, then the Pessimistic View does rule out the possibility that Forms could be meanings. However, as I pointed out above (p. 30), it not necessarily the case that for Plato, all speakers of a language have to understand the (true) meanings of general terms. Charles (2003, Ch. 4) argues that, for Aristotle, the significance of a term is not determined by what the language-user understands by the term. He nevertheless maintains that this can be seen as a part of Aristotle's theory of *meaning*, if 'meaning' is understood in a sufficiently broad sense: 'The gulf that separates Aristotle's theory from Fregean ones may explain why some have doubted whether he was interested in meaning at all. His account of signification is certainly not an account of meaning, if all such accounts have to consist in dictionary definitions or to provide one who understands them with a way to determine the extension of the term. But there is a more generic conception of meaning. In it, to give the meaning of a name ' α ' is to state something which determines those conditions under which indicative sentences containing ' α ' are true or false (in so far as they contain ' α ').' Charles (2003: 106–107) Plato's theory of Forms could easily be seen as a theory of meaning in *this* sense, since Forms as explanatory properties *do* determine the conditions under which a sentences such as 'x is beautiful' are true or false. The question remains what cognitive conditions have to be satisfied, for Plato, for an agent to use the term meaningfully. Charles himself remains uncommitted as to what Plato's position concerning this question might be (Charles 2006: 125, n.20). I think this question is moot, since Plato does not discuss this issue in the dialogues, as far as I know. It is unlikely that Plato requires that a speaker be able to produce a nominal definition of the term, since non-philosophers are unable to offer necessary and sufficient conditions for falling under, e.g. the term 'just', although they presumably use the term meaningfully. It might be that in order to use the term meaningfully one must have at least one true belief about what the term refers to (this is suggested by Benson 1992), or that they are able to pick out (some) instances of the things that the term refers to (Fine 2010). Thus, it is likely that, for Plato, in order to use a term meaningfully, one does not need to be able to cite *neither* necessary *nor* sufficient conditions for falling under this particular term.

presented the Optimistic View at such length since the standard account (discussed in the next section) takes the *later* Plato to be committed to a version of the Optimistic View.

I would like to end this section by offering a minor consideration in favour of the Pessimistic View. Namely, the Optimistic View is a non-starter when it comes to solving the problem of the rationality of belief, since it cannot explain how the lower parts of the soul come to have beliefs in the first place. The defenders of the Optimistic View are committed to the claim that (1) conceptualization requires cognitive access to Forms. It is also plausible that (2) Plato, in the middle dialogues, takes Forms to be accessible only to reason⁶¹. This would mean that beliefs concerning concepts that have counterpart Forms (Beauty, Justice, etc.) would have to be assigned to reason. Yet, Plato says, in the *Republic* (602C), that the inferior parts of the soul *believe* things close by to be *large* and the same things far away to be *small*, this presumably involves the *concepts* ‘large’ and ‘small’. In the *Republic* (523E–524C) and *Phaedo* (75C) Plato tells us that there are Forms of Large and Small. On the Optimistic View, conceptualizing something as large would then have to involve cognitive access to the Form of Large (since it requires comparing large things with the Form of Large). But this cannot be, since Plato is clearly referring to the non-rational parts as subjects of belief at *Rep.* 602C. Therefore, in case of *Rep.* 602C, (1) and (2) conflict. Since (2) has Platonic credentials, it seems that (1) should be abandoned, i.e. that the Optimistic View cannot be correct. At least at the time of writing *Republic* X, then, Plato does not take cognitive access to Forms to be necessary for conceptualization and belief.

3. The Standard Account of Rationality of Belief

This account is represented by Lorenz (2006) and Bobonich (2002)⁶². Both Bobonich and Lorenz agree that the beliefs of non-philosophers and beliefs of the non-rational parts of the soul are cognitively independent of Forms, in the middle dialogues. According to Bobonich (2002: 328), Plato’s later dialogues differ from the middle dialogues in that now non-philosophers, too, are in ‘cognitive contact’ with Forms (although the *kind* of contact they have is different from philosophers’ grasp of Forms). According to Lorenz, the later Plato makes ‘cognitive access’ to intelligibles necessary for belief formation and that this ‘perforates the *Republic*’s careful distinctions between ‘the visible’ and ‘the

However, as I already mentioned, it is difficult to be sure, since he does not discuss this question.

⁶¹ There is no clear statement of this in the *Phaedo* (since the *Phaedo* lacks partition of the soul altogether) or in the *Republic* (although it could be implied at *Rep.* 490B), however, a slightly later *Phaedrus* (247D) does make the claim explicitly.

⁶² Is is anticipated by very influential scholars who claim that Forms of the middle dialogues (as metaphysical entities) change into concepts in the late dialogues (e.g. Stenzel 1917, Ackrill 1955) or that, in the late dialogues, Plato focuses on formal concepts or types of proposition (Ryle 1939).

intelligible’ and between the corresponding modes of cognition (509D1–511E5)’ (2006:91). In the *Republic* non-philosophers remain on the level of ‘the visible’, and thus presumably do *not* have ‘cognitive access’ to or ‘contact’ with intelligibles. Thus, Lorenz thinks that in the *Republic* beliefs are cognitively independent of Forms. However, both Bobonich and Lorenz think that Plato radically changes his views about the role of Forms/intelligibles in human cognition. The central point is that Plato, in the later dialogues, makes all beliefs cognitively dependent on Forms.

The standard account involves the following argument:

- (i) For Plato, any capacity that involves a grasp of intelligibles or Forms necessarily belongs to the reasoning part of the soul;
- (ii) Plato starts to think of belief formation as involving a grasp of intelligibles or Forms;
- (iii) Thus, Plato commits himself to the view that belief formation is a capacity that necessarily involves the reasoning part of the soul.

The standard account suggests the following story: in the middle dialogues the grasp of Forms was not a necessary condition of thought. However, in the later writings Plato starts to view belief formation as an activity that presupposes some sort of cognitive access to intelligibles. So, what used to be the distant aim of philosophical thinking in the middle dialogues now becomes a necessary condition of belief formation in later dialogues. The standard account presents a version of the Optimistic View that is developmentalist in nature. This developmentalist stance helps to offer an elegant solution to the problem of the rationality of belief. It explains why later Plato thinks that only reason can form beliefs. This is so because only reason has access to Forms. And since every human, but not every animal, soul has seen the Forms (*Phdr.* 249B, 249E–250A), Plato can be seen to conclude that forming beliefs is a specifically human affair. However, it is not immediately obvious (and I will return to this below) why the necessity of cognitive access to Forms would make belief formation into an activity that involves reasoning and deliberation.

First, how should one understand the notions of ‘cognitive access’ or ‘cognitive contact’ in relation to Forms/intelligibles? Unfortunately neither Lorenz nor Bobonich offer a very clear account of what they mean by these notions. Bobonich stresses several times (2002: 305, 312, 327) that the non-philosophers do not recognize Forms for what they are (i.e. they do not recognize *that* Forms are non-sensible properties), but that their concepts draw on ‘dim awareness’ of Forms. He also speaks of ‘degrees of Form-awareness’ (2002: 303). The general idea seems to be that non-philosophers concepts are somehow derived from (unconscious) awareness of Forms, and this enables them to successfully discriminate, e.g. beautiful things from sexually attractive things (2002: 305). Lorenz also does not explain what he means by ‘cognitive access to’ (or ‘grasp of’) Being, Opposition and Difference. In fact, for Lorenz Plato himself remains uncommitted on this issue and never provides an account of what level of understanding of ‘intelligibles’ is required for belief formation. Nevertheless,

Lorenz insists that for Plato ‘some understanding’ of intelligibles is necessary to form beliefs (Lorenz 2006: 92).

What Forms are required to form a belief ‘ x is F ’? Bobonich and Lorenz offer slightly different answers to these questions. Bobonich’s version is closer to the Optimistic View discussed above, in that he thinks that for later Plato, most thoughts and beliefs with the content ‘ x is F ’ require cognitive access to the Form of F . For instance, to conceptualize anything as (to represent-as) good, just or beautiful, one needs to have some ‘dim awareness’ of the Forms of Good, Just, and Beautiful. This is, of course, only in case there is a Form corresponding to the term ‘ F ’. But even if there is no Form corresponding to the term ‘ F ’, one still needs to grasp the Form of Being that connects the terms in a proposition (expressed by the term ‘is’). This is the unrestricted version of the standard account⁶³.

(B) Cognitive access to the Form of F and to the Form of Being is necessary to form a belief ‘ x is F ’ (just in case a Form of F corresponding to the term ‘ F ’ exists).

Lorenz believes that, for later Plato, cognitive access to only *some* Forms (Lorenz speaks of ‘intelligibles’) is necessary to form beliefs. These intelligibles include Being, Difference and Opposition. Cognitive access to these intelligibles is required in order to form the simplest perceptual beliefs, such as ‘this is sweet’. Lorenz does not say that the cognitive access to the intelligible ‘Beauty’ to be necessary in order to form a belief ‘this is beautiful’ (although, of course, cognitive access to Being, Difference and Opposition is required). This is the restricted version of the standard account⁶⁴.

(L) Cognitive access to the intelligible of G (G = Being, Difference, Opposition) is necessary to form a belief ‘ x is F ’.

⁶³ In fact, Bobonich thinks that, since for later Plato Forms are conceived of as being interconnected with one another, the ‘dim awareness’ of the Form of F requires ‘dim awareness’ of other Forms that are metaphysically connected with this particular Form. ‘Third, Plato’s later metaphysics emphasizes that Forms stand in complicated relations of superordination and subordination; e.g. the Form of Justice and the Form of Virtue. Knowing one Form may require knowing its location within a very complicated structure, but some awareness of some of these relations may be involved even in dim recollection: recollecting justice may involve seeing it as a virtue. Fourth, it might also be the case that recollecting the Form of F requires various kinds of reasoning, e.g. distinguishing F from various other items. And if, for example, Sameness, Difference, and Being are Forms, they might be thought to be involved in many or all of these judgments, even if one is not explicitly thinking of them as Forms. As we shall see below, Plato in the *Theaetetus*, the *Timaeus*, and the *Sophist* thinks that some highly abstract Forms are involved in all (or almost all) thought’ (Bobonich 2002: 551).

⁶⁴ Lorenz discusses explicitly only beliefs about perceptual predicates. Therefore it is not clear how he would view the cognitive resources required for forming beliefs involving non-perceptual predicates, such as ‘ x is beautiful.’ Do they require cognitive access to the Form of Beauty? If so, then Bobonich and Lorenz’s accounts would be very similar indeed. However, since Lorenz does not address this issue, it seems reasonable to keep the two accounts separated.

However, Lorenz seems to waver between two possible versions of restricted version. At times he suggests that grasping the Form of Being is necessary to *connect* two terms, thus forming a complete thought, for example ‘this IS red’ (this is also assumed by Bobonich). The thought is complete just in case it is true or false.

... even simple perceptual beliefs of the form ‘ x is F ’ (where the value of F is a perceptual predicate like ‘salty’) involve at least one common feature, being, a feature that is grasped only by the soul’s independent activity. (Lorenz 2006: 79).

Thus, in order to have true or false beliefs (i.e. beliefs *tout court*), one needs to grasp the ‘intelligible’ of Being. At other times Lorenz suggests that grasping the intelligibles Being, Difference and Opposition is necessary in order to *identify* the properties (and things) that the thought is about ‘as what they are’ (Lorenz 2006: 87). For example, in order to form a thought ‘this is hard’, it is necessary to grasp ‘what it is to be’ hard, and this requires cognitive access to Difference and Opposition, the ability to recognize that hardness and softness are different from one another and that they are opposed to one another:

‘... to be able to form the belief that something or other bears some feature, you have to have some grasp of such relations as difference and opposition, and some grasp of the feature in question being different from, and opposite to, its opposite (if it has an opposite). (Lorenz 2006: 91)⁶⁵

These two versions of the restricted version should be kept apart (although Lorenz does not keep them apart). Thus we get:

- (L1) Cognitive access to the intelligible of Being is necessary for connecting two terms to form a complete thought, ‘ x is F ’,
- and
- (L2) Cognitive access to the intelligibles of Being, Difference and Opposition is necessary for identifying the property F in order to form a belief ‘ x is F ’.

In what follows, I will discuss these positions in turn, and then I will turn to the assessment of these views. Bobonich accepts the Pessimistic View on recollection in the *Phaedo*. He agrees that recollection in the *Phaedo* is not designed to explain ordinary concept acquisition and that non-philosophers do not recollect (Bobonich 2002: 487). However, he thinks that recollection is an explanation of how philosophers acquire *their* concepts. For Bobonich, non-philosophers and philosophers effectively have different sets of concepts. The

⁶⁵ In his more recent article Lorenz expresses (L2) as follows: ‘[F]orming any belief involves framing a statement or account, and even framing basic statements of the form ‘this is F ’ requires having grasped at least some basic facts about being F , such as the fact that being F is different from being the opposite of F , if being F has an opposite. Moreover, it requires having grasped such facts in a way that involves rational sensitivity to logical relations such as entailment and incompatibility’. (Lorenz 2012: 239)

concepts of non-philosophers are acquired, most probably, by means of perception and perhaps tradition. The concepts of philosophers, on the other hand, are acquired by reasoning (about Forms). A constitutive part of the possession of philosophical concepts is the *recognition* that the property corresponding to the concept is different from all its perceptual instantiations and does not suffer from compresence of the opposites (Bobonich 2002: 307). Since non-philosophers do not recognize this difference, they do not have the same concepts as philosophers. Of course, such a massive difference between the content in philosophers' and non-philosophers' 'heads' is bound to raise significant philosophical problems (for example, how could philosophers and non-philosophers communicate?)⁶⁶. This is one of the reasons, according to Bobonich, why Plato abandons this view.

Bobonich claims that Plato, by the time of writing the *Phaedrus*, has come to change his mind; and that *Phaedrus*' theory of recollection is significantly different from the earlier theory in the *Phaedo*. According to Bobonich, Plato recognizes in the *Phaedrus* (249B–C) that linguistic competence (the ability to speak and understand speech) involves an awareness of Forms (Bobonich 2002: 314). Starting with *Phaedrus*, then, *all humans* recollect (and not just the philosophers). Further, in the *Theaetetus* (184–7) Plato recognizes that grasping certain intelligibles (being) is necessary for belief formation and conceptualization. '...the soul is capable of such conceptualization and beliefs only by drawing on its awareness (perhaps quite dim and indistinct) of Forms' (Bobonich 2002: 332).

Timaeus, according to Bobonich, goes even further – it deprives the mortal parts of the soul of belief and *logos*. This means that they are incapable of conceptualization and belief, which, in turn, means that they are incapable of any genuine representational content. Bobonich is unfortunately not very clear about why conceptualization is necessary for all content and why he thinks that Plato could not take at least some representational content to be non-conceptual (this is one of the major differences between Lorenz and Bobonich). This means that, Bobonich's account, Plato has indeed radically changed his mind between the *Phaedo* and the *Timaeus*. What used to be the distant goal of philosophical education in the *Phaedo* and in the *Republic*, i.e. the apprehension of Forms, has now become the necessary condition of all representation (of, e.g., something *as* just or something *as* good). Although Plato does not start with the Optimistic

⁶⁶ Note that this problem does not rise if Forms are not taken to be semantically relevant. For example, on Fine's view, Forms are real explanatory properties, the definitions of which are *known* (in the demanding sense) by philosophers. This does not mean that philosophers have different concepts or that the philosopher's words have different meaning from the words of non-philosophers' (just like the word 'water' in my vocabulary does not differ in meaning from the word 'water' in chemistry professor's vocabulary, I simply have more false beliefs about water and I am more liable to make mistakes in identifying samples of water). Bobonich himself also points out (2002: 311), that Plato's account of names might offer resources to solve this problem of 'reference shift', in that reference is fixed by external factors, and not by what's in the heads of speakers. See also pp. 177–178, esp. fn. 229.

View, he ends up with it. For later Plato, all representational states involve conceptualization, and thus involve a grasp of Forms ('no matter how dim'). Belief is a rational capacity since it is a representational state. Bobonich's version of the rationality of belief is the following: belief involves *conceptualization*, and in order to conceptualize anything as *F*, it is necessary have awareness ('no matter how dim') of the Form of *F*-ness and (in case there exists a Form of *F* corresponding to the term '*F*').

Lorenz's account reaches the same conclusion about the rationality of belief – it is rational since it involves 'cognitive access to intelligibles such as difference and opposition' (Lorenz 2006:91). However, the story Lorenz tells is quite different from Bobonich's. According to Lorenz, in the middle dialogues Plato has no worked out notion of belief. For this reason Plato also has no problem in calling quite different mental states 'beliefs'. These mental states involve non-reflective acceptances, appearances, reflective beliefs, etc. Since middle Plato has this generous and non-technical notion of belief, it is only natural that he takes all three parts of the soul to have beliefs. However, one has to keep in mind that the cognitive psychology behind the genesis of these mental states is importantly different. The non-rational part accepts uncritically (Lorenz 2006: 56) whatever appears to it whereas the rational part reflects and makes inferences and only then comes to hold a belief.

According to Lorenz, in later dialogues Plato develops a more technical notion of belief. Now Plato takes beliefs to be only those representations that involve *predication*. But Plato makes it plain in the *Theaetetus* (according to Lorenz) that predication always involves a successful recognition of some basic facts about ('discerning of being') the relevant predicates. The ability of the soul to 'discern the being' of predicates ('soft', 'fine', 'just'), it has to have 'cognitive access' to intelligibles like oppositeness and difference. In order to form a belief 'this is hard', for example, the soul has to be able to tell that softness is the opposite of hardness (and similarly with all other predicates, such as just or beautiful). Lorenz concludes that forming beliefs requires cognitive access to certain intelligibles (such as Opposition and Difference). The reason why cognitive access to these intelligibles is specifically *rational* is that it requires grasping logical relations such as entailment and incompatibility (Lorenz 2012: 239). Grasping logical relations is therefore another precondition of forming beliefs. According to Lorenz, it is natural that Plato starts to view belief formation as an ability that belongs exclusively to the reasoning part of the soul. However, this does not mean that the lower parts of the soul are cognitively impoverished – they do enjoy representations (here Lorenz adopts a view opposed to Bobonich's). In fact, they have the same (or very similar) content as they did in the *Republic*. These representations do not have predicative structure and therefore they do not count as beliefs for later Plato. For Lorenz, belief becoming rational is almost a terminological point – Plato calls beliefs only those representations that, as seen in the *Republic*, belonged to the rational part of the soul (thus leaving the cognitive abilities of the irrational parts of the soul intact). In addition, Plato recognizes that these predicative

representations necessarily involve a grasp of (some) intelligibles. Lorenz's answer to the problem of the rationality of belief is the following: belief necessarily involves *predication* and predication involves cognitive access to intelligibles Opposition and Difference (and Being).

Now, obviously Bobonich's and Lorenz's versions of belief becoming rational are somewhat different. The views Bobonich and Lorenz hold about the representation below belief are almost directly opposite (Bobonich takes all representations to involve reason, whereas Lorenz thinks that there is 'content' below belief), and the debate continues⁶⁷. I now turn to some critical remarks about both versions of the standard account.

4. Assessment of the Standard Account

In case of both (B) and (L), I will first discuss a few general problems and then turn to the question whether each is textually supported. I will argue that the most of the relevant passages in later Plato fail to support the standard account.

First, I would like to note that the standard account does not give a completely satisfactory solution to the problem of the rationality of belief. The accounts of both Lorenz and Bobonich fail to explain why Plato stresses that belief formation involves reasoning and deliberation (esp. *Theaetetus* 189E–190A and *Philebus* 38B–E). In forming a belief, the soul carries on a discussion and considers candidate answers to whatever question it asks itself. When it finally comes to a decision, this is called a belief. Any account of the rationality of belief would have to explain why Plato takes reasoning and deliberation to be a necessary component of belief formation. The standard account fails in this respect. According to Bobonich, belief is rational since it requires conceptualization and this in turn requires awareness of Forms. Lorenz takes the distinctively rational aspect of belief formation to be predication, which requires cognitive access to intelligibles. Neither Lorenz nor Bobonich present arguments as to why conceptualization or predication would require the amount of deliberation Plato is insisting on⁶⁸.

⁶⁷ The most recent additions to this debate are Bobonich (2010) and Lorenz (2012).

⁶⁸ Bobonich does not address this issue; all he says (2002: 557) is that these passages show that belief is 'linguistic'. This does not explain why belief formation always involves deliberation, however, since surely not all cognitive acts that involve language-use involve deliberation. Lorenz tries to offer an explanation (2006: 92–3) to why Plato starts to view belief as a reflective activity, involving an inner dialogue, considering candidate answers, etc. Lorenz says that this shift follows from the fact that Plato sees belief as rational. This is no doubt true, but it is not an explanation as to what it is about reason that makes it necessary for Plato to view beliefs as always requiring deliberation and inner dialogue. Clearly there is nothing in the notion of 'predication' as such (a specifically rational thing about belief according to Lorenz) that makes deliberation and inner dialogue a necessary feature of belief. Further, Lorenz thinks that reasoning is necessary to acquire concepts (to be able to 'discern' what it is to be, e.g. hard). But the descriptions of the soul forming beliefs in *Tht.* 189E–190A and *Phlb.* 38B–E do not concern acquiring basic level

Secondly, Plato does not mention intelligibles or Forms when offering his descriptions of belief formation in the *Theaetetus* (189E–190A), *Sophist* (264A), and *Philebus* (38B–E). Of course, he could still think that the whole process of belief formation implies a grasp of Forms but choose not to mention it for dialectical reasons. A more natural way to read the late dialogues is to take the Forms to be exclusively objects of knowledge (and, perhaps, *de re* beliefs). This is already implied by how much Plato emphasizes that it is only the circle of the same (i.e. of knowledge) that ‘reveals the objects of reasoning’ (*Tim.* 37C). In fact, in *Timaeus* he strongly suggests that Forms are outside the cognitive reach of δόξαι altogether (51B–E). A similar claim appears in *Philebus* 61D–E. Bobonich and Lorenz do not discuss these passages in any depth⁶⁹, even though they seem quite challenging for the standard account.

Bobonich’s version of the rationality of belief suffers from problems that are typical to all accounts that make the grasp of Forms necessary for conceptualization, which is a matter of reason and this, in turn, is made necessary for representational content⁷⁰. I will discuss these problems in somewhat greater depth in the next chapter and, accordingly, here I will confine myself to a few short remarks. First, since Forms are accessible to reason only, then the states of the inferior parts of the soul – i.e. pleasures, pains, boldness, fear, anger, expectation, perception and lust (*Tim.* 69D) – are not representational. They cannot represent anything *as* being anything, they are un-conceptualized movements, and ‘the conceptual content is provided by the rational part of the soul’ (Bobonich 2002: 324). It becomes difficult to see how they could play the roles that they are meant to play in the *Timaeus*’ account of cognitive psychology. For example, it is unclear how they can originate actions. Bobonich

understanding of ‘what it is to be hard’. The passages are clearly not about concept-acquisition. The soul *already has* concepts in these descriptions. In this context, it is useful to distinguish between reasoning or deliberation and conceptualization (see Wilberding 2012). Reasoning is a higher-level cognitive achievement and *assumes* conceptualization as lower-level cognitive achievement. Why, then, does Plato stress deliberation and reasoning in forming beliefs? In Chapter 4 of this dissertation, I will argue that the specifically rational feature of belief is that always involves the cognitive *aim* of representing reality correctly. This explains why belief formation involves deliberation and reasoning.

⁶⁹ For example, Lorenz relegates discussion of *Tim.* 37A–C to a short footnote (Lorenz 2006: 96, n.4), where he claims that this passage shows that the world-soul must *apprehend* being, in order to ‘form beliefs on the basis of this apprehension’. Again, Lorenz assumes that in order to have beliefs, there must exist a *previous* apprehension (‘on the basis of this ...’) of the being in question. All that the passage actually implies is that the circles of difference of the world-soul consist of being, sameness, and difference, in order to form ‘firm and true beliefs and convictions’ (37B8), not in order to form *any* beliefs, true and false, as Lorenz reads the passage. The world-soul is a very special kind of soul because it is error-free. It is thus a cognitive *ideal* for individual souls. The ‘apprehension of being’ that Lorenz refers to should be taken as a goal that an individual human being must *achieve* and not what it must already *have* in order to form beliefs. Lorenz assumes that in order to form beliefs, one must be able to ‘discern the being’ of the properties that the belief is about. I do not think that Plato shares this view.

⁷⁰ For example, that of Allan Silverman (1990), (1991).

is, of course, alive to this problem (in effect, he argues that this is one of the reasons why Plato abandons tri-partition of the soul). His solution is, in effect, to split perceptions and desires into two classes; conceptualized desires, perceptions and fears, and non-conceptualized desires, perceptions and fears (2002: 326). Thus, whatever content perception and desire, for example, have is actually provided by the rational part. This is problematic. First, the distinction between conceptualized states with content and un-conceptual movements is not made by Plato himself and seems rather *ad hoc*. Of course, any interpretation consists (partly) of making distinctions that author himself (in this case Plato) does not make. But even if Plato would, if pressed, accept this distinction, it is quite unclear what the un-conceptualized movement of, say, fear or boldness might be like. Bobonich's answer for Plato is the following: 'In human beings in the appropriate condition, there is also an accompanying conceptualization. (For example, fear involves the belief that something bad is in the offing, e.g., *Laches* 198B8–10, *Leg.* 646E7–647A2, *Prot.* 358D5–E1.)'. This seems to get the phenomenology of fear exactly the wrong way around. It is not that one first has a physical movement and then interprets it as the 'fear of x'. Why would this physical movement arise in the first place? Fear arises *because* something is considered to be bad (and in the offing). Thus, according to the framework Bobonich prefers, the description of fear would have to be the following: the rational part considers something to be bad and in the offing, this results in a physical movement and *then* this movement is conceptualized as fear. It is hard to see how the spirited part could be considered to be the proper bearer of fear at all. At least the typical emotions of the spirited part are quite hard to make into purely conceptual movements.

The second worry concerns Plato's notion of animal cognition. Since Bobonich claims that (i) conceptualization requires awareness of Forms, and (ii) animals are not aware of Forms, he is committed to the view that according to Plato animals do not 'conceptualize'. This is indeed what he says: 'Since the lower parts of every human soul are excluded from any contact at all with the Forms, the lower parts of the soul have, in kind, the same epistemic resources as do the souls of non-human animals' (2002: 315). This creates a double problem: first, non-human animals are cognitively completely impoverished; in fact animals start strongly to resemble Cartesian automata. At the same time, it is well known that Plato is quite generous when it comes to the cognitive capacities of animals⁷¹; second, on Bobonich's account, the reasoning part of animals becomes simply redundant, it contributes nothing to animal cognitive lives whatsoever (since Bobonich takes awareness of Forms to necessary for all cognitive acts that can be attributed to reason).

⁷¹ See, for example, the classic studies of Urs Dierauer (1977), and Richard Sorabji (1995, esp. 9–12) and, more recently, Carpenter who claims that *Timaeus* does not make any significant distinctions between human and animal cognitive abilities: 'The upshot of this exploration is to return us to (A1): there is in practice no real difference between us and other animals' (Carpenter 2008: 18). See also Osborne (2007: 43–62).

How well founded textually is Bobonich's version of the standard account? Bobonich claims that in order to conceptualize anything *as F*, one needs to have 'dim awareness' of the relevant Form. This explains why belief is rational. However, it is surprisingly difficult to find passages in the later Plato that would clearly support this view. There are a few passages where Plato connects discourse and Forms, which might suggest that Plato takes the connection between understanding speech (and forming beliefs) to require awareness of Forms. These passages could then be seen to support (B). The first passage comes from the *Parmenides*. After Parmenides has thoroughly criticized the theory of Forms, he says that without Forms the power of discourse would be destroyed.

'Yet on the other hand, Socrates,' said Parmenides, 'if someone, having an eye on all the difficulties we have just brought up and others of the same sort, won't allow that there are forms for things (μη ἔασει εἶδη τῶν ὄντων εἶνα) and won't mark off a form for each one (μηδέ τι ὀριεῖται εἶδος ἐνὸς ἐκάστου), he won't have anywhere to turn his thought, since he doesn't allow that for each thing there is a character that is always the same. In this way he will destroy the power of discourse/dialectic entirely (καὶ οὕτως τὴν τοῦ διαλέγεσθαι δύναμιν παντάπασι διαφθερεῖ). But I think you are only too well aware of that.' (*Parm.* 135 B–C)

This might suggest⁷² that without Forms language loses its meaning, and since Forms make language meaningful, it is plausible to infer that whoever grasps the meanings of words also grasps the relevant Forms. Interpreted in this way, this passage could support (B). There are, however, two objections against this reading. The first objection concerns the verb διαλέγεσθαι. It can, indeed, simply mean 'engage in a discourse' but it often also means 'dialectic' as a specific philosophical method. If one takes 'διαλέγεσθαι' here to mean dialectic, then Plato is claiming that without Forms the dialectical method would become powerless⁷³. Consequently he would not be making a point about the connection between Forms and language at all. It is difficult to decide between these two possibilities. Second, even if this passage concerns the meaningfulness of language, it does not follow that all speakers of the language grasp the meanings of the words they use. That is, Plato might have a

⁷² For discussion of this and the following passage from the *Sophist*, and for references for further discussions, see Fine (1993: 133–136).

⁷³ Zeller, for example, says about this passage that 'Die Wirklichkeit der Ideen leugnen heisst daher alle Möglichkeit einer *wissenschaftlichen Untersuchung* von Grund aus vernichten' (Zeller 1889: 645, my emphasis). For a directly opposed view: 'Anyway, the passage quoted [i.e. *Parm.* 135B] strongly suggests that what he is now sure of is *not* that there must be Forms as conceived in the middle dialogues, Forms as ethical ideals and as metaphysical objects of intuitive and perhaps mystical insight; what he is now sure of is that there must be fixed things to guarantee the *meaningfulness of thought, fixed concepts – the meanings of general words* – whose role is to ensure τὴν τοῦ διαλέγεσθαι δύναμιν' (Ackrill 1955/1971: 208–209, my emphasis). Ackrill's claim that the interweaving of Forms accounts for meaningfulness of sentences has an unfortunate consequence that that sentences such as 'Movement is Rest' (these Forms do not 'mingle') come out as *meaningless*.

demanding notion of meaning, i.e., the semantic account of Forms does not imply the Optimistic View (see above, pp. 30-31). Unless further textual support for (B) is provided it seems that *Parm.* 135 B–C cannot be taken to support (B).

A similar consideration applies to a second passage. In the *Sophist* the Eleatic Visitor says the following:

In fact, my friend, it's inept to try to separate everything from everything else. It's the sign of a completely unmusical and unphilosophical person. – Why? – To dissociate each thing from everything else is to destroy totally everything there is to say. The weaving together of forms is what makes speech possible for us (διὰ γὰρ τὴν ἀλλήλων τῶν εἰδῶν συμπλοκὴν ὁ λόγος γέγονεν ἡμῖν). (259D–E)

This is usually taken to mean that the interweaving of Forms makes language possible. However, λόγος can just as well mean argument and not speech in general (Fine 1993: 314), and Plato can be taken to argue that in order to engage in philosophical argument Forms have to be related in a certain way. Again, even if the passage concerns language as such, it does not claim that in order to think or engage in forming beliefs, one has to apprehend how Forms are connected, since it might well be the case that one does not understand (in the demanding sense) the words one uses. As a matter of fact, in the very same passage Plato suggests that the person who ‘dissociates each thing from everything else’, i.e. does not allow for Forms to be interweaved, is not language-less and in complete cognitive darkness. Plato simply says that he is ‘unphilosophical’ (ἄφιλόσοφος). This suggests that this passage does not support (B).

Neither of the above passages says anything about what the cognitive preconditions of belief might be. Bobonich supports (B) mainly with two passages. The first passage that Bobonich takes to support his interpretation comes from the *Phaedrus*⁷⁴. The sentence occurs midway through Socrates' second speech on love. Socrates presents his great myth about the reincarnation

⁷⁴ Plato maintains in the *Phaedrus* (248B–E) that the lives that the non-philosophers live are dependent on what Forms their souls saw prior to incarnation (e.g. whether one is likely to become a doctor or a tyrant). Bobonich thinks that this shows that Forms do play a role in everyday non-philosophical thought, namely that pre-philosophical thought has to involve knowledge of Forms, at least to a certain degree, i.e. to the extent of the ‘clarity with which each [Form] is known’ (302). However, in the *Phaedrus* Plato does not address the issue of whether *knowledge* of the same object could have degrees (of clarity). In fact, in the *Theaetetus* 165D Plato implies that knowledge cannot have more or less clarity. Knowledge (of the same object) is, for Plato, an all or nothing affair. This does not, incidentally, mean that if one lacks knowledge of something, one must be in a complete cognitive blank in relation to this object. One can always simply have true belief(s) about the object, while lacking knowledge (see, e.g. Fine 2010). It is therefore unlikely that in the *Phaedrus* Plato assumes that non-philosophers differ from each other in the degree of clarity of knowledge about different Forms. Rather, Plato might be suggesting that different people have certain inclinations towards pursuing certain goals. These inclinations, if realized, may lead to knowledge of certain Forms. Of course, many people never realize their inner potential.

of the soul. Leaving the (rather unclear) details aside, Socrates says that human souls can enter animal bodies and vice versa. However, there is an important restriction:

In the thousandth year both groups arrive at a choice and allotment of second lives, and each soul chooses the life it wants. From there, a human soul can enter a wild animal, and a soul that was once human can move from an animal to a human being again. But a soul that never saw the truth (οὐ γὰρ ἢ γε μήποτε ἰδοῦσα τὴν ἀλήθειαν) cannot take a human shape, since a human being must understand speech in terms of general forms, proceeding to bring many perceptions together into a reasoned unity (δεῖ γὰρ ἄνθρωπον συνιέναι κατ' εἶδος λεγόμενον, ἐκ πολλῶν ἰὼν αἰσθήσεων εἰς ἓν λογισμῷ συναιρούμενον). (*Phdr.* 249B–C)

Now, at first sight this passage quite unambiguously says that the distinctive feature of human souls is that they understand language and that for understanding language it is necessary to grasp Forms (κατ' εἶδος λεγόμενον). If this is the only way to understand the sentence, then it would offer very strong support to (B). And indeed, this sentence is quite essential for Bobonich's arguments concerning the *Timaeus*. Namely, in discussing the parts of the soul in *Timaeus*, Bobonich often infers from the claim that λόγος is necessary for belief and representational content (a claim that is in itself quite controversial) to the claim that awareness of Forms is necessary for belief and perceptual content. This inference is justified only when understanding λόγος requires a grasp of Forms.

As is well known, the above Greek sentence is ambiguous and there is an alternative translation of the relevant part. For example, Hackforth's translation is: 'seeing that a man must needs understand the language of Forms, passing from a plurality of perceptions to a unity gathered together by reasoning'. This rendering puts the emphasis not on understanding language as such but on understanding the language of the *Forms* (whatever this might mean). It leaves the possibility that one can understand (regular) language without grasping Forms at all. But even so, Socrates says that a human being *must* (δεῖ) understand the language of Forms. As Scott pointed out (1995: 79) that sentence can (on both translations) be understood in either a prescriptive or a descriptive sense. In the first case the sentence describes what human beings *ought* to do, and does not at all imply that this is what human beings *in fact* do (descriptive reading). The point of the passage should be (quite in accordance with the Pessimist View) that human beings *ought to* philosophize. The prescriptive reading, of course, does not support (B). This leaves open the possibility that one can have beliefs without in any way grasping the Forms and that belief does not involve awareness of Forms. The arguments Bobonich presents against Scott's reading are not persuasive.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Even if the εἶδος in the above passage does not refer to Forms but rather natural kinds (as Bobonich argues, against Scott (2002: 313–314)), from this fact alone it does not follow that

Other than this sentence from *Phaedrus* there is actually just *one* passage in the later Plato that can be taken to support (B). This passage is the rather difficult Passage of the Commons in the *Theaetetus* (184–7) that will be the topic of the rest of this dissertation. Socrates, on almost every reading of this passage, implies that there are (i) certain so-called ‘commons’ that cannot be perceived (being, fineness, numbers, etc.), and (ii) that these commons are grasped simply in virtue of entertaining a relevant thought. This is exactly what (B) requires. I conclude, therefore, that the textual justification of Bobonich’s version of the standard account stands and falls with this particular passage.

According to Lorenz, belief is not a paradigmatic representational state. Not all representations involve belief. The representational states below reason are not beliefs. Lorenz seems to think, however, that belief *is* a paradigmatic representational state for the reasoning part of the soul. What distinguishes belief from other representations is that it involves predication. The main problem for Lorenz is his peculiar notion of predication. At times Lorenz seems to think that predication involves nothing more than saying or thinking something about something (that is, predication involves truth and falsity). Predication simply involves a complex mental state, i.e. predication is *propositional*. Yet, for Lorenz the specifically rational thing about belief is not that it predicates something about something, but rather that it ‘discerns’ the being of the relevant predicate, which means that it can recognize it ‘as what it is’ (Lorenz 2006: 87, esp. n44). The recognition of the property ‘as what it is’ requires cognitive access to intelligibles or Forms (L2). This seems to mean that for predication one has to understand what the predicate *really* designates:

When you look at a large piece of chocolate cake and a smaller one located on a table right in front of you, your non-rational part will have no trouble, and will lose no time, in distinguishing the large from the small. In a more obvious

all human beings classify things according to natural kinds (as Bobonich seems to infer). Plato makes it clear that it is the art of dialectic that carves at the natural joints of things (*Phdr.* 265D–266B) and discovers the εἶδος (a species or a kind). He does not think that simply by acquiring language we automatically receive this ability. He further implies (266C) that dialectic is involved in all crafts. Taken together with the 249B–C, the ‘must’ could still be read prescriptively, in a sense that a human being must divide things in accordance with the species or kinds, by, e.g., learning a craft. Thus *Phaedrus* seems to relax the requirements for grasping Forms to a certain extent. Now it is allowed (unlike in the *Republic* or *Phaedo*) that some non-philosophers, i.e. those who have learnt a craft divide things according to Forms. Plato also suggests (*Phdr.* 251A–C) that divinely mad lovers recollect the Form of Beauty. However, being in love (a quasi-mystic experience for Plato) is obviously different from being able to use the word ‘beauty’ (or have a concept of beauty). This suggests that recollecting Beauty is not required to use the word ‘beautiful’ (or to have the concept of beauty) are. Bobonich (2002: 553) denies this and maintains that having the concept of beauty requires the right ‘causal ancestry’, i.e. the concept has to be recollected. He is therefore committed to the view that most people (who are not divinely mad lovers, i.e. who do not recollect) do not have the concept of beauty (i.e. that they do not represent things as beautiful), which is certainly an odd result.

and important sense, the non-rational part really is unable, as Socrates says it is, to distinguish between the large and the small. This is because it has no idea what it really is to be large, or small, which is obviously not the same thing as appearing through sight to be large, or small, or taking up a great deal of space, or very little space, in someone's visual field. (72, my emphasis).

But predication (framing a propositional structure) and *successful* predication – assuming that this is what the ‘idea of what it really is to be large’ means – seem to be two quite different matters. Appearing through sight to be large is just as propositional as grasping that something really is large. Of course, Lorenz could argue that any predication or framing of a proposition requires ‘discerning’ what it really is to be large, but he does not explicitly argue for this and it is by no means clear that this is how Plato sees things (I will return to this in more detail in the subsequent chapter). For example, in the *Sophist* the Visitor says:

But with me I think you need to begin the investigation from the sophist – by searching for him and giving a clear account of what he is. Now in this case you and I have only a name in common (τοῦνομα μόνον ἔχομεν κοινῇ), and maybe we've each used it for a different thing (ἔργον). (*Soph.* 218B–C)

It seems that in this particular case either Theaetetus or the Visitor (or both) do not ‘discern’ the being of the sophist. So if they both form a thought ‘x is a sophist’ then, according to Lorenz, (at least) one of them would not engage in predication in Lorenz's sense. But this surely is an odd result. Now, is Lorenz's (L2) version of the solution to the problem of the rationality of belief textually supported? It is clear that, in later Plato, Forms of very abstract features (sameness, difference, being) become the centre of attention. Plato scrutinizes the metaphysical and epistemological roles of these Forms in several dialogues. The metaphysical aspect of the relations between sameness, difference and being is at the forefront in the second part of the *Parmenides* (137C–166C) and in the central part of the *Sophist* (250B–260A). The epistemological aspect is less fully worked out but there are passages in the *Philebus* (e.g. 14C–18D) that discuss this as well. The curious thing is, however, that very much like the Forms of the middle dialogues, Sameness, Difference and Being mostly serve the purpose of explaining (philosophical) *knowledge*, and not belief. The paradigmatic passage comes from the *Sophist*:

Aren't we going to say that it takes expertise in dialectic to divide things by kinds (κατὰ γένη διαιρεῖσθαι) and not to think that the same form (τὰντὸν εἶδος) is a different one or that a different form is the same? Yes. So if a person can do that, he'll be capable of adequately discriminating a single form spread out all through a lot of other things (δυνατὸς δρᾶν μίαν ἰδέαν διὰ πολλῶν), each of which stands separate from the others. In addition he can discriminate forms that are different from each other but are included within a single form that's outside them, or a single form that's connected as a unit throughout many wholes, or many forms that are completely separate from others. That's

what it is to know how to discriminate by kinds how things can associate and how they can't. – Absolutely. – And you'll assign this dialectical activity (διαλεκτικὸν) only to someone who has a pure and just love of wisdom (φιλοσοφοῦντι). (253D–E)

This passage would require a thorough treatment. Here I simply wish to point out that discriminating 'sameness' and 'difference' is, for Plato, a matter of philosophical knowledge (dialectic). Plato does not say that discerning sameness and difference is necessary for forming beliefs (i.e. predication).

A possible candidate for support for (L2) is the passage about the construction of the world-soul in the *Timaeus* (37A–C). Here Plato says that the World-Soul is made out of a mixture of the Same, Different and Being, and that this enables the World-Soul to reach knowledge, understanding and firm and true beliefs and convictions. However, this passage fails to support (L2), since it does not, at least not straightforwardly, imply that belief formation as such requires a grasp of 'sameness' and 'difference' of the particular predicate. In fact, later on in the *Timaeus* (43E–44C), Plato says explicitly that the thoughts of the new-born fail to grasp sameness and difference (of any given property):

Whenever they encounter something outside of them as characterizable as same or different, they will speak (προσαγορεύουσαι) of it as the 'same as' something, or as 'different from' something else, when the truth is just the opposite, so proving themselves to be mislead (ψευδεῖς) and unintelligent (άνόητοι). (*Tim.* 44A)

This strongly points to the view that predication (and, by implication, propositional thought) does *not* require a successful 'cognitive contact' with intelligibles. However, it might be that Plato thinks that forming beliefs requires that the circles run well. He does say, after all, that newborns cannot form beliefs (this seems to be implied in *Tht.* 186C). This is indeed how Lorenz reads the passage (Lorenz 2006: 96). The second possibility is that only after the person has received education can he come to recognize sameness and difference in things, and the circles of the same and different 'correctly identify (προσαγορεύουσαι) what is the same and what is different, and render intelligent (ἐμφορῶν) the person who possesses them' (44B). *Timaeus* does not say that being intelligent is necessary for forming all beliefs. It seems likely, rather, that if the circles of the same and different 'run well', this explains the ability to reach knowledge and 'firm and true beliefs' (*Tim.* 37C), in much the same way as, in the *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus*, recollection is meant to explain philosophical thought. In this case the *Timaeus* does not require that the possibility of predication involve the successful grasp of being, sameness and difference. I think *Timaeus* is neutral between these possible readings, since Plato does not show (like in most of the passages we have looked at) much interest in what makes belief *tout court* possible, but rather what makes possible the possibility of apprehending things correctly. To be sure, *Timaeus* is different from the *Republic*, for instance, since it claims that in beliefs it is *possible* to

apprehend *being*, although of the divisible kind (35A), but it does not say that apprehending being is necessary for forming all beliefs. It rather gives the impression that (the divisible) being is apprehended in firm and true beliefs.

Just like (B), (L2) finds strong support in the Passage of the Commons of the *Theaetetus*. There indeed Plato seems to say clearly that the grasp of difference, opposition and being characterizes all beliefs.

Finally, what about (L1)? Does Plato, in his late dialogues say that belief requires the grasp of the Form Being in order to connect the subject and predicate? One passage that might suggest this possibility comes from the *Sophist*:

We also say that each piece of speech has to have some particular quality. – Yes. – What quality should we say each one of these has? – The second one is false, I suppose, and the other one is true. – And the true one says those that are, as/that they are, about you (τὰ ὄντα ὡς ἔστιν περὶ σοῦ). – Of course. – And the false one says things different from those that are (ἕτερα τῶν ὄντων). – Yes. – So it says those that are not, but that they are (τὰ μὴ ὄντ' ἄρα ὡς ὄντα λέγει). – I suppose so. – But they're different things that are from the things that are about you – since we said that concerning each thing many beings are and many are not. (*Soph.* 263A–263B)

The language of the passage is ambiguous⁷⁶. Plato might be saying that the true statement says about the things that are *that* they are (about you). This would suggest that every statement does involve the term being. On the other hand, the sample sentences 'Theaetetus sits' and 'Theaetetus flies' do not contain an explicit copula. And indeed, the sentence can just as easily be construed as saying that the true statement says things that are *as* they are, in which case the sentence does not involve an explicit copula. This is not, however, necessarily a problem for (L1), since Lorenz does not require that the Forms of Being, Difference and Opposition should figure *explicitly* in a belief. All he means is that the grasp of these intelligibles (and their relations) is a cognitive precondition for beliefs. Yet it is difficult to say whether Plato intends the above passage to mean that the Form of Being has to be grasped (implicitly) in every thought. The passage is supposed to be an explanation of what makes sentences (and beliefs, *Soph.* 264A) true or false, it does not aim to explain the cognitive preconditions of forming a sentence or a belief.

However (as the reader might perhaps already expect), *Theaetetus* 184–187 has often been read in a way that supports (L1). The task of the next chapter is to argue that, despite appearances, the Passage of the Commons in the *Theaetetus* fails to support (B), (L2) and (L1), in other words, it fails to support all versions of the standard account. I conclude that in order to see whether Plato indeed comes to hold some version of the Optimistic View, a thorough analysis of this passage is unavoidable.

In this chapter I argued that there is a significant shift between Plato's middle and late dialogues in respect of the notion of δόξα – namely that δόξα

⁷⁶ See, for example, M. Frede (1992: 417–418).

becomes a rational capacity. I further distinguished between two views about the relation between the Forms and ordinary thinking in the middle dialogues, the Optimistic and the Pessimistic View. I argued that the standard account, according to which Plato, in his later dialogues, endorses a version of Optimistic View of Forms, is problematic. It fails to explain the key feature of Plato's later notion of belief, namely that forming beliefs requires deliberation and reasoning. The passages sometimes taken to support the Optimistic View are ambiguous. However, there is one passage that seems to commit Plato to the Optimistic View about Forms (or intelligibles), namely *Theaetetus* 184–7. Thus, assuming that the argument in this chapter is correct, the standard account stands or falls depending on whether it is supported by the Passage of the Commons⁷⁷.

Even one of the most adamant critics of the Optimistic View about the middle dialogues, Dominic Scott, thinks that *Theaetetus* 184–7 marks Plato's radical departure from his earlier account of how Forms figure in ordinary thought and his arrival to the Optimistic View:

This passage in the *Theaetetus* is a significant stage in Plato's development. It represents a rejection of a view of the senses that runs throughout the middle period, a view that is an essential part of D. In recanting his generosity towards sense perception and removing from it even the ability to provide unreliable information Plato moved towards a new set of considerations similar to those that K is importing back into recollection. This is an anachronism, however, because recollection is firmly tied to the middle-period ontology and epistemology. (Scott 1995: 84)

In the following chapters I want to challenge this view. I hope to show that Plato retains his Pessimistic View in his later texts. Especially, *Theaetetus* does not commit Plato to an Optimistic View. The rest of this dissertation has a double agenda. First, I will argue that *Theaetetus* 184–7 does not commit Plato to the Optimistic View. Second, I wish to argue that this passage contains a different explanation as to why Plato starts to see belief as a rational capacity.

⁷⁷ It is no coincidence that one of the first defenders of the Optimistic View about Forms, Natorp (1922/1961: 91–119, see esp. p. 114), thinks of *Theaetetus* as an *early* dialogue, preceding the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*. The fact that Passage of the Commons seems to express the Optimistic View about commons enables Natorp to treat the Forms of the *Phaedo* and the *Republic* similarly as *concepts* (*Begriffe*). The standard account retains Natorp's central claim - while maintaining (correctly) that the *Theaetetus* is a late dialogue - by thinking that the Forms *become* to be (like) concepts for later Plato.

CHAPTER TWO.

Conceptualism and *Theaetetus* 184B4–187A7

In *Theaetetus* 184B–187A, Plato seems to commit himself to the claim that grasping intelligibles (he calls them ‘commons’ since they are common to or shared by the objects of the different senses) is necessary for forming beliefs. The most widespread reading of this passage supports the standard account. According to this reading, the passage makes the following claims. First, the soul grasps certain abstract features of things, i.e. the commons, simply in virtue of entertaining a thought involving the terms for these commons. For example, a thought expressed in a sentence ‘color is beautiful’ involves the grasp of the common of beautiful. Second, these features are not perceptible, hence perception cannot account for thoughts involving (e.g.) the term ‘beautiful’. Third, all beliefs (including beliefs about perceptible qualities) require a grasp of certain special commons, minimally the common of being but maybe also the commons of sameness, difference and opposition. Thus the passage can easily be read so as to support both versions of the standard account. In this chapter, I will argue that this reading (I call this the ‘conceptualist reading’) is riddled with problems. According to the conceptualist reading, the crucial notion of ‘being’ should be construed as a copula involved in all propositional thought. This interpretation attributes Plato with a theory of perception that is not supported by what Plato says elsewhere, and it furthermore fails to give an adequate reading of the second half of the Passage of the Commons. I will further discuss an alternative to the conceptualist reading, the ‘realist reading’, which takes the notion of ‘being’ to mean objectivity or reality. I will point out that, although the realist reading is clearly superior to the conceptualist reading in interpreting the second half of the Passage of the Commons, all the available versions of the realist readings nevertheless fail, since they also assume that the commons are grasped in all thoughts involving the terms for these commons. I conclude that this assumption (the ‘conceptualist assumption’) should be abandoned.

I. The Conceptualist Reading

The Passage of the Commons contains the final refutation of Theaetetus’ first definition of knowledge, according to which ‘knowledge is nothing but perception (οὐκ ἄλλο τί ἐστὶν ἐπιστήμη ἢ αἴσθησις)’ (*Tht.* 151E3). It is useful to divide the passage into two stages. This is not only a heuristic device; we shall see that there are important philosophical differences between the claims made at the two stages. At stage one (184B3–186A1), Socrates argues that one should distinguish between ‘with’ what one perceives and ‘by means’ of what one perceives. The former expression characterizes the way the soul contributes to the act of perception and the latter expression the way bodily organs contribute

to it. Socrates then narrows the objects of perception down to the so-called proper sensibles. He points out to Theaetetus that there are certain things or features of things that are common (τὸ κοινὸν, τὰ κοινά) to proper objects of senses. These so-called commons include being⁷⁸ (οὐσία), sameness (τὸ ταυτόν), and difference (ἕτερον). These commons cannot be perceived at all since senses are restricted to their proper sensibles. Yet the soul has some sort of access to these features in thinking that sound and color are, or are different from each other, etc. These features are revealed to or grasped (λαμβάνειν) by the soul, when it has a relevant thought or asks a relevant question (185B4–5). Furthermore, Theaetetus agrees that commons are not common to proper sensibles only, but to *all things* (185C4–5). Theaetetus then says that since the commons cannot be perceived, they have to be grasped by a different activity, *viz.* when the soul operates ‘itself by means of itself’ (αὐτὴ δι’ αὐτῆς) and not by means of any of the bodily senses. Socrates agrees. At this stage being is simply one of the commons and no special importance is attached to it.

Stage two (186A2–187A8) opens by Socrates drawing Theaetetus’ attention to being as a special common that ‘goes with everything’ (186A3). Theaetetus says that being is something that the mind itself by itself yearns after (ἐπορέγεται). The list of the commons is expanded to include beauty and ugliness, goodness and badness. Theaetetus adds that in case of the beauty and ugliness, the sameness and difference (etc.) the soul examines their being (i.e. the being of the commons), calculating things in past and future. Socrates then goes on to point out that the soul tries to judge (κρίνειν πειρᾶται) the being not only of common features like sameness and difference, but even the being of perceptual properties like hardness and softness the soul judges itself by itself, independently of the body. He asserts that by means of bodily senses soul has access to perceptual features but not to their being (186C). Stage two shows that being is more than simply one of the commons — it is somehow involved in all or at least most of the cognitive acts performed by the soul itself by itself, both concerning commons and concerning the perceptual properties. Socrates adds that calculating in accordance with being of perceptual affections requires ‘long and arduous education’ (186C5). He then argues that attaining being is necessary for attaining truth and attaining truth is necessary for having knowledge and concludes that since perception cannot attain being, it cannot be knowledge. Having reached this conclusion, Theaetetus identifies the activity of the soul, ‘busying about the things that are’ itself by itself, with forming beliefs (δοξάζειν) (187A7–8). Socrates agrees.

This suggests that the commons, as they are introduced at stage one, are apprehended by the soul simply in virtue of entertaining a thought involving a term for a relevant common. Socrates first asks whether Theaetetus is capable

⁷⁸ I will refer to the commons themselves simply as being, same, beautiful, etc. For terms referring to the commons, I will use single quotation marks (‘being’, ‘sameness’, ‘beauty’, etc.).

of thinking that color and sound are, that color and sound are⁷⁹ different, etc. The context suggests that Socrates is not referring to any peculiar subset of thoughts, but rather to thoughts that anyone can have about sound and color. Then he poses the following question:

Well now, by means of what do you think (διανοῆ) all these things about them? Because it's impossible to get a hold of what they have in common (κοινὸν λαμβάνειν περὶ αὐτῶν) either by means of hearing or by means of sight. (185B7–9)⁸⁰

Socrates is here apparently suggesting that Theaetetus gets a hold of or grasps (λαμβάνειν) one of the commons whenever he thinks, e.g. that ‘color and sound are’, namely the common being. The problem Socrates presents to Theaetetus is the following. We hear sounds by means of hearing and see color by means of seeing. But we cannot ‘get a hold of’ or grasp a feature that both sound and color share (a common feature) by means of hearing or sight. Yet we *do* ‘get a hold of’ being and sameness in thinking thoughts like ‘sound and color are’ and ‘sound and color are the same’. How do we grasp those common features? It cannot be by means of the senses because senses are restricted to their proper sensibles.⁸¹ Eventually Theaetetus concedes that these features are grasped by means of an independent activity of the soul. Thus the argument assumes that being and difference are grasped when we have thoughts ‘sound and color are’ and ‘sound and color are different’. This receives further support from a few lines below. Socrates asks the following question:

Good. Now through what does that power function which reveals to you (δηλοῖ σοι) what is common in the case both of all these things and of these two – I mean that which you express by the words ‘is’ and ‘is not’ (ὃ τὸ ‘ἔστιν’ ἐπονομάζεις καὶ τὸ ‘οὐκ ἔστι’) and the other things mentioned in our questions just now? (185C4–7), trans. Levett/Burnyeat.⁸²

Here it is clearly stated that there must be a power (which Theaetetus goes on to identify with thinking and forming beliefs) which ‘reveals’ the commons such as being and sameness when the soul thinks that ‘color and sound are’ and that

⁷⁹ The Greek text omits the verb ‘to be’ in all the sample sentences at 185A10-B5, except for the sentence that focuses on ‘being’ (185A8). Unfortunately, the verb needs to be added in the English translation.

⁸⁰ Throughout this and the following chapters I will use McDowell’s (1973) translation (unless otherwise noted), with amendments.

⁸¹ I will discuss the structure of this argument in the next chapter (Section 3).

⁸² For the moment I am quoting from Levett/Burnyeat (Burnyeat 1990: 316), since this translation states the conceptualist assumption more clearly. McDowell’s translation (McDowell 1973: 67) is the following: ‘Good. What about the power which makes clear to you that which is common to everything, including these things: that to which you apply the words ‘is’, ‘is not’ and the others we used in our questions just now?’

‘color and sound are different’. The commons are named or ‘expressed by words’ (ἐπονομάζεις), which makes them close to meanings of words. When these two passages are read together, they suggest that Socrates is saying that in order to use the verb ‘to be’ in the sentence such as ‘color and sound are’, one must apprehend what sound and color have in common, namely being. The same applies to other commons (‘the other things mentioned in our questions just now’). What other commons are there?

The following commons are introduced in *Theaetetus* 185D–186B: being (οὐσία) and not-being (μὴ εἶναι), likeness (ὁμοιότης) and unlikeness (ἀνομοιότης), the same or sameness (τὸ ταὐτόν) and different or difference (ἕτερον), one (ἓν) and other numbers (τὸν ἄλλον ἀριθμὸν), odd (περιττὸν) and even (ἄρτιον), beauty (καλὸν) and ugliness (αἰσχρὸν), goodness (ἀγαθὸν) and badness (κακόν). Socrates suggests that being and not-being are grasped in thoughts and questions involving the terms ‘is’ and ‘is not’, no reason is given to think that being is, in this respect, different from the other commons. It seems legitimate to infer that the commons of sameness and difference, and beauty and ugliness are also grasped if one applies the terms expressing these properties. Thus, presumably, if Theaetetus thinks that ‘color and sound are beautiful’ he grasps or gets a hold of the common beauty, and if he thinks that ‘color and sound are good’, he gets a hold of the common of goodness. This assumption can be formulated as follows:

Conceptualist Assumption (CA): If the soul entertains a thought involving a term ‘*F*’, then the soul grasps or apprehends the common *F*.
Perhaps the clearest example of reading (CA) into the text of stage one derives from McDowell:

The present passage [185C4–186A1] suggests a different sort of formulation: the things which can be thought about anything are represented, not by phrases of the form ‘that is *f*’, but by expressions of one of the following forms:

- (1) ‘*f*-ness, or similarly abstract noun verbs, e.g. ‘being’;
- (2) ‘the *f*’: the Greek rendered ‘not being’ means, literally, ‘the not to-be’, and the Greek rendered ‘the same’ means, literally, ‘the the-same’;
- (3) simply ‘*f*’, e.g. ‘different’

There is no difficulty about combining the two sorts of formulation. Plato is, I believe, inclined towards a view of judgment according to which the mind, in judging, touches or handles, as it were, the terms (in a reasonably natural sense) of the judgment it makes. (McDowell 1973: 188)

The defenders of the standard account might not agree with McDowell’s claim that the ‘mind’ touches (so to speak) the terms of the judgment. However, the defenders of the standard account are committed to the claim that the mind has

to have ‘cognitive access’ to or some understanding of the nature of the common properties that the general terms designate⁸³.

(CA) expresses the Optimistic View about commons. It should be clear that (CA) supports the standard account. In fact, it seems that (CA) is just a restatement of this version⁸⁴ on the assumption that the commons of the *Theaetetus* can be identified with Platonic Forms. Further, stage two connects forming beliefs closely to the commons of being, difference and opposition. Thus, (CA) applied to these commons supports Lorenz’s version of the standard account⁸⁵. It is true that certain important features of Forms are not mentioned in the Passage of Commons (e.g. Socrates never says that the commons are paradigms or that they are everlasting), but this does not necessarily mean that commons are different from Forms. Plato does not mention Forms by name in the *Theaetetus*. But since he takes the commons to be imperceptible and accessible to soul when it functions independently of the body and the senses, the parallels between Forms of the *Phaedo* (esp. *Phd.* 79A-B) and *Republic* (e.g. *Rep.* 509D–511E and *Rep.* 523B–525A) are quite suggestive. In fact, there is nothing in the passage that would contradict reading commons as being (similar to) the Forms. Bobonich makes a good point when he says that

The commons may be Forms, even if they do not have all the features that middle-period Forms do. Plato might also think that the commons have features beyond what the argument at *Tht.* 184B–186E establishes. (Bobonich 2002: 559)

Here one needs to be careful, however. Forms and commons can be identified in two different ways, one of which is ruled out by the text, whereas the other

⁸³ ‘It [the *Theaetetus*] attributes to all human beings some contact with non-sensible properties, the commons (the *koina*), and holds that contact with them is involved in forming most, if not all, judgments. This contact need not involve an explicit recognition of the commons, as such, that is, it need not involve recognizing them as nonsensible properties. (The commons include being, sameness, difference, fineness, and goodness.)’ (Bobonich 2002: 327). Bostock represents a position that is quite similar to McDowell’s: ‘We very naturally think that we grasp what is expressed by ‘Socrates’ because we are acquainted with the thing it stands for, namely the man Socrates. Then it is not so unnatural to suppose that we grasp what is expressed ‘wise’ because we are equally acquainted with the thing it stands for, namely wisdom. The idea that a word such as ‘wise’ stands for some object is not particularly repelling. But having come this far we will evidently be tempted to go on to the last step, and say similarly that we grasp what is expressed by ‘is’ because we are acquainted with what it stands for, namely being.’ (Bostock 1988: 275) Bostock uses the Russellian notion of ‘acquaintance’ in a deliberately vague manner (see p. 275, n. 6), which probably does not entail ‘touching’ or ‘handling’ in McDowell’s sense.

⁸⁴ That is, (B), according to which, in order to form a belief ‘x is F’, it is necessary to have cognitive access to (i) the Form of F (if ‘F’ is a term that has a corresponding Form), and (ii) to the Form of Being that connects the terms to form a full thought.

⁸⁵ (L): Cognitive access to the intelligible of G (G= Being, Difference, Opposition) is necessary to form a belief ‘x is F’.

seems quite consistent with it. Accordingly, the first version does not support the standard account, whereas the second version does.

The historically prevalent interpretive possibility was simply to take οὐσία as shorthand for Platonic Forms or essences of the middle dialogues.⁸⁶ However, there are powerful considerations that speak decisively against this reading.⁸⁷ Most importantly, οὐσία is introduced in the text as a nominalization of the verb ‘to be’, used in simple sentences (and apprehended in simple thoughts) such as ‘color and sound are’. Socrates does not refer to any specific way of speaking about color and sound, e.g. expressing their essence or ‘true being’. This makes it very difficult to read οὐσία as referring to the ‘truly real being’ of Forms in the middle dialogues. The second, much more viable possibility (which is assumed by both Bobonich and Lorenz) is to take οὐσία to be *one of* the Forms (Lorenz calls them ‘intelligibles’) and not as shorthand for all Forms. In other words, the commons such as being, sameness and difference all refer to abstract properties that Plato often discusses in his late dialogues, most notably the *Sophist*. This second option of connecting Forms and commons offers quite strong support for the standard account, since, on (CA),

⁸⁶ A classic example of this reading stems from Proclus: ‘The opinative faculty embraces the accounts of sense-perceptible objects (τῶν αἰσθητῶν λόγους) and that it is this faculty that knows their essential natures (οὐσίας αὐτῶν γινώσκον) and examines the ‘what it is’ question, but remains ignorant of the cause (αἰτίαν ἀγνοοῦ). Since it is the role of the discursive reasoning to know both the essential natures and the causes of the perceived objects (διανοίας ἅμα καὶ τὰς οὐσίας καὶ τὰς αἰτίας γινώσκούσης τῶν αἰσθητῶν), but of sense-perception to know neither – for it has been clearly demonstrated in the *Theaetetus* that sense-perception is ignorant of essential nature and completely uninformed about the cause of what it knows– it is necessary that opinion (δόξα) be ranked in between [these two] and that it know the essential natures of the objects of perception (οὐσίας τῶν αἰσθητῶν) by means of the accounts (διὰ τῶν ἐν αὐτῇ λόγων γινώσκειν) in it, but remains ignorant of the causes. In this way right opinion would differ from knowledge, namely that it would only know the ‘what it is’, whereas the latter is able also to examine the cause’ (*In Tim.* 240. 10–22). This is how the Renaissance translator of Plato, Ficino, understood the passage (see Becker 2007: 387). This view was also held by German scholars of the nineteenth century and in the twentieth century by Cornford, who takes οὐσία to be catch-all term referring to Forms (1935:105–110), and McDowell, who thinks that οὐσία refers to essences. I will discuss McDowell’s reading at pp. 151–152.

⁸⁷ See also McDowell (1973: 189–190) and Cooper (1970: 366–367), who have provided arguments against identifying ‘being’ with Forms. On Cornford’s reading (i.e. Burnyeat’s (1990) Reading A), the point of the argument is that perception is not knowledge, since the objects of perception are not ‘unchangingly real’ (Cornford 1935: 109). However, one should be very careful in identifying the common of being with the realm of Forms of the middle dialogues. This is so for several reasons. First, (what count in the *Theaetetus*) as perceptual properties (and not commons), such as largeness, heaviness, etc. were taken to be Forms in the middle dialogues (e.g. *Rep.* 523–5). Secondly, the commons are not contemplated in isolation from the sensibles, but rather investigated *about* the sensibles (see, esp. Cooper 1970). Thirdly, the Passage of the Commons clearly allows for knowledge of sensibles (esp. 186C), unlike the middle books of the *Republic* (at least on the majority-interpretation of the *Republic*).

commons are grasped by entertaining thoughts involving the terms that refer to commons.

Further, the stage two of the argument focuses on the common being, and both Bobonich and Lorenz suggest that Passage of the Commons claims that grasping ‘being’ is necessary for forming all beliefs. Stage two also emphasizes the importance of sameness, difference and opposition. It furthermore seems likely that beauty or good are also apprehended (just like being or sameness) in virtue of forming a belief that contains terms such as ‘beautiful’ or ‘good’. Thus, all versions of the standard account can reasonably be seen as expressed in the Passage of the Commons. Since all these versions of the standard account derive from the acceptance of the Conceptualist Assumption in regard to (at least) some commons, in what follows I will refer to this family of views simply as ‘conceptualist reading’.

The conceptualist reading of the Passage of the Commons creates a serious problem for the Pessimistic View about Forms.⁸⁸ Pessimistic View claims that ordinary thinking and belief-formation is cognitively independent of Forms. Since there is no knockdown argument against the position that regards commons as Forms, the Passage of the Commons offers strong justification for the claim that later Plato starts to view Forms as relevant for explaining how ordinary thinking and belief-formation is possible. The main defender of the Pessimistic View, Gail Fine (1993: 134–135), thinks that all that the Passage of the Commons claims is that the soul is able to identify the object *as* being something, and that being is necessary for ordinary thought in this minimal sense. Fine also remains uncommitted as to whether being in this minimal sense should be identified with the Form of Being (Fine 1988: 26). Fine is willing to admit that being in the minimal sense is grasped in all beliefs. However, being is just one in the long list of commons. Therefore, if (CA) applies to being, it should apply to the other commons as well. In fact, Socrates does explicitly say in the passage above that ‘the other things mentioned in our questions just now’ (sameness, difference, likeness, unlikeness) are also revealed to soul if the soul has thoughts involving these terms. He can only be referring to the thoughts such as ‘sound and color are different’, etc. Therefore, he means that (CA) applies to all the commons, not just being. However, it is quite difficult to read ‘one’ and ‘number’, ‘goodness’ and ‘badness’ is the same minimalist sense that Fine attaches to ‘being’. On the contrary, Plato seems to be saying, in accordance with the Optimistic View (Fine calls it the ‘semantic view’), that in order to understand sentences involving the terms ‘same’ and ‘beautiful’, one has to stand in the relation of grasping or apprehending the commons of beauty and sameness. One cannot be a conceptualist about being while refusing to be a conceptualist about other commons. Therefore, if the conceptualist reading of

⁸⁸ For example, Scott (1995: 85) says that this passage marks a shift from Plato’s earlier pessimism towards a more optimistic position. Similar claims are made by Bobonich (2002: 327) and Lorenz (2006: 91).

the Passage of the Commons is correct then the passage offers support *for* both versions of the standard account and *against* the Pessimistic View.

Now, is it correct to think that (CA) applies to commons? How should one approach this issue? I will focus on the common being (οὐσία) in order to determine whether the conceptualist reading of the commons is the best possible reading. I chose to focus on being because being is by far the most often referred to common in the text (185C9, 186A2, 186A10, 186B6, 186B7, 186C3, 186C7, 186D2, 186E5). It is therefore easier to determine whether the text supports (CA) about being. Being also plays a crucial role in the whole argument because perception is denied the status of knowledge on account of its failure to reach οὐσία. Thus, one can consider whether or not being, as understood on (CA), yields a good argument for the conclusion that perception is not knowledge. Further, being is crucial because, on all versions of the standard account, it is the one intelligible or Form that is grasped in *all* beliefs.

I begin by outlining the main possibilities for interpreting the notion of οὐσία. I will argue that the conceptualist reading must take οὐσία to be a copula. Otherwise it is unclear in what sense ‘being’ is grasped in all thoughts involving ‘is’ as a term. Then I will turn to the question of whether being as a copula fits with the rest of the Passage of the Commons. If ‘being’ cannot be read as a copula, there is good reason to think that conceptualism about commons is not Plato’s considered position in the Passage of the Commons.

Greek οὐσία (a substantive formed on the basis of the present participle of the verb ‘to be’, i.e. εἶναι) is an extremely difficult notion, having a wide range of meanings⁸⁹. According to Liddell-Scott dictionary, οὐσία is normally used to as meaning ‘wealth’, ‘estate’: ‘that which is one’s own, one’s substance, property’.⁹⁰ This use of οὐσία is accounted for also in the *Theaetetus*. When Socrates first meets Theaetetus, he says that Theaetetus’ father left him a ‘quite substantial property’ (144C7), but unfortunately this οὐσία, Theodorus adds, was ‘squandered by some trustees’ (144D2). This pre-philosophical sense of οὐσία is probably the only meaning of the word that one can say with certainty Socrates and Theaetetus do not have in mind in 185C9–186E10.

But this is of not much help; Plato uses the term οὐσία in different contexts in a variety of ways and it is by no means easy to determine what it is, exactly, that he might have in mind. There are three uses of οὐσία, which are relevant in

⁸⁹ ‘There is no hoarier notion in ancient metaphysics’ (Silverman 2002:5).

⁹⁰ This is actually the only meaning of the word οὐσία in classical Greek outside Plato and Aristotle. Bernard Suzanne observes that there is only one exception to this rule in Demosthenes’ *Contra Midias* 210, otherwise all occurrences of the term are exclusively ‘materialistic’, i.e. meaning ‘wealth, property’. ‘Pourtant, une recherche sur les occurrences d’οὐσία dans les textes grecs disponibles sur Perseus 6 montre que ce mot, s’il est tardif (on ne le trouve pas dans les auteurs antérieurs au Ve siècle avant J. C.), n’est pas un mot rare à partir de cette époque (1398 occurrences recensées) et qu’en dehors de Platon et Aristote, on ne le trouve que dans son sens matériel.’ (Suzanne 2006, 2) Thus, it seems safe to assume that the philosophical meaning of the word originates in Plato and becomes a fixed part of the philosophical vocabulary only in Aristotle.

the present context: οὐσία can refer to essences⁹¹, to reality⁹² or to the copulative use of ‘is’⁹³. Of course, in its most well-known use, οὐσία refers to the Platonic Forms of the middle dialogues.⁹⁴ However, as I have pointed out above, there are good reasons for denying that οὐσία in the context of *Theaetetus* refers to the realm of Forms. Occasionally Plato also uses οὐσία to designate the essence of something (i.e. what something is) without reference to the Forms. In the early dialogues, in particular, οὐσία seems to mean something like essential characteristic or definition, and does not carry the ontological baggage of the middle dialogues. The second aspect in the meaning of οὐσία is close to the notion of ‘reality’. There are passages, where Plato indicates that when something has being, it is real or that this something has objective being.⁹⁵ The third use of οὐσία is the least demanding: it does not refer to essence or reality but to being something or other. This use of οὐσία is common in the dialogues that belong to Plato’s later period, especially the *Sophist* and the *Parmenides*.⁹⁶ When Plato talks about something sharing in οὐσία in these dialogues, he seems to have in mind nothing more than ‘x is something’ without further qualification like ‘is real’ or ‘has an essence’. This meaning of οὐσία is closest to the modern notion of copula. Now, all three uses of οὐσία make an appearance in *Theaetetus* as well.⁹⁷

Of course, these distinctions between the different aspects of οὐσία are not explicitly made by Plato himself. His dialogues give the impression that he tends to take οὐσία as a single unitary notion that somehow comprises all these different uses. The question of how one should construe the relation between the ‘essential’, ‘copulative’ and ‘existential’ uses of ‘being’ is one of the most difficult and controversial questions in Plato scholarship. Sometimes (e.g. *Crat.*

⁹¹ Modrak (1981) and McDowell (1973: 185–193) take οὐσία to designate essences (but not Forms). The best arguments against interpreting οὐσία as essence are found in Bostock (1988: 137–142). Modrak’s view is extensively criticized in Shea (1985).

⁹² Οὐσία as reality is defended by Crombie (1963: 13–14, 28), Cooper (1970), Heitsch (1987), Kanayama (1987) and, most recently, by Gerson (2004: 204–212). But see also Kahn (1981), who he seems to think that at stage two οὐσία refers to ‘facts’ or ‘reality’. Although M. Frede (1987) defends the copula reading, in his slightly later (1990) seems to take ‘being’ as reality.

⁹³ Οὐσία as copula is the most widespread interpretation. The first scholar to hold a version of this interpretation seems to be Natorp (1922/1961). This interpretation became orthodox after Burnyeat’s influential article ‘Plato on the Grammar of Perceiving’ (1976). See also Kahn (1981), Fine (1988), Bostock (1988: 110–145), Shea (1985), Silverman (1990), M. Frede (1987), Bobonich (2002:295–231), especially Lorenz (2006: 74–95), and, most recently, Nielsen (2008).

⁹⁴ For example, *Rep.* 525B, *Phdr.* 247C, *Phd.* 92 D. As to Socratic οὐσία, see *Euth.* 11B.

⁹⁵ See, e.g., *Th.* 155E, where Plato refers to people who ‘refuse to admit that actions and processes and the invisible world in general have any place in reality (οὐκ ἀποδεχόμενοι ὡς ἐν οὐσίας μέπει)’ (trans. Levett/Burnyeat, p. 277). Another set of examples of οὐσία as ‘reality’ can be found in the *gigantomachia*-passage of the *Sophist* 246A–249D.

⁹⁶ See, e.g., *Th.* 202E–203A, *Soph.* 260D.

⁹⁷ Οὐσία as a copula figures at *Th.* 202E–203A, οὐσία as reality at 155E, and οὐσία as essence at 202B and 202B–C.

423E) Plato suggests that whatever exists must have an essence, sometimes (e.g. *Parm.* 142E) he suggests that whatever has copulative being, must also exist. And according to some scholars (esp. Nehamas 1979/1999: 176–191 and Silverman 2003: 90–94), middle period Plato fuses the copulative and essential uses of ‘is’. That is to say, Plato does not clearly distinguish between sentences ‘x is *F*’ and ‘x is what it is to be *F*’. As Kahn puts this point, ‘To speak of what *F* is or of what is (truly) *F* is, for Plato, to speak of the same thing’ (Kahn 1982: 109). So, it may turn out that a complete understanding of *Theaetetus* 184B–187A has to take into account several different aspects of the meaning of οὐσία.

However, even if the notion of οὐσία somehow includes three different aspects, it is plausible that one aspect of the notion of οὐσία plays a more prominent role in the argument of the Passage of the Commons than others. Contemporary scholarship considers copulative use of οὐσία to be the most likely candidate for the *primary* meaning of οὐσία in the Passage of the Commons. This is also the only meaning of οὐσία that clearly supports (CA) about being. If the term ‘being’ were read as ‘essence’ or as ‘objective reality’, it would be difficult to see why Theaetetus would find (CA) about being completely uncontroversial and would propose it without hesitation. First, ‘being’ as essence seems implausible in the context of stage one, since it is not clear why Theaetetus would take it for granted that grasping the ‘being’ in the the thought ‘color and sound are’ involves the grasp or apprehension of *essence* of color and sound, respectively? The argument also requires that ‘being’ as a property is the *same* in case of sound and color, yet their essences are clearly different. Further, being as reality also seems difficult to reconcile with (CA), why would Theaetetus think that merely by entertaining a thought ‘color is’, the soul succeeds in grasping the objective color ‘out there’? After all, a given thought can easily turn out to be false? In that case the soul would obviously fail to represent reality.

Οὐσία as a copula, on the other hand, makes it clear how Socrates and Theaetetus could subscribe to (CA) about being: everyone who has a minimal command of language has some dim apprehension of being as copula. ‘Being’ as a copula is by far the strongest option if one wants to maintain that (CA) applies to the common of being. Therefore, the easiest way to assess the conceptualist reading of the commons is to ask whether the text supports the copula reading of being. If it turns out that the text does not support being as a copula, there is good reason to think that (CA) does not apply to being. And if (CA) does not apply to being, there is good reason to think that it also does not apply to rest of the commons. Therefore, the conceptualist reading stands and falls together with the copula reading of ‘being’.

Now I will survey the main reasons given by the scholars for the copula reading of being. I will, furthermore, outline three versions of this reading. Then, in the next section, I will turn to the assessment of the copula reading(s).

The most important philosophical consideration for the copula-reading concerns the structure of the argument in the Passage of the Commons. Plato argues that perception cannot be knowledge because it does not attain truth

(186C6-E10), and it does not attain truth because it does not ‘hit on’ (τυχεῖν, 186C7) οὐσία. If οὐσία were taken to refer to Forms or essences, then Plato would be claiming that perception cannot be knowledge since it fails to grasp Forms or essences. However, Plato does not argue that only truths that concern essences of things are pertinent to knowledge, whereas truths that are inessential (e.g. ‘this is red’) or contingent are not. Plato does not restrict the notion of truth in any way, so it seems that one must assume that perception does not ‘attain’ any truths whatsoever⁹⁸.

No defence is offered of the idea that knowledge, let alone truth, presupposes a grasp of being in the specific sense of existence, reality or essence, and if any such narrow notion of being were intended, the argument would be left to limp on an unargued assumption of the first magnitude. That is not Plato’s manner in this dialogue. (Burnyeat 1976: 25)

On the face of it, there seem to be just two possibilities as to why perception does not reach truth: either this is *always* false or it does not admit of truth and falsity at all. Plato does not say that perceptions are always false. In fact, falsity is never mentioned in the Passage of the Commons (it becomes the central theme in the next section of the dialogue). This leaves us with the second option: perception is not something that admits truth or falsity. This is exactly what the copula reading claims: perception lacks propositional structure. Perception cannot attain being as a copula, and therefore perception cannot connect subject and a predicate to form a proposition. Therefore perception cannot be characterized as true or false. This means that for Plato all bearers of truth and falsity require being as a copula, connecting the subject term to the predicate term.⁹⁹

Further, οὐσία as a copula fits well with that way in which οὐσία is introduced into the discussion. Socrates asks Theaetetus what might be the sense-organ by means of which the soul perceives what they used in their questions about sound and color just now, ‘that to which you apply the words ‘is’ and ‘is not’” (185C5–6). Theaetetus proposes that in having thoughts involving the terms ‘is’ and ‘is not’ the soul is considering οὐσία and μὴ εἶναι just by itself, and not by means of any of the senses. Socrates agrees. This suggests a very close connexion between οὐσία, as it is introduced, and preceding uses of ‘is’. There are only two occurrences of the verb εἶναι in the previous questions that Socrates and Theaetetus might be picking up. At 185A9, Socrates asks if Theaetetus can think about sound and color ‘that they both are’ (ὅτι ἀμφοτέρω ἐστὶν), and a few lines later, at 185B10, Socrates inquires what would be the organ by means of which Theaetetus would consider whether

⁹⁸ For additional reasons why the essentialist reading of ‘being’ is questionable, see pp. 151–152.

⁹⁹ Burnyeat (1976), Bostock (1988), Frede (1987), Fine (1988), Kahn (1982), Lorenz (2006) among others are the defenders of this version of the argument.

‘color and sound are salty or not’ (ἐστὸν ἄλμυρὸν ἢ οὐ). In the first sentence ἐστὸν is syntactically complete, whereas in the second it is incomplete, i.e. the verb requires a complement, in this case ‘salty’, whereas in the first it does not.¹⁰⁰ It would be natural, then, to take the first occurrence of οὐσία to be a nominalization of either the complete or incomplete use of εἶναι. Is it plausible to take *both* uses of the verb ‘to be’ as instances of copula? Normally we would read a sentence like ‘color is’ as meaning ‘color exists’. However, in Greek things are slightly more complicated. Kahn (1981, 2009) and Brown (1991, 1986/1999) argue that Greek verb εἶναι behaves quite differently from ‘to be’ in English, and that it does not allow for a clear-cut distinction between existence and copula. This enables the defenders of the copula reading to maintain that οὐσία designates a copulative use of the verb ‘to be’ even when it is used without the complement. According to Kahn and Brown, the syntactic distinction between complete and incomplete uses of εἶναι does not map upon the semantic value of the verb (the complete use does not simply mean ‘existence’ and the incomplete use does not rule ‘existence’ out).

The syntactic distinction between copulative and absolute constructions is real enough but superficial, a feature of surface structure only for the Greek verb. (Kahn 2004: 112)

Kahn and Brown stress that the existential and the copula use of the verb εἶναι form a continuum. The incomplete use of the verb has existential force, and similarly, the complete use is, as Kahn puts it, ‘pregnant with the incomplete copula’ (Kahn 1982: 108, 123). According to Brown (1986/1999: 460), the Greek verb εἶναι behaves in a similar manner as English verb ‘to teach’. Just as in English ‘Jane teaches French’ implies that ‘Jane teaches’, in Greek ‘color is salty’ implies that ‘color is’. And conversely, just like ‘Jane teaches’ implies ‘Jane teaches something’, ‘color is’ implies in Greek that ‘color is something’. The so-called ‘overdetermination’ (Kahn 1982) of Greek εἶναι (that the verb expresses simultaneously both existence and copula, and that it is impossible to draw a clear line between them) is important for the copula reading. Οὐσία can be seen as performing a double function: it posits a subject for predication and at the same time enables to predicate something about the subject. Thus, applying the concept ‘being’ (‘grasping being’) can be taken as being equivalent to forming a complete thought (a thought that can be true or false), because being understood in this way is necessary for predicative or propositional structure. This implies that one grasps ‘being’ each time one predicates something of something, e.g. whenever one forms a belief that color is salty (quite independently of whether the belief is true or not).

Plato’s use of the term οὐσία in the Passage of the Commons presents two minor problems for the copula reading (I discuss these problems in order to set

¹⁰⁰ ‘[An incomplete use is] a use in which a subject-expression and the appropriate form of the verb require complement in order to constitute a complete sentence; though in an elliptical sentence the complement may be omitted’ (McDowell 1973: 118).

out the copula reading more clearly). But they too can be easily avoided, if one takes into account the specific character of the Greek verb ‘to be’. First, at stage one οὐσία is used in statements ‘about’ (περί) something. Socrates stresses that Theaetetus grasps being if he considers being (or any other common) *about* sound and color (or anything) (185B7, 185B9, 185C6, 185D1, 185E1) e.g. Theaetetus ‘thinks being’ *about* sound and color (185B7). This supports the copula reading because these expressions seem to refer to the propositional nature of thought. However, at stage two the about-clauses disappear, and Socrates and Theaetetus talk about ‘considering’ or ‘judging’ the being of sameness, difference, good and bad, or simply ‘attaining being’ *tout court* (186A2, 186A10, 186B6, 186B7, 186C7, 186D2, 186E2), and it is simply not mentioned that being is apprehended in relation to or about something. Thus, it could be objected that even if it is assumed that οὐσία enters into the discussion as a replacement for a copulative use of εἶναι, there is no indication at stage two that ‘being’ is understood as a copula connecting a subject with the predicate. Does this perhaps indicate that Plato has in mind a direct grasp of being, in isolation from the subject-predicate structure of a thought? The copula reading has an answer to this objection: the lack of about-clauses can be accounted for, if one takes the occurrences of οὐσία at stage two as elliptical. That would mean that ‘reaching out’ for the being of sameness or difference simply means to consider about something whether/that a thing is same or different, where the thing under consideration is left unspecified, i.e. considering whether this something is same or different (as something else).¹⁰¹

Second, the copula reading takes ‘deciding the οὐσία of beauty’ at stage two to be an elliptical restatement of ‘deciding whether/that x is beautiful’. But being is introduced at stage one in a different manner: the statements that the introduction of being picks up are ‘sound and color are’ and ‘sound and color are salty’. When the soul grasps being ‘about’ sound, it considers whether (or that) it is and whether (or that) it is *F* (e.g. same). But if one construes οὐσία at stage two in a parallel manner, one would expect ‘deciding the οὐσία of beautiful (or beauty)’ to mean the same as ‘deciding whether (or that) beautiful (or beauty) is’ or ‘whether (or that) beautiful (or beauty) is *F*’. The problem is that stage two does not mention predicates that are supposed to attach to the

¹⁰¹ Here I am indebted to Lorenz’s (2006) reading: ‘We may assume, then, that when Theaetetus... speaks of the soul’s ‘reaching out’ for such things as being, likeness, sameness, etc., (186A2–7), he has in mind raising and settling questions involving such common features, with regard to something or other. In other words, he has in mind considering whether something or other is or has being, is like something else, is the same as itself, etc. These questions correspond precisely to the assertoric thoughts mentioned at 185 A8–B5. So when we come to 186A10–B1, the context certainly allows us to supply some things or other with regard to which the soul considers the being of fineness and disgracefulness, and goodness and badness. Once one sees this, it becomes attractive to think that what the soul considers in considering the being of the features in question is whether they are or have being with regard to something or other—say, with regard to a person or a law’ (Lorenz 2006: 84–85). Similar points are also made by Cooper (1970), Bostock (1988: 130) and M. Frede (1987).

term ‘beautiful’. On the contrary, it seems that here ‘beautiful’ is not the subject but rather the *predicate* of the sentence. The most natural way to understand ‘deciding the οὐσία of beautiful’ would be to take it as deciding the οὐσία of (the predicate) beautiful *about* something, i.e. deciding whether something is beautiful. This means that there is a shift between stage one and stage two: οὐσία at stage one is applied to the subject, and οὐσία at stage two is applied to the predicate. The copula reading has an answer to this objection as well.

It is perfectly natural for Plato to reformulate the statement ‘x is *F*’ in both ways: as grasping ‘the being of *F* about x’ or grasping the ‘being of x in relation to *F*’. As Frede says:

And it is easy to see how Plato could think this, given his views on being. For he assumes that any belief, explicitly or implicitly, is of the form ‘A is *F*’, and he thinks that in assuming that A is *F* one attributes being both to A and to *F*-ness. To assume that Socrates is just is, on this view, to attribute being to Socrates and to justice. (1987: 379)

Thus there need not be any kind of shift in the meaning of the term οὐσία between stage one and stage two, even though ‘being’ is attached to the subject of the sentence in stage one and to a predicate in stage two. ‘Being’ is a Janus-faced notion. A single thought can be rephrased in two different manners, and accordingly, grasping οὐσία can mean two different, but obviously related, things.

Copula reading of οὐσία

(a) Stage one: grasping the οὐσία of x indicates grasping x’s being (*F*), for example, the ability to form a belief that color *is* (salty);

(b) Stage two: grasping the οὐσία of indicates grasping the being of *F* (about an unspecified x), for example, the ability to form a belief that beauty *is* (of or about the person).

According to the copula reading ‘being’ is a necessary concept for any belief (inasmuch as for Plato every act of forming a belief is supposed to have a propositional structure). The general idea is expressed nicely by Bostock: ‘His argument is that in order to make any judgment one must grasp the notion of being, for every judgment involves this notion’ (1988: 128).

The role of οὐσία (as copula) in forming beliefs varies on different readings.¹⁰² I will briefly discuss three slightly different interpretations, which I

¹⁰² The differences among the defenders of the copula reading are greater than they themselves seem to acknowledge. For example, Fine (1993: 313) thinks she is following Burnyeat (1976) in claiming that grasping the copulative οὐσία is necessary for *identifying* the subject of the sentence. However, Burnyeat says that ‘the inability of perception to grasp being stems, we said, from an inability to frame even the simplest proposition of the form ‘x is *F*’. In his final proof that perception is not knowledge Plato is interested in the perfectly general point that true judgment involving the verb ‘to be’ is a necessary condition for knowledge’ (1976: 49). This means that Burnyeat is inclined to take being as necessary for connecting terms in a judgment rather than identifying the subject of a judgment.

will call ‘copula reading A’, ‘copula reading B’ and ‘copula reading C’, respectively.

Copula Reading A (Bostock, Burnyeat): Grasping being is necessary for connecting a subject and a predicate in order form a full thought.

According to Burnyeat (1976: 45) and Bostock (1988: 132), grasping οὐσία is necessary for forming any judgment that *x is F* – οὐσία simply connects a subject and a predicate. Neither of the two terms thus related in a proposition must be a general term (i.e. a ‘common’). However, οὐσία, expressed by ‘is’, that relates the terms, must be a general term (e.g. ‘this IS red’). The complexity of a proposition always involves generality (since being is a general notion).¹⁰³ According to this version of the copula reading, every judgment can be rephrased into a judgment involving the copula; e.g. ‘Theaetetus sits’ could be rephrased into ‘Theaetetus is sitting’ (or ‘there is a sitting Theaetetus’). Bostock argues that this is probably Aristotle’s view (see *De Int.* 12, 21B), and it could be attributed to Plato as well (1988: 132).

Copula reading B (Fine, M. Frede): Grasping being (as copula) is necessary for *identifying* the subject and the predicate.

According to this version of the copula reading, grasping being (as a copula) is necessary in order to identify the subject of a sentence or a thought. Fine says that:

‘If I am to do more than merely perceive the color, but also make judgments about it, then I must be able to identify it as being something or other’. (Fine 1988: 25)

The being involved in identification is οὐσία as a copula. For Fine, the ‘identification as’ is a mental preliminary of making judgments about anything. This ‘identification as’ has a judgmental structure involving a copula and, therefore, grasping being as a copula becomes necessary for cognitive content. It seems that for Fine ‘being’ is not necessary for identifying something correctly (as what it is), but simply for representing something as something. M. Frede (1987) makes a similar proposal, but Frede seems to think that it is indeed necessary for identifying a thing *correctly*, before one can form a belief about this thing. According to Frede, (unlike Bostock and Burnyeat), it is in *true* beliefs that one grasps the being of *F*. In order to have true beliefs, the soul has to ‘settle the question of being correctly’ (1987: 380). However, Frede also maintains that in order to form a belief (full stop) the soul must have arrived at some idea of *what it is to be* something:

¹⁰³ The position that Burnyeat and Bostock attribute to Plato is reminiscent of Russell’s position: ‘It will be seen that no sentence can be made up without at least one word which denotes a universal... Thus all truths involve universals and all knowledge of truths involves acquaintance with universals’ (Russell 1912/1953: 92). The difference is that, for Russell, hardness and softness would be universals, whereas hardness and softness do not count as commons for Plato. Universality in a proposition is due to the common of being.

To be able to form the belief that *A* is *F*, the mind has to have arrived at some idea of what it is to be for *A* and what it is to be for *F*-ness, or what it is to be for for an *F*, and it has to find out whether *A* is such as to be an *F*. (Frede 1987: 381)

This seems to suggest that one needs to grasp being in order to form any beliefs at all, not just true beliefs. I am not sure how these two claims are to be connected. Frede might think that in order to have a belief (even a false one) about *F*, the soul needs to have *true* beliefs ('settle the question of being correctly') about *F*. He does not specify what precisely he has in mind with an expression like 'some idea of what it is to be for *A*' (see above quote). Presumably he does not mean knowing the essence of *A*, but grasping some (unspecified) minimal conditions required for forming beliefs involving *A*. Be that as it may, both Fine and Frede think that grasping the copulative being is necessary to identify (or identify as) the subject and the predicate of a given thought. Copula Reading A says that 'being' is required to connect the subject and a predicate to form a sentence. Copula reading B adds that 'being' is (also) required for identifying the subject and a predicate as being something.

Copula reading C (Lorenz): Grasping being (as a copula) and sameness and difference is necessary for recognizing the predicate that is attached to the subject.

To discern the being of (say) hardness with regard to something involves judging that the thing in question is hard, and being competent to judge whether something is hard requires some awareness of the opposition between hardness and softness. But any such awareness, indeed even any attempt to attain it, belongs to the soul's independent activity. The same goes for attempting to find out that one perceptual feature is different from its opposite: difference, too, is a common feature that the soul investigates through itself. (Lorenz 2006: 90)

According to Lorenz, to be able to form a belief '*x* is *F*' one has to 'discern' the being of *F*. This is exactly what Frede says, but Lorenz adds that in order to do this the soul has to have a sufficient grasp of the intelligibles of sameness, difference and opposition. In order to predicate (e.g.) hardness of something, one needs to recognize hardness for what it is, and this, in turn, requires application of sameness, difference and opposition. It is important that, according to Lorenz, 'sameness', 'difference' and 'opposition' do not have to figure in beliefs about sensible qualities as *explicit* terms. Rather, sameness and difference of sensible qualities are grasped *implicitly*, in order to enable predication of the terms that refer to these sensible qualities. Lorenz assumes that, for Plato, predication requires some awareness of *what* the property that is being predicated *is*.

Thus, the copula readings differ in details. On the one hand, οὐσία is taken to be a simple nominalization of the copula use of the verb 'to be'. On the other

hand, most scholars (with the exception of Burnyeat) think that the copulative use of ‘to be’ enables successful recognition of the subject and the predicate of the sentence.¹⁰⁴ That is to say, that the copulative οὐσία is required in order to recognize (‘identify as’) the terms figuring in the sentence (belief, thought) *as what they are*. Now, the answer to the ‘what is x?’ question is, in the Platonic language, ‘the essence of x’. Thus, the copula readings tend to assume that the aspect of οὐσία as ‘essence’ is also relevant to the argument. But unlike the defenders of the essentialist reading of οὐσία¹⁰⁵, the grasp of ‘what x is’ is here not taken to be the cognitive goal of thinking about x, but rather as something that makes all thinking about x possible.

The above versions of the copula reading share one crucial assumption; namely, that the grasp of the copulative-essential οὐσία is a mental *preliminary* of all thinking and belief formation. According to all three copula readings, the soul has to grasp the intelligible ‘being’ in order to form beliefs. Therefore, all versions of the copula reading subscribe to (CA) about being. Most copula readings also rely on an unargued assumption that, for Plato, forming beliefs about *F* (predicating *F*, making judgments involving the term ‘*F*’) necessarily *requires* the ability to correctly identify¹⁰⁶ or recognize ‘what *F* is’ or ‘what it is to be *F*’. Eventually I hope to show that although οὐσία in the Passage of the Commons can indeed plausibly be seen as combining all three (‘essentialist’, ‘realist’ and ‘copulative’) aspects of the meaning of this difficult notion, the grasp of οὐσία should not be considered to be a mental preliminary, but rather as a goal of forming beliefs. That is to say, belief aims at correctly apprehending whether ‘x is *F*’ and for the *correct* apprehension that ‘x is *F*’ one is necessarily required to be able to identify or recognize ‘what *F* is’. However, it is a mistake to assume (as conceptualist reading does) that this ability is required in order to form beliefs *tout court* (true or false).

¹⁰⁴ Even Bostock, who stoutly defends the view that being is simply the copula connecting the subject and predicate eventually slips into saying that applying words like ‘hard’ or ‘salty’ (which presumably means nothing else than using the copula to connect terms for ‘x’ and ‘hard’ or ‘x’ and ‘soft’ to form a thought ‘x is hard’) requires ‘grasping the relevant similarities between all hard things and all salty things’ (Bostock 1988: 125). Therefore, Bostock also assumes that using ‘being’ as a copula somehow involves a successful recognition of the qualities that are being predicated using the copula as a connector.

¹⁰⁵ See, e.g. McDowell 1973, *ad loc.*, or Silverman 1990.

¹⁰⁶ I am not certain whether this captures Fine’s position. All she says is that in order to make a judgment, one must identify the subject *as* being something. This does not necessarily mean that this identification has to be correct. One can identify X falsely *as* being Y, and still make a judgment about X. Frede and Lorenz would presumably say that in that case one is still required to identify Y as ‘what it is’. I am not certain whether Fine would agree.

2. Assessment of the Conceptualist Reading

In this section I will argue that the conceptualist reading of being (and other commons) is unsatisfactory as an interpretation of the Passage of the Commons. ‘Being’ as a copula enables the conceptualists to apply (CA) to οὐσία and, indirectly, to other commons. My assessment of the conceptualist reading will, consequently, take the form of assessing the copula readings of οὐσία. If the copula readings of οὐσία do not work, it is legitimate to infer that the fault lies within conceptualism in general. The problems I shall raise for copula readings are not new. However, I do not think that any of the solutions proposed in the literature proves to be satisfactory. The adherents of the conceptualist reading are either forced to ignore certain aspects of the text or saddle Plato with a theory of perception and belief that is quite implausible and not supported by what Plato says about perception and belief elsewhere.

The first problem is that the text of the Passage of the Commons does not support the extremely narrow notion of perception attributed to Plato by the copula reading. The copula reading claims that perception cannot reach truth. What, then, is the contribution of perception to the cognitive life of the soul? If ‘being’ is read as copula and perception does not attain being, then perception is non-cognitive, i.e. it does not have any representational content (otherwise it would have truth conditions and this means, on this account, that it could attain truth). This line of reasoning has been adopted by virtually all recent commentators who favour the copula-reading. Perception is taken to be ‘passive affection’ (Frede 1987: 382), ‘non-cognitive’ (Fine 1988: 26), ‘transaction of a determinate kind between the perceiver and certain items ‘out there’’ (Burnyeat 1976: 50), non-judgmental ‘having of experiences’ (Bostock: 142), ‘non-cognitive information’ (Silverman 1990: 160), etc. Since Plato himself is not overly precise concerning the scope of perception, the commentators understandably vacillate between perception as non-cognitive awareness of the proper sensibles (e.g. seeing red is like feeling pain) and perception as physical process.

This interpretation of the scope of perception is problematic, since in summing up the results of stage one, Socrates says that one should distinguish between two kinds of things, and two corresponding means of access to these things: ‘there are some things (τὰ μὲν) which the soul itself considers (ἐπισκοπεῖν), by means of itself, and some (τὰ δὲ) which it considers by means of the capacities of the body’ (185E6–7). The most natural way to read this sentence is that the second activity mentioned is identical with perception,¹⁰⁷ whereas the first refers to an independent activity of the soul (such as thinking or forming beliefs). This suggests that the soul is active in perception and that perception does have cognitive content, i.e. the content that comes to the soul by means of the senses. It would be difficult to read the verb ‘consider’ (ἐπισκοπεῖν) as specifying some sort of non-cognitive mental state or simply physical movement (it is, after all, an activity of the *soul*). Further, at 185B9–C3

¹⁰⁷ This is contested by Kanayama (1987).

Socrates implies that there are certain judgments that the soul makes by means of a perceptual faculty, like ‘this is salty’.

A way to explain this can be found in Lorenz (2006: 77–78)¹⁰⁸. Lorenz’s point is that the difference between stage one and two should be seen as dialectical: stage one shows that there are some features of things that are outside the scope of perception (but it allows for perception to make judgments and form beliefs). The goal of stage two is to point out that there are some features (being, difference and opposition) which are accessible only to the soul itself by itself. These features are necessary for forming all beliefs, including beliefs with the content ‘this is salty’. Thus stage two tacitly corrects the claims made at stage one. Even the activity of the soul ‘by means of the senses’ must include, minimally, the grasp of ‘being’, if it is to have any representational content. Thus, the defenders of the non-cognitive view about perception could maintain that Theaetetus only recognizes that perception is devoid of all content at the end of stage two. Thus, the claims made about perception at 185E6–7 do not express Plato’s own opinion. However, Lorenz’s solution is problematic for those who hold that perception is non-cognitive, because Socrates states explicitly that some things are considered by means of the body and some by the soul itself by itself, and even insists that this is what *he* (Socrates) also thinks (185E7–8). This is the only time in the *Theaetetus* where Socrates renounces his role as a barren midwife and it is difficult to maintain that he goes on to deny this very same point a few lines later. Thus, the first problem for the copula reading is that Plato does seem to take perception to have cognitive content, unlike the copula reading suggests.

Second, at least one version of the copula reading – Copula Reading A – commits Plato to a position that in a false beliefs soul is grasping οὐσία. I cannot find a single occurrence of the term οὐσία in the Platonic corpus where it is used in this sense. Even in the *Sophist*, where we are supposed to get the most elaborate account of being in Plato, the Eleatic Visitor is careful to point out that the false statement ‘Theaetetus flies’ is false because it says things that are *different* from the ‘things that are’ (263B3–9). Relatedly, the copula reading suggests that Socrates and Theaetetus are both aware that having beliefs involves a complex mental activity of predicating something *about* something. But ignoring this is precisely one of the reasons why the puzzles of falsity will arise. They will arise because Socrates ignores the *complexity* of thought. He says just a few Stephanus pages later:

¹⁰⁸ Note that Lorenz himself does not think that perception is non-cognitive (2006: 76). He is trying to explain why Socrates, at stage one, seems to indicate that perception can form simple judgments to the effect that ‘this is salty’. Lorenz’s point is that Theaetetus has not yet understood that ‘being’ is in fact apprehended in *all* judgments (and not only in judgments explicitly about being such as ‘color is’). This really is an excellent way to resolve this seeming inconsistency in the text. Lorenz’s solution cannot be appropriated by those who think that perception is non-cognitive, however, for reasons indicated in the text.

Well now, what if someone forms a belief? Doesn't he have in his belief some one thing? And if one has in one's belief some one thing, isn't it the case that one has in one's belief a thing which is? So if someone has what is not figuring in his belief, he has no one thing in his belief. But if one has nothing in his belief, one isn't believing at all (ὁ γε μηδὲν δοξάζων τὸ παράπαν οὐδὲ δοξάζει). (189A6-A12)

It is obvious that Socrates takes judging/believing to be a kind of a direct grasp of its object. Why would this be if he and Theaetetus are so clear about thought's propositional nature? The scholars usually do not address this problem, since they concentrate only on the Passage of the Commons and leave the second part of the *Theaetetus* out of consideration. Therefore, no serious solutions have been offered. Bostock (1988: 166–167), though, acknowledges that there is a problem: 'So again it seems that the conclusion of the first part of dialogue [184–7] has been ignored' (166–167). But he does not explain why propositional complexity should be ignored in this manner. Unless a reason for this is proposed, one is forced to conclude that propositional nature of belief was *not* the main point of the Passage of the Commons at all. Burnyeat admits that the paradox of 'being and not being' rests on the assumption that belief is not propositional:

Precisely because there is a distinction between what a judgment is about and what is judged about it – a distinction with no parallel in perceiving or naming – there is a difference between judging what is not about something and judging without anything to judge. (1990:78)

Since Burnyeat, too, thinks that the message of the Passage of the Commons is to point out that belief is propositional whereas perception is not, one would expect him to give a reason for Theaetetus' sudden amnesia concerning this vital issue. But he simply says that the paradox is 'grand fun' (ibid.) and will be solved later on in the *Sophist*, and is silent as to *why* Theaetetus does not protest against Socrates' treatment of belief as non-propositional.¹⁰⁹ Now, an obvious

¹⁰⁹ The puzzles of falsity can be (and have been) read as an indirect critique of Theaetetus' second definition that knowledge is true belief (Fine 1979, Benson 1992). This is quite plausible in case of paradox of knowing and not-knowing (and the corresponding 'other-judging' paradox). However, with the paradox of being and not-being things are more complex. Fine's 'acquaintance model' (that she takes to be sufficient for the truth of Theaetetus' second definition) explains only the paradoxes of knowing and not knowing. It does not help much to explain why Socrates ignores the propositional nature of belief in paradoxes of being and not-being. Benson reads the falsity puzzles as a straightforward *reductio*. According to Benson's reading, the puzzle of knowing and not-knowing is generated by combining genuine Platonic principles about knowledge and belief with the false assumption that knowledge is true belief. That this results in a falsehood (false belief is impossible) shows that Theaetetus' second definition is false. In that case, the characteristics attributed to true belief in the 'being and not being paradox' should really be characteristics of knowledge, and the paradox would arise because of the false identification of true belief with knowledge. True belief is taken to be a non-propositional direct grasp of its object (state

suggestion is that propositionality (and, consequently, being as copula) was *not* the issue at 184B–187A to begin with. From the fact that ‘being’ in Greek is a notion that implies complexity, reference, predication and propositionality, it does not follow that Plato explicitly recognizes it as implying all these things, and that he consequently takes the grasp of being to be identical with forming a complex thought.

Third problem – and this is by far the most serious problem for all copula readings – arises from a consideration that the stage two connects mind’s independent activity, i.e. considering being, with quite demanding mental activities. Theaetetus says that in case of beauty, ugliness, goodness and badness ‘the soul considers their being in relation to one another, calculating in itself things past and present in relation to things in the future’ (186A10-B1). Socrates adds that even in case of hardness and softness the soul itself by itself tries to judge the being and the oppositeness of hardness and softness and the being of this oppositeness ‘by reviewing them and comparing them with one another’ (186B8). Finally, Socrates says that the perceptual experiences are shared by all animals and humans, but

the calculations about those things, with respect to being and usefulness (περὶ τούτων ἀναλογίσματα πρὸς τε οὐσίαν καὶ ὠφέλειαν), they’re acquired, by those who do acquire them, with difficulty and over a long time, by means of long troublesome education (διὰ πολλῶν πραγμάτων καὶ παιδείας). (186C2–5)

The problem is the following: according to copula reading A, ‘being’ is a simple copula found in sentences ‘this IS hard’. According to copula readings B and C, ‘being’ refers to some minimal cognitive conditions for applying the concept ‘hard’. On all three versions of the copula reading, Plato is making the point that representing something *as* hard requires reviewing, comparing and calculating which, in turn, requires education. It is rather difficult to explain why Socrates would be inclined to think that using a copula requires such an amount of education. On most versions of conceptualism,¹¹⁰ Plato makes concept-application necessary for perceptual content. If, for example, concepts are just discriminatory abilities,¹¹¹ then this is perhaps a fairly good theory of

of affairs), at 189A. If this is because of the equation of knowledge with true belief, then it seems that Plato takes knowledge to involve non-propositional direct grasp. However, in that case the message of 184B–187A cannot be that propositionality (or subject-predicate complexity) is a necessary condition for knowledge, as the copula reading claims.

¹¹⁰ There are many interpretations that take Plato to be subscribing to some sort Kantian theory of perceptual content. The most influential recent interpretations include Burnyeat (1990: 62) and Kahn (1981: 121). However, the theory of ‘projecting concepts’ in perception was quite widespread already in later antiquity, see Sorabji (2005: 37–44). For a recent clearly argued case for Plato being a conceptualist about perception, see Silverman (1990; 1991).

¹¹¹ Just like in some contemporary philosophers attribute concepts to (e.g.) bees. See, e.g., Carruthers (2009).

how perceptual experience works. But this is, in fact, not how concept-application is understood by conceptualist readings of Plato. The above passage does not allow taking concept application in this non-demanding sense. Plato makes it clear that calculating in accordance with being requires education and is not even achieved by all humans (he says that calculations about being require education for ‘those who do acquire them’, implying that not everyone acquires the ability to calculate according to being). The copula reading sets the need for concepts on a very low level of cognition (the ability for perceptual representation), while at the same time setting high requirements for concept-application.¹¹²

All versions of the copula reading claim that propositional structure is, for Plato, necessary for representational content.¹¹³ This reading implies, then, that long and arduous education is necessary for the ability to represent anything as anything. This is quite problematic. First of all, it would follow that Plato commits himself to the view that animals do not perceptually represent their environment. Otherwise animals would ‘reach truth’ (their perceptual representations could be correct), given that the notion of representation is defined by its truth-conditions¹¹⁴. Second, Socrates implies that not even all mature human beings are able to calculate according to being (186C5) (see esp. D. Frede (1989) on this point). This would have to mean that there are mature human beings who do not represent the world in any way (otherwise they would reach truth). Third, how is one supposed engage in *παιδεία* (education) if one cannot represent anything whatsoever? If there is no representational content, then one cannot come to acquire any *truths* during the process of education. It is usually thought that education and concept-acquisition proceeds from more simple representations towards more complex ones.¹¹⁵ Since ‘calculations according to being’ are, for the copula reading, results of education, and necessary conditions of all representation, the assumption is that ‘long and arduous education’ is

¹¹² Conceptualism was a an orthodoxy (Smith 2002: 70) throughout the twentieth century, which help to understand why so many scholars of Plato have found the idea to make Plato into a conceptualist about cognition/perception, appealing. Many influential philosophers have defended a view that makes concept-possession necessary for perceptual representation; for one of the most recent examples, see McDowell (1994). Usually the agent who is representing reality perceptually has to be able to represent the conceptual aspect in experience independently of the particular perceptual situation. Burge (2010: 111–283) has a useful survey of most of the eminent philosophers who advocate views belonging to this family. He calls this family of views ‘Individual Representationalism’.

¹¹³ With the exception of Lorenz, who claims that being is necessary for predication but also that there is ‘content’ below predication (2006: 76). As we have seen, Lorenz has a rather special notion of predication.

¹¹⁴ One can deny that representation is defined by truth conditions in the above sense, and claim that, e.g. that the perceptual representation in animals is defined by correctness- or accuracy conditions. But in that case one should also offer an additional argument as to why *correct* perceptual representations in animals cannot be cases of knowledge. Plato offers no such argument.

¹¹⁵ Carey (2009: 18) calls it a ‘truism that all learning involves building new representations from antecedently available ones’

necessary to represent anything. There has to be some miraculous threshold between non-representational states of children and the representational states of adults. First the child receives education (without representing anything, since she cannot use the copula) and then slowly acquires the conceptual apparatus for perceptual representation. It is difficult to attribute such a problematic position to Plato, unless there is evidence that he is committed to this position in other dialogues. As far as I know, there is not such evidence.

There have been three main attempts to solve the ‘problem of education’.¹¹⁶ I will now show that they all fail.

The first possibility is to say that Socrates changes the topic between stage one and stage two. For example, at the first stage Socrates and Theaetetus discuss being and other commons as they are grasped in our ordinary, humdrum and non-reflective beliefs or judgments. This seems to be licensed by Socrates’ claim that *ὁσεία* and the rest of the commons are grasped whenever the soul applies a term designating them (185C4–7), i.e. (CA). At the second stage, however, Socrates changes gear. He and Theaetetus are not talking about our humdrum grasp of the commons but rather about reflective judgments *about* the commons. The point is that all human beings (and perhaps animals) are able to ‘apply common concepts’, though not many are able to make them into an object of theoretical reasoning.¹¹⁷

Since all thought is propositional, it requires the use of this common [i.e. being]. Since all normal adults think, all have access to being. Few, however, have reflected on the nature of this concept and even fewer still have acquired knowledge of it, i.e. can say what being is. The distinction applies to all concepts. (Silverman 1990: 169)

However, nothing in stage two suggests that Socrates talks about some different relation of the soul to the common of being. There is nothing corresponding to Silverman’s ‘knowledge of the nature of the concept being’. Plato’s message at 186B11–C5 cannot be that perception and *knowledgeable* grasp of being are different. Or else what is the point of the ensuing argument? Immediately after the crucial passage where Socrates says that ‘calculations according to being’ are difficult and require education, he goes on to suggest (186C7) that it is impossible to reach truth without reaching being. This must imply that ‘reaching being’ and calculations according to being (186C3) are, or involve, the same kind of activity. Further, if Socrates discusses a completely different activity (reflective, philosophical) at stage two, then the crucial stretch of stage

¹¹⁶ The forth approach is simply to ignore that the problem exists. A star example of this approach is Burnyeat’s influential essay ‘Plato on the Grammar of Perceiving’ (1976). Burnyeat claims that grasping ‘being’ in judgments of the form ‘x is *F*’ is necessary for any sort of awareness and consciousness in general. He neglects to mention that it means to say that one needs a great deal of arduous education in order to be conscious. In fact he does not discuss the uncomfortable claims (for the copula reading) made by Plato at stage two in any depth.

¹¹⁷ See also D. Frede 1989.

two (186A2-C5) would simply be *redundant* to the argument that perception does not reach being and truth.

The second solution is offered by Bostock: ‘Perhaps, then, the long and troublesome education that he refers to is the process of learning to talk. After all, it takes time and only humans can do it’ (1988: 124). According to his solution, forming propositions ‘x is *F*’ is indeed a very demanding activity, since it presupposes a command of language. A small, preliminary point (made by D. Frede 1989) against this solution is that since Socrates implies that not even all human beings are capable of calculations according to being (186C5), he has to be referring to learning-disabilities in humans. This is not very likely (Plato never refers to mature human beings who cannot speak) but it is at least possible. However, there are two more serious objections to Bostock’s solution.

First, the entire terminology used at stage two (ἀναλογιζομένη at 186A11; ἐπανιοῦσα καὶ συμβάλλουσα at 186B8; ἀναλογίσματα at 186C3, παιδεία at 186C4; ἐν δὲ τῷ περὶ ἐκείνων συλλογισμῷ at 186D3) can hardly refer to simply language-learning and language-using, or attaching predicate to a subject. Plato never calls learning a language παιδεία. The term ἀναλογίσματα appears just in the target passage, but the related verb ἀναλογίζομαι is more common in Plato, but it always refers to making inferences and calculating (e.g. *Rep.* 524D), activities that are more complex and demanding than ‘framing a proposition’ or forming a sentence; συλλογισμός occurs only twice in the Platonic corpus: here and in the *Cratylus* (412 A-B) where it is connected to knowledge. The related verb συλλογίζομαι usually means¹¹⁸ ‘to draw a conclusion from an argument’ or ‘to infer’¹¹⁹ and I have found no occurrence of συλλογίζομαι where it simply refers to connecting a subject to a predicate.¹²⁰ Further, it is difficult to see what calculations according to past and future (186B1) have to do with language learning or framing propositions.

¹¹⁸ See Robinson (1953: 21–22)

¹¹⁹ For example, *Philebus* 41C or *Gorgias* 498E. The most demanding use of συλλογίζομαι can be found in a celebrated passage from the *Republic*: ‘Finally, I suppose, he’d be able to see the sun, not images of it in water or some alien place, but the sun itself, in its own place, and be able to study it. - Necessarily so. - And at this point he would infer and conclude (συλλογίζοιτο) that the sun provides the seasons and the years, governs everything in the visible world, and is in some way the cause of all the things that he used to see’ (*Republic* 516 B–C). The case is similar with the verb ἀναλογίζομαι, it usually refers to quite demanding calculations. An example: ‘One needs to reflect (ἀναλογίζεσθαι) that wisdom and friendship, when stated to be the aim in view, are not really different aims, but identical’ (*Leg.* 693C).

¹²⁰ An interesting parallel (that no commentator I am aware of has mentioned) to the *Theaetetus* 186C can be found in the *Cratylus*. ‘The name ‘man’ (ἄνθρωπος) indicates that the other animals do not examine, or consider (ἐπισκοπεῖ οὐδὲ ἀναλογίζεται), or look up at (ἀναθρεῖ) any of the things that they see, but man has no sooner seen—that is, ὅπως—than he looks up at and considers that which he has seen. Therefore of all the animals man alone is rightly called man (ἄνθρωπος), because he looks up at (ἀναθρεῖ) what he has seen (ὅπως).’ It is hard to say what force the ἐπισκοπεῖ οὐδὲ ἀναλογίζεται carry here. Is Plato referring to propositional thought or some higher cognitive capacity?

Second, the theory of representational content attributed to Plato is dubious. The theory amounts to a claim that only linguistic creatures represent the world. Of course, it is possible that Plato thinks that one ought to learn language before one can perceptually represent anything. However, other than the supposed statement of the theory here, in the Passage of the Commons, there is no indication that Plato is inclined toward such a view. For example, in the *Timaeus* Plato describes the newly incarnated soul, i.e. the soul of an infant. Although the orbits of the soul are initially disfigured, the infant is clearly able to engage in representation (although she gets *everything* wrong):

Whenever they encounter something outside of them as characterizable as same and different, they will speak (προσαγορεύουσα) of it as ‘the same as’ something or ‘different from’ something else when the truth is just the opposite, so proving themselves to be mislead and unintelligent. (43E1–44A8)

Plato probably does not think that that the newborn infants literally speak. He is likely to mean that the newborns attempt to identify and distinguish things, although they fail to do it successfully. They have not learned the language but yet they do represent the world. In the *Timaeus*, then, Plato does not take language to be necessary for representation. Admittedly, it is possible that Plato subscribes to a different theory in the Passage of the Commons, i.e. a theory that requires that one should go through long and arduous education in order to represent. But at the very least the *Timaeus* passage suggests that Plato is not committed to this dubious theory of perception. More precisely, the *Timaeus* suggests that the (rational) soul is active in perceptual representation, but not that this activity involves a successful grasp of the identity of what is predicated. Nor does it suggest that perceptual representation requires education. It is also important that *Timaeus* does not call these (‘propositional’) representations *beliefs*.

There is yet a further possibility to disarm the problem of education. This is offered by Lorenz (2006). According to Lorenz, to engage in predication the soul has to ‘recognize’ what it is to be hard and what it is to be soft. To do this, the soul has to recognize ‘that they are in fact two features’, ‘an inference from the observation that hardness is sometimes perceived without softness being perceived at the same time, and *vice versa*’, ‘that they are separate and different from one another’ etc. He concludes all these cognitive activities ‘involve a great deal of time and effort’ (Lorenz 2006: 91). In effect, Lorenz is here close to adopting the interpretation of οὐσία as essence. The ‘orthodox’ essence-reading (Modrak 1981, McDowell 1973), however, differs from Lorenz’s in that grasping οὐσία is usually taken to be a cognitive *goal* and not the cognitive *precondition* of belief-formation. Lorenz thinks that in order to ‘predicate’ hardness of anything (form a thought ‘x is hard’) one has to ‘recognize’ a great deal about *what* hardness *is*. All these acts of recognition have propositional or

predicational form ('that p'). Lorenz's Davidsonian¹²¹ point is that in order to engage in simple predication one has to have a certain amount of true beliefs (including beliefs involving very abstract features) about this feature (e.g. hardness).

There are two problematic points in Lorenz's interpretation. First, as I noted in the previous chapter, Lorenz's account of predication does not correspond to the way Plato conceives of predication. In the late dialogues (*Sophist*, *Laws*) he allows for someone who does not 'recognize' what *F* is to predicate *F*-ness of things (of course, this results in false beliefs). Plato indeed recognizes (e.g. *Philebus* 18C-D) that knowledge has a holistic character, but he *never* says that in order to hold a belief about something, one needs a network of inter-connected true beliefs. Second, Lorenz's interpretation of the crucial sentence at 186B6–9 is dubious. Socrates says:

But their [hardness and softness] being and that they are and their oppositeness to each other, and the being, in its turn, of this oppositeness, are things which the mind itself tries to decide for us, by reviewing them and comparing them with one another (Τὴν δέ γε οὐσίαν καὶ ὅτι ἐστὸν καὶ τὴν ἐναντιότητα πρὸς ἀλλήλω καὶ τὴν οὐσίαν αὐτῆς ἐναντιότητος αὐτῇ ἢ ψυχῇ ἐπανιοῦσα καὶ συμβάλλουσα πρὸς ἄλληλα κρίνειν πειρᾶται ἡμῖν). (186B–9)

The most natural way to read this sentence is to take Socrates to refer to cognitive activities in the *increasing* order of complexity. This is also the way Lorenz seems to understand this passage (Lorenz 2006: 87, n44). The mind starts with perceiving hardness (first level), then (second level) it tries to decide ('discern') the hardness about something (i.e. decide whether something is hard), then (third level) recognizes the difference between hardness and softness, and then (fourth level) predicates the opposition about hardness and softness (i.e. forms a belief that hardness is opposite to softness). Yet, when Lorenz tries to explain why predicating hardness is a difficult activity (requiring education, etc.) he suddenly claims that it is difficult, because it already *presupposes* the cognitive activity of predicating opposition. It is difficult to see how the cognitive activity of a lower (second) level presupposes a cognitive activity of a higher (fourth) level.

¹²¹ Davidson says: 'As remarked above, there may be no fixed list of beliefs on which any particular thought depends. Nevertheless, much true belief is necessary. Some beliefs of the sort required are general, but plausibly empirical, such as that cats can scratch or climb trees. Others are particular, such as that the cat seen running a moment ago is still in the neighbourhood. Some are logical. Thoughts, like propositions, have logical relations. Since the identity of a thought cannot be divorced from its place in the logical network of other thoughts, it cannot be relocated in the network without becoming a different thought. Radical incoherence in belief is therefore impossible. To have a single propositional attitude is to have a largely correct logic, in the sense of having a pattern of beliefs that logically cohere' (2001: 99).

Further, Lorenz translation of κρίνειν as ‘to discern’ seems dubious. In the *Theaetetus* Plato uses κρίνειν exclusively in the sense ‘to decide’ or ‘to judge’ or ‘to lay a verdict’ (comp. *Tht.* 150B and especially the defence-speech of Protagoras, at *Tht.* 166A–168D). In fact, it has been convincingly argued (Ebert 1984) and that the sense of κρίνειν as ‘discern’ or ‘distinguish’ or ‘recognize’ in a cognitive (perceptual) context originates with Aristotle’s *De anima*. This is important, since it is much more difficult to take explicit ‘judging’ or ‘deciding’ the oppositeness of *F* as a mental *preliminary* for the ability to predicate *F*-ness. I conclude, therefore, that Lorenz’s account of predication is not the most natural reading of the text and it also seems to be internally inconsistent. These three options of dealing with the problem of education are the only available in the literature. None of the solutions is entirely satisfactory.

I have claimed that reading ‘being’ as a copula is the strongest version of the conceptualist reading. Only this reading can account for why being is grasped in all thoughts involving the term ‘is’, i.e. it shows why (CA) applies to being, and it also gives Plato a good argument to the conclusion that perception is not knowledge (since it connects being with a reasonably mundane notion of truth). However, if the results of this section are correct, then the copula reading, and hence also conceptualism in general, faces serious problems. It is therefore reasonable to assume that if there are viable alternatives to the conceptualist reading, the conceptualist reading should be abandoned.

3. The Realist Reading

In Chapter 4, Section 1, I will argue that οὐσία understood as reality is the best possible reading of οὐσία. According to this reading, Plato is saying in the Passage of the Commons that determining how things are (‘out there’, so to speak) is necessary and sufficient for ‘attaining truth’. In this section I will take a quick look at the versions of the ‘realist readings’ proposed in current scholarly literature. I conclude that realism about οὐσία cannot be defended if one accepts (CA) about commons, and suggest that since the realist reading is the best reading of οὐσία, (CA) should be abandoned.

Οὐσία understood as reality has been defended by several scholars (‘reality’ and ‘existence’ in Cooper (1970) or ‘objectivity’ in Gerson (2004) or ‘fact’ in Kanayama (1987), or ‘So-sein’ in Heitsch (1987)). The copula reading maintains that οὐσία has to be taken in the formal mode of speech, as referring to the concept ‘being’ that one has to grasp in order to engage in thinking. ‘Attaining being’, understood in this sense, is necessary for ‘hitting on truth’ (since all truths require propositional structure), but not sufficient (since there are false propositions). But οὐσία can also be taken in the material mode referring to actual things and properties ‘out there’. Here οὐσία would mean *reality*, not the concept of ‘reality’. Plato’s argument would then be that perception is not knowledge because it does not attain being in the sense objectivity, i.e. it does not attain how things are in the mind-independent world. ‘Attaining οὐσία’

would thus be both necessary and sufficient for ‘hitting on truth’. This reading fits well with the claim of some scholars that for Plato the verb ‘to be’ *always* carries the implication of ‘being real’ (see Szaif 1998: 344–356), and that the purely formal notion of copula as a connector of subject and predicate originates with Aristotle’s *De Interpretatione* 3 (Szaif 1998: 462).¹²²

Now, the realist reading conflicts with (CA) because being in the sense of reality (i.e. in the sense of how things objectively are) is not grasped in all thoughts involving the term ‘is’. This is so because there are thoughts and beliefs that are false. In a similar manner, the thoughts and beliefs involving the terms ‘same’ and ‘beautiful’ do not involve the grasp of the corresponding commons, if a belief such as ‘x is beautiful’ is false. I will argue that the only way to maintain the realist reading of the Passage of the Commons is to deny that (CA) applies to the commons.

To set out the main idea of the realist reading more clearly, it is helpful to appeal to Charles Kahn’s distinction between the syntactic and semantic role of the verb ‘to be’. Kahn argues that the syntactic role of the verb is its role as a copula, whereas a semantic use of the verb is an ‘expression of extra-linguistic reality’ and ‘includes existence for subjects, instantiation for predicates, and truth or occurrence for the sentence as a whole’ (2009: 10). In other words, the syntactic role of the verb ‘to be’ is a linguistic copula that connects the noun to the verb thus creating a sentence (or a thought). The verb in its semantic role, on the other hand, connects the subject (the extra-linguistic object) to a predicate (the property), expressing that a given property *really* belongs to the object in question. It implies the actual existence¹²³ of the object designated by the subject term and instantiation of the property designated by a predicate term. The copula reading insists that being should be construed in its syntactic role. However, it is also possible to focus on the verb ‘to be’ in its semantic role. Thus, the notion of ‘grasping being’ at stage one and at stage two would correspond, according to the realist reading, to the following two claims:

Realist reading:

- (a) Stage one: grasping the οὐσία of x indicates *correctly* apprehending a state of affairs of x *being* (F). For example, the ability to apprehend whether color is in fact (salty).
- (b) Stage two: grasping the οὐσία of F indicates *correctly* apprehending a state of affairs of F *being* (about x). For example, the ability to apprehend whether beauty is in fact (about the person).

Note that the realist reading also assumes that the complete use allows for a possible addition of the predicate, preserving the ‘overdetermination’ of the verb ‘to be’ (see Section 1 of this chapter). Therefore, ‘being’ in its semantic

¹²² Although it is plausible that for Aristotle, too, the copula has some existential import. See, esp., Bäck (2000: 11–31), who provides further references.

¹²³ Thus, ‘exists’ expresses that an object is part of extra-mental *reality*. Imaginary, intentional, or intralinguistic objects might not exist in this sense. Szaif (2003: 35) calls this the ‘positional’ use of the term ‘exists’.

role is *not* equivalent to the notion of ‘existence’. Burnyeat (1976) was the first to notice that at 185C9 it is claimed that being and not-being are common to *everything*. If being is rendered as ‘existence’, this would lead to an absurd consequence that non-existence is common to all things. But being in its semantic role also comprises instantiation (and not merely existence). Thus Theaetetus’ claim at 185C9 can be understood simply as stating that not-being is common to everything since (i) every *F* is *not* since it is not instantiated by some things and (ii) every *x* is *not* since there is some property *F* that *x* does not instantiate (thus ‘not-being’ attaches both to the object and the property).

The difference between the conceptualist and realist readings is that the former appeals to the concept ‘being’, necessary for the complex structure of thought, whereas the latter takes οὐσία to be expressing objectivity (states of affairs or facts in the world). It certainly seems more natural to read the argument at stage two as referring to reality – to how things really, actually are. According to the realist reading, the argument at stage two shows that soul, in ‘reasoning and calculating’, tries to find out whether abstract properties like sameness or beauty (186A2-B1) or perceptual properties like hardness (186B2–9) really apply to unspecified objects, i.e. whether these objects ‘have reality’ in each particular case. In other words, Socrates does not use οὐσία to refer to a copula enabling predication (or propositional content) but rather to facts and states of affairs in the world. His point is that perception cannot determine how things are, for that one has to engage in reasoning and calculations. The realist reading, so conceived, stands in diametrical opposition to the conceptualist (or semantic) reading, nicely summed up by Bostock:

For it is clear that that theory is an attempt to explain how we *understand* the propositions which employ such notions; it is not designed to tell us how we can sometimes know that they are *true* (Bostock 1988: 124, author’s emphasis)

The realist reading reverses Bostock’s claim: Plato is not making a point about understanding (or about ‘perceptual content’). Rather, he is saying that determining how things are requires independent work of the soul (comparing, calculating). Plato’s point is epistemological rather than semantic. ‘Attaining being’ is a goal of forming beliefs, not its precondition. And attaining being requires reasoning and calculating.

When Socrates says at 186B11 it is necessary to compare and review the past and future when determining the οὐσία of (e.g.) goodness, this means that it is necessary to compare and review the past and future to determine whether (e.g.) a person is (really) good, i.e. whether ‘goodness is’ (in regard to or about a person or a law). This helps to explain why grasping being of goodness requires education and involves ‘reviewing and comparing’, for it is intuitively clear that to determine whether or not someone is really good is much more difficult than forming a simple thought that a given person is good. Second, the realist reading does not commit Plato to the view (otherwise unattested in the

dialogues) that being is grasped in false beliefs. According to copula reading A (defended by Bostock and Burnyeat), being is grasped in every thought that involves a copula (either explicitly or implicitly). According to copula readings B and C (defended by Fine, Frede and Lorenz), being is grasped in every belief, since being is necessary for recognizing the feature ‘as what it is’ in order to engage in predication. This is where the realist reading is importantly different – being is not grasped in all beliefs, but only in beliefs that conform to reality. This means that, in the final argument, grasping being in the sense of reality is not only necessary for truth (as it is on the conceptualist reading) but *sufficient* for it as well. Realist reading explains stage two of the argument very well. Furthermore, the realist reading explains another peculiar feature of stage two.

Namely, Theaetetus says that soul ‘yearns after’¹²⁴ (ἐπορέγεται, 186A4–5) being of sameness and difference, beauty and ugliness. Socrates adds that also in the case of hardness and softness the soul is ‘trying to’ (κρίνειν πειρᾶται) decide the being (of hardness and softness) and the being of sameness and difference (of hardness and softness) (186B6–9). It is difficult to make sense of these claims on the conceptualist reading. On this reading, grasping the being of hardness is a matter of forming a belief that ‘x is hard’, and grasping the being of beauty means forming a belief ‘x is beautiful’. But in what sense is the soul trying to grasp something that must be *already* grasped in order to form a belief? Is the soul trying yearning after the concept ‘being’? It is more natural to take οὐσία as reality or instantiation of properties of beauty and hardness. The soul is trying to find out whether something is really beautiful, whether it is really soft, just as the realist reading suggests. In order to determine whether a given property (be it a common or perceptual property) ‘has reality’, the soul needs to determine whether sameness and difference are instantiated (whether a property of e.g. hardness is same or different as the property of softness). Again, this is a goal of belief formation, not its precondition. Not all beliefs reach this goal (especially not false beliefs). Therefore, the commons are not ‘apprehended’ or ‘grasped’ in all beliefs.

Nonetheless, the realist reading has problems of its own¹²⁵. The main problem for the realist reading is that the commons – especially being – when introduced at stage one, are very much like concepts. This means that being is grasped in every thought involving the term ‘is’. Of course, this is what commons should be if one supports the copula reading of being. However, for the realist reading the conceptualist assumption creates a serious problem, since reality is *not* grasped in all thought involving the term ‘is’. In fact, as I will

¹²⁴ See Kanayama (1987:39), who argues that this is the right translation of ἐπορέγεται (and not ‘apprehend’ as in Cornford’s translation).

¹²⁵ Another problem is that it is difficult to determine what perception can accomplish assuming that it does not attain being in the sense of reality. Is perception confined to appearances? Can it make simple judgments like ‘this is red’? I will return to this problem in the following chapter (Section 3). To anticipate, my solution to this problem will be to deny that the Passage of the Commons aims at presenting a theory of perception at all.

argue, the realist reading of being cannot be consistently maintained if one accepts the conceptualist assumption.

The problem for the realist reading is the following. If οὐσία is grasped in all thoughts involving the word 'is' (185C5), then οὐσία cannot mean reality, since reality is not grasped in all thoughts involving 'is' as a term. Reality (not 'reality') is not a concept; it is the world out there. The defenders of the realist reading have offered unsatisfactory answers to this problem. Consider, for example, Gerson's answer:

Thus, I interpret *ta koina* in contrast to 'private' or 'unique' terms (*ta idia*). That the mind attains universals or common predicates is just an irrelevant point. It is objectivity, not universality that is germane. (Gerson 2004: 207–8)

Problems with Gerson's proposal are the following. First, although τὰ κοινά can be translated as 'public' properties (as mind-independent features shared between perceivers), the commons are *not* introduced as properties of things that are common *for* more than one *perceiver*. Plato says that the commons are common *to* the *things* perceived (185B4). Otherwise it would be a complete mystery why the commons could not be perceived. The whole argument requires that the commons are shared by the proper sensibles of different senses. Plato never hints that it is the common objective world that is 'germane' to the argument. Secondly, if the commons are by definition features of mind-independent world, then it is not at all clear why Plato should focus on οὐσία at stage two and not just any other common. Gerson simply denies without argument that (CA) is of any relevance to the text. However, there are passages motivating (CA) – esp. 185B7–9 and 185C4–7 –, and these passages play an important role in the argument for the conclusion that commons are not sensible.

Another defender of the realist reading, Kanayama (1987: 67), affirms that the commons at stage one *are* grasped each time one entertains a thought. However, Kanayama distinguishes between the act of entertaining a thought (stage one) from the act of 'considering' (stage two). Considering becomes central at stage two and involves trying to find out the facts, that is, how things really are. His interpretation suggests that being functions as a concept (copula) at stage one and as 'facts' (reality) at stage two. I do not find this convincing. The problem is that this would make the argument equivocate on 'being'. The concept 'being' and the world out there are two very different things. If Plato would argue from the imperceptibility of the first to the imperceptibility of the second, he would need additional premises to show how the two are connected. Second, the question becomes which one of these meanings of the expression 'being' Plato has in mind in the final part of the argument? In light of these complications, I believe that Kanayama cannot consistently ascribe (CA) to Plato at stage one, and then argue that οὐσία means objectively obtaining states of affairs or facts at state two.

The same problems affect Cooper's (1970) reading. According to Cooper, stage one makes a point that the application of some concepts (the commons) is beyond the power of sense perception. However, just like Kanayama, Cooper¹²⁶ affords a special place to the common being (which he takes to mean 'existence'). Perception does not reach 'existence' since it only grasps how things appear:

On this interpretation the failure of perception to grasp the οὐσία of its objects would be taken to mean that in perception one notices only the color (etc.) a thing appears to have and says nothing about what its real color is. As I remarked above, οὐσία is an undifferentiated concept of being; but it seems naturally interpreted in this passage (at, e.g., 185a9) as expressing existence. To judge that a color exists one must engage in the kind of calculation of past and present perceptions with a view to the future which Theaetetus mentions in connection with judgments of value; and just as Plato insists that judgments of value imply the existence of objective standards which experts constantly use to guide their thought, so one must be guided by objective standards in saying how things in the world are. This is the work not of perception but of reflective judgment. (Cooper 1970: 373)

'Existence', at stage one, is taken by Cooper to be a 'concept' that is applied to the proper sensibles (see, esp. Cooper 1970: 371). At stage two, however, Cooper takes 'existence' to mean how things are (as opposed to how they appear). It is clear from the above quotation that Cooper does not have in mind a simple application of the concept 'existence' but rather the *correct* application of the concept of 'existence', which involves determining whether color really is (about or of something) or whether beauty really is (about or of something). Otherwise it would be hard to understand why the application of the concept 'existence' (using it in forming a sentence or a belief) is more difficult and requires 'objective standards' than the application of the concept 'appears'. In fact, some have argued that possessing the concept 'appears' already presupposes the grasp of the concept 'is'.¹²⁷ Further, why does it take education and inference-making and taking into account past and future in order to apply the concept of 'existence' to color, i.e. to think 'color exists'? Thus, it seems that for Cooper it is not the kind of 'concepts' that are applied to perception that

¹²⁶ Actually, this is only one of the two interpretations that Cooper considers. The other interpretation is the familiar conceptualist reading, which insists that perception does not make any judgements, because it does not 'have access' to being as a copula. However, in the end Cooper prefers the realist reading (Cooper 1970: 373–375).

¹²⁷ 'Thus, when I say 'X looks green to me now' I am *reporting* the fact that my experience is, so to speak, intrinsically, *as an experience*, indistinguishable from a veridical one of seeing that x is green. Involved in the report is the ascription to my experience of the claim 'x is green'; and the fact that I make this report rather than the simple report 'X is green' indicates that certain considerations have operated to raise, so to speak in a higher court, the question 'to endorse or not to endorse.' I may have reason to think that x may not after all be green.' (Sellars 1997: 39)

matter, but rather the features of the world that they capture – in comparing and reviewing the soul captures things as they *really* are, whereas in perception it stays on the level of what *appears*. Therefore, Cooper has switched (without an argument) from the application of the concept ‘existence’ to grasping how things really are (Cooper 1970: 373). Cooper does not offer any justification as to why he suddenly shifts from ‘existence’ as a concept to ‘existence’ as reality. He seems to assume that (CA) applies to the term ‘being’ at stage one but seizes to apply to it at stage two, i.e. that ‘being’ has different meanings in the course of the argument.

Now, Gerson, Kanayama and Cooper could, in principle, argue that without the concept of οὐσία (i.e. without οὐσία in taken in the formal mode of speech) the soul cannot ‘attain’ οὐσία in the material mode of speech, i.e. reality. In that case the argument in the Passage of the Commons would not straightforwardly equivocate on ‘being’. However, there is a problem with this suggestion. It is not the way Socrates argues. He does not indicate that the meaning of οὐσία is importantly different between stage one and stage two of the argument. Of course, one could maintain that Plato simply confuses these two meanings of οὐσία. This is Kahn’s position.

We must recognize that Plato does not always sharply distinguish between οὐσία as reality, or being-so in the world, and *ousia* as content of a description of reality, the being-so in a truth claim. He seems to slide here (in *pros ousias* at 186C3) from the intentional to the objective being-so, just as he sometimes slips from knowing or saying of what-is that it is (*hos esti* intentionally understood) to knowing or saying it as it is (*hos esti* objectively understood). (Kahn 1981: 126)

Kahn adds that the need for drawing this distinction in the context of the Passage of the Commons is not obvious. However, one could argue that representing reality (being objectively understood) does not presuppose having the concept of reality (being ‘intentionally’ understood)¹²⁸. If this is true then Plato’s argument would be fallacious. Be that as it may, the problem is that in any case an important part of stage two of the argument (186A1–186C6) is not, on Kahn’s construal, strictly speaking relevant. The conclusion of stage one (that the concept being is not perceptible or not applied by means of the senses) suffices for the argument (186C7-E12) to reach its conclusion. It is not at all obvious why Plato sees it necessary to emphasize that it is difficult to attain being in the sense of objective reality between the end of stage one and the final conclusion. In addition, in the text Socrates and Theaetetus *infer* from the claim that it takes education and reasoning to ‘attain being’ of even perceptual properties like hard and soft (οὐσία as reality) to the claim that οὐσία and truth are always grasped in reasoning (συλλογισμῶ, 186D3) and not in perceptual affections (παθήματα, 186C2, 186D2). This inference would not be licensed if οὐσία is ‘intentionally’ understood in the final argument. But if οὐσία in the

¹²⁸ This position is defended by Burge 2010.

final stage of the argument should be taken as reality, then the *first* stage would be redundant. Thus it seems best to assume that οὐσία has the same meaning throughout stage one and stage two.

Thus, the main problem that affects all the realist readings lies in the difficulty of connecting stages one and two, because Plato's use of the term οὐσία is ambiguous. On the one hand, he seems to suggest that being is grasped in all thoughts involving 'is' as a term. On the other hand he suggests that 'attaining being' requires education and reasoning. If it is possible to read the Passage of the Commons so that Plato is not made to confuse the two uses of οὐσία, this reading should be preferred. I think that my arguments against the copula reading show that it is quite difficult to import being as a copula into stage two. This leaves just one option. Stage one must, if possible, be interpreted so that Plato is not committed to (CA), despite appearances. Only then would we avoid attributing to Plato the confusion between what it takes to form beliefs *tout court* and what it takes to form true beliefs. So the question becomes – is it possible to read stage one in a way that does not commit Plato to (CA)? Can the claims made at 185C4–7 and 185B7–9, usually taken to imply (CA), be read in a different manner? In the next chapters I will argue this is indeed an option, if one takes into account the specific features of Socratic method.

I have argued in this chapter that the standard account of why belief becomes a rational capacity for later Plato depends on one particular interpretation of the Passage of the Commons, namely conceptualism. Conceptualism is committed to (CA), according to which, in ordinary thinking and belief-formation, the soul stands in a cognitive relation to the common features of things. I argued that conceptualism does not provide a satisfactory interpretation of the Passage of the Commons. This means that the passage does not have to be taken to support the standard account of the rationality of belief.

I also presented an alternative to conceptualism – the realist reading. However, the current versions of realist readings prove inadequate because they, too, accept (CA). Thus, I concluded that the realist reading of Passage of the Commons can only be defended if (CA) is abandoned. The task of the next chapter is to place the Passage of the Commons in its dialectical context, in order to show that Plato is not committed to (CA). Only then will I return to the problem of rationality of belief. In the final chapter I hope to show that on the realist reading the Passage of the Commons contains an alternative to the standard account of the rationality of belief.

CHAPTER THREE.

Socratic Midwifery and Perception

In the previous chapter, I argued that Plato's notion of 'being' (οὐσία) in the Passage of the Commons presents a dilemma. On the one hand, the passage seems to commit Plato to the conceptualist position about commons, especially the common being. According to conceptualism, the common being that is grasped in all thoughts involving, either implicitly or explicitly, is the copula 'is'. Thus, 'being' should be understood as a nominalization of the copula use of εἶναι. On the other hand, a significant portion of the passage (186A–C) suggests that 'being' refers to 'reality', i.e. the way things are independently of the thinking mind. This ambiguity in the meaning of the term 'being' forces us to accept either the conceptualist or a realist reading of the Passage of the Commons. The conceptualist reading leaves Plato with a dubious theory of perception, which is not attested in other dialogues. It also fails to explain certain significant features of the second stage of the passage. The realist reading, on the other hand, either attributes Plato an invalid argument or makes a portion the second stage of the passage redundant. The solutions presented in the literature to this dilemma are inadequate. Since, for Plato, the notion forming beliefs is closely connected to the notion of οὐσία, it becomes difficult to determine what is Plato's conception of belief in the *Theaetetus* 184B–187A.

In this chapter, I will take some preliminary steps towards a solution to this dilemma, and, consequently, towards the clarification of Plato's notion of belief in the *Theaetetus*. I will argue that the seriousness of this problem can be minimized by taking into account Socrates' method of intellectual midwifery, which plays an important role in the Passage of the Commons. I will argue that a crucial feature of Socratic midwifery is its dependence on interlocutor's beliefs. Socrates sometimes uses, as premises of arguments, beliefs that he himself (or Plato) does not hold. This is especially so with deep-seated assumptions that remain on the background of the discussion, assumptions that the interlocutor is not aware of making. The most important background-assumption of the first part of the *Theaetetus* is that all human cognition (including beliefs) is perception-like, i.e. it involves a direct grasp of its objects. This helps to explain why Theaetetus, at stage one of the Passage of the Commons, assumes that the soul grasps being and other commons simply by entertaining a thought involving the relevant terms.

I. Socratic Midwifery

At the beginning of the Passage of the Commons Socrates makes the following statement: 'What we must do is to try, by means of my midwifery, to deliver Theaetetus of what he had conceived on the subject of knowledge' (184B1–3). Socrates stresses that the method he is following is that of midwifery (μαίευτικῇ τέχνῃ). In the course of the dialogue (157C–D, 161A–B, 184B, 210B–C)

Socrates refers several times to his initial self-description as a midwife of souls (148E7–150D4). It seems safe to assume that Plato intends the metaphor of midwifery to give the reader a hint as to what methodology Socrates uses in the discussion with Theaetetus. Hence, to give an adequate reading of the Passage of the Commons, it is important to take a closer look at what Plato means by the notion of Socratic midwifery.

The notion of ‘midwifery’ is introduced immediately after Theaetetus has expressed his puzzlement towards defining knowledge. On the one hand, he does not think he is capable of saying anything adequate on the matter. But at the same time, he ‘can’t stop worrying about it either’ (148E3–5). Socrates then explains to Theaetetus that he is actually pregnant and in labour, and there follows the famous self-description of Socrates as an intellectual midwife (149A–151D).¹²⁹ Socrates starts by singling out the characteristics of regular midwives, and then proceeds to show how some of them apply to him as an *intellectual* midwife. Regular midwives have the following characteristics: (i) in order to be a midwife, the woman has to be past the age of childbearing herself (in honour of the virgin-goddess Artemis); (ii) the midwives cannot be barren women, since they must have childbearing experience; (iii) they recognize best who is pregnant and who is not; (iv) they can (by singing incantations and giving drugs) bring on the pains of labour and make them milder, and bring about birth and miscarriage, (v) they are the best of match-makers.

Socrates’ intellectual midwifery shares these characteristics with regular midwives (only, of course, in relation to souls rather than to bodies). Socrates claims that he can tell who is intellectually pregnant and who is not, he is good at intellectual matchmaking and he can make the birth easier and harder. Just like regular midwives, Socrates himself is not capable of doing what some of his interlocutors can; namely, giving birth to intellectual children. There are two major differences between Socrates and the regular midwives. First, Socrates is able to tell whether the intellectual child of the interlocutor is genuine or just a phantom, i.e. whether it is *true or false* (150C, 161A). Second, Socrates himself has *never* given birth to intellectual children, he is *intellectually barren*. ‘God compels me to be a midwife, but has prevented me from giving birth.’ (150C9–D1) Socrates’ ability to test the intellectual offspring of his interlocutors and his intellectual barrenness are the most important features of Socratic midwifery. It will prove useful to discuss these features in greater detail before returning to the Passage of the Commons.

The feature that is particularly relevant in the context of the Passage of the Commons is Socrates’ intellectual barrenness. The terms ‘Socratic ignorance’ and ‘Socrates’ disavowal of knowledge’ have long ago become a common

¹²⁹ There is a discussion whether the historical Socrates saw himself as a midwife. However, since Plato makes Socrates say that he has kept his midwifery ‘a secret’ (149A) it seems reasonable to assume that it is Plato’s invention. For some discussion, see Burnyeat (1977). In what follows, whenever I refer to ‘Socrates’, I mean Socrates as a character in Plato’s dialogues (especially the *Theaetetus*) and not the historical Socrates.

currency in the scholarship. Perhaps the most famous expression of Socratic ignorance is found in Socrates' speech in the *Apology*:

So I withdrew and thought to myself: 'I am wiser than this man, it is likely that neither of us knows anything worthwhile, but he thinks he knows something when he does not, whereas when I do not know, neither do I think I know' (ἀλλ' οὗτος μὲν οἶται τι εἰδέναι οὐκ εἰδώς, ἐγὼ δέ, ὥσπερ οὖν οὐκ οἶδα, οὐδὲ οἶομαι). (*Ap.* 21D)

Similar pronouncements of Socratic ignorance are found in other passages of the early dialogues.¹³⁰ It is well known that Socratic ignorance in the early dialogues allows for a variety of interpretations. Does Socrates disavow all kinds of knowledge but yet take himself to be in possession of non-trivial true beliefs, as some have suggested (Irwin 1995: 28–29)? Or does he disavow just one kind of knowledge, e.g. 'the divine knowledge' or 'certain knowledge', and yet accepts that he has knowledge in some weaker sense, e.g. eristic knowledge (Vlastos 1994: 39–67)? Or is he a genuine sceptic, like some of the ancients thought (Sedley 1996)? There is no scholarly consensus on these matters when it comes to early dialogues and the situation with the *Theaetetus* is no different. The professions of ignorance in the *Theaetetus* can be read so as to accommodate all these possibilities. It would be a mistake, however, to treat Socratic ignorance in the *Theaetetus* as being on par with the claims made in Plato's earlier dialogues. It is unlikely that Plato subscribed to some unitary interpretation of Socrates' disavowal of knowledge throughout his career.¹³¹ The pertinent question is, rather, what the midwife-metaphor is intended to convey in the *Theaetetus*.

In the *Theaetetus*, too, Socrates expresses his ignorance in slightly different ways. He says that he is 'unproductive of wisdom (ἄγονός εἰμι σοφίας)',¹³² (150C4), or that he does not 'know anything of that kind [i.e. what the 'wise know']' (157C7-D1), or that he is 'someone with no knowledge (ἐμοὶ δὲ τῷ ἀνεπιστήμονι)' (179B2–3). He says that he is 'not entirely wise' (150D1)¹³³. He professes to have a τέχνη, e.g. 'have you heard that I practice the same craft

¹³⁰ See, e.g., *Ap.* 20C, 21D, 23B, *Charm.* 165 B–C; 166C–D, *Euth.* 5A–C 15C, 15E–16A, *Lach.* 186B, 188C–E, 200E, *Lys.* 212A, 223B4, *H.Maj.* 286C–E; 304D–E, *Gorg.* 506A, 509A, *Meno* 71A, 80C–D, *Rep.* 337E, *Symp.* 216D.

¹³¹ 'As a matter of fact I doubt that any one interpretation will work for all the Socratic dialogues, if only because Plato himself may have had considerable trouble deciding just what spin to put on Socrates' disavowal. He probably suspected at times that Socrates knew more than he let on, and his tendency—which increased dramatically in his middle period—to put solid doctrines in Socrates' mouth could well be a measure of that suspicion. But this can be a matter for little more than speculation. What we might more usefully do is ask what spin Plato was putting on his master's disavowal of knowledge at the time of writing the *Theaetetus*.' (Sedley 2004: 31, author's emphasis).

¹³² All the translations of the *Theaetetus* are McDowell's (1973), with some amendments.

¹³³ That this is likely the correct translation of the expression οὐ πάντι σοφός is argued in Sedley 1996.

[midwifery]?’ (149A4–5). This craft involves that Socrates is ‘able to get an argument from someone else, who’s wise, and to accept it in proportion to its merits’ (161B4–5). So, Socrates does not disclaim *all* knowledge; what he seems to be saying is that his knowledge is limited to the craft (τέχνη) of midwifery.¹³⁴ As the argument at 146D–147C shows, he takes the notion of τέχνη to imply the notion of knowledge. Therefore, Socrates of the *Theaetetus* does not lack knowledge altogether. Socrates also seems to hold his fair share of beliefs and to express these beliefs in assertions. These include mundane beliefs, e.g. Socrates believes Theaetetus is the son of Euphronius (144C). He also has some moral beliefs and he makes some moral assertions to the effect that younger people should not disobey older and wiser people (146C). Yet he says that he does not make any ‘pronouncements about anything’, since he does not have knowledge (αὐτὸς δὲ οὐδὲν ἀποφαίνομαι περὶ οὐδενὸς διὰ τὸ μηδὲν ἔχειν σοφόν) (150C). How should one reconcile these seemingly contradictory claims?

All claims of ignorance in the *Theaetetus* (with the exception of 179B2–3) belong to the context where Socrates is explaining his approach to the discussion with Theaetetus. Unlike in the *Apology*, he does not claim that his recognition of ignorance is somehow morally important (although he does not deny it either, see 210C), or that the recognition of his ignorance makes him (humanly) wise. I think that that Socrates’ disavowal of knowledge in the *Theaetetus* concerns mainly his reluctance to express commitments to philosophical definitions¹³⁵ and theories¹³⁶ (161A). Socrates’ point is that he does not know what ‘the great and admirable men’ of the past and present know (210C5–6). He does not make any philosophically loaded pronouncements or assertions. Of course, he does hold beliefs and he does make assertions about mundane things, and he does even have knowledge of midwifery. Does he lack beliefs about philosophical matters? And if not, why is it important for him to withhold those beliefs?

Socrates expresses his beliefs about philosophical matters at least once in the *Theaetetus*, at 185E. The same passage gives an important hint why Socrates refrains from making similar pronouncements in the rest of the *Theaetetus*, and why says at 150C that he ‘never’ makes pronouncements or assertions. Theaetetus has said that the soul considers some things by means of the body, and some by means of itself, independently from the body. This is how Socrates replies: ‘That was what *I thought myself*, but *I wanted you to think so too* (τοῦτο γὰρ ἦν ὃ καὶ αὐτῷ μοι ἐδόκει, ἐβουλόμην δὲ καὶ σοὶ δόξαι, my emphasis) (185E7–8). If this is the case, why didn’t Socrates just tell Theaetetus that this is how he sees things? I think the answer is that Socrates wants Theaetetus to

¹³⁴ Sedley (2004: 30–35) gives an overview of what kind of expertise the craft of midwifery might involve.

¹³⁵ Socrates is not ignorant of *all* definitions. He is, for example, quite capable of producing a definition for ‘clay’, that it is ‘earth mixed with water’ (147C). Socratic ignorance concerns definitions that are not ‘commonplace and simple’ (φασγλὸν που καὶ ἀπλοῦν) (147C).

¹³⁶ See also McDowell (1973) *ad loc.* and Giannopoulou (2007).

come to this insight on his own, and not because of Socrates' authority.¹³⁷ Socrates wants his interlocutors to reach certain conclusions *by themselves*, sometimes even make unavoidable mistakes *by themselves*. Why is this so important for Socrates? I believe that the answer lies in certain assumptions that Socrates (and Plato too) makes about knowledge. Knowledge cannot be acquired simply by accepting one particular proposition. Knowledge requires understanding the implications of a proposition, an ability to place a proposition in a systematic and coherent whole with other propositions. In this sense knowledge always implies knowing-how (and not only knowing-that).¹³⁸ 'Human nature is too weak to acquire skill in matters of which it has no experience' (149C). What Socrates expects from his interlocutors (that they think for themselves and make mistakes for themselves) is directly opposed to Aristotle's conception of an ideal learner who 'accepts on faith what the expert tells him are the principles of the subject. 'The learner ought to believe' he says (*SE* 2, 165B3)' (Robinson 1953: 16). In order to elicit answers from his interlocutors Socrates refrains from making any substantial claims on the subject matter. He *helps* to deliver intellectual offspring, bringing out what his interlocutors think and believe and to see whether their thoughts turn out to be philosophically significant.

It is for this reason that Socrates, while performing his midwifery, does not express any beliefs about the subject matter discussed. He wants his interlocutors to draw their own conclusions from arguments put forth, so that they can familiarize themselves with the particular conceptual terrain (understand the connections between different propositions and the concepts involved in those propositions) that the notion in question (in this case the notion of 'knowledge') belongs to.

How fond of arguments you are, Theodorus! It's splendid of you, the way you think that I'm a sort of bag of arguments, and will easily pick one out and say how that theory goes wrong. You aren't bearing in mind what's happening. None of the arguments ever comes from me (ὅτι οὐδεὶς τῶν λόγων ἐξέρχεται παρ' ἐμοῦ); they always come from the person who is having the discussion with me (ἀλλ' αἰεὶ παρὰ τοῦ ἐμοῖ προσδιαλεγομένου). I know no more than he does, apart from the tiny bit,

¹³⁷ Similar suggestion is made by Nozick (1995): 'Moreover, Socrates cannot simply tell people the truth; they cannot reach knowledge of the good through the say-so and authority of anyone else. At best, that will give them an unstable true belief, open to upsetting by the next contrary 'authority'. The only way to aid their knowledge of the good is to get them to think through issues about the nature of the good and its relation to other things, that is, to engage them (or to get them to engage themselves) in *elenchus* concerning these matters.' (p. 152)

¹³⁸ I am well aware that I am very briefly touching on an immense topic. I hope, however, that the remarks made here suffice for the task at hand. The general idea that knowledge, for Plato, always involves a craft, or a know-how, or, even more generally, 'understanding', is expressed by many scholars. See, for example, Moravcsik (1992: 11–54) and Burnyeat (1981).

enough to be able to get an argument from someone else, who's wise, and to accept it in proportion to its merits (ἐτέρου σοφοῦ λαβεῖν καὶ ἀποδέξασθαι μετρίως). That's what I'm going to do now: I'm going to try to get an argument from him, not to say anything myself (καὶ νῦν τοῦτο παρὰ τοῦδε πειράσομαι, οὗ τι αὐτὸς εἰπεῖν). (161A7-B6)

Socrates insists that *everything* in the discussion comes from (ἐξέρχεται) his interlocutor – he himself never offers any statements or theories to support or to undermine the thesis under consideration. Now, it seems reasonably clear that Socrates does offer quite many arguments. It is Socrates, for example, who proposes that Theaetetus' definition might mean something similar to Protagorean Measure Doctrine¹³⁹, and who connects the Measure Doctrine to the Secret Doctrine of Protagoras, according to which everything is in constant flux.

In what sense, then, does everything (or almost everything) proposed by Socrates in the dialogue come from Theaetetus? I think that there is only one reasonable sense in which Theaetetus is the originator of all the claims or theories Socrates introduces to the discussion. Namely, unlike Socrates, Theaetetus is *doxastically committed* to what is being said in the discussion. He believes that the definitions under discussion and the theories introduced to support them are true. This is especially clear if one takes a closer look at the way in which the definitions are introduced. With the first definition Theaetetus' commitment is clearly stated:

It seems to me (δοκεῖ οὖν μοι) that a person who knows something is perceiving the thing he knows. The way it looks to me (φαίνεται) at the moment is that knowledge is nothing but perception. (151E1–4)

Theaetetus does not say: 'Let's discuss the question whether perception could be knowledge' or 'Let's assume...'. Rather, he *commits himself* to the definition – this is what he *really* thinks and believes. The second and third definitions are offered more carefully. The second definition is, on a first sight, introduced by Theaetetus in a non-committal way:

I can't say it's false judgment in general, Socrates, because there is false judgment as well; but perhaps (κινδυνεύει... εἶναι) true judgment is knowledge. Let that be my answer (ἀποκεκρίσθω). If it turns out, as we go along, that it isn't as good as it seems now, we'll try to find something else to say (ἄλλο τι πειρασόμεθα λέγειν). (187B4–9)

But shortly after this passage, Theaetetus admits that he said that because this is how he sees things, that he really takes knowledge to be true belief (τοῦτο γὰρ αὖ νῦν μοι φαίνεται, 187C7–8). The third definition is offered as something Theaetetus once heard from someone (201C8–9), but Socrates quickly forces

¹³⁹ 'Because he [Protagoras] says, you remember, that a man is the measure of all things: of those which are, that they are, and of those which are not, that they are not' (152A).

Theaetetus to commit himself to the definition: ‘And are you satisfied with it (ἀρέσκει οὖν σε)? Are you prepared to lay it down on those lines (καὶ τίθεσθαι ταύτη), that true judgment with an account is knowledge?’ (202C7–9). Theaetetus says that he is. Thus, Theaetetus commits himself to all the definitions advanced. Socrates, by contrast, remains uncommitted: he does not take the position of authority in the discussion, which enables him to evaluate the mental offspring of his interlocutors who *are* committed to the definitions offered.¹⁴⁰

Thus, we have established that Socratic midwifery requires Socrates to ignorant about the truth or falsity of the definition discussed and the interlocutor to be committed to the truth of the definition. What else does midwifery involve? A clearer picture of Socratic midwifery emerges if one takes into consideration the comments Socrates makes during the discussion of the first definition. Socrates connects Theaetetus’ definition ‘knowledge is perception’ to Protagoras’ Measure Doctrine, according to which everything that appears (to be true) to the person is (true) for this person (152A1 ff.), and to the complex ontology of the Secret Doctrine, according to which everything that exists is in flux (152D2 ff.). The bewildered Theaetetus asks whether Socrates himself believes the doctrines advanced. This is how Socrates answers this question:

You’re forgetting that I neither know nor claim as my own anything of that kind (ὅτι ἐγὼ μὲν οὐτ’ οἶδα οὔτε ποιοῦμαι τῶν τοιούτων οὐδὲν ἐμὸν), but, on the contrary, I’m incapable of giving birth to them (εἰμὶ αὐτῶν ἄγονος). I’m practicing midwifery on you, and that’s why I’m singing incantations, and offering you bits to taste from the products of each group of wise men, until I can help to bring what you think out to light (ἕως ἂν εἰς φῶς τὸ σὸν δόγμα συνεξαγάγω). Once it has been brought out, that will be the time for me to look and see if it turns out to be the result of a false pregnancy or genuine (σκέψομαι εἴτ’ ἀνεμιαῖον εἴτε γόνιμον ἀναφανήσεται). Come one, persevere and don’t lose heart; answer like a good brave man, and tell me what you think about whatever I ask about (ἂ ἂν φαίνεται σοι περὶ ὧν ἂν ἐρωτῶ). (157C7-D5)

This passage sheds a good deal of light on how Socrates takes his midwifery to function. First, as expected, Socrates says that he himself does not know nor subscribe to any of the complex theories that he has just presented. It is also noteworthy that his inability to give birth to them (literally ‘sterility’) covers both his inability to produce knowledge himself *and* to (explicitly) support any foreign theories. This fits well with the proposal that Socrates’ ignorance is methodological. He does not propose his own theories nor does he expect his interlocutors to accept the theories of great philosophers simply on the basis of Socrates’ authority. The interlocutor must think for himself whether the theories presented are true.

¹⁴⁰ Here my account of midwifery is indebted to Giannopoulou (2007).

Further, the above passage shows that Socratic takes his midwifery as a process to have two stages: first Socrates determines what his interlocutors think or believe and only then he goes on to examine whether these thoughts are true or false. A similar two-stage strategy seems to be implied at 154E and 161E–162A. The second stage seems to be identical (or at least similar) to Socratic *elenchus*, which I will discuss in somewhat more detail below. What about the first stage? At this stage, Socrates offers the theories of wise men (Protagoras and his Secret Doctrine) to Theaetetus in order to bring what Theaetetus thinks (δόγμα) ‘out to light’. Theaetetus has already offered his definition ‘knowledge is perception’; he has also committed himself to this definition by saying that this is ‘the way things look to me at the moment’ (151E2). Normally we would say that what Theaetetus thinks is already out in the open – he obviously thinks that knowledge is perception. Therefore, one might think that there is hardly any need for additionally bringing his thoughts ‘out to the light’, especially by connecting Theaetetus’ definition to the theories as complex as Protagoras’ Secret Doctrine.

Scholars¹⁴¹ usually take Socrates to be bringing out the philosophical *implications* of Theaetetus’ first definition.¹⁴² It is assumed that Theaetetus’ first definition already has determinate content; what Socrates does is to show what sorts of *other* theses are implied (Protagorean Measure Doctrine and the Secret Doctrine) by Theaetetus’ definition. Socrates point would be, then, that it is necessary to examine the implications of a given philosophical thesis in order to lay a verdict on the thesis (determine whether it is true or false). However, I

¹⁴¹ See, e.g. Burnyeat (1977): ‘What Theaetetus has to discover is not, presumably, the right words to express his opinion – he managed that when he gave his definition – but whether he really does believe them. In philosophy, at least, to know what ones opinion is, it is not to have formulated the proposition in words; one must have thought through its implications in a systematic way, confronting it with other relevant beliefs and considering whether these require it to be withdrawn or revised’ (p.12).

¹⁴² The traditional reading (e.g. Cornford 1935) suggests that Plato simply supports the Secret Doctrine and that for Plato the sensible world (as opposed to the realm of Forms) suffers (or is, 156A) permanent change. The modern reading (defended, for example, in Sayre (1969), and in a series of influential papers by Burnyeat (see, esp., Burnyeat 1982 and Burnyeat 1990) and by Fine (1994)) insists that the Measure Doctrine and the Secret Doctrine are introduced for dialectical reasons, in order to be able to evaluate Theaetetus’ definition. The Measure Doctrine and the Secret Doctrine either support (Fine 1994: 135, n. 10)) or imply (Burnyeat 1982: 5–7) Theaetetus’ definition. Consequently, the critique of the Measure Doctrine and the Secret Doctrine should be taken to be an indirect critique of Theaetetus’ definition (or a *reductio* of Theaetetus’ definition). According to the modern reading, Plato himself is not committed to any of these doctrines. In what follows, I will simply assume (with a large majority of scholars) that the modern reading is correct. First, the modern reading fits much better with the notion of Socratic midwifery. Socrates explicitly says that the Measure Doctrine and the Secret Doctrine are introduced in order to bring what Theaetetus thinks ‘out to light’ (157C). Second, Socrates claims (160D–E) that the three theses come to mean the *same thing*. Since Theaetetus’ definition is officially refuted, it can hardly be the case that Plato supports the doctrines (e.g. the Secret Doctrine) that are said to have the same content as the thesis refuted.

think that Socrates' goal should be taken in a slightly stronger way; namely, Theaetetus' first definition is vague in the sense that it lacks *determinate content*.¹⁴³ For Socrates, the content of a given thought is not transparent to the person who holds this thought.¹⁴⁴

But since, as things are, we're ordinary people (ιδιωται), we'll want first of all to inspect (θεάσασθαι) our thoughts themselves, in relation to one another, to see what, exactly, they are (αὐτὰ πρὸς αὐτὰ τί ποτ' ἐστὶν ἃ διανοοῦμεθα) and whether we find they harmonize with one another (ἀλλήλοις συμφωνεῖ) or absolutely fail to do so. (154E3–6)

Most importantly, Theaetetus never explains what he means by αἰσθησις. Socratic midwifery, then, gives to Theaetetus' definition and the concepts involved in the definition a more precise content. Its aim is to clarify what Theaetetus takes the concepts of the definition ('perception', 'knowledge') to mean and how these concepts can form a coherent whole with other, closely connected concepts ('appearance', 'truth', 'thinking', etc.) so as to give the result that Theaetetus' definition comes out true. Only then can the definition and whatever other theses that are brought in to support the definition, be critically evaluated. This is the goal of introducing the Measure Doctrine and the Secret Doctrine. Once it has been determined what Theaetetus definition *means* (by bringing into play both theories of Protagoras), Socrates moves on to the second stage of midwifery – that of testing the intellectual offspring, seeing whether the beliefs that Theaetetus holds about perception and knowledge harmonize with the definition and its implications.

The second stage of Socratic midwifery is very similar to the *elenchus* of the early dialogues. Indeed, the verb ἐλέγχειν occurs at *Theaetetus* at 161E, and this activity of 'testing' or 'refuting' is taken to be a component of midwifery and dialectic. In the early dialogues, the interlocutor is expected to give an answer to the Socratic 'what is F?' question.¹⁴⁵ This is followed by the 'testing' (*elenchus*) of the definition in a dialogue form. Socrates is asking questions and the

¹⁴³ 'When Socrates introduces Protagoras' Measure Doctrine by saying it is 'the very same thing' as Theaetetus' definition, only 'put in rather a different way', he is not saying that the two are equivalent, or that Theaetetus is already committed to it... Since Theaetetus' definition is ambiguous between a number of interpretations, Socrates is asking for a clarification of (T), in the form of a substitute, (P), whose commitments are clearer.' (Lee 2006: 79)

¹⁴⁴ This is also the case in early dialogues. In *Gorg.* 474B Socrates assigns to his interlocutor Polus a belief that Polus is not aware that he has. In fact, Polus denies that he has the belief (that it is better to suffer injustice than to cause it), he thinks he believes the opposite. Hugh Benson summarizes the situation as follows: 'Socrates here includes among Polus' beliefs not only those doxastic phenomena on the basis of which Polus is disposed to act, and which Polus thinks he has, but also those which are deducible (whether Polus recognizes it or not) from those phenomena Polus is disposed to act on or thinks he has' (Benson 2011: 188).

¹⁴⁵ In the *Meno* Socrates asks 'what is virtue?', in the *Charmenides* 'what is temperance?', in the *Laches* 'what is courage?', in the *Lysis* 'what is friendship?', in the *Euthyphro* 'what is piety?', in the *Greater Hippias* 'what is beauty?', in *Republic I* 'what is justice?'.

interlocutor answering them. This leads the interlocutor up to the recognition that his beliefs are not consistent. On the account of Socratic *elenchus* that I favour, Socrates shows that the interlocutor holds beliefs that are inconsistent with the proposed definition, also believed to be true by the interlocutor.¹⁴⁶ Since consistency in beliefs is a necessary condition for knowledge, Socrates is able to lead the interlocutor to recognize his lack of knowledge.

Taking into account that Socratic *elenchus* demonstrates inconsistency of his interlocutor's beliefs, the question becomes how Socrates can demonstrate the falsity of some of those beliefs (i.e. the definition offered by the interlocutor)? Would he not have to assume that most beliefs held by his interlocutor are, in fact, true and that the interlocutor is capable of ruling out the false belief that is responsible for the inconsistency? This is a very difficult question. Socrates sometimes seems to think that what shows that a given belief is false is its inconsistency with other beliefs held by the interlocutor (see Vlastos 1983). The situation is similar when it comes to the *Theaetetus*. Socrates claims that his midwifery helps to decide whether his interlocutor's 'newborns' are true or false (150B, 160E)¹⁴⁷, yet all he manages to show is that the interlocutor has conflicting beliefs on subject. In that sense Socratic midwifery, just like the early *elenchus*, is a peculiarly 'local' method. The 'falsity' of a given belief remains dependent on which one of the inconsistent beliefs the interlocutor is inclined to abandon.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ Similar account is defended in Benson (2000).

¹⁴⁷ Socrates actually expresses himself much more carefully after each of the theses under consideration has been refuted. Indeed, Theaetetus and Theodorus seem to be more impressed by the results of the discussion than Socrates himself. For example, after refuting Protagoras, Socrates leaves open the possibility that the refutation only applies to the argument as it has been presented by Socrates and accepted by Theodorus (171C-D). Similarly, after refuting Theaetetus' second and third definitions of knowledge, Socrates says that it *seems* (ἔοικεν ἄλλο τι ἑκάτερον εἶναι) that knowledge and true belief are different (201C6–7) later on (210A) that 'it would seem' (note the optative mood of the verb) that knowledge is not perception or true belief or true belief with an account. Thus Socrates leaves the possibility open that a better defense for all the definitions could, at least in principle, be given. The strongest statement made in the whole dialogue, namely that 'it has become absolutely clear that knowledge is something other than perception' (186E) is put into Theaetetus' mouth shortly after the only time Socrates has expressed his *own* opinion about matters (and, therefore, the denial that perception is knowledge has received support from outside the scope of midwifery).

¹⁴⁸ It is not clear why Socrates is confident that the interlocutor will abandon a belief that actually is false. After all, he claims that he does not know which of the beliefs is true. Historically (see Sedley 1996) it has been common to refer, in this context, to the doctrine of recollection. According to this view, Socratic midwifery helps his interlocutor's to recollect. However, there are powerful arguments against this view. For example, later on in the *Theaetetus* Socrates claims, in direct contradiction to the doctrine of recollection, that our souls are empty at birth (197E). Further, in contrast to the doctrine of recollection, the 'newborns' of Socrates' interlocutors are likely to be false (McDowell 1973: 117). And, thirdly, Socrates says that some people do not seem to be pregnant at all (151B), whereas according to the theory of recollection, all human beings are capable of recollection. Thus it seems that recollection does not offer a solution to the problem of why Socrates assumes that

Bringing his interlocutor to contradict himself and to abandon a particular belief is not the only goal of Socrates' midwifery. Socratic midwifery is more constructive than Socratic *elenchus*.¹⁴⁹ Namely, Socrates also has to show where the interlocutor's mistakes originate. Plato puts this point (somewhat ironically perhaps) into Protagoras' mouth (that is, Socrates speaking for Protagoras). Socrates initially conducts the elenctic part of the discussion with Theaetetus (161C–164C) in a manner that is not genuinely philosophical, but relies on 'logic-chopping' (ἀντιλογικῶς, 164C7), i.e. 'with the view to verbal consistency'. In reaction to this Protagoras (Socrates as Protagoras) says:

In controversy (ἀγωνιζόμενος) one may joke, and trip up people as much one can, but in dialectic (ἐν δὲ τῷ διαλέγεσθαι) one should be serious, and help up the person one is talking to (ἐπανορθοῖ τὸν προσδιαλεγόμενον), showing up (ἐνδεικνύμενος) to him only those of his mistakes (τὰ σφάλματα) where his tripping up is his own fault or due to the company he used to keep (ἃ αὐτὸς ὑφ' ἑαυτοῦ καὶ τῶν προτέρων συνουσιῶν παρεκέκρουστο). If you behave like that, the people who spend their time with you will blame themselves, not you, for their confusion and difficulties (τῆς αὐτῶν ταραχῆς καὶ ἀπορίας); they'll run after you and like you, but they'll hate themselves and seek refuge from themselves in philosophy, so as to become different people and get rid of those they used to be (ἵν' ἄλλοι γεγόμενοι ἀπαλλαγῶσι τῶν οἱ πρότερον ἦσαν). (167E–168A)

Protagoras says that a proper, dialectical, way of discussion (which I take here to apply to Socrates' midwifery) should not be content with simply bringing the interlocutor to contradict himself. What Socrates must do is to show where the mistakes derive from. He furthermore indicates that noticing these mistakes is a life-changing (one might perhaps even say 'existential') experience for the interlocutor. As a result of noticing his mistakes, Socrates' interlocutor will 'hate himself' and try to become someone else, leaving his former self behind. It is therefore unlikely that by 'mistakes' (τὰ σφάλματα) Protagoras has in mind trivial logical fallacies that can be easily corrected or unimportant false beliefs that can easily be discarded. I suggest, rather, that Protagoras is referring to deep-seated assumptions or what are sometimes called 'central beliefs',¹⁵⁰

his interlocutors will be able to pick out a false belief from the inconsistent set of beliefs. It has also been suggested (Bostock 1988: 31–36), that Socrates' midwifery requires some lower-level knowledge of 'meanings'. This proposal seems to suffer from the same problems as the recollection-solution (e.g. not everybody is pregnant, i.e. there are (mature) people who do not have the low-level knowledge of meanings). It has also been thought (Giannopoulou 2008) that it is the divine mandate of Socrates' mission (mentioned several times at 149A–151D) that somehow enables Socrates to tell true from false beliefs.

¹⁴⁹ For the argument that *elenchus* of the early dialogues should be taken to be mainly destructive, see Robinson (1953: 7–20).

¹⁵⁰ 'A central belief is a belief that is so fundamental for a person or group that they could not abandon it without abandoning many other beliefs (and perhaps some epistemic standards) as well. /--/ Central concepts and central beliefs are intimately related, since

beliefs or assumptions that determine one's way of understanding things.¹⁵¹ In Theaetetus' case these are likely to involve assumptions about knowledge and perception, and human cognition in general. Socrates' midwifery must, by means of its elenctic question and answer method, be able to uncover these problematic deep-seated assumptions that the interlocutor might not be even aware of. Once they are uncovered, the interlocutor will 'hate himself', but at the same will be in a better epistemic condition for further inquiry – the mistaken assumptions distorting his understanding of the problems and concepts involved will be removed. This goal of 'showing' the interlocutor where his mistakes lie sets Socrates' midwifery apart from the more destructive *elenchus* of the early dialogues.

Revision of beliefs is often based on authority. We are told (by someone we consider to have knowledge) that a particular assumption that we (sometimes unconsciously) make is false and in light of this we come to change our mind about other, connected beliefs too. This option is not open for Socrates. Since he cannot authoritatively *tell* his interlocutors where they make mistakes and which of their (sometimes unconsciously made) assumptions are false, he has to rely on his 'testing' the interlocutor's already existing framework of beliefs, showing that this framework is inconsistent and in need of revision. If all goes well, the interlocutor eventually realizes which of his assumptions are false and willingly discards this assumption, and also understands *why* the revision is necessary (this is not necessarily the case if the beliefs are revised simply on someone's external authority). In this sense Socratic showing or displaying of the interlocutor's mistakes must be indirect – it is the interlocutor *himself* who has to notice which one of his background assumptions is problematic and discard this assumption. Socrates cannot simply point out the mistake (this would conflict with Socrates' ignorance). Socrates' midwifery quite literally 'shows' (ἐνδεικνύμενος) the mistakes of the interlocutor, not by telling or

concepts are typically central because they figure in central beliefs, and central beliefs often involve central concepts. /--/ Even if we could somehow divest ourselves of such beliefs, doing so would leave us with a very different picture of the world from the one most of us have now.' Swoyer (2003)

¹⁵¹ Plato does, in dialogues other than the *Theaetetus*, explicitly recognize the possibility that a few central beliefs might distort someone's grasp of the whole conceptual field. For example, in the *Phaedo* the non-philosophers lack understanding of the true nature of virtues (esp. moderation and courage) since one of their central beliefs connects virtues with the body (*Phd.* 68B-69D). Another (not wholly unrelated) example comes from the *Republic*, where the 'lovers of sights and sounds' refuse to acknowledge that Beauty (and the rest of the Forms) has being apart from the many beautiful things (*Rep.* 476C), which causes them to live in a dream-like state. Beliefs such as this one are plausible candidates for the meaning of the metaphorical 'bonds' (ἐκ παίδων ὄντας ἐν δεσμοῖς, *Rep.* 514A) that hold the gaze of the prisoners fixed onto the shadows of the wall in *Republic's* Cave. The *Theaetetus* lacks the sharp distinction between the philosophers and non-philosophers that is typical to Plato's middle period dialogues. Thus one might assume that Socrates is more optimistic about Theaetetus' central beliefs about knowledge. However, I shall propose in the next chapter that it is useful to read the first part of the *Theaetetus* as a critique and eventual discarding of Theaetetus' central belief that all human cognition is perception-like.

admonition, but by revealing the problematic consequences of these mistakes, thus enabling the interlocutor to recognize which of his assumptions are problematic. This is the ‘endeictic’ aspect of Socrates’ midwifery.¹⁵²

This creates a paradoxical situation: in order to show his interlocutor where he makes mistakes, Socrates has to rely on his interlocutor’s beliefs which are partly formed on the same mistaken assumptions that Socrates is trying to point out. As I have emphasized before, Socrates cannot bring anything into the discussion that is not explicitly accepted by Theaetetus (or Theodorus, who replaces Theaetetus and also commits himself to the claims made, see 181C). Therefore, the discussion conducted by Socrates is heavily dependent on Theaetetus’ understanding of the central concepts involved.¹⁵³ Socrates has to conduct the discussion in a language that Theaetetus understands.

It is likely that the interlocutor’s understanding of the central concepts used in the discussion is partial and distorted for the following reason. Individual beliefs are not held in isolation. Each of our beliefs is supported by many other beliefs that we hold. This is also the case with false beliefs, which are in part supported by other false beliefs. For example, Theaetetus believes that knowledge is perception. This belief must be supported by certain background assumptions Theaetetus makes about both the nature of knowledge and the nature of perception. These assumptions make the definition ‘knowledge is perception’ plausible to Theaetetus. Since the definition is ultimately shown to be false, it is likely that Theaetetus’ background assumptions about the notions of perception and knowledge that make the definition initially plausible to him, are also false. This means that Theaetetus’ grasp of the concepts involved must be problematic from the outset. From this it follows that since Socrates has to perform his midwifery in terms that the interlocutor understands, he also has to make concessions to certain mistaken assumptions made by the interlocutor, hoping that the discussion will later on offer an opportunity for the interlocutor to (implicitly or explicitly) correct his way of seeing things.

It is important to note that after Protagoras’ criticism of Socrates’ initial controversialist approach to Theaetetus, the discussion switches over to Theodorus, who answers Socrates’ questions on Protagoras’ behalf (168D–184B). The discussion with Theaetetus resumes only at the beginning of the Passage of the Commons. If I am right about how Socrates’ midwifery works,

¹⁵² The above passage influenced the ancient commentators to describe some of Plato’s dialogues as *endeictic*: ‘According to this passage [*Tht.* 167E-168A], the difference between anatreptic and endeictic dialogues ought to be the desire to induce errors in former and the desire to bring to light existing errors in the latter.’ (Tarrant 2000: 79)

¹⁵³ Maybe the clearest expression of this requirement can be found in *Meno* 75D, where it is said that the terms of the argument have to be known (εἰδέναι) to those engaged in a discussion. Of course, it is not easy to determine what Socrates means by requirement. In the literature it has sometimes been called the ‘dialectical requirement’. Fine expresses it in the following manner: ‘If it [i.e. the argument] is to be genuinely dialectical, then, as Plato explains in the *Meno* (75D), it should only use claims that are (believed to be) true, and that the interlocutor accepts; this is Plato’s *dialectical requirement* (DR).’ (Fine 1990/2003: 87)

then in the Passage of the Commons Socrates should (among other things) aim to point out the mistaken (and perhaps unconscious) assumptions lead Theaetetus to identify knowledge with perception. But before turning to the Passage of the Commons, it is useful take a closer look at Theaetetus' definition. This is the task of the next section.

2. The Aisthetic Model of Cognition

When we take into account the specifics of Socrates' method (namely, that it remains dependent on the interlocutor's framework of beliefs), it is worth asking what beliefs Theaetetus can be said to hold in the Passage of the Commons. Theaetetus holding certain beliefs or making certain assumptions (and Socrates adjusting the discussion accordingly) could help to explain why the relation of the soul to 'being' is portrayed in an ambiguous manner in the Passage of the Commons. In this section, I will argue that Theaetetus takes, throughout the discussion of his first definition, all human cognitive acts to involve direct apprehension or grasp of its objects. In fact, Theaetetus thinks of human cognition as being the same or similar to perception. Perception should be construed here, however, quite generally as 'direct awareness' and not narrowly as 'sense-perception'.

What does Theaetetus *mean* with his first definition? 'It seems to me that a man who knows something perceives what he knows (δοκεῖ οὖν μοι ὁ ἐπιστάμενός τι αἰσθάνεσθαι τοῦτο ὃ ἐπίσταται), and the way it appears (φαίνεται) at present, at any rate, is that knowledge is simply perception (οὐκ ἄλλο τί ἐστὶν ἐπιστήμη ἢ αἴσθησις)' (151E). Theaetetus says that knowledge is nothing but perception. This sounds like an identity claim. And indeed, throughout the first part of the dialogue Socrates addresses Theaetetus' definition as claiming that perception is knowledge or that knowledge is perception or that they are simply 'the same' (158A5–6, 160D5–6, 160E1–2, 164A6, 164D9–10, 165D7, 179D1, 182E7, 184B6, 186E9, 210A9).

The fact that Socrates and Theaetetus take knowledge and perception ('hypothetically', 165D1) to be identical fits well with Socratic requirement for definitions of the earlier dialogues. The requirement is that the *definiens* (in this case perception) of F (in this case knowledge) should apply to all things F (all instances of knowing should also be instances of perceiving) and *definiens* should not apply to things not-F (there should not be any instances of perceiving that are not instances of knowing). Dancy (2004: 80) calls this 'The Substitutivity Requirement: its [i.e. the definition's] *definiens* must be substitutable *salva veritate* for its *definiendum*.'¹⁵⁴ Indeed, Socrates explicitly asks Theaetetus

¹⁵⁴ Dancy takes the Substitutivity Requirement to entail the following: 'An alleged definition can be overthrown by counterexamples. Counterexamples can either be cases that satisfy the alleged *definiens* but not the *definiendum*, or cases that satisfy the *definiendum* but not the alleged *definiens*. Cases of the first type show that the *definiens* is not a necessary condition for the application of the *definiendum*; cases of the second, that it is not a sufficient

to gather all ‘knowledges’ into one account (πολλὰς ἐπιστήμας ἐνὶ λόγῳ προσειπεῖν, 148D9), which is presumably exactly what Theaetetus aims to accomplish with his first definition, ‘knowledge is perception’. Hence, it seems safe to assume that Theaetetus’ definition is an identity claim.

However, there is a second and slightly more complex question. What does Theaetetus identify knowledge *with*?

‘Liddell-Scott’ Dictionary gives two meanings of αἰσθάνεσθαι:

- (i) to apprehend by the senses, to see, to hear;
- (ii) to apprehend by the mind, to understand.

The former (a) is the narrow meaning of the word αἰσθάνεσθαι, i.e. ‘sense-perception’ (perception by means of the five bodily senses). The latter (b) indicates a much broader use of the term, where it means ‘understanding’, ‘recognizing’ and ‘being aware of...’¹⁵⁵ on a very general level and is not necessarily confined to the bodily senses. Which one of these two meanings of αἰσθάνεσθαι does Theaetetus have in mind, when he says that knowledge is αἴσθησις? Majority of the commentators (e.g. Bostock 1988, Burnyeat 1990, Fine 1994, Sedley 2004) assume that αἴσθησις has to mean sense-perception in the first, narrow sense – hearing, smelling, seeing, etc.¹⁵⁶ One reason behind this assumption is, no doubt, that the notion of ‘sense perception’ is so deeply entrenched in our conceptual repertoire (the same does not necessarily apply to Plato). If this reading is correct, Theaetetus expresses a strongly empiricist theory of knowledge – knowledge is not only *derived from* or grounded in sense perception, it is *identical* to sense perception. This reading finds support in Theaetetus’ and Socrates’ using αἴσθησις in the conclusion of the first part of the dialogue in the narrow sense:

‘S. Now what name would you give to the former – seeing, hearing, smelling, feeling cold and warm? T. I call that perceiving – what else could I call it? S. So the whole lot taken together is perception? T. Necessarily.’ (186D8-E3).

condition.’ (Dancy 2004: 82). Dancy also (p. 82–114) provides references to passages in the Socratic dialogues that express Socrates’ adherence to this requirement.

¹⁵⁵ ‘Though *aisthanesthai* presumably is formed from a root which signifies ‘hearing’, its ordinary use is quite general. It can be used in any case in which one perceives something by the senses and even more generally in any case in which one becomes aware of something, however it this may come about...It is used whenever someone becomes aware of something. And up to Plato’s time, and often far beyond it, there is no clear recognition that there are two radically different ways in which we become aware of something, one by sense-perception and the other in some other way, e.g., by a grasp of the mind.’ (M. Frede (1987: 377–378))

¹⁵⁶ The following scholars are among the few that resist identifying αἴσθησις with sense-perception: Dancy (1987), Frede (1987) and Lee (2005: 77–117).

Is Theaetetus, at 151E1–3, then claiming that knowledge is the same as seeing, hearing, smelling, i.e. the ‘whole lot taken together’ (implying that these are the only αἰσθήσεις)? I think that to read the claims made at 186D–E into Theaetetus’ initial definition would amount to reading the dialogue backwards. It might be the case that the discussion starts with the broad notion of ‘perception’ and switches to narrow notion at the Passage of the Commons. I shall maintain that the narrow notion of αἴσθησις indeed only emerges in the Passage of the Commons, the discussion that precedes relies on ‘perception’ in the broad sense. Of course, pre-Platonic Greek does not clearly distinguish between these two uses of the verb¹⁵⁷. It is perhaps one of Plato’s great achievements in the Passage of the Commons to clearly delineate a novel, narrow notion of ‘perception’ as ‘sense perception’ (this claim is made by M. Frede 1987). I will argue that it is difficult to make sense of the whole first part of the Theaetetus (151E–184B) if one reads into the whole discussion the narrow notion of αἴσθησις.

First, αἰσθάνεσθαι rarely means ‘perceive by means of the senses’ in Plato. Browsing through the dialogues for the occurrences of αἰσθάνεσθαι, it quickly becomes evident that the large majority of the uses of the verb have no special relation to perceiving by means of the senses at all. It is only in special, one could almost say ‘technical’, contexts where sensory aspect of αἰσθάνεσθαι is stressed.¹⁵⁸ The pre-theoretical use of αἰσθάνεσθαι is reflected by the very large variety of different English translations of this verb. Here is a sample of how the verb has been translated in Plato’s dialogues: ‘to perceive’, ‘understand’, ‘notice’, ‘recognize’, ‘see’, ‘hear’, ‘find’, ‘apprehend’, ‘observe’, ‘realize’, ‘become aware’, ‘be aware’, ‘sense’, ‘experience’, ‘know’, ‘feel’, etc. The objects that one ‘recognizes’ or is ‘aware of’, have in majority of cases nothing to do with perceptual properties in the narrow sense. The ‘pre-theoretical’ notion of αἰσθάνεσθαι is apparently completely neutral as to the objects of this particular mental activity. The objects of αἰσθάνεσθαι can be very complex states of affair (*Lys.* 209D), propositions (*Rep.* 500E), conclusions of an argument (*Gorg.* 478C and 496E), even the Forms (*Rep.* 538 B–C), the soul (*Rep.* 608D), etc. The verb αἰσθάνεσθαι is often followed by a prepositional clause introduced by ὅτι (i.e. ‘that’), it also occurs with περί (i.e. ‘about’), meaning ‘to understand that’, ‘to recognize that’ (indicating propositional complexity), but can also take a simple object in which case it normally means to ‘recognize’.

The term ‘awareness’ suggested by M. Frede (1987: 377–378) captures the large variety of different cognitive relations very well. Plato never characterizes αἴσθησις as being mistaken or false, just like in English one cannot be falsely aware of anything. The variety of different translations quoted above – ‘to apprehend’, ‘observe’, ‘realize’, and ‘recognize’ – shows, too, that the thing or a

¹⁵⁷ For an overview of the many nuances of meaning of αἰσθάνεσθαι in Pre-Platonic Attic Greek, see Schirren (1998, esp. 3–16).

¹⁵⁸ For example, *Phd.* 65D–67B and *Rep.* 523E–524C.

state of affairs realized or apprehended exists or obtains. There are two important features (in light of the present task) of the verb αἰσθάνεσθαι:

- (i) αἰσθάνεσθαι is always used as a success-verb, which implies that there is no false αἴσθησις; and its objects, i.e. the states of affairs or propositions, either exist (in case of objects) or are true (in case of propositions).
- (ii) αἰσθάνεσθαι designates an occurrent state of mind, lacking dispositional characteristics, being an event-like and implying immediate or direct grasp.

Now, if Theaetetus takes all human cognition to involve awareness in the above described sense then it would make sense to propose, in the Passage of the Commons, that the soul apprehends ‘being’ simply by entertaining a thought involving (explicitly or implicitly) the term ‘is’. This simply fits with the notion of ‘awareness’ as requiring the existence of its objects. However, before I defend this position in greater detail, it is necessary to show that αἴσθησις should indeed be taken in this broader sense throughout the discussion that precedes the Passage of the Commons. This is what I will attempt to do now.

First, Theaetetus’ definition is not the first answer to Socrates’ question ‘what is knowledge?’ (145E and 146C), it is simply the first correct *kind* of an answer, i.e. the first answer that fits the requirements of a definition (146D–147C)¹⁵⁹. Theaetetus’ original attempt was to enumerate examples of things that he takes to be knowledge, a mistake common to many Socrates’ discussion partners in Plato’s earlier dialogues.¹⁶⁰ The examples listed by Theaetetus include geometry, cobbling and ‘the subjects you enumerated just now’ (146D), by which Theaetetus presumably means ‘astronomy, arithmetic and music – all that an educated man should know’ (145A). This answer is criticized and only then does Theaetetus offer the first (formally) satisfactory answer to Socrates’ question – ‘knowledge is the same as αἴσθησις’. Does Theaetetus intend there to be a *relation* between his examples of knowledge and his first definition? I think that the text leaves no doubt that he does. The definition of ‘powers’ that Theaetetus and his friend (younger) Socrates came up with aims to ‘collect the powers into one (συλλαβεῖν εἰς ἓν) by which we could refer (προσαγορεύομεν) to them’ (147D8-E1). Socrates explicitly says that this is exactly what Theaetetus should do concerning the ‘many knowledges’ he has listed: ‘Just as you collected them [i.e. the powers], many as they are, in one class (ὥσπερ ταύτας πολλὰς οὐσας ἐνὶ εἵδει περιέλαβες) try, in the same way, to find one account by which to speak of many kinds of knowledge (οὕτω καὶ τὰς πολλὰς ἐπιστήμας ἐνὶ λόγῳ προσειπεῖν)’ (148D5–9). The subsequent definition is supposed to ‘gather into one’ the examples of knowledge just listed. If αἴσθησις is taken to mean sense-perception, it is impossible to explain how Theaetetus (a budding mathematician, after all, 147D–148B) could think that they all fall under this class.¹⁶¹ On the other hand, definition that takes (e.g.) geometry or cobbling to be cases of αἴσθησις in the sense of ‘awareness’ would make good

¹⁵⁹ See Sedley (2004: 19–28, esp. 20–21) for an overview of what these requirements are.

¹⁶⁰ For example, *Eyth.* 5D–6E, *Lach.* 190E, *Meno* 72E–74B.

¹⁶¹ Geach (1966: 372)

sense. We could, of course, complain that the definition is uninformative or vacuous (see, e.g. Dancy 1987), but it doubtless fits the required form of the definition and could reasonably be seen as necessary and sufficient for both the ‘theoretical’ and the ‘practical’ branches of knowledge. Thus, what has happened previously, before Theaetetus proposed his definition, strongly suggests that αἴσθησις should be read in the broad sense as ‘understanding’ or ‘awareness’.

The situation is quite similar when one takes a closer look at what happens next in the dialogue. This is especially important since Socrates’ next moves (made with Theaetetus’ consent) aim to give Theaetetus’ definition a more determinate content.

Theaetetus’ definition is immediately connected to Protagoras’ Measure Doctrine, according to which *all* appearances are true – everything *is* for the person the way it appears to the person (151E9–C3). At first it looks as if the connection between Theaetetus’ definition and Measure Doctrine is supposed to cover only perceptual appearances (152C1–2). However, as soon as the Secret Doctrine is introduced, it turns out that Measure Doctrine in connection with the Secret Doctrine is supposed to cover *everything*, i.e. all properties are such that they fall under the scope of Protagoras’ two doctrines (152D1–E1). Perceptual predicates in the narrow sense serve as *paradigmatic* cases for introducing ‘appearings’ that are not perceptual in the narrow sense.¹⁶²

If Theaetetus’ definition should cover only perception in the narrow sense, then the Measure Doctrine and the Secret Doctrine would not support the definition, but would actually be *inconsistent* with it¹⁶³. Plato makes it quite

¹⁶² Maybe the claim that ‘appearing and perception are the same, in the case of that which is hot and everything *of that sort*’ (152C) have to be read as restricting αἴσθησις to narrow perceptual qualities? No. My suggestion is simple: Socrates is not identifying αἴσθησις with the ‘appearing’ of perceptual properties (in the narrow sense). I think that the clause ‘hot and everything of that sort’ should not be read as restrictive but rather as explanatory – Theaetetus is supposed to grasp that Protagoras equates appearance and perception (‘and this ‘appears’ is perceiving’ (152b12)). In order to make his equation plausible, Socrates concentrates on the paradigmatic cases of perception, e.g. when someone feels (the wind to be) cold, for example. This is not meant to restrict αἴσθησις to perceptual qualities in the narrow sense, but rather explain how perception and appearance come to be the same thing in certain paradigmatic cases. See also Burnyeat (1976a: 45).

¹⁶³ This is admitted by McDowell (1973: 121). Burnyeat thinks that Theaetetus’ definition offers no grounds for introducing Protagoras’ claim that *all* appearances are true (not only perceptual appearances), and says that ‘Protagoras applied the same principle to non-perceptual cases, where, one might think, “It appears to a that p” hardly amounts to more than that a judges or believes that p. The extension may have little but bluff to support it.’ (1976a: 45). See also Fine (1994: 134, n. 9). However, the problem is not only that there are no sufficient grounds in the dialogue for making non-perceptual appearances come out true. The problem is that Theaetetus’ definition comes out false, if non-perceptual appearances are all true and Theaetetus’ definition concerns perception in the narrow sense. However, if ‘perception’ is taken in the broad sense, it is clear both how Protagoras’ Measure Doctrine supports Theaetetus’ definition and it is also clear that Theaetetus’ definition does justify Protagoras’ position according to which all appearances to be true.

clear that Theaetetus' definition is to be taken as an identity claim. Now, if Theaetetus had in mind only perceptual acts in the narrow sense, then Protagoras, in claiming that dreams and beliefs and fears, etc., are all true and of 'what is' – that is, they are cases of knowledge (157E–160D) – would imply that not all cases of knowledge are in fact cases of perception (beliefs, thoughts, and fears, etc., are different from perception in the narrow sense, minimally because they can be about properties that are not perceptual, e.g. 'this is just'). If all beliefs (concerning both perceptual and non-perceptual properties) are true and 'of what is', then there are cases where *x* is an instance of knowledge but *x* is not an instance of perception. The identity between perception and knowledge would break down. Thus we must assume that dreams, beliefs, thoughts, memory, etc., simply *are* perceptions, which means that perception has to be taken in its broad sense. Since Socrates stresses several times that Theaetetus' definition and Protagorean Measure-Doctrine and the Secret Doctrine come much to the same thing (esp. 160D–E), it is mandatory to take perception in Theaetetus' initial definition to be broad in scope. Further, Socrates' connecting Theaetetus' definition with a theory that is obviously inconsistent with this definition would seriously undermine Socrates' role as a midwife, as the one who is supposed to bring out the implications of his interlocutor's definition.¹⁶⁴ Implications of a proposition cannot be inconsistent with it. If one wants to preserve the integrity of Socrates' method in the *Theaetetus*, I see no other option but to take 'perception' in the broad sense.

What is the nature of the relation between Theaetetus' definition ('knowledge is the same as awareness'), Protagoras Measure Doctrine ('all appearances are true') and the Secret Doctrine ('everything is in constant flux')? If perception is taken in the broad sense, then the most reasonable way to understand the relation is roughly the following. Theaetetus, while offering his definition, is relying on a vague idea that to have knowledge is the same as to have direct awareness of how things are. He tentatively proposes that knowledge is 'some sort of awareness', having a characteristic of immediate recognition. When Socrates brings Protagoras into the discussion, he does not

¹⁶⁴ This conflicts with the views expressed by several eminent scholars, such as Fine (1994), Sedley (2004: 49–54), among others. Their position is, roughly, the following. 'Perception' should be read in the narrow sense, as 'sense-perception' (neither Fine, Sedley, nor Bostock consider the alternative possibility). Consequently, one should also distinguish between Broad and Narrow Protagoreanism. Narrow Protagoreanism maintains that *perceptual* appearances are true. Broad Protagoreanism maintains that *all* appearances (both perceptual and non-perceptual) are true. Broad Protagoreanism entails Narrow Protagoreanism. Narrow Protagoreanism supports Theaetetus' definition that knowledge is the same as sense perception. The problem I mentioned in the last paragraph is that Broad Protagoreanism contradicts with Theaetetus' definition, since it entails that non-perceptual appearances are also instances of knowledge. Neither Fine nor Sedley offer any way towards how one should resolve this difficulty. Thus it seems more economical to assume that the text does not distinguish between Narrow and Broad Protagoreanism. And, since Theaetetus' definition is said to mean the *same* as Protagoras' Measure Doctrine, it is likely that it should be construed as entailing 'perception' in the broad sense.

suggest that Theaetetus' definition *implies* Protagoras' Measure Doctrine. All he says is that Protagoras put 'the same point in a different way (τρόπον δέ τινα ἄλλον εἶρηκε τὰ αὐτὰ ταῦτα)' (152A1–2). Bringing in Protagoras is supposed to clarify Theaetetus' position, to give it determinate content. And, as Socrates soon points out, it is a good interpretation, since it makes αἴσθησις infallible (152C5–6). The Secret Doctrine is, in turn, meant to describe the world in which Protagoras' Measure Doctrine applies, a world in which Theaetetus' definition is correct. In this world all appearances (all acts of awareness) are true *simpliciter*.

Thus, to use Fine's (1994) terminology, I take Protagoras to be an infallibilist, and not a relativist. For a relativist (in Fine's terminology) there are no absolute truths, all truths are true relative to the person who holds the belief. Another possibility, according to Fine, would be to maintain that Protagoras is a perceptual relativist, who claims that perceptual properties exist only relative to a perceiver. However, both types of relativism leave it a complete mystery as to why the Secret Doctrine is introduced at all (see Fine 1994). There is no obvious connection between the doctrine of universal flux and the doctrine of relative truth (or perceptual relativism). Truth could easily be relative without everything moving or everything could move without truth being relative (Bostock 1988: 45). However, in case of infallibilism the connection is clearer. The Secret Doctrine is supposed to show how appearances or perceptions in the broad sense can be true *simpliciter* (not relatively true)¹⁶⁵. Plato presumably relies on a version of correspondence theory of truth, according to which truth depends on the way the world is. According to the Measure Doctrine, all appearances are *true*. This is equivalent to Theaetetus' definition that all perceptions (in the broad sense) are instances of knowledge, since knowledge is always true and 'what is' (152C5–6). In order to hold on to the Measure Doctrine and Theaetetus' definition, it is required that the world *changes* relative to appearances, since it is assumed that truth requires correspondence

¹⁶⁵ What, exactly, is the difference between relativism of truth and infallibilism? Relativism is a theory of *truth* that denies that there are objective truths – a belief is true *for* the person who holds this belief (in more modern language, truth is relative to some 'framework', see Swoyer 2003). Relativism of truth, in this sense, implies that truth does *not* consist in strict correspondence of thought with reality (for some discussion, see O'Grady (2007: 39–43)). 'True' simply means 'true for someone' (or 'believed by someone', or 'true in some framework'). Thus, relativism of truth does not imply anything about ontology or about how the world is. Infallibilism, on the other hand, is not a theory of truth. It simply assumes that truth consists in (some form of) correspondence with reality. The infallibilist claims, however, that reality (or facts) are dependent on the person who holds a belief, and that therefore each belief of a person is objectively true. Thus, infallibilism is a theory about belief that *does* have ontological implications. One could, perhaps, say that relativism of truth and infallibilism come to mean the same thing if one subscribes to *both* relativism of truth and correspondence-theory of truth (see next footnote). For some discussion, see Fine (1994: 138–141).

with reality, and appearances (perceptions) conflict.¹⁶⁶ This is why the doctrine of flux plays such an important role in the text. However, I think that Sedley (2004: 50 n. 15) is correct to insist that ‘relativism’ is a term that captures Protagoras’ meaning better than Fine’s ‘infallibilism’. Thus we could speak of ‘relativism of worlds’ or ‘relativism of facts’, as opposed to ‘relativism of truth’. According to this theory, the way the world is, is dependent on the perceiver.

The Secret Doctrine makes no clear distinction between perceptual acts in the narrow sense and other cognitive acts. Although the Secret Doctrine uses perceptual (in the narrow sense) properties as examples of how the ontology of flux explains cognition, it is clear that it applies to all cognitive acts whatsoever. When Socrates lays out the ontology of the Secret Doctrine, he says that:

There are two kinds of change (τῆς δὲ κινήσεως δύο εἶδη), each unlimited in number, the one having the power of acting and the the power of being acted on (δύναμιν δὲ τὸ μὲν ποιεῖν ἔχον, τὸ δὲ πάσχειν). From their intercourse (ὁμιλίας), and their friction with one another, there come to offspring, unlimited in number but coming in pairs of twin (δίδυμα), of which one is a perceived thing (αἰσθητόν) and other a perception (αἴσθησις), which is on every occasion generated and brought to birth together with a perceived thing (μετὰ τοῦ αἰσθητοῦ). (156A6-B2)

The list of ‘perceptions’ that Socrates goes on to give is the following:

Now we have names for these perceptions, of the following sort: seeings, hearings, smellings, feelings of cold, feelings of heat; also what are called pleasures, pains, desires, fears and others. The nameless ones are unlimited in number, but those which have been given names are extremely numerous. (156B2–6)

Socrates includes, with Theaetetus’ silent consent, in the list of perceptions pleasures, pains, desires and fears. This means that the ontology of αἴσθησις he is laying out is supposed to cover a scope that is much broader than the narrow notion of αἴσθησις, confined to the five senses (perception as understood in the Passage of the Commons). In fact, he stresses that αἰσθήσεις are *unlimited* in number. Socrates continues:

¹⁶⁶ ‘So a correspondence theorist will resist most forms of cognitive relativism. Nevertheless, one may query whether this really has to be the case. It is true that those currently defending correspondence theories of truth, for example Michael Devitt or John Searle, are avowed anti-relativists and explicitly use their correspondence theories to challenge various forms of relativism. *Yet could there be a correspondence theorist who held to ontological relativity, that there is no one way the world is, and yet held that truth is correspondence with multiple realities?*’ (O’Grady 2007: 40, my emphasis). I think this is precisely the position attributed to Protagoras by Plato, only that he does not speak of multiple realities (although this, too, might be implied at 160C), but of one reality that is constantly changing in relation to the perceiver.

On the other side, the appropriate class of perceived things shares a common origin (ὁμόγονον) with each set of perceptions: colors of every kind with seeings of every kind, sounds with hearings in the same way, and the other perceived things with the other perceptions, coming into being from the same origin (συγγενῇ γιγνόμενα). (156B7-C4)

It turns out that all properties that things can be said to have are explained in the similar fashion, as a result of the intercourse of the relevant bodily organ with its object: ‘We must think of the other cases, too, in the same way: we must take it that nothing is hard, hot, or *anything* just by itself’ (156E8–157A1). The ontology of flux concerns all the properties that things can have: none of them have separate ‘being’ from the cognisant; rather, all of them are ‘offsprings’ of the two slow motions (the perceiving eye and the thing perceived, e.g. a stone, 156D–E). This is, I think made obvious by the fact that after Socrates has finished the overview of the ontology of flux, he lists moral and aesthetic properties amongst the properties that are dependent from the perceiver: ‘Once again, then, tell me if you’re satisfied with this: nothing is good, beautiful, or any of the things we were going through just now, but things always come to be so?’ (157D7–9). If the ontology presented by Socrates, at 156A3–157C2, would concern only perceptual properties in the narrow sense, it would be a mystery why Theaetetus would call the inclusion of properties ‘good’ and ‘just’ under the heading of Secret Doctrine ‘extraordinarily reasonable’. It seems, then, that αἴσθησις is, in the discussion of the Secret Doctrine, implicitly taken to be broad in scope by both Theaetetus and Socrates.

In the subsequent discussion of Protagoras’ doctrine, neither Socrates nor Theaetetus draw a clear line between the cognitive acts that require the use of bodily senses and the cognitive acts that do not. Dreaming (158E1ff.), desiring (156B6), fearing (156B6), thinking (158B4) and remembering (163D–164C) are all lumped together, thereby forming a single cognitive faculty that, according to Protagoras’ doctrine, is infallible and always about ‘what is’. This cognitive faculty is bound to its objects by necessity, since all the ‘perceptions’ – i.e. the acts of believing, thinking, remembering and perceiving – are dependent on their objects, just as the objects are dependent on them. This leaves no room for falsity:

Whenever I come to be perceiving, I necessarily come to be perceiving something (Ἀνάγκη δέ γε ἐμέ τε τινὸς γίγνεσθαι, ὅταν αἰσθανόμενος γίγνωμαι); because it’s impossible to come to be perceiving, but not to be perceiving anything (αἰσθανόμενον γάρ, μηδενὸς δὲ αἰσθανόμενον, ἀδύνατον γίγνεσθαι). And whenever it comes to be sweet, bitter, or anything of that kind, it necessarily comes to be so for someone (τινὶ γίγνεσθαι), because it’s impossible to be sweet, but not sweet for anyone (μηδενὶ). (160A7-B3)

Thus, according to the Secret Doctrine, Theaetetus’ αἴσθησις and Protagoras’ ‘appearance’ come to mean the same thing. The Secret Doctrine understood

along these lines represents a specific understanding of how cognition works. And since it represents an interpretation of Theaetetus' definition, it also 'brings out to light' (157D) what Theaetetus thinks about cognition in general. According to this model of cognition:

- (i) αἴσθησις (or 'appearance') is a single cognitive faculty of the soul, comprising perception in the narrow sense, but also thinking, dreaming, fearing, etc;
- (ii) each of the different αἰσθήσεις (or 'appearances') is attached to its proper object and there always is an object corresponding to an αἴσθησις (or 'appearance');
- (iii) αἴσθησις (or 'appearance') always involves a direct interaction with the sense organ and the object.

In what follows, I will refer to it as the 'aesthetic model of cognition', since it fits well with the wide notion of αἴσθησις as an infallible state of mind that implies immediate contact with its object. Does the aesthetic model apply to beliefs, too? I think that it does and that applying this model to beliefs results in a particular (Protagorean) notion of belief that will be discarded in the Passage of the Commons.

When Socrates is laying out the ontology of the Secret Doctrine, he does not mention beliefs. However, after the discussion of the ontology of the Secret Doctrine is complete, he quickly connects the Secret Doctrine with dreams, hallucinations and madness. Theaetetus agrees that in these cases people are usually thought to hold false *beliefs* (158B), e.g. that they are flying or that they are gods. Socrates points out to Theaetetus that the Secret Doctrine can account for these situations as well. One simply has to assume, with Protagoras, the beliefs held by Socrates-ill and the beliefs held by Socrates-well are not held by the same people: Socrates-ill is a different person from Socrates-well (159D). The αἴσθησις resulting from the collision of Socrates-ill with wine, results in an αἴσθησις of bitterness, whereas an αἴσθησις resulting from the collision of Socrates-well with of wine, results in αἴσθησις of sweetness. According to the Secret Doctrine, these perceptions of bitterness and sweetness are both true. The same applies to the cases of sleep, madness and hallucinating, beliefs, thoughts, etc.

This suggests that Socrates and Theaetetus do not draw a clear line between αἰσθήσις and belief. It seems that cases of dreaming to fly and hallucinating being a god simply *are* beliefs (Sprute 1962: 36–42). This is why Socrates can easily rephrase claims made about perception and appearance in the Secret Doctrine into a claim that all *beliefs* are true (e.g. 161D, 167C-B). This claim can be substantiated by two considerations. The first consideration is textual. Throughout the discussion of Protagoras' Measure Doctrine, Socrates slides between the verbs for 'perceiving', 'appearing', 'holding a belief' and 'thinking'. He seems to use all these verbs interchangeably. Socrates says, for example:

So my perception is true for me – because it’s always of the being that’s mine (τῆς γὰρ ἐμῆς οὐσίας ἀεί ἐστιν) – and, as Protagoras said, it’s for me to decide (ἐγὼ κριτῆς), of the things that are for me, that/how they are, and of the things that are not, that/how they are not (τῶν τε ὄντων ἐμοὶ ὡς ἔστι, καὶ τῶν μὴ ὄντων ὡς οὐκ ἔστιν). – Apparently. – Well then, if I’m free from falsehood (ἄψευδής), and don’t trip up in my thinking (διανοίᾳ) about the things that are, how could I fail to have knowledge of the things I’m a perceiver of (οὐκ ἐπιστήμων ἂν εἶην ὥνπερ αἰσθητής)? (160C-D)

Here Socrates does not distinguish between perceiving, deciding or judging and thinking. Similar slides occur elsewhere, e.g. 161D, 161E, 166E–167C. The Protagorean notion of ‘appearance’ covers very different forms of cognitive activity. And since perception, thinking, believing, etc. are all indiscriminately referred to as ‘appearances’, it is only natural that the limits between different types of appearances are very hazy, even non-existent.¹⁶⁷

Secondly, there is a philosophical consideration that supports making the connection between appearances, perception and beliefs very close. If perceptions and beliefs were recognized as two different types of cognitive activity, then the Secret Doctrine would not offer Protagoras the support that Socrates assumes it does. For example, if beliefs were formed *on the basis of* or *about* perceptions and appearances, while being distinct from these perceptions and appearances, this would allow for mistaken beliefs about the very same perceptions and appearances. Socrates-ill, for example, could mistakenly judge that the wine tastes sweet (for him), whereas in fact it tastes bitter (for him). Protagoras insists that his Secret Doctrine licences the conclusion that all beliefs are true (167A–C). If perceptions, appearances and beliefs were taken to be different cognitive states then Protagoras would need an additional argument as to why the mechanics of αἴσθησις presented in his Secret Doctrine justifies his global relativism about *belief*. I think that the most natural way to read the text is to take Protagoras’ notions of perception, appearance and belief to have roughly the same extension (this is licensed and explained by the fact that Theaetetus’ notion of perception is broad). This is why Protagoras can generalise from perception to appearance to belief and claim that they are all infallible.

The Protagorean notion of belief has the following characteristics that result from the aisthetic model of cognition. First, Protagoras (i.e. Socrates speaking for Protagoras) takes belief formation to be *passive*. Beliefs simply reflect how

¹⁶⁷ There was a discussion in German literature (see Sprute (1962: 36–42), Ebert (1966), Sprute (1969)) whether δόξα, in the first part of the *Theaetetus* should be translated as *Vorstellung* or as *Meinung*. It seems that the text supports Sprute’s position, according to which it is not possible to draw a clear distinction between *Vorstellung* and *Meinung* in the first part of the *Theaetetus*. See also Lafrance (1981: 245–249). However, it is important to bear in mind that this vague notion of δόξα is not *Plato’s own*, but rather results from Protagoras’ and Theaetetus’ understanding of human cognition, i.e. it results from the aisthetic model of cognition. Socrates comes to a much clearer notion of δόξα in the Passage of the Commons, where he also implicitly criticizes the aisthetic model.

things appear to us. If the wine appears sweet to Socrates, Socrates also (by the same token) believes that the wine *is* sweet. There is no difference between wine appearing sweet and the belief according to which it is sweet, the two are identical. The same applies to properties that are not perceptual (in the narrow sense), like ‘just’, or ‘convincing’ (e.g. 172A). That beliefs are coextensive with what appears to us, whereas we remain passive is, I think, supported by the claim Protagoras makes in his defence speech. He implies that it is not even *possible* to have a belief that transcends one’s present experience, i.e. what someone passively (πάσχει) experiences. Beliefs are not formed in taking into account the possible alternative candidate-beliefs.

It’s not that anyone ever makes someone whose beliefs are false (ψευδῇ δοξάζοντά) come, later on, to believe what’s true: after all, it isn’t possible to have in one’s belief the things which are not (οὔτε γὰρ τὰ μὴ ὄντα δυνατόν δοξάσαι), *or anything other than what one’s experiencing*, which is always true (οὔτε ἄλλα παρ’ ἧ ἂν πάσχει, ταῦτα δὲ ἀεὶ ἀληθῆ). (167A-B)

Second important feature of Protagorean notion of belief is that (since belief-formation is passive) one does not choose among possible propositions to believe. The beliefs just ‘come to’ one. All belief-formation is first-order, second-order considerations, like the question whether, (e.g.) I am in the right epistemic condition to form a belief that the wine is sweet do not play any role in forming beliefs. If something appears as sweet, I semi-automatically generate the relevant belief. More precisely, the appearance simply *is* belief. Forming beliefs is, for Protagoras, *flat*, it never involves second order considerations.¹⁶⁸

Thirdly, beliefs are *atomistic* for Protagoras, beliefs are not formed on the background of the other beliefs that the person holds. If something appears to me, at the moment, just or sweet, then I believe that this thing is just or sweet, regardless of all the other beliefs I might hold about these matters. As a matter of fact – and this where Protagoras’ theory is truly radical – a given person *cannot* have more than one belief, by acquiring a (new) belief a person becomes someone else. This is a consequence of Secret Doctrine’s ontology; the appearance (the belief) that the wine is sweet is just a momentary combination between the ‘slow movements’ of the tongue and the wine. Both the perception (the belief) and the quality perceived exist only for this particular moment. Protagoras goes even further; he denies the persistent identity of the subject in time: ‘So, for my part, I’ll never come to be perceiving any other thing in just this way; because there’s another perception for the thing and it makes the perceiver otherwise qualified and another thing’ (159E). This suggests that a person can receive only *one* appearance (belief, perception); if she is a subject of another appearance (belief, perception), she becomes a different person. Thus, beliefs are, for Protagoras, atomistic by definition.

¹⁶⁸ I am borrowing this term from McCabe (2000: 35–36). My discussion of Protagorean notion of beliefs is heavily indebted to her.

As scholars have noticed (McCabe 2000, Ch. 1), these features of Protagorean notion of belief pose a genuine threat to Socrates, since the Socratic method (as I showed in the previous section) relies on demonstrating inconsistencies within the framework of beliefs of the interlocutor. It requires that the interlocutor give up the beliefs found to be inconsistent with the rest of the beliefs that the interlocutor holds. Socrates requires that beliefs were not taken to be passive, flat and atomistic, but rather formed as a result of an active, reflective process, in relation with other beliefs held. Socrates recognizes that if Protagoras' notion of belief is correct, his whole elenctic project is in jeopardy:

I say nothing about my own case, and how much ridicule I'm bound to incur for my art of midwifery (τῆς ἐμῆς τέχνης τῆς ματευτικῆς); and I suppose the same goes for the whole business of dialectic (σύμπασα ἢ τοῦ διαλέγεσθαι πραγματεία). It must be (mustn't it?) a long and protracted bit of foolery to set about inspecting (ἐπισκοπεῖν) and testing (ἐλέγχειν) one another's appearing and beliefs (φαντασίας τε καὶ δόξας), if everyone's are correct (ὁρθὰς): as they are, if Protagoras' *Truth* is true, and it wasn't as a joke that it issued its oracular sayings from the book's inner sanctum (161E–162A)

Here Socrates emphasizes that *elenchus* would be pointless, if everyone's beliefs are correct. But, of course, making beliefs into passive and atomic appearances is the price Protagoras has to pay in order to maintain that all beliefs are true. As soon as Protagoras allows for reflection about appearances and for genuine inconsistency between beliefs, he also allows for the possibility of false belief. Thus, by claiming that all beliefs are correct, Protagoras simultaneously commits himself to a passive and atomistic notion of belief. And passive and atomistic notion of belief makes Socratic *elenchus* pointless. I hope to show that, in the Passage of the Commons, Plato comes to reject all three Protagorean characteristics of belief. Plato will show that belief-formation is not passive, nor are beliefs flat and atomistic.

Before turning to that passage, it is important to note that the subsequent refutation of Protagoras does not have to mean that Theaetetus is forced to abandon the aesthetic model of cognition. The arguments are not directed against this general model of cognition, but rather focus on specific problematic aspects of Protagoras' theory. Namely, that the theory will be in trouble in case it has to account for beliefs that range over other beliefs, and similarly in case of beliefs about the future. It is furthermore shown that the doctrine of universal flux results in Theaetetus' initial definition coming out both true and false. None of these arguments address the general picture of cognition that underlies Theaetetus' definition. This is only natural, since the interlocutor defending Protagoras is Theodorus and not Theaetetus.

There are three sets of arguments against Protagoras in the dialogue (not taking into account the arguments of 'logic-chopping' and the arguments relying on 'plausibility' at 160B–165E). First is the infamous self-refutation argument (169D–170D). I will not go into the details of this very complex and

controversial argument. What is uncontroversial, however, is that the self-refutation argument is directed at Protagoras' claim that all beliefs are true. The self-refutation results if Protagoras' allows beliefs (or judgments) to range over other beliefs (or judgments) and be true (for the people who hold them). If one focuses on Protagoras' own belief that all beliefs are true (for the people who hold them) then this results in the following. Protagoras' will have to admit that the beliefs of the majority who believe that *his* belief, namely that all beliefs are true, is false, is true (for the people who hold them). Which means that Protagoras himself has to admit that his belief, namely that all beliefs are true, is false (for the people who hold this belief). The main question of interpretation is whether Socrates is justified in omitting the clause in parenthesis and concluding that the Measure Doctrine is false for Protagoras, too.¹⁶⁹ Be that as it may, the Self-Refutation argument demonstrates that there are appearances (beliefs) that Protagoras cannot allow to be infallible, namely beliefs about beliefs.

The 'argument of the future' (172E–173B and 177C–179D) restricts the truth of beliefs to present experiences – two conflicting beliefs about future (involving terms like good or useful) cannot both be true. Socrates claims that the belief of a layman about whether he is going to have a fever 'and that degree of heat' (178C) and a contradictory belief (that the layman is *not* going to have a fever) held by a doctor, cannot both be true. The gist of the argument is that the doctor is going to be right about what it *will seem or appear* to the layman later on, whereas the layman will be wrong (by his own lights). Socrates uses as examples the narrow perceptual qualities like the doctor and the fever (178C3–8), vine grower and the sweetness of wine (178D1), musician and being in tune (178D4–7), cook and the pleasantness of dinner (178D7–9). But then, without any warning, he goes on to talk about Protagoras himself and the convincingness of speeches (178E6–7) and legislation. Clearly Socrates does not draw a sharp distinction between narrow perceptual properties and properties like 'just'. Socrates' point is that beliefs about what will appear in the future cannot all be true. He further argues that some properties, like usefulness (179A), are essentially tied to the future, and therefore all beliefs about these properties (even if these beliefs are not explicitly about future time) cannot be true¹⁷⁰. In conclusion, Socrates says that this argument does not apply to 'each person's present experience' (179C). Commentators (e.g. McDowell 1973: 120) think that here a clear line between perceptual and non-perceptual predicates is finally drawn. However, it is likely that 'the present experience' also applies to properties like just, since these properties are not essentially tied to what will transpire in the future (177D), unlike properties such as usefulness.

¹⁶⁹ Fine (1998) argues convincingly that the argument is valid if Protagoras' position is taken to be infallibilism and not relativism of truth. A more complex defence of Plato's argument can be found in Burnyeat (1976b).

¹⁷⁰ See Puster (1993), who thinks that the whole 'argument of the future' relies on the notion of a 'dispositional property'.

What about the argument against the doctrine according to which everything flows (181C–183B)? Is it conceivable that Theaetetus (in the Passage of the Commons) still holds on to the aisthetic model of perception, even after the flux theory has been refuted? The aisthetic model of cognition was initially built on the ontology of flux of the Secret Doctrine. As with most passages in the *Theaetetus*, scholars have very different opinions on how the flux theory is refuted. Some think that it is refuted by showing that universal flux makes meaningful language impossible,¹⁷¹ some think it is because flux makes dialectic impossible.¹⁷² For the present purposes it suffices to point out that the theory of flux that is refuted at 181C–183B is actually more radical version of the theory than its counterpart presented at 156A–157E. Here the flux theorists claim that everything is constantly changing in every way, whiteness is constantly becoming not-whiteness and seeing is constantly becoming not-seeing. Nothing like this was ever stated in the original version of the theory. The original version seemingly allowed seeings and other perceptions to remain identical for at least some time. Thus, it seems that one could easily hold on to the basic features of the aisthetic model of cognition without holding on to the theory of radical flux.

It is quite plausible that Theaetetus holds on to the basic features of the aisthetic model of perception by the time of the final (second) refutation of his definition ‘knowledge is perception’. He still takes all human cognition to involve a direct awareness of its objects and he still takes all human cognition to fall under the same genus, whether it be ‘appearance’ or ‘perception’. In the Passage of the Commons Socrates shows that both these assumptions are false. However, since Socrates is methodically barren, he cannot simply *tell* Theaetetus to give up these assumptions. He rather relies on Theaetetus framework of beliefs in posing his questions, so that Theaetetus himself can acquire the insight that cognition is a diverse phenomenon and that not all acts of cognition involve direct awareness of their objects.

3. Perception in the Passage of the Commons

It might be objected that if ‘perception’ is taken to be broad in scope throughout the discussion up to 184B, then the final argument at 186C–E, which attacks the narrow notion of ‘perception’ (seeing, hearing, smelling and feeling hot and cold) would simply be equivocating on the notion of ‘perception’. The argument would purport to show that Theaetetus’ original definition ‘knowledge is perception’ (in the broad sense) is false by showing that ‘knowledge is not perception’ (in the narrow sense), thus resulting in a fallacy of equivocation. However, this objection does not take into account the specific features of Socratic midwifery. Not only does Socrates critically *test* (*elenchus*) the theses put forward by his interlocutor, he also helps to *deliver* the definition in the

¹⁷¹ Most recently it has been maintained by Silverman (2000).

¹⁷² Sedley (2004: 89–104)

sense of providing determinate content to the definitions. How does this help to answer the above objection? Quite simply – we are dealing with two different interpretations of Theaetetus’ definition (the definition itself was vague enough to allow for two interpretations).

Socrates’ statement at the beginning of the Passage of the Commons is in a way quite remarkable. He says that he will have to, by means of his midwifery, ‘deliver Theaetetus of what he had conceived on the subject of knowledge (ὧν κυεῖ περὶ ἐπιστήμης πειρᾶσθαι ἡμᾶς τῇ μαιευτικῇ τέχνῃ ἀπολῦσαι) (184B1–2). The reason why this is remarkable is that earlier, after having introduced the Secret Doctrine (160D–E), Socrates had claimed that the first stage of his midwifery on Theaetetus’ first definition is *already* complete, that the newborn has been delivered and now begins the second stage of testing whether the newborn is ‘real or phantom’. Why does he then later on say that he *will* deliver what Theaetetus has conceived,¹⁷³ implying that the birth of the newborn is not finished after all? It seems that the Passage of the Commons is intended to be read as an independent maieutic episode, comprising both stages: first Socrates gives a novel interpretation of Theaetetus’ definition and then proceeds to show that even on this novel interpretation the definition is false. This means, however, that the maieutic procedure on the first newborn (i.e. the first interpretation) is already finished. And this, in turn, means that there is a difference between the two interpretations of the definition and of the concept of αἴσθησις involved in the definition. In this way one can avoid attributing Plato a fallacious argument while maintaining that there is a difference in the notion of ‘perception’ as it is used in the Passage of the Commons, and as it is used in the preceding argument.

If I am correct about Socrates’ method of midwifery, then we should expect to find the following. Socrates has to offer a new interpretation of Theaetetus’ definition, since the interpretation of Theaetetus’ definition (as implying Protagoras’ Measure Doctrine and the Secret Doctrine) has been refuted. Again, Theaetetus has to commit himself to this interpretation, and then consider whether perception, on this interpretation, is the same as knowledge. I think that the stretch of the text from 184B6–184E7 establishes a new interpretation of the crucial notion of ‘perception’. The ensuing argument at 184E7–187A11 shows that perception understood in this sense is not knowledge. I will show at the end of this section that one has to be careful in attributing this novel notion of perception to Plato himself. The discussion takes place under the assumption that knowledge is perception (Socrates reminds Theaetetus of that at 184B3–6), and this assumption (which Plato obviously does not accept) enforces certain claims made about perception in the Passage of the Commons, most conspicuously the claim that each sense perceives only its proper objects.

¹⁷³ The verb ἀπόλλυμι means to ‘to lose’, ‘to ruin’, ‘perish’ (Liddell-Scott), but in this context it likely means ‘to deliver’. Socrates does emphasize that Theaetetus is still pregnant (Θεαίτητον ὧν κυεῖ), which would be irrelevant if Socrates had only in mind the testing of a new-born (that has already been delivered). This is indeed how McDowell (1973: 65), Levett/Burnyeat (1990: 314) and Schleiermacher/Becker (2007: 139) translate this sentence.

In developing a novel conception of ‘perception’ Socrates first makes a distinction that is somewhat difficult to comprehend. He asks Theaetetus whether it is correct to say that a man hears high and low and sees white and black ‘with’ the ears and eyes (Ὅμμασί τε καὶ ὤσιν, later Socrates speaks more abstractly of ‘with what’ i.e. τῷ, both expressions are in dative). Theaetetus is inclined to say that it is, indeed, with the eyes that one sees. Socrates goes on to contrast the expression in dative with another expression that is quite similar in meaning, namely the (δι’ οὗ) (διά+genitive). Socrates apologizes for paying too much attention to the expressions used, but insists that the distinction he is about to make is important. Theaetetus decides (with some help from Socrates, since Socrates has uncharacteristically hinted that Theaetetus’ previous answer was *not* correct, 184C5) that the latter expression is actually more accurate, namely that it is ‘by means of’ the eyes that we see. What is the intended difference between these the two semantically close expressions? What difference does it make to say that we see *with* our eyes or that we see *by means* of our eyes? Socrates’ question sounds innocent and, on the first sight, seeks to identify the instrument that a man uses in perceiving. No doubt this is also the way Theaetetus first understands him, since the *agent* involved in seeing and hearing is identified as ‘a man’ (184B9), at least for the time being. Why would Theaetetus rethink his earlier suggestion and consider the διά+genitive construction to be more accurate? This depends on what the difference between these two grammatical expressions – ‘by means of which’ and ‘with what’ – amounts to.¹⁷⁴

The dative seems to be used in the instrumental sense¹⁷⁵ and the preposition διά+genitive can mean both ‘through’ in the spatial sense (the senses are the *medium* of perception, as in ‘through the door’), but also in instrumental sense (as in ‘by means of a hammer’). From the grammatical point of view, Socrates might be distinguishing between two kinds of instrumentality,¹⁷⁶ one expressed by dative and the other by διά+genitive (since both of these constructions do convey instrumentality). The meanings of the expressions are very close.¹⁷⁷ Thus, it seems that the only way to understand the difference between the two expressions is to see what Socrates says next.

The use of the dative to describe the function of eyes and ears is quite common in Greek,¹⁷⁸ and therefore Socrates can simply be picking up on an everyday expression. But taking into account the preceding discussion (as Socrates, near the beginning of the Passage of the Commons, suggests that we

¹⁷⁴ The following is heavily indebted to Burnyeat (1976).

¹⁷⁵ ‘The Greek dative, as representative of the lost instrumental case, denotes *by which* or *with which* an action is done or accompanied.’ (Smyth 1954: 346)

¹⁷⁶ This is proposed by Campbell: ‘The difference between between ᾧ and δι’ οὗ, direct and indirect instrumentality, is obvious but difficult to render exactly.’ (Campbell 1862:158)

¹⁷⁷ ‘“Only a nuance” is indeed the express verdict of one of the grammarians cited earlier, Jean Humbert, in his work *La disparition du datif en grec* (Paris 1930), 116–17.’ (Burnyeat 1976: 38).

¹⁷⁸ Burnyeat (1976)

should do) one recognizes that the ‘with’ idiom was used in the discussion of the Secret Doctrine to describe the process of perceiving (e.g. 165C1–3). This points towards the fact that Socrates is well aware that Theaetetus tends to think of perception (and cognition in general) along the lines of the Secret Doctrine and that Socrates is trying to help Theaetetus to ‘give birth’ to the notion of perception that differs from the notion of perception that was in play in the Secret Doctrine. Further, it is important to notice that even here it is not obvious that Socrates is addressing ‘perception’ in the narrow sense – it could just as well be that seeing and hearing serve as *paradigmatic* cases of the broad notion of perception. Having in mind the clear-cut notion of sense perception expressed at 186D10-E3, it is easy to ignore the dynamics of the discussion. However, it has to be kept in mind that this clear-cut notion of sense perception is something that the passage *achieves* rather than assumes. However, both the exact scope and nature of perception as well as distinction between the two expressions ‘with’ and ‘by means of which’ is still, at 184C, rather vague.

The meaning of this distinction becomes much clearer from Socrates’ next question:

S: Yes, because it would surely be strange (δαινόν) if we had a multitude senses/perceptions sitting in us, as if in wooden horses (εἰ πολλαὶ τινες ἐν ἡμῖν ὥσπερ ἐν δουρείοις ἵπποις αἰσθήσεις ἐγκάθηνται), and it wasn’t the case that all those things converged (πάντα ταῦτα συντείνει) on some one kind of thing (ἀλλὰ μὴ εἰς μίαν τινὰ ἰδέαν), a mind/soul or whatever one ought to call it (εἴτε ψυχὴν εἴτε ὅτι δεῖ καλεῖν): something with which we perceive all the perceived [things] by means of them as if by means of instruments (ἢ διὰ τούτων οἷον ὀργάνων αἰσθανόμεθα ὅσα αἰσθητά). T: Yes, I think the second alternative is better than the first.

Socrates says that it would be strange or terrible (δαινόν) if several αἰσθήσεις would be sitting in us and not converge to some one thing i.e. the soul. It is for this reason it is better to think of senses as those ‘by means of which’ we perceive, rather than ‘with which’ we perceive. Now, why would it be terrible if we perceived ‘with’ the many senses? The point seems to be the following: if one says that it is the eyes a man sees *with*, then one is, at least implicitly, saying that the eyes are the *subjects* or *agents* of perception.¹⁷⁹ The Greek dative can function so as to express the subject of an action and does not have to be taken ‘instrumentally’.¹⁸⁰ The wooden horse analogy then says that if ‘a man’

¹⁷⁹ This conclusion is brilliantly presented by Burnyeat (1976). However, roughly the same conclusion, namely that the dative should here be taken as designating the subject or the agent of perception, is arrived at already by Schmidt (1878) and also by Heidegger (2002). Burnyeat probably was not aware of the second of these texts (since Heidegger’s lecture series on the *Theaetetus*, though held in 1931, was published only after Burnyeat’s article).

¹⁸⁰ ‘Der griechische Dative hat, wie Rumpel in seiner Casuslehre S. 261 in überzeugender Weise nachgewiesen hat, die Grundbedeutung ‘er sei es, dem in die Satzsubstanz liegende Gedankenbewegung gelte, dem sie angehöre’. Diese Bedeutung fühlte der Griechen auch noch in dem sogenannten instrumentalen Dativ oder dem Dativ mit der Ablativleitung durch,

sees *with* eyes (and similarly with other ‘perceptions’ or ‘senses’), this makes the single subject of perception impossible; we would rather have a multiplicity of perceivers within each body. It is as if all senses were acting as autonomous agents within a wooden horse (‘a man’) that is itself insatiate. As Heidegger succinctly puts it: if senses are agents, then this means that there is ‘nobody there to perceive’ (2002: 124). There has to be something; namely, the *soul* towards which all perceptions ‘converge’, and the ‘with-idiom’ is supposed capture this intuition.

This brings us to the διὰ+genitive construction. This idiom is supposed to capture the role played by the senses in the perceptual act. There are two possible ways to understand this expression: (a) by διὰ+genitive Socrates means that senses are the *instruments* the soul (as an agent) uses in perception, or (b) that it is *through* the senses, in the spatial sense, that the soul (as an agent) perceives.¹⁸¹ The present passage speaks strongly in favour of the instrumental reading. Socrates refers to each bodily sense ‘by means’ of which we perceive, as ὄργανον, a term that usually refers to equipment.¹⁸²

Plato does not say much about what he takes the notion of the soul to involve. It seems that he deliberately leaves this notion vague (‘the soul or whatever we ought to call it’). Thus it seems useless to make conjectures whether he has in mind only the rational part of the soul or all three parts of the soul, or whether he abandons the notion of the parts of the soul altogether. The passage does not address this issue, leaving it thus undetermined. What Plato is after is to point out that we all assume (there is no *argument* in the text, all that Socrates says is that the opposite case would be ‘strange’) that the bodily senses themselves cannot be agents. Further, it is important for the ensuing argument that the agent would be capable of *comparing* or *relating* the input from the different senses. We *are* obviously capable of doing this. Thus, I do not think that Plato is making an important philosophical point about the parts of the soul (which are never mentioned in the *Theaetetus*). He is simply conducting his argument based on premises Theaetetus (and the readers) are willing to accept as commonsensical (i.e. not ‘strange’). The ‘with’ idiom is supposed to capture

wenn er sich auch derselben im gewöhnlichen Gebrauche nicht bewusst war’ (Schmidt 1877: 519–520).

¹⁸¹ There are, actually, more possibilities: ‘And it is not too difficult to persuade oneself that the ‘through’ idiom is, in fact, ambiguous, that there are two distinct senses of the Greek διὰ or the English ‘through’ which might be involved in the present context: (i) a spatial sense concerned (literally or figuratively) with the passage taken by a process through a space, and (ii) a causal one (in the grammarians’ sense of ‘causal’) concerned with the means through which something is brought about, this causal sense in turn being subdivided according as the means in question is (a) an animate agent through whom one acts or (b) an inanimate thing, e.g. a piece of equipment, through which a certain result is effected.’ (Burnyeat 1976: 37)

¹⁸² Campbell says (and many scholars approve of this claim): ‘The term ‘organ of sense’ perhaps originates with this passage’ (Campbell 1862: 158). However, Plato refers to eyes as sense-organs already in the Republic (508B3), saying that they are the most sun-like on organs (tools, equipment) of αἰσθήσεις: ἡλιοειδέστατόν γε οἶμαι τῶν περὶ τὰς αἰσθήσεις ὀργάνων.

this commonsensical belief that one should distinguish between the senses that are used in perceiving and the agent that uses them.

When Socrates refers to the soul's activity by means of the αἰσθήσεις, does he refer exclusively to perceptions by means of the five senses *or* does he still take perceptions to be infinite in number (including fears, pleasures, thinking and remembering)? I think that perhaps the best way to characterize the situation is that Socrates is slowly acquiring Theaetetus' consent in order to narrow perception down to the five senses (i.e. αἰσθησις in the narrow sense). Theaetetus still thinks that perception covers the wide variety of cognitive acts (fearing, etc.). All he agrees to, at the moment, is that a man uses eyes and ears as instruments in *seeing* and *hearing*. There is nothing really controversial about that, and it is easy to understand why Theaetetus would agree with this. Theaetetus has also agreed with Socrates' proposal that every act of perception involves some sort of instrument. But it is important to see that this does not yet commit him to any specific kind of instrument. Indeed, in case of seeing and hearing the instruments are eyes and ears. But when Socrates mentions, in the wooden horse analogy, that there would be πολλάί αἰσθήσεις sitting in us, he is, I think deliberately ambiguous as to the exact nature of the αἰσθήσεις. The term πολλάί does not usually mean 'several' (as, for example, in McDowell's translation). It refers to a great number or a multitude (see Chappell 2004, *ad loc.*) Therefore, it would be wrong to maintain that there is a clear-cut notion of 'sense' (as in 'five senses') in play already here. Socrates refers back to the unlimited number of αἰσθήσεις (156B7–8) from the Secret Doctrine. He is claiming that *all* perception takes place 'by means of' an instrument. What the instrument might be is left unspecified.

By 184C7 Socrates has secured Theaetetus' agreement concerning the 'instrumental' nature of perception. Next, Socrates makes another crucial move – he connects all perceptual instruments to the *body*. Up to now Socrates has been discussing seeing and hearing, pointing out that they always involve an instrument. Now Socrates wants to know whether Theaetetus thinks that the instrument involved is something that *always* belongs to the body as an instrument.

S. If the question is put to you, will you be able to refer everything of that sort to the body (ἔξεις ἐρωτώμενος πάντα τὰ τοιαῦτα εἰς τὸ σῶμα ἀναφέρειν)? But perhaps it would be better that you should state the point by answering questions, rather than I should interfere on your behalf. Tell me this. Take the things by means of which you perceive [things which are] hot, hard, light, and sweet (θερμὰ καὶ σκληρὰ καὶ κοῦφα καὶ γλυκέα δι' ὧν αἰσθάνη). You classify each of them [the organs] as belonging to the body, don't you (τοῦ σώματος ἕκαστα τίθης)? Or do you think they belong to something else? T. No, they belong to nothing else. (184D6–E7)

The important thing to notice is that in the previous passage Socrates was limiting the range of objects of perception by insisting that only what is perceived by means of an instrument is genuinely perceptible, whereas here he

follows the converse route. He seeks to identify the nature of the *instrument* in reference to its object. Socrates offers Theaetetus a set of properties (hot, hard, light and sweet), and asks whether all these belong to the things (i.e. the instruments) that ‘belong to the body’ or are ‘of the body’ (τοῦ σώματος). Theaetetus agrees. What he agrees to, apparently, is that in perception one always uses some sort of bodily instrument. Thus we have two important and novel claims here: there is a single enduring soul that is the subject of perception *and* this soul always, in perceiving, uses a bodily organ as an instrument. I think that at this point the narrow notion of αἴσθησις has finally begun to emerge – Theaetetus admits that only those acts of the soul that have bodily instruments count as perceptual. And it is reasonable to assume that fears or emotions, for example, do not have bodily *instruments* like seeing, hearing and tasting do. It does not seem to make much sense to ask for the organ by means of which one feels fear or by means of which one thinks. The novel (narrow) notion of αἴσθησις has the following important features:

- (i) an enduring soul is the agent of perception;
- (ii) the soul always perceives ‘by means of’ the body.

These two claims are opposed to the Secret Doctrine’s notion of perception. Most notably, the assumption that there is a single agent in all perception is fundamentally alien to the Protagorean notion of how perception works. In several passages, in which Socrates develops the Secret Doctrine (e.g. 153E4–154A3, 156C1–4, 156E1–157A3, 159E8–B4), perception is taken to be an isolated event (fast change), taking place between the slow movements of a sense-organ (eye) and its object (e.g. the stone). Nowhere in the discussion does Socrates mention mind or soul in relation to perception. In fact, Socrates makes it clear that the person perceiving is just a part of the perceptual event (and nothing over and above), and is different in each perceptual situation (159E1–160A4). Here, by contrast, Socrates stresses (184D8) that there is indeed the *same* thing (αὐτῶν τῷ αὐτῷ)¹⁸³ that is involved in each perceptual act that involves black and white, and other things. This means, in contrast to the Secret Doctrine, that there is something that remains *identical* throughout different perceptual acts.¹⁸⁴ Further, it is stressed that perceptual acts *always* involve the

¹⁸³ The phrase is somewhat difficult, but the sense seems to be that it is indeed the *same* thing with which we get at different perceptual objects. Schleiermacher, for example translates: ‘ob wir mit einem und demselben in uns...’ (Becker 2007: 141) and Narcy ‘quelque chose que nous est propre, quelque chose d’identique...’ (1995: 228). Levett/Burnyeat has ‘one and the same part of ourselves’. McDowell completely under-translates this expression with ‘with which’.

¹⁸⁴ This is where Burnyeat memorably says (in a passage quoted in the Introduction): ‘Plato’s achievement [is] in arriving at the first unambiguous statement in the history of philosophy of the difficult but undoubtedly important idea of the unity of consciousness.’ (Burnyeat 1990: 58) As a matter of fact, Burnyeat was not the first to make this point (although in the English speaking literature he is usually the only scholar referred to in this context). D. Peipers, for one, also sees the importance of the passage in its emphasis on the unity of consciousness, i.e. *Einheit des Bewusstseins* or *Einheit des Seelenlebens*, ‘mit diesem is die einfachste, primitivste Akt geschildert die ein Erleben für die Seele möglich

body, a claim that was never made in the context of the Secret Doctrine (for the simple reason that the Secret Doctrine did not distinguish between the soul and the body).

What about the *objects* of perception: do we see white and black things or do we simply see white and black (color)? The last option would indicate that at least some aspects of the Secret Doctrine's notion of perception still hold. Burnyeat (1976), for example, insists that it is indeed the white and black *things* Socrates is referring to, and that Secret Doctrine has been completely abandoned. As evidence for this he cites the use of the verb ἐφικνέομαι (184D8) which has the meaning 'reach out' or 'extend' (McDowell translates 'get at'), which, according to Burnyeat, should be read as 'the soul gaining access to the world' (1976: 42).

However, Socrates claims that the soul has access to white and black by means of eyes and to *other* things with other instruments. This indicates that Socrates is talking about white and black (color), since white and black *things* are obviously accessible to other senses (see McDowell 1973 *ad loc.*). Socrates therefore seems to restrict visual perception to colors, not to colored things. By parity of reasoning, the same restriction should apply to other senses as well (e.g. we hear sounds and not the things that make these sounds). According to the first possibility, Plato is advancing the 'Proper-Object-Theory' of perception – each sense is confined to its proper objects. For example, the sight sees only colors and the like, and the hearing hears only sounds and the like. The second reading, inaugurated by Burnyeat (1976, 1990), takes the scope of perception to be much broader. It includes material objects (e.g. houses) and cross-modal perceptual features (e.g. shape). This conforms well to common sense, and to the way Plato usually talks about sense perception – we see things, colors, and shapes. Which reading should we prefer?

This is an important question. An answer is required in order to determine whether all claims about perception made in the Passage of the Commons are supported by Plato himself, or whether the novel interpretation of the notion of 'perception' still assumes that Theaetetus' definition holds. In the latter case not *all* claims made about perception by Socrates should be attributed to Plato himself.

In the next section of the dialogue (191B–194E, see esp. 192D), Socrates and Theaetetus speak of perceiving (seeing and hearing) *things* and *persons*. Thus, if the theory of perception laid out in the Passage of the Commons *precludes* perceiving things and requires that only colors are seen and only sounds heard, there is good reason to think that the theory of perception of the Passage of the Commons is dependent on the previous discussion and especially on the assumption that perception is knowledge.

The best way to determine which of these options is correct is to take a closer look at what the scope of perception *should* be in order for the ensuing

macht' (Peipers 1874: 531). In general, Peiper's interpretation of the Passage of the Commons is quite similar to Burnyeat's.

argument to be valid. What are the limits of perception the argument assumes? What can we be said to perceive? The premise of the argument is the following: ‘Will you also be willing to agree that if you perceive something by means of one power, it’s impossible to perceive the same [thing] by means of another’ (184E6–185A1). From this premise, then, it is argued to the conclusion that ‘it’s impossible to get hold of what they [sound and color] have in common either by means of hearing or by means of sight’ (185B7–9). The passage sets the limits to what can be perceived. It is then stated that ‘common’ features of objects of *both* sight and hearing cannot be apprehended by sight and hearing, respectively. Theaetetus concludes (185E1–3) that these features are not apprehended by the senses at all. Not only is it not possible to apprehend the sameness or difference ‘about’ both sound and color, but it is *also* not possible to apprehend the sameness or difference of two colors (‘everything’ at 185C5–7).

The impossibility of a given sense to have access to the objects of another is a principle the whole argument is built on. The problem is, though, that the principle limiting the senses to their sets of objects is somewhat ambiguous. The statement: ‘if you perceive something by means of one power, it’s impossible to perceive the same [thing] by means of another’ can be interpreted in two different ways:

The Proper Object Theory: the senses are restricted to their proper objects; there is nothing that can be perceived by two or more senses.

The Common Sense Theory: the senses have two kinds of objects, some accessible through several senses, some accessible by only one sense.

By ‘common sense’ I mean simply what people are usually (in their unphilosophical moments) inclined to think about perception, and not Aristotle’s theory of ‘common sense’, as presented in *De Anima* (III.1–2.) and *De Sensu*. I will now argue that the attempts to construe the argument as based on the Common Sense Theory fail and it has to be accepted that the argument relies on the Proper Object Theory. According to the Common Sense Theory,¹⁸⁵ there are things that one can see only through sight, i.e. colors. But there are also objects and features of objects both visible and accessible to other senses. According to Burnyeat (who is the main proponent of the Common Sense Theory about the

¹⁸⁵ In what follows I will focus on Burnyeat’s version of the Common Sense Theory. ‘P2: Colours and features of colours which are perceived through sight cannot also be perceived through hearing, sounds and features of sounds which are perceived through hearing cannot also be perceived through sight, and similarly with other senses’ (Burnyeat 1990: 56–57). Burnyeat concludes: ‘It follows even from the weaker principle P2 that it cannot be through either sight or hearing that we are aware of the common features mentioned in our example. It cannot be through hearing if sameness and the rest are features of a colour, and it cannot be through sight if they are features of sound. Some third mode of apprehension must be involved. The next step is to argue that the third mode of apprehension is itself perceptual only if we can find a sense or a sense organ giving access to the feature in question. /--/ But no bodily organ or sense can be found to give access to the common features in our example. As a later philosopher would put it, there is no such thing as an impression of being or of sameness or of unity.’ (Burnyeat 1990:58)

Passage of the Commons), Plato focuses in the argument on ‘proper sensibles’, but that does not mean that they are the only objects we can be said to perceive. Thus the premise of Socrates’ argument is that each ‘proper sensible’ is (perceptually) accessible to the soul by means of only one sense-modality. Besides there being proper and common objects of the senses, there are also ‘proper’ and ‘common’ features¹⁸⁶ of these sensibles. A shape is a common feature of a common sensible, a table, for example. It is a *common* feature in the sense that it can be both seen and felt, of an object that can also be both seen and felt. In addition, there are also features of things that are proper to one sense only, for example, the color of this particular table. Thus common sensibles can have both common features and proper features. Proper sensibles also have features – colors can have shade, which is a proper feature of the same (visual) sense modality, but colors also have (crucially) *difference* or *sameness* in relation to other colors. What the argument claims, according to Burnyeat, is that if there are features shared by *proper sensibles* (such as sameness or difference), these features themselves cannot be perceived by any of the senses, because the features of proper sensibles are either proper features or they are not sensible at all. ‘Being’ and ‘sameness’, as features shared by proper objects (but not themselves proper features) cannot be perceived. It is not difficult to see that this argument, in order to reach the conclusion, needs an additional premise: all perceptual features of proper sensibles are themselves also necessarily proper objects of the same sense modality or they are not perceptible at all.

But is this principle plausible? Why can't it be the case that in case of sight we see the shape of a color, and in case of touch we touch the shape of a (tangible) table? Shape, in this case, would be a shared (common) feature of *proper* sensibles that is itself a *perceptible* feature. Another assumption seems to be necessary to block this possibility: if *F* common perceptual feature of *x*, then, for every *F* and every *x*, *F* has to be perceivable by more than one sense. But this principle is obviously false. Shape is a common feature, but we cannot, e.g. touch the shape of a color-patch. We cannot have access to the shape of a color patch by means of any other sense than sight. Almost every (Aristotelian) common sensible¹⁸⁷ - shape, number, movement - can be such that it is sometimes (in regard to certain objects) perceivable by only one sense, and not the others. Common features are not the kinds of features that are *always* perceivable by means of more than one sense; it is enough that they are *sometimes* accessible by means of more than one sense. This is a major problem for the Common Sense Theory: why can't being, difference and sameness be common (perceptual) features of the proper objects¹⁸⁸? There seems to be nothing in the argument to rule this possibility out.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁶ The term ‘feature’ is meant to be taken very loosely, i.e. anything that ‘can be said of something’. Thus feature is not necessarily a predicate.

¹⁸⁷ De an. III, 1 (425A16–18)

¹⁸⁸ ‘If ‘feature of a proper object’ is construed quite broadly, the ‘weak’ premiss appears to be as strong as Plato's formulation. If ‘feature of a proper object’ is narrowly construed so as to exclude relational and contextual features of the proper object, it will turn out that some of

The problem evaporates if one takes the argument to rely on the Proper Object Theory. This theory says that all the senses are *confined* to their proper objects, i.e. the objects of a given sense are never accessible (to the soul) by means of any other sense. Common sensibles are not allowed at all, and for this reason being and sameness cannot be perceptual features, because they are *common* to objects of two or more different senses. According to the Proper Object Theory, being and sameness are either proper sensibles or not perceivable. Since they are not proper sensibles (they are common to proper objects), they are not perceivable. It follows that they cannot be perceived *tout court* and they have to be apprehended by means of another cognitive capacity.¹⁹⁰

The argument for the imperceptibility of commons requires the Proper Object Theory. The question becomes, now, what grounds does Socrates have for expecting Theaetetus to accept it? Some have claimed that this just is how Plato conceives of perception – that he actually endorses the Proper Object Theory of perception, and it is therefore natural for Plato to have Theaetetus accept without further ado¹⁹¹. But this is unlikely. First, it is by no means clear

the *κοινά* mentioned in the argument (e.g., difference, usefulness) are not features of proper objects in the relevant sense, in which case the weak premiss is too weak to do the work required of it.’ (Modrak 1981: 37)

¹⁸⁹ A similar problem faces the accounts (McDowell 1973, Silverman 1990, Lorenz 2006) that try to make the cognitive act of thinking about *both* sound and color to be sufficient for the argument to work. Granted, thoughts about both sound and color cannot be accounted for by any individual sense. This is a fact about thoughts of this kind. The fact that the being of color and sound is imperceptible might simply be due to the special nature of these *thoughts*, namely that in thinking we can have both sound and color ‘present for the mind’, although there is no occurrent perception of them. Why must we conclude from this that *being* is a non-perceptual feature? It might simply be non-perceptual in this particular case (in thoughts involving objects of different senses). To put the point in another way, the sample thought involves three terms, ‘sound’, ‘color’ and ‘is’. Shouldn’t one also infer, by parity of reasoning that ‘sound’ and ‘color’ (as objects of thought or concepts) are also not perceptual, inasmuch there is something we think about both of them (this conclusion is actually endorsed in Silverman 1990)? This would completely destroy the desired contrast between perceptual features and common features.

¹⁹⁰ A small addition is necessary in order to disprove the (rather unlikely) possibility that one particular sense could have access to the ‘commons’. ‘It appears theoretically possible, if not very plausible, that we see, for example, existence, even though this existence attaches to sounds and objects of other senses as well as to colors. Thus it appears theoretically possible that existence is the object of just one sense – say the sense of sight’ (Holland 1973: 105). Why can’t the sense of smell ‘have access’ to features of colors? Empirical grounds obviously will not do, since they would in one way or another be question-begging. Here’s Holland’s additional premise that that yields the argument valid: ‘A2: Whatever both is an object of just one sense and is applicable to an object which is an object of just one sense, is an object of the same sense as the object to which it is applicable.’ (Holland 1973: 105) This additional premise is similar to the one mentioned above. However, on the reading based on Proper Object Theory, the premise is not problematic anymore (as it was on the Common Sense Theory), since no common sensibles are allowed.

¹⁹¹ This is assumed by Bostock (1988) Kahn (1981), Modrak (1981), among many others.

that, e.g. *Timaeus*' theory of perception is in fact a Proper Object Theory. Indeed, *Timaeus* does connect each sense to its specific object (*Tim.* 45B-D and 61E–68D). However the *Timaeus* never excludes the possibility that some properties (or things) might be perceivable by several senses. Some things Plato says imply that this has to be the case. For example, *Timaeus* (52E) clearly assumes that *things* around us are perceptible. Secondly, be that as it may, Socrates cannot expect Theaetetus to have read *Timaeus* – Theaetetus should be inclined to accept the Proper Object Theory on the grounds that are offered in the *Theaetetus*. A promising suggestion is that Theaetetus still hangs on to (some aspects) of the Secret Doctrine:

Now we have names for these perceptions, of the following sort: seeings, hearings, smellings, feelings of cold, feelings of heat; also what are called pleasures, pains, desires, fears and others. The nameless ones are unlimited in number, but those which have been given names are extremely numerous. On the other side, the appropriate class of perceived things shares a common origin with each set of perceptions: colours of every kind with seeings of every kind, sounds with hearings in the same way, and the other perceived things with the other perceptions, coming into being from the same origin. (156B5-C4)

In this passage Socrates clearly states that each perception is related to its own separate object and the implication clearly is that what is seen cannot be touched, etc. But the extreme flux theory has been refuted. Why would Theaetetus still hold on to parts of it?

Some scholars (Cornford 1935, Modrak 1981) claim that Plato *accepts* this part of the Secret Doctrine and that it is for this reason why Proper Object Theory is inserted in the Passage of the Commons. But this solution does not work either, since Socrates and Theaetetus soon go on to *deny* Proper Object Theory:

S. Now sometimes I see you and sometimes I don't, sometimes I touch you, sometimes not; sometimes I hear you, or perceive you in some other way, and sometimes I have no perception relating to you. T. Certainly.' (192D5-E1).

This suggests that Socrates and Theaetetus either use perception in this passage in a different (non-technical) sense, or the Proper Object Theory has been abandoned. Cooper maintains that:

Furthermore, though without arguing the point, Plato seems to limit perception to what may be called elementary sense-perception, i.e. the perception of the 'proper objects' of five senses: colors, sounds, tastes, smells, and a supposed analogue for touch. He does not indicate how he regards seeing or otherwise perceiving a physical object, but presumably he would wish to say that this is not perception, strictly conceived, but already involves some of those higher reflective activities of mind to be introduced in a moment. (Cooper 1970: 359).

If Cooper is correct, then it would have to mean that in the false belief section Plato uses the term ‘perceive’ in the way that perception already entails conceptual capacities. However, if Plato used the term αἰσθάνεσθαι in such a way that perception would entail (a tacit) judgment or belief, the Wax-Block model would lose its explanatory force in the context of explaining the possibility of false beliefs. At this point of the discussion, it is assumed that it's impossible to have in one's belief terms that one does not know, because (to put it very crudely) in order to form a belief about anything one has to know the concepts or terms involved in the belief. Since knowledge entails infallibility, it turns out that I cannot make mistakes about the terms or concepts involved in my beliefs. In this context perception as a non-conceptual cognitive capacity offers a way out. Socrates can perceive Theaetetus and think that it is Theodorus, precisely because perceiving Theaetetus is not conceptual. If perception here is taken to be (a hidden or implicit) perceptual judgment or a belief, then the problems of knowing and not-knowing would immediately resurface, since one would have to know the terms of the (tacit) perceptual judgment, and the miss-fitting of perception and memory-trace would again become impossible. It is necessary, for the Wax-Block model of perceptual judgment to work, that ‘perceiving Theaetetus’ would *not* have a conceptual structure.

Therefore, one should seriously consider the possibility that Plato does not endorse the Proper Object Theory. The theory is there because it belongs to Theaetetus’ framework of beliefs. This framework of beliefs includes, prominently, the belief that perception is knowledge. More precisely, Theaetetus is inclined to believe Proper Object Theory *because* he believes that knowledge is perception. It is psychologically easy to see why he would, since Proper Object Theory played a significant part in the Secret Doctrine. There is also a philosophical consideration behind Theaetetus’ acceptance of Proper Object Theory. Namely, it does offer quite good support for the claim that knowledge is perception (quite independently of the Secret Doctrine). A reason why Proper Object Theory can easily be seen to support Theaetetus’ definition is that if different senses had access to the same perceptible properties (e.g. shapes) and objects (e.g. houses), this would create the possibility of inter-modal conflict. For example, if by means of sight one would see the same *thing* as round but by means of touch one would feel the same thing to be triangular, then, presumably one of the perceptions would have to be mistaken, and therefore, not a case of knowledge. Since Theaetetus has already agreed that there is a single enduring soul as an agent in both of these perceptual acts, he cannot avail himself of the Protagorean claim that the seeing eye and, say, touching hand are different agents (and avoid the conflict in this manner). Thus, it is only natural that Theaetetus would so eagerly accept Socrates’ proposal that restricts each sense to its own proper objects, and implies that we cannot really perceive *things* out there. This is the only possible way for Theaetetus to avoid inter-modal conflict and maintain perception’s claim to be knowledge.

This is, admittedly, a speculative solution to the problem. But, given that Proper Object Theory is renounced a couple of pages later and that the argument in the Passage of the Commons requires Proper Object Theory, it seems only natural to take Theaetetus' acceptance of Proper Object Theory to be due to his belief that knowledge is perception. Socrates shows that the Proper Object Theory leads to the conclusion that perception is not knowledge. Perception, limited to its proper objects, does not grasp 'being' and it therefore also fails to reach truth (and therefore fails to be knowledge). Yet, in order to maintain perception's claim to be knowledge, Theaetetus has to assume the Proper Object Theory. The argument, therefore, is indirect¹⁹². After Theaetetus has come to learn that knowledge is *not* perception, he abandons the Proper Object Theory, as the exchange at (191B–195B) clearly demonstrates¹⁹³.

In addition, Socrates himself also hints that not all the premises of the argument for the non-perceivability of the commons should be endorsed. He says that

‘And besides being handsome, you’ve done me a favour: you’ve let me off a very long argument (με μάλα συχνοῦ λόγου ἀπαλλάξας), if you think that there

¹⁹² An excellent account of why indirect arguments are so prominent in Plato's Socratic dialogues can be found in Robinson (1953: 20–32). An indirect argument uses the thesis to be refuted as one of its premises. If Theaetetus accepts Proper Object Theory *because* he believes that knowledge is perception, then the latter claim is a premise of the argument (even though this premise is tacit). One possible way to construe the argument as indirect would be the following:

Premises

- (1) Perception is knowledge.
- (2) Perception is knowledge only if perception is restricted to its proper objects.
- (3) The soul has access to common features, such as being, sameness and difference.
- (4) Grasping being is necessary for grasping truth.
- (5) Grasping truth is necessary for knowledge.

Argument

- (6) Perception is restricted to its proper objects, therefore
- (7) The soul's access to the common features is not perceptual, therefore
- (8) The soul does not grasp being by means of perception, therefore
- (9) The soul does not grasp truth by means of perception, therefore
- (10) Perception is not knowledge.

¹⁹³ Gerson takes the same attitude towards the Passage of the Commons: ‘One final point. Like the fruitless debate over whether sense-perception involves judgement, the debate over whether Plato actually endorses the theory of sense-perception developed here is bound to go nowhere. For what we in fact have is a theory of sense-perception based on the assumption that sense-perception is knowledge. That is, we have a theory of what sense-perception must be if it is to meet the inerrancy and reality criteria. Since it does not meet these criteria, it is really beside the point to ask whether Plato endorses this theory. I think in all probability he does not. But we cannot know this for certain because he is only developing a theory of knowledge based on the proposed criteria. Telling us what knowledge is does not reveal what the criteria for sense-perception are’ (Gerson 2003:214). Sayre argues for the same conclusion (2005: 206–217).

are some things which the soul itself considers, by means of itself, and some which it considers by means of the body.’ (185E5–7)

What might Socrates mean by saying that Theaetetus has let him off ‘a very long argument’?¹⁹⁴ If my argument in this section has been correct, then Socrates is glad because Theaetetus has accepted the conclusion that Socrates himself also accepts (that some things are considered by the mind on its own) based on the argument that has questionable premises – namely the premiss according to which all senses are confined to their proper objects (the Proper Object Theory). Socrates is saying that even though the some of the premises of the argument are questionable, the conclusion is, as a matter of fact, correct. Socrates hints that the argument, in its proper form - starting, perhaps, from genuinely Platonic premises - would be very long. One can only guess what the proper argument for Socrates’ claim (that some things are not perceptual and apprehended by the mind itself) would have been.

This could be seen as a somewhat disappointing result. Indeed, this means that the ‘theory of perception’ presented in the Passage of the Commons cannot be dogmatically attributed to Plato (and indeed that there is no reason to try and extract a well developed theory from the passage at all). However, Socrates and Theaetetus think that they have proved the definition ‘knowledge is perception’ to be *false* (186E9–12). They think, apparently, that they have shown more than an inconsistency within Theaetetus’ framework of beliefs.

An indirect argument, i.e. the argument containing the thesis to be refuted as one of the premises, can only hope to prove the thesis false if the *other premises* of the argument are in fact *true* (Benson 2000: 49). From the Passage of the Commons we can therefore learn quite a bit about what Socrates and Theaetetus (and perhaps Plato) take perception to be, namely that perception always involves the body as an instrument and the soul as the agent. We furthermore learn that there are properties that all objects share (such as being and sameness) and that the soul has some sort of access to these objects. These premises *have to be true* in order for the indirect argument to successfully show the falsity of Theaetetus’ definition. We simply should not attribute Plato the dubious principle according to which all senses only perceive their proper objects. This claim is meant to support Theaetetus’ definition but eventually proves to be the reason for its downfall.

¹⁹⁴ For a few suggestions as to what he might mean by this, see McDowell (1973: 190) and Lorenz (2006: 81–83).

CHAPTER FOUR.

Belief and Being

In this chapter, I will argue that at no juncture of *Theaetetus* 184–7 does Plato endorse that commons are grasped in all beliefs. In order to see this, the Theaetetus-passage should be read in its dialectical context. The Passage of the Commons fails to support the standard account of the rationality of belief. I hope to show, however, that the passage does contain genuinely novel claims about belief – namely that by its very nature, belief is aimed at being, i.e. aimed at obtaining states of affairs or simply at ‘reality’.

Section 1 is dedicated to developing a version of the realist reading of the Passage of the Commons. Theaetetus’ framework of beliefs about cognition is largely governed by the aisthetic model – he thinks that all acts of cognition require a direct relation between the subject and the object. Socratic midwifery works within this framework of beliefs, hence Socrates has to rely on this model himself while posing questions and directing Theaetetus. I will propose that stage two should be understood as an abandonment of the aisthetic model of cognition. Socrates stresses that, at least with one common, namely being, one needs a significant amount of education in order to be able to calculate according to it. I will argue that ‘being’ should be understood as ‘the reality of something’; it is difficult and time-consuming to learn the ‘comparing’ and ‘calculating’ that are necessary to determine whether or not a given property (e.g. beauty) is instantiated.

In Section 2, I will consider what sort of notion of belief emerges from the Passage of the Commons. The main difference between perception and belief is that the latter is a cognitive state aiming to ‘attain being’, whereas the former is not. In *Theaetetus* Plato supports a teleological or goal-directed account of belief formation. I will argue that this teleological notion of beliefs explains the differences between Plato’s account of belief in the middle and the late dialogues. Plato assumes that only reasoning and deliberation can lead to attaining being (i.e. determining how things are). Since Plato recognizes that forming beliefs is intrinsically aimed at acquiring true beliefs, he also comes to view reasoning and deliberation as necessary components in forming beliefs.

I. A Realist Reading of the Passage of the Commons

In the previous chapter I argued that Socrates’ method of intellectual midwifery is dependent on the interlocutor’s framework of beliefs. The commons are introduced step by step, and not everything said or implied during the introduction is necessarily part of the conception of the soul’s relation to the commons toward which Socrates is directing Theaetetus. Since midwifery has to make concessions to what the interlocutor believes, some claims are made with a view to making certain points plausible to Theaetetus. These claims may be subjected to revision later on.

In fact, as I will now try to make plausible, this is exactly what happens at stage one (up to *Tht.* 185E). Socrates is relying on Theaetetus' framework of beliefs about cognition, especially on Theaetetus' central belief that all cognition involves a direct apprehension of its objects. At the end of stage one, Theaetetus reaches the (preliminary) conclusion that there are objects that remain outside the reach of the bodily senses (the commons)¹⁹⁵. He nevertheless still thinks that the soul grasps these objects in a perception-like manner, simply by virtue of entertaining a relevant thought. This creates the illusion that the commons are like concepts or semantic entities. However, stage two goes on to correct this line of thought. It turns out that grasping commons (especially to 'attain being') requires hard work and education.

It is useful to start with the conclusion of stage one, which is expressed as follows:

S. Theaetetus, you're handsome not ugly, as Theodorus was saying; because someone who speaks handsomely is handsome, and a fine person too (καλὸς γὰρ εἶ, ὃ Θεαίτητε, καὶ οὐχ, ὥς ἔλεγε Θεόδωρος, αἰσχυρός· ὁ γὰρ καλῶς λέγων καλὸς τε καὶ ἀγαθός). And besides being handsome, you've done me a favour: you've let me off a very long argument (πρὸς δὲ τῷ καλῷ εὖ ἐποίησάς με μάλα συχνοῦ λόγου ἀπαλλάξας), if you think there are some things which the soul considers by means of itself and some which it considers by means of the capacities of the body (εἰ φαίνεται σοι τὰ μὲν αὐτῇ δι' αὐτῆς ἢ ψυχῇ ἐπισκοπεῖν, τὰ δὲ διὰ τῶν τοῦ σώματος δυνάμεων). That was what I thought for myself, but I wanted you to think it too (τοῦτο γὰρ ἦν ὃ καὶ αὐτῷ μοι ἐδόκει, ἐβουλόμην δὲ καὶ σοὶ δόξαι). (185E3–9)

¹⁹⁵ There is a reading that denies that Socrates' argument is designed to show that certain *objects* (or features of objects) are outside the reach of the senses (Cooper 1970). According to this view, the argument shows that there are two kinds of *judgments*. One kind of judgment requires applying predicates that are common to the objects of several senses, whereas the other kind does not. The main reason behind Cooper's claim is that the commons are often (185B7, 185B9, 185C7, 185D1 and 185E1) used with 'about' clauses – Socrates assumes that the soul considers the commons *about* something (especially sound and color). This might indeed suggest that Plato is interested mainly in the ways that *judgments* about sensibles differ from one another. Now, although it is true that the commons are introduced first as constituents of thoughts that Theaetetus admits he can form, e.g. Theaetetus can think *about* sound and color *that* they are, *that* they are different from each other, etc (185A4–B4), shortly afterwards the emphasis clearly shifts to the common *objects* that are grasped (λαμβάνειν at 185B8) or revealed (δηλοῖ σοι at 185C5) in forming these judgments. One should not attach too much weight to the about-clauses, for the following reason. It seems to be that about-clauses are there not to emphasize the 'propositional' nature of judgments, but simply to refer back to the claim that whatever is thought or perceived *about* the *proper objects* of the senses cannot be perceived by the senses. Here it is not the 'aboutness' of judgment that matters but simply the inaccessibility of the senses to features shared by the proper objects (note the dual at 185B7). The about-clauses serve to remind Theaetetus of the crucial premise of the argument – that if the inaccessibility principle holds, the commons cannot be perceived. For a convincing critique of Cooper's view, see Bostock (1988: 132–137).

This is the only occasion in the dialogue where Socrates expresses his own opinion. For this reason what he says here should obviously be taken very seriously. Socrates makes a distinction here between two kinds of things – those that are considered by means of the senses and those considered by the soul ‘by means of itself’. This strongly suggests that this is precisely what the foregoing argument has demonstrated: there are two kinds of objects and, correspondingly, two different means of access to the objects in question.

How is the relation between the soul and commons conceived of at stage one? There are two options. The prevailing view takes the relation to be one of ‘grasping’ or ‘apprehending.’ Commons function like meanings or concepts, i.e. one has to grasp commons in order to form thoughts (nicely expressed in Bostock 1988: 128–132). The realist reading, on the other hand, takes commons to be real properties of things. If the commons are construed as real properties, then the soul does not necessarily ‘apprehend’ commons simply by forming a belief or a thought; indeed, the soul can form many beliefs about the commons that are simply *false*. According to the first construal, when Theaetetus formulates the thought ‘color is different from sound’, Theaetetus stands in a relation (of grasping) to ‘difference’, regardless of whether or not the given color really instantiates difference (in relation to something, e.g. sound). According to the second construal, when Theaetetus forms a thought such as ‘color is different from sound’, Theaetetus grasps the ‘difference’ only in case a given color really instantiates difference (in regard to sound). According to the first reading, the soul’s relation to commons is addressed in semantic terms; according to the second reading, it is rather the epistemological aspect that matters.

As I demonstrated in Chapter Two, the realist reading of ‘being’ (and consequently other commons) is difficult or even impossible to defend if one accepts the Conceptualist Assumption (CA):

Conceptualist Assumption (CA): If the soul entertains a thought (or holds a belief) involving a term ‘*F*’, then the soul grasps the common *F*.

To recapitulate the results of Chapter Two, the textual reasons for holding (CA) are the following. (i) When Socrates first introduces the commons, he lists several sample thoughts, like ‘color and sound are’, ‘color and sound [are] different’. Theaetetus agrees that he is indeed capable of thinking these thoughts. Socrates’ next question is the following:

Well now, by means of what do you think all those things about them (ταῦτα δὴ πάντα διὰ τίνος περὶ αὐτοῖν διανοῆς;)? Because it’s impossible to *get hold of* what they have in common either by means of hearing or by means of sight (οὔτε γὰρ δι’ ἀκοῆς οὔτε δι’ ὄψεως οἶόν τε τὸ κοινὸν λαμβάνειν περὶ αὐτῶν).

Socrates appears to be suggesting to Theaetetus that if he manages to think that ‘color and sound are’ and ‘color and sound are different’ he must be somehow grasping (or getting a hold of, λαμβάνειν) being and difference. The

train of thought at 185A4–15B9 seems to rely on the assumption that if Theaetetus is capable of entertaining a thought ‘x is (*F*)’, where ‘is’ and ‘*F*’ both refer to a common feature, Theaetetus must grasp or apprehend the common feature in question. (ii) Socrates rephrases his previous question in the following way:

S. Good. But what about the power that *reveals to you* that which is common to everything, including these things (ἡ δὲ δὴ διὰ τίνος δύναμις τό τ’ ἐπὶ πᾶσι κοινὸν καὶ τὸ ἐπὶ τούτοις δηλοῖ σοι), that to which you apply the word/ ‘is’, ‘is not’, and the others we used in our questions about them just now (ὃ τὸ ‘ἔστιν’ ἐπονομάζεις καὶ τὸ ‘οὐκ ἔστι’ καὶ ἅ νυνδὴ ἠρωτῶμεν περὶ αὐτῶν)?

This again suggests that there is some power that reveals (δηλοῖ σοι) the commons whenever a term designating a common is used, such as ‘is’ or ‘is not’, and presumably also ‘beautiful’ and ‘good’.

These two passages make (CA) look very plausible, at first sight, any attempt to deny (CA) might seem simply quixotic. However, this is where the results of the previous chapter become relevant. Practically all commentators assume that the above claims simply express Plato’s own opinion about how thought (or soul) and commons relate to each other. However, if one takes into account (i) the specific methodological features of Socratic midwifery, and (ii) Theaetetus’ commitment to the aesthetic model of cognition, one can avoid attributing (CA) to Plato.

Socratic midwifery is a peculiar method of teaching that is heavily dependent on the framework of beliefs of the interlocutor’s framework of beliefs. In the last chapter I argued that an important part of Theaetetus’ framework of beliefs is the aesthetic model of cognition. According to this model, all cognition involves a direct grasp of its object. The aesthetic model of cognition involves (see Chapter Three, Section 2) the assumption that all cognition requires direct interaction between the cognitive act and its object.

In this sense, all cognition is rather similar to sense-perception. Socrates’ procedure at stage one is an exemplary case of his midwifery – while relying on his interlocutor’s beliefs, Socrates goes on to show that there are certain features of things that are not perceptual (since perception requires bodily senses). This is by no means all Socrates intends to show. At stage one Theaetetus still thinks that the activity of the soul ‘itself by means of itself’ is very much *like* perception. According to Theaetetus, if the soul thinks that ‘color and sound are different’ it stands in a direct quasi-perceptual interaction with the property of, e.g. difference. No doubt Socrates knows that Theaetetus’ thinking has been following such a course. It is the goal of stage two to make it clear to Theaetetus that the soul’s relation to commons (especially the common ‘being’) is *not* perception-like, and that (the being of) commons is not grasped in all thoughts involving the terms that refer to these commons.

It is important to note that both of the above passages that are usually taken to support (CA) derive from a context where Theaetetus still assumes that there

might exist a perceptual way of access to the commons; indeed, Socrates reinforces this assumption with his questions. First, Socrates asks several times, ‘by means of what’ does the soul perceive the commons (185A5–6, 185C7–8). This is also the way Theaetetus understands him at 185D3. The διά+genitive idiom (‘by means of’) was firmly attached to perception (184C-D5), and designated instrumentality (see Chapter Three, Section Three). It is as if Socrates were looking for a bodily instrument ‘by means of which’ the commons are perceived. For example, he says (185B7–8) that it is not *by means of* sight or hearing that Theaetetus’ grasps the commons. Socrates is thus working on the assumption that grasping commons is similar to perceiving sounds and colors.

This is where the curious τεκμήριον that has puzzled the commentators¹⁹⁶ becomes important. Here is what Socrates says:

S. Well now, by means of what do you think all those things about them (ταῦτα δὴ πάντα διὰ τίνος περὶ αὐτοῖν διανοῆς;)? Because it's impossible to get hold of what they have in common either by means of hearing or by means of sight (οὔτε γὰρ δι' ἀκοῆς οὔτε δι' ὄψεως οἷόν τε τὸ κοινὸν λαμβάνειν περὶ αὐτῶν). Besides, here's another indication of the point we're talking about (ἔτι δὲ καὶ τόδε τεκμήριον περὶ οὗ λέγομεν). If it were possible to investigate whether both are salty or not (εἰ γὰρ δυνατόν εἴη ἀμφοτέρω σκέψασθαι ἅρ' ἐστὸν ἄλμυρῶ ἢ οὔ) of course you'll be able to say with what you'd investigate it with: it would clearly be neither sight nor hearing, but something else (οἶσθ' ὅτι ἔξεις εἰπεῖν ὃ ἐπισκέψη, καὶ τοῦτο οὔτε ὄψις οὔτε ἀκοὴ φαίνεται, ἀλλὰ τι ἄλλο.). T. Yes, of course: the power that's exercised by means of of the tongue (τί δ' οὐ μέλλει, ἢ γε διὰ τῆς γλώττης δύναμις;). (185B7-C3)

The aim of this example is by no means obvious. Some scholars¹⁹⁷ think that Socrates is trying to reply to a possible objection to the claim that commons are not perceptible – namely that it could, in principle, be possible that one particular sense (e.g. taste) could perceive the commons about sound and color. And since taste does not have access to color and sound, this would then go to show that none of the senses can have access to the commons about color and sound). However, this seems to miss the point of the passage. As Kanayama (1987: 33) notes, the use of the optative mood (εἰ γὰρ δυνατόν εἴη) does not commit Socrates to the impossibility of investigating the saltiness of color and sound. Socrates remains uncommitted as to whether or not this is possible. Rather, the point seems to be the following. Socrates has assumed (in accordance with Theaetetus’ aesthetic model of cognition) that thinking is like perceiving – only the objects are different. Thinking of ‘sameness’ and ‘difference’ about color and sound is, in a way, like tasting the saltiness of color and sound. Socrates next goes on to inquire from Theaetetus what is the ‘power that reveals the commons about everything’ (185C5), as if the commons were

¹⁹⁶ For example, Bostock (1988: 121) calls this passage ‘odd in several ways’.

¹⁹⁷ McDowell 1973, *ad loc.*

(similar to) perceptual features. This is the context from which the second passage in support of (CA) derives. It seems that Socrates assumes (in accordance with the aesthetic model of cognition) that commons are revealed simply by having a relevant thought because he assumes that grasping commons is like a *special kind of perception* – the kind that has access to common features.

Throughout stage one Socrates and Theaetetus use verbs like ‘to think’ (διανοέω, 185A9, B7), ‘to consider’ (ἐπισκέπτομαι, 185B5, C1, E2, E7), ‘to examine’ (σκέπτομαι, 185B10), ‘to perceive’ (αἰσθάνομαι, 185A6, 185B8, 185D3), ‘to reveal’ (δηλόω, 185C5), ‘to grasp’ (λαμβάνω, 185B8) interchangeably. These verbs fall, very roughly, into two categories. The first three verbs refer to non-factive mental states. One can think that ‘*x* is *F*’ without the state of affairs ‘*x*-being-*F*’ actually obtaining. This holds also for ‘considering’ and ‘examining’ (the representation involved in examining can be false). ‘To perceive’, ‘to grasp’ and ‘to reveal’ are, on the other hand, success-verbs, i.e. they carry an implication that representation is true. One can perceive something only when this something is really there to be perceived. Similarly, one cannot mistakenly grasp something, nor can something be mistakenly revealed to one.

At stage one Socrates and Theaetetus move easily back and forth between these two types of verbs and their corresponding mental states. Throughout stage one Socrates and Theaetetus take the soul’s relation to the commons to be perception-like (185B8, 185C5, 185D3). Even if the states of affairs that the commons are part of are complex (as is suggested by the repeated use of expressions like ‘thinking’ or ‘grasping’ *about*), there is no sign at stage one that Theaetetus takes the soul’s grasping of these states of affairs to involve any work or activity on the soul’s part. For Theaetetus at this stage, thinking is similar to ‘picking up’ the properties of or about things (color being different from sound, etc.). This is so because he thinks about cognition along the lines of his aesthetic model.

Even Theaetetus’ final conclusion at stage one leaves the strong impression that he has not abandoned his aesthetic model of cognition (indeed, he has not yet been given reasons why he should). After Socrates has asked him what might be the organ or instrument that the soul uses in grasping the commons, Theaetetus says:

Well, good heavens, Socrates, I couldn't say (ἀλλὰ μὰ Δία, ὃ Σώκρατες, ἔγωγε οὐκ ἂν ἔχοιμι εἰπεῖν), except that I think there simply isn't any instrument of that kind peculiar to those things as there is in the case of those others (πλὴν γ' ὅτι μοι δοκεῖ τὴν ἀρχὴν οὐδ' εἶναι τοιοῦτον οὐδὲν τούτοις ὄργανον ἴδιον ὥσπερ ἐκείνοις). On the contrary, it seems to me that the soul itself, by means of itself, considers the things which apply in common to everything (ἀλλ' αὐτὴ δι' αὐτῆς ἢ ψυχὴ τὰ κοινὰ μοι φαίνεται περὶ πάντων ἐπισκοπεῖν).

This is the view that Theaetetus has arrived at now – that the soul investigates the common features ‘by means of itself’. As I mentioned earlier, ‘by means of’

expresses a perceptual relation. Thus still relying on his aesthetic model of cognition, Theaetetus thinks that the soul uses *itself* as an instrument in investigating the commons. The peculiarity of this expression (itself by means of itself) suggests that there is something Theaetetus still has to learn. Actually, the difference between the with-idiom and the ‘by means of which’ idiom was plausibly seen (Chapter Three, Section 3) as expressing the difference between the agent and the instruments that the agent uses. Theaetetus’ final conclusion blurs this earlier distinction – his view is that the agent uses *itself* as an instrument in quasi-perceiving the commons. At stage one, Socrates can only show that even within Theaetetus’ aesthetic model, there are certain features of things that remain outside the scope of perception. What Socrates has yet to show is that, in fact, the soul’s relation to commons is different from perception not only in its objects, but also in ‘mode of access’ to these objects.

This is the reason why, in posing his questions at stage one, Socrates moves easily between thinking, grasping, and perceiving. He assumes that Theaetetus takes all acts of cognition to be perception-like. For a reader who ignores Socrates’ maieutic method of discussion, this quite naturally creates an impression of being and other commons as ‘concepts’, which are somehow operative in every act of thinking. But this is only an illusion, since, as the argument at stage two goes on to show, grasping being and other commons involves more than entertaining a thought about them, and there is ‘a great deal of education’ required for getting things right.

We are now prepared to ask, what exactly happens at stage two? Indeed, commentators are usually in trouble in explaining why stage two is inserted in the text at all (see Chapter Two, Section 3). Theaetetus has (at the end of stage one) already openly agreed that οὐσία remains outside the scope of perception. This is all that Socrates needed in order to clinch the final argument, since the final argument connects οὐσία with truth and knowledge and claims that without ‘attaining being’ there can be no knowledge, and since perception fails to attain being, it also fails to be identical with knowledge. I believe that the central goal of stage two is to stress the act of *reasoning* in regard to οὐσία. Even though, at stage one, Theaetetus admitted that there were two kinds of objects - commons and perceptible features - he still thinks that the commons are apprehended by the soul ‘by means of itself’ directly and effortlessly. Socrates’ aim at stage two is to point out that this is not the case. It is difficult to judge whether properties like beauty or goodness *are* of or about something, e.g. whether a given person *really* is good or just. He further points out that (correctly) deciding the reality (or the instantiation) of even perceptual features is difficult, involving a great deal of independent activity by the soul. Nowhere in the discussion does Socrates refer to the difficulty of ‘framing a propositional structure’ (as the standard account maintains). It is not difficult to form a proposition ‘x is just’ or ‘predicate justice’ of or about the person. But it *is* difficult to determine whether or not a given person *really* is just, e.g. whether justice has being (‘has reality’) in regard to a person.

Throughout stage two, ‘being’ should be understood as ‘reality’. Thus, to repeat what was already said in Chapter Two, Section 3, ‘being’, should throughout be taken in the semantic sense (in Kahn’s terminology), designating states of affairs that really obtain in the world, which is what the realist reading maintains:

Realist Reading:

- (a) Grasping οὐσία of *x* indicates correctly apprehending a state of affairs of *x* being (*F*). For example, the ability to apprehend whether color is in fact (salty).
- (b) Grasping οὐσία of *F* indicates correctly apprehending a state of affairs of *F* being (about *x*), for example, the ability to apprehend whether beauty in fact is (of or about the person).

It is still unclear, however, how one should understand the status of the rest of the commons. Stage one mentions the following commons (in addition to being and not-being): likeness (ὁμοιότης) and unlikeness (ἀνομοιότης), sameness (τὸ ταυτόν) and difference (ἕτερον), one (ἓν) and other numbers (τὸν ἄλλον ἀριθμὸν), odd (περιττὸν) and even (ἄρτιόν). Stage two goes on to add beauty (καλὸν) and ugliness (αἰσχρὸν), goodness (ἀγαθὸν) and badness (κακόν). Might it not be plausible to take these to be concepts of ‘sameness’ and ‘difference’, etc., and maintain simply that ‘being’ has a special status? In other words, might it not be the case that (CA) applies to all of the commons, with the exception of being and not-being? The problem with this proposal is that, at stage one, Plato does not even hint that one should distinguish between being and not-being and the rest of the commons in such an important way. Thus, one should expect that just like being and not being, the rest of the commons are also not apprehended simply by virtue of using the terms that refer to these commons. If commons are not concepts, then what are they? Unfortunately, the text of the Passage of the Commons is not very forthcoming on this issue. Assuming that the rest of the commons should have a status similar to the common of being, I suggest that they should be taken to be genuine *properties* of things. And, analogously to being and not-being, stage one assumes that the soul stands in a quasi-perceptual relation to the being of these properties, whereas stage two goes on to show that this is, in fact, not the case.

I will now try to make it plausible that stage two aims at making Theaetetus understand that the apprehension of commons (especially being) is not perception-like, but rather that it necessarily involves calculation, deliberation, and education. At the beginning of stage two Socrates seems to recapitulate the results of stage one, asking Theaetetus whether being belongs to the list of commons, and then adding beautiful, ugly, etc., to this list as well (186A2–9).

S. Well now, in which [class] do you put being? Because that's pre-eminently something that goes with everything (ποτέρων οὖν τίθης τὴν οὐσίαν; τοῦτο γὰρ μάλιστα ἐπὶ πάντων παρέπεται).

The majority of commentators take this to be a simple recapitulation of what was said at the end of stage one. But Theaetetus has already openly agreed that ‘being’ does indeed belong to the class of those things that are grasped by the soul itself by itself. Why would Socrates need to address this issue for the second time? It is quite likely that Socrates has something else in mind when he seemingly repeats his question about the status of the common ‘being’. First, it is worth noting that Socrates adds a new aspect to the notion of ‘being’. At stage one it was agreed that all the commons mentioned are common to everything (185C4–5, E1). Here Socrates singles out ‘being’ as that which most (μάλιστα) accompanies everything. What does he mean by this? According to the realist reading that I am defending, this means that being real, in both senses (a) and (b), is the most common property there is. Of course, the second reason why Socrates might be focusing on being is that this notion will play a crucial role in the ensuing argument; after all, the inability to attain reality proves fatal to perception’s claim to be knowledge. I think there is also a third reason behind Socrates’ stressing being. Indeed, as it emerges from Theaetetus’ answer, for him the common ‘being’ is not something that is simply picked up by means of thinking about it. Rather, the soul’s relation to being is something more akin to desiring or *yearning*. Theaetetus says that

T. I put it in that [the class of things] which the soul itself yearns after, by itself (ἐγὼ μὲν ὧν αὐτὴ ἡ ψυχὴ καθ’ αὐτὴν ἐπορέγεται). (186A2–A4)

The verb ἐπορέγεται is often translated as ‘apprehending’ (e.g. by Cornford 1935: 106, Nancy 1995: 232). This would fit very well with the verbs of ‘grasping’ and ‘revealing itself’ at stage one. However, it has convincingly been argued (Heidegger 2002: 146–147, Kanayama 1987: 37) that the translation ‘yearn after’ is, in fact, correct here. Suddenly, in contrast to stage one, Theaetetus is claiming that the soul ‘yearns after’ being. This is surprising. If being indeed does mean reality, he must mean that the soul yearns after reality in the sense of aiming to finding out how things are. This means that, for Theaetetus, the soul does not apprehend being simply in virtue of thinking ‘x is (F)’, but rather that he takes apprehending reality as a *goal*. What has Theaetetus seen now that he did not see earlier? Socrates has drawn Theaetetus’ attention to οὐσία as a specific common that stands out from the rest. Why is being special? Why would Theaetetus be inclined to abandon his aesthetic model of cognition when it comes to being? I think that the answer can be found from the previous course of the dialogue. Socrates has just (179D–183A) refuted (a version of) Protagoras’ Secret Doctrine, according to which everything is in motion (in every way). This doctrine of universal flux was initially designed to support the claim that there is no perceiver-independent οὐσία:

So my perception is true for me – because it’s always of the being that’s mine (τῆς γὰρ ἐμῆς οὐσίας ἀεί ἐστιν) – and, as Protagoras said, it’s for me

to decide (ἐγὼ κριτῆς), of the things that are for me, that/how they are, and of the things that are not, that/how they are not (τῶν τε ὄντων ἐμοὶ ὡς ἔστι, καὶ τῶν μὴ ὄντων ὡς οὐκ ἔστιν). – Apparently. – Well then, if I'm free from falsehood (ἄψευδής), and don't trip up in my thinking (διανοίᾳ) about the things that are, how could I fail to have knowledge of the things I'm a perceiver of (οὐκ ἐπιστήμων ἂν εἶην ὥντερ αἰσθητής)? (160C-D)

Everything that is real is real in relation to someone (160C); being results from an interaction between the perceiver and the perceived object; there is no being that is perceiver-independent. I argued in Chapter Three, Section 2, that in this passage (and in the previous discussion as a whole), 'perception' should be taken in its broad sense, covering all acts of cognition. The Secret Doctrine thus supported Theaetetus' aesthetic model of cognition, according to which all acts of cognition (believing, remembering, and thinking) involve a direct relation to their objects. Indeed, according to the Secret Doctrine, there are no 'beings' outside this relation. The Secret Doctrine has just been officially refuted (183C). This doctrine was meant to be the main support (160A–C) for the claim that there is no independent οὐσία. Further, Socrates has shown Theaetetus that there are things (the commons) that cannot be perceived at all. Theaetetus himself has to take the final step and conclude that soul's non-perceptual relation to being is not one of direct and effortless grasping, i.e. to abandon the aesthetic model, at least when it comes to being as reality.

I think that here it is possible to see the 'endeictic' (see below, pp. 108-109) aspect of Socrates' maieutic method. Throughout the discussion, Theaetetus has taken human cognition to be perception-like (involving direct awareness). First, Socrates has brought out the implications of Theaetetus' definition, and thereby he has also brought out the implications of the background assumption (the aesthetic model of cognition) that made this definition plausible to Theaetetus. One of the implications of Theaetetus' definition was that οὐσία has to be conceived of as being perceiver-dependent. But this required admitting that everything is in constant movement (the Secret Doctrine). Since the Secret Doctrine is shown false, it is also likely that οὐσία is not perceiver-dependent. Socrates has drawn Theaetetus attention to the 'commons', and has pointed out that the commons are not perceivable. Since Socrates is methodologically barren, he has relied on Theaetetus' framework of beliefs in posing his questions (which includes the aesthetic model). He has gotten Theaetetus to admit that there are certain features of things that are not perceptual (in the narrow sense). Thus, Socrates has given Theaetetus' two reasons to think that soul's relation to οὐσία cannot be perception-like direct awareness. First, οὐσία is not perceiver-dependent (in the broad sense). Secondly, οὐσία is no even perceptual (in the narrow sense). It is therefore quite natural that, after a moment of reflection, Theaetetus would admit that the soul's relation to being (as reality) cannot be perception-like picking-up that it was assumed to be at stage one. If there is objective perceiver- (or mind-) independent reality, then the thinking soul is not constantly in contact with it, because thinking is different from perceiving. This being the case it is indeed far more natural for

Theaetetus to see the attaining of objective being to be the *goal* of thinking. As Socrates goes on to show, this applies to all properties – the soul needs to work, calculate, and reason to represent reality as it is. Representing reality as it is (‘attaining being’) needs to be *achieved* (this implicitly contradicts Protagoras, which will be further discussed below, in Section 2). Therefore, Socrates has shown (ἐνδεικνύμενος, 167E) without openly *telling* it to Theaetetus, that soul’s relation to the common of οὐσία should not be construed as a direct ‘picking up’ of how things are.

Socrates’ next question brings this out even more clearly. He asks about ‘like’ and ‘unlike’, ‘same’ and ‘different’, ‘good’ and ‘disgraceful’, ‘beautiful’ and ‘ugly’ (186A6–9). Seemingly Socrates is still compiling a list of commons. Theaetetus’ answer is significant:

S. And the like and the unlike, the same and different (ἢ καὶ τὸ ὅμοιον καὶ τὸ ἀνόμοιον καὶ τὸ ταὐτὸν καὶ ἕτερον)? T. Yes. S. What about beautiful and ugly, good and bad (τί δέ; καλὸν καὶ αἰσχρὸν καὶ ἀγαθὸν καὶ κακόν)? T. They, too, seem to me to be pre-eminently things whose being the soul considers in relation to one another, calculating/reasoning in itself things past and present in relation to things in the future (καὶ τούτων μοι δοκεῖ ἐν τοῖς μάλιστα πρὸς ἄλληλα σκοπεῖσθαι τὴν οὐσίαν, ἀναλογιζομένη ἐν ἑαυτῇ τὰ γεγονότα καὶ τὰ παρόντα πρὸς τὰ μέλλοντα). (186A5-B1)

First, one would expect Theaetetus to say that good, beautiful, etc., belong to the class of commons. What Theaetetus actually says is quite different; he says that their οὐσία, too, is something that the soul considers by itself (i.e. without the aid of the senses). Why, all of a sudden, does he slip into talking about the *being of* beautiful, etc., and not simply of beautiful *tout court*? Secondly, how come Theaetetus stresses that the soul considers the οὐσία of beautiful and ugly, good and bad, same and different (notice the ‘too’ (καὶ) at 186A10) *in relation to* (πρὸς ἄλληλα) each other? This is quite unexpected compared to stage one, where the commons were considered or grasped in isolation (albeit ‘about’ things). Thirdly, the soul considers the οὐσία of all these things while reasoning about past, present, and future. Again, this is something that was completely missing at stage one.

As to the first question, this widening of the notion of ‘being’ to cover not only reality full stop, but also the reality *of* sameness and difference, good and bad, etc., is supported by the fact that already at stage one ‘being’ was taken to be the ‘being of *something*’ (185B–C). Since Theaetetus has already agreed that being in the sense of reality is not apprehended in all thoughts, it is only natural for him to expand this to cover the reality *of* beauty, sameness, and goodness. The soul attempts to determine whether these properties are instantiated in a given case – whether a given sound is different from a given color, whether a given law is just or not, or whether a given person is beautiful or ugly. Since Theaetetus has in mind the objective being of these properties (in any given case), he is inclined to think that the soul needs to engage in comparisons and take into account the past and future to determine what is, in fact, the case.

Here it seems obvious that ‘being’ as the reality (of something) is the only option of rendering οὐσία. The realist reading claims that ‘being’ should be construed as a state of affairs in a very broad sense. This would explain why Theaetetus takes this to involve, first, comparing and, second, taking into account past, present and future time. As to the first, in order to successfully determine whether a given person is good, one has to compare good and disgraceful actions. This comparing of putatively good things to putatively bad things probably eventually leads to some understanding of *what* goodness is. This has tempted some commentators into thinking that Plato has in mind the ‘being’ of beautiful in the sense of *essence* or nature of beauty (e.g. McDowell 1973 *ad loc.*, Modrak 1981, Silverman 1990). It seems reasonable to assume that correctly apprehending whether ‘*x* is *F*’ contributes somewhat to understanding what *F* is. It is also likely that one is in a better position to decide whether ‘*x* is *F*’ correctly if one has some grasp of what *F* is.

Similarly, one is also liable to make mistakes in determining whether *F* is instantiated, if one has an insufficient grasp of what *F* is. There are at least two ways in which the soul can fail to apprehend the property of, e.g. difference, even regarding such simple matters as sound and color. For example, the soul can mistakenly think that two sounds are the same, when they are in fact different. In this case, the soul fails to apprehend the relevant property (i.e. difference), since it represents falsely, i.e. it fails to attain the being (reality) of difference in regard to these two sounds; it fails to attain the fact that difference is (about or regarding these two sounds). On the other hand, the soul can think that a particular color is beautiful, whereas in fact it is not. The soul can make this mistake since it does not properly understand *what* it is to be beautiful in the first place. The second example involves ignorance (or at least some false beliefs) about the very nature of the given property, whereas the first concerns (what we would call) a mistaken application of a concept that is otherwise known.

It is important to see that Plato does not draw a clear line between these two kinds of mistakes. In fact, as stage two goes on to show, it seems that Plato regards determining *that* a given property ‘has reality’ (about or in regard to something) and determining *what* this property itself is as two sides of the same coin. This might be due to the fact that Plato’s position results from his (unconscious) conflation of the existential and essential uses of the verb ‘to be’ (see, e.g. Kahn 1981). But Plato can equally well be taken to be expressing an epistemological position, according to which the mistakes in what we would call concept application always result from an insufficient understanding of the nature of the property that the concept aims to capture. It is indeed quite plausible that if *S* mistakenly judges, e.g. a law to be just, then the problem lies in *S*’s insufficient grasp of what it is to be just, i.e. of the property of justice. There is nothing obviously counter-intuitive in the claim that if *S* takes two different sounds to be the same, this is because *S* has an insufficient grasp of what the property, for example, the difference (of sounds) is.

Perhaps this assumption might help to explain why Plato uses the notion of οὐσία in the Passages of the Commons in a way that might suggest its interpretation as ‘essence’ rather than reality. Determining *what* *F* is helps enormously to determine *whether* *F* is instantiated (whether *F* has being in regard to *x*). In that sense ‘being’ as essence is not far below the surface of the text of the Passage of the Commons, however I do not think that ‘being’, at stage two, should simply be identified with essence.

In Chapter Two, Section 1, I discarded the essentialist reading of ‘being’, on the grounds that it had difficulties in accommodating the Conceptualist Assumption. However, now I have argued that Socrates does not, in fact, subscribe to (CA). In that case the essentialist reading becomes, again, a viable alternative. It is plausible that at stage one Socrates probably does not have in mind being as essence (since ‘being’, at stage one, is a nominalization of the complete use of the verb ‘to be’). However, the defenders of the essentialist reading could claim that ‘being’ at stage one means ‘existence’, whereas being at stage two means ‘essence’. Thus there might be a shift from the existential (complete) use of ‘being’ to the predicative (incomplete) use of ‘being’ at stage two.

In Chapter One I indicated that this shift is rather typical in Plato (C. Kahn and L. Brown have persuasively argued for this claim). The general idea is that, for Plato, to be is always to be *something* (to have an essence). Thus it can be that determining whether a thing exists (or whether a property is instantiated) goes hand in hand with (perhaps even means the same as) determining the thing’s (or property’s) essence¹⁹⁸.

I believe that this proposal has its merits and that Plato does think that determining the thing’s (or property’s) essence is relevant for determining whether it exists (or is instantiated). However, it is hard to claim that ‘being’ at stage two simply *means* essence, mainly for following two reasons.

(1) The passage insists on a very close connection between ‘being’ and ‘truth’. 186C-E makes it clear that ‘attaining being’ is taken to be necessary (and maybe also sufficient) for ‘grasping truth’. According to the essentialist reading, Plato would be claiming that determining thing’s essence is necessary for grasping (any) truth about this thing. This probably means that the notion of ‘truth’ Plato has in mind is restricted to truths about essences (or at least that grasping truths about essences is necessary for grasping all truths). It can, perhaps, be maintained that ‘truth’ in Plato’s middle period is sometimes strongly connected to Forms (or essences), and that sometimes Plato thinks that *only* statements about Forms can be true in *stricto sensu* (e.g. *Phd.* 65B–66A). However, in the *Theaetetus* Plato clearly recognizes that statements such as ‘the wine is sweet’ or ‘this man was robbed’ can be *true* (these are not, at least not obviously, truths about essences). Thus there is no reason why Socrates would say (and Theaetetus would accept) that truth can only be reached if one ‘attains being’ in the sense of essence.

¹⁹⁸ This was suggested by J. Szaif.

McDowell (1973 *ad loc.*) proposes that Plato might not have in mind *any* grasp of truths but that he might be referring to a *knowledgeable* grasp of truths (which requires grasping essences). But, of course, Plato does not restrict the notion of grasping truths in any way, but speaks quite generally about ‘hitting on truth’. Thus it seems that the essentialist reading is forced to either limit the notion of ‘truth’ (to truths about essences) or the notion of ‘grasp’ (to a knowledgeable grasp) in a way that is not at all warranted by the text.

(2) Aside from this general (but I think decisive) consideration against the essentialist reading, there are also some minor reasons for rejecting the essentialist reading. For one, Theaetetus says (at 186B1) that the soul takes into account the past and future in order to investigate the ‘being’ of something. This is an odd claim, if ‘being’ means essence, since Plato usually thinks that essences are a-temporal, and, consequently, when it comes to *grasping* essences, Plato usually regards the temporal dimension as irrelevant too (e.g. *Tht.* 174E–175C). McDowell (1973 *ad loc.*) thinks that Socrates’ next remark ‘Hold on!’ (ἔχε δῆ) is supposed to indicate that Theaetetus is making a mistake, and that temporal dimension is not pertinent to the discussion after all. However, as Kanayama (1987: 77) has persuasively argued, the expression ‘Hold on’ is normally used in Socratic dialogues precisely to point out that the interlocutor has made an important step *forward*.

Secondly, at 186B6, ‘being’ is coupled with the expression ὅτι ἐστὸν (‘that it is’) by means of the epexegetic καὶ (meaning ‘i.e.’). This indicates that, for Plato, the ‘being’ of hardness and softness means the same as what the expression ὅτι ἐστὸν expresses. That is, it refers either to facts (the realist reading) or to statements about facts (the copula reading). McDowell (1973 *ad loc.*) thinks that ὅτι can be rendered here as ‘what it is’. This would support the interpretation of being as ‘essence’. However, Bostock (1988: 139–140) has presented convincing counterarguments against this proposal.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁹ For example, McDowell’s rendering would, first, make the relevant sentence at 186B6 come out ungrammatical (Bostock 1988: 139). Secondly, since the expression ὅτι ἐστὸν clearly means ‘that it is’ at stage one (185A9), it is hard to imagine that Plato would use the same expression in a *different* sense and connect this expression again with ‘being’ at 186C. This would be simply misleading (Bostock 1988: 140). However, Bostock’s second objection is not necessarily a problem for the essentialist who wants to maintain that there is a *real* shift in the meaning of the term ‘being’ and that Plato is *unaware* of this shift. To use Nehamas’s (1979) phrase: for Plato, there is no difference between the statement ‘x is (F)’ (stage one) and ‘x is what it is to be F’ (stage two). Since, according to this reading, Plato does not realize that there is a difference between the two expressions, he is also unaware that there is real shift in meaning of the term ‘being’ between stage one and stage two. This would, of course, explain why Plato stresses the difficulty of attaining being and the necessity of education (truths about essences are hard to achieve). However, the result would be, in the context of the Passage of the Commons, that statements that express contingent (or non-essential) truths come out as not true (in the strict sense of failing to express the essential characteristic of a thing). I pointed out above, throughout the discussion of Protagoras’ doctrine, and later in discussing Theaetetus’ second definition, Plato assumes that there *are* contingent truths (e.g. 200E–201C). Thus he would need to offer some argument (in the Passage of the Commons) as to why certain truths fall outside the scope

Thus it seems much more likely that what Plato has in mind is simply determining whether given things instantiate a given property and not grasping the essence of that property (although this might eventually turn out to be very helpful). In order to determine whether a given person is in fact good, one has to take into account his past and present actions, and what he is likely to do in the future. Theaetetus can easily make these claims about considering the being of goodness, since Socrates and Theodorus raised exactly this point about determining the goodness of laws in the ‘argument of the future’ (177–9). However, it is unclear why Theaetetus would be inclined to think the same about the beautiful and ugly. Although one might agree that determining whether something is beautiful requires comparing the beautiful thing with ugly things, it seems that normally we would not think that the consideration of whether something is beautiful would require taking into account past, present and future. Why would Theaetetus think this? In my view, the answer is found in Socrates’ praise of Theaetetus just a few lines above. Socrates says that Theaetetus is beautiful and good, and not ugly, as Theodorus said (143E). He further implies that his discovery of Theaetetus’ beauty was the result of the foregoing long discussion. In discovering Theaetetus’ beauty, Socrates himself has certainly taken into account both the past and the present (and the future too, 142C5–D3).

Thus, it seems that, e.g. ‘considering the οὐσία of beautiful’ is well accounted for by the realist reading. It explains why Theaetetus would think that the soul has to consider the οὐσία of the good in relation to the disgraceful. The realist reading also explains why Theaetetus thinks that deciding the οὐσία of beautiful and ugly, and of good and bad involves taking into account both past and future. In fact, it is that seems the other main possibility of rendering οὐσία (i.e. as a copula) would be in serious trouble here. According to the copula reading, considering the being of beautiful would have to mean forming a proposition ‘x is beautiful’ (or ‘beauty is about x’). I can see no explanation as to why one must take into account past and future to do that. One can think to oneself that ‘x is beautiful’ while completely disregarding past, present and future (in fact, it seems that this was precisely what Theodorus did when he thought that Theaetetus is ugly (143E)).

With just a couple of questions, Socrates has directed Theaetetus quite far from his initial understanding of the nature of commons and, especially, being. First, by focusing on the common of being and then bringing into the discussion properties like goodness and badness, Socrates has helped Theaetetus to discover that the soul does not stand in a perception-like relation to the common ‘being’, nor does it stand in this relation in regard to the being of properties like goodness, badness, or sameness.

‘truth’ and ‘being’ as these terms figure in the Passage of the Commons. Plato offers no such arguments. He, furthermore, continues the discussion of Theaetetus’ second definition (‘knowledge is true belief’) in focusing *mostly* on contingent (or non-essential) truths (187B–201C). This would be distinctly odd, if the thought that Passage of the Commons established that only essential truths are pertinent to knowledge.

The next step taken by Socrates is crucial for the whole argument in the Passage of the Commons. He proposes that the states of affairs or facts are difficult to grasp even in the case of *perceptual* properties. In this way he is showing Theaetetus that the soul *always* (not only in case of more abstract features such as ‘good’) has to engage in deliberation and reasoning in order to judge the ‘being’ of a perceptual feature.

S. Hold on. It'll perceive the hardness of what's hard by means of touch, won't it, and the softness of what's soft in the same way (ἔχε δὴ: ἄλλο τι τοῦ μὲν σκληροῦ τὴν σκληρότητα διὰ τῆς ἐπαφῆς αἰσθήσεται, καὶ τοῦ μαλακοῦ τὴν μαλακότητα ὡσαύτως;)? T. Yes. S. But their being, and what/that they both are (τὴν δέ γε οὐσίαν καὶ ὅτι ἐστὸν), and their oppositeness to each other, and the being, in its turn, of this oppositeness (καὶ τὴν ἐναντιότητα πρὸς ἀλλήλω καὶ τὴν οὐσίαν αὐτῆς ἐναντιότητος), are things which the soul itself tries to decide for us, by reviewing them and comparing them with one another (αὐτὴ ἡ ψυχὴ ἐπανιοῦσα καὶ συμβάλλουσα πρὸς ἄλληλα κρίνειν πειρᾶται ἡμῖν). T. That's quite right (πάνυ μὲν οὖν).

First, the passage seems to offer perhaps the best support for the copula reading, since here οὐσία is connected (by means of epexegetic καὶ) to ‘that they [hardness and softness] are’ (ὅτι ἐστὸν). This seems to imply that the soul does perceive hardness and softness by means of the senses (i.e. touch), but that the soul is incapable of forming the thought that ‘color is’ without grasping at least one of the commons, namely ‘being’. However, I argued at length in Chapter Two (Section 3) that this reading is difficult to defend. It is hard to explain why Socrates would be inclined to think that forming thoughts like ‘color is’ would be so difficult as to require ‘a great deal of troublesome education’.

Can the realist reading fare better? First, it is important to note that trying to make judgments (about sound and color) ὅτι ἐστὸν does not have to mean that the soul is trying to form a thought that ‘hardness is’. There is no reason why the verb ‘be’ should be taken in its syntactic sense here, as opposed to the earlier semantic sense. According to the realist reading, Socrates simply means that the soul is trying to judge whether hardness has being (about something), i.e. whether hardness is *really* instantiated. The soul is not simply trying to form a judgment; it is trying to judge *correctly* whether or not a given perceptual feature is instantiated. To look forward in the argument (186D4), the soul is trying to ‘attain the being’ of hardness and softness (about or in relation to something), and this, in turn, requires the ‘attaining of being’ of opposition (about or in relation to hardness and softness). This attaining of opposition can be achieved by comparing and reviewing, in short, by reasoning. Later on, at 187A8, this activity is identified as forming beliefs. Now the question is this – if reasoning is a necessary part of forming beliefs, as I will argue, does this passage not commit Plato to the view that one has to grasp at least one intelligible – opposition, in order to form beliefs (about hardness and softness)?

Lorenz (2006: 76), for one, is very convinced that the term ‘opposition’ designates a common. In fact, his whole interpretation relies crucially on this

assumption. According to Lorenz, Plato's point is that one has to grasp opposition in order to apply a perceptual predicate, e.g. 'hardness'. However, if this really is Plato's point, then it is simply astonishing that he does not bother to list 'opposition' explicitly among the commons. It would be odd for Socrates to expect Theaetetus to understand that 'opposition' is a common unless it was explicitly stated. This is one problem with counting opposition as one of the commons. The second problem (I am not aware of any commentator raising this issue) is that opposition might plausibly *not* be a common at all. At least it is difficult to see how opposition could be a common in the criterion set for commons at stage one. Commons were initially introduced as properties that belong to *the proper objects of different senses* (185A). Can the proper objects of the senses reasonably be said to be opposed to each other (is sound opposed to color)? Indeed, it seems that opposition is not cross-modal. Therefore, I think that Plato is not making a point that the soul has to grasp intelligibles in order to reason. Socrates' point is simply that one has to reason and calculate and compare in order to successfully 'attain the being' of opposition (i.e. deciding whether opposition 'has reality' in regard to or about hardness and softness), and then in order to determine whether something is (really) soft or hard. Why is the deciding of being of opposition necessary for deciding the being of hardness and softness (whether hardness 'has reality' in regard to or about x)? I think that the answer is that Socrates assumes that in order to successfully decide the being of hardness, one has to have some sort of grasp of the fact that hardness is opposed to softness. However, this is not necessary for forming beliefs *tout court* (as Lorenz suggests (2006: 76ff)). Rather, it is required for successfully reaching the *goal* of 'attaining being', i.e. deciding *correctly* whether a given thing is hard or soft. Thus the above sentence supports neither of the claims that Lorenz attributes to Plato. First, 'intelligibles' are not grasped in all beliefs, since opposition might not be an 'intelligible'. Second, even if opposition could be seen as an 'intelligible', Socrates is not claiming that opposition has to be grasped in all beliefs; he is simply saying that grasping opposition is necessary for achieving the *goal* of 'attaining being'.

The dynamics of the discussion are as follows. Theaetetus has recognized that in the case of properties like good or beautiful, the soul has to compare these properties to one another in order to 'attain the being' or to determine successfully whether they are, in fact, instantiated. That Socrates thinks that Theaetetus is on to something important is reflected by the expression 'hold on'.²⁰⁰ Socrates' next move is to point out that in the case of perceptual features,

²⁰⁰ There is a long-standing discussion as to the precise import of the expression 'ἔξε δῆ' in this passage. The question is whether Socrates indicates that Theaetetus is on to something correct and important or whether he thinks that Theaetetus is making a mistake. According to Schmidt (1877: 512) the discussion on this topic was already quite lively among the nineteenth-century German scholars (between Heindorf and Stallbaum). McDowell (1973: 190) thinks that Socrates is saying that Theaetetus is on the wrong track. Kanayama (1987: 77) and Lorenz (2006: 86 n. 41) prefer the second option (both referring to *Gorg.* 460A), as do I.

too, a great deal of activity of the soul is required in order to attain the being of, e.g. hardness. The expression πρὸς ἄλληλα, i.e. ‘in relation to one another’, repeats what Theaetetus has just said in regard to investigating the being of the good and beautiful. Thus Socrates says that deciding the being of hardness (i.e. attaining the being of hardness about something, i.e. correctly settling the question whether something is hard) also requires that the soul compare it with softness. The soul does this independently of perception. Socrates’ point is not semantic, but rather epistemological. What he is trying to say is that if one wants to determine whether a given thing is really hard (or soft, or beautiful), one has to engage in reasoning and, perhaps, in making inferences. Socrates is not suggesting that one has to grasp the commons in order to reason. In fact his point is exactly the converse – one has to reason in order to grasp (at least one of the) commons, i.e. to ‘attain being’. The exact nature of this reasoning is left undetermined (but it does minimally involve comparing, calculating and taking into account past, present, and future), but nowhere does the text suggest that one has to have already ‘attained the being’ of something in order to compare and review and calculate (as the standard view suggests). It is quite plausible that Socrates would take a similar stance towards the rest of the commons other than being. In order to grasp or attain, e.g. the (being of) difference of something (from other things), one has to engage in comparing, reviewing, and making inferences.

Having acquired Theaetetus’ consent that even in the case of perceptual features the soul has to work in order to determine whether they have being, i.e. whether something is hard, Socrates is ready to make another important distinction before clinching the final argument.

S. So there are some things which both men and animals are able by nature to perceive from the moment they're born (οὐκοῦν τὰ μὲν εὐθὺς γενομένοις πάρεστι φύσει αἰσθάνεσθαι ἀνθρώποις τε καὶ θηρίοις): namely, all the experiences reach the soul by means of the body (ὅσα διὰ τοῦ σώματος παθήματα ἐπὶ τὴν ψυχὴν τείνει). But as for calculations about those things, with respect to being and usefulness (τὰ δὲ περὶ τούτων ἀναλογίσματα πρὸς τε οὐσίαν καὶ ὠφέλειαν), they're acquired, by those who do acquire them, with difficulty and over a long time, by means of great deal of troublesome education μόγις καὶ ἐν χρόνῳ διὰ πολλῶν πραγμάτων καὶ παιδείας παραγίνεται οἷς ἂν καὶ παραγίγνηται). T. Definitely (παντάσῃ μὲν οὖν).

Here Socrates makes a distinction between the παθήματα (experiences) that reach the soul by means of the body and the calculations about these experiences. In the literature one finds many suggestions as to the precise character of the παθήματα in question²⁰¹. It seems to me that Socrates is not

²⁰¹ For discussion, see Kanayama (1987: 48–49 and 78–80). The word παθήμα has a wide range of meanings in Plato. It often just means a ‘cognitive state’. In the *Timaeus* all representational states of the mortal soul are called παθήματα (*Tim.* 69D1). Similarly, in *Republic* the segments of the Line (and the corresponding states) are called παθήματα (*Rep.*

being overly precise here. Again, the point that he is trying to make concerns the epistemological requirements for grasping the οὐσία of something – namely that even in case of perceptual properties, the soul has to *reason* in order to determine how things are.

The sentence above does raise some questions that are not very easy to answer. First, is it correct to take ‘being’ at 186C3 as referring to the being (reality) of hardness and softness (of something)? In the immediate context ‘being’ should rather refer to the being of παθήματα, and not hardness and softness. In that case, Socrates would be saying that it takes long and arduous education in order to calculate according to being of παθήματα. This poses a problem for the realist reading. What sense would it make to say that the soul has to receive education in order to determine whether the experiences are real?²⁰² However, it is not at all mandatory to take οὐσία to be referring to the being of experiences (as do, e.g. Modrak (1981) and Silverman (1990)). It seems rather that ‘being’ is here used in an indeterminate way so that it harks back to the use of οὐσία throughout the second stage of the Passage of the Commons. The idea is that it takes education to learn to reason in a way that enables the soul to determine whether the experiences (of, e.g. hardness) correspond to reality (e.g. whether a particular thing really is hard). As Theaetetus suggested above, determining this requires calculations concerning past and future (and of course, determining their oppositeness, etc.). It is likely that this is also why Socrates stresses the notion of ‘usefulness’ (ὠφέλεια). Theaetetus learned earlier (at 177–179), that determining whether something is useful always requires taking into account the future; it is never enough to simply focus on the present time, whereas perception is always tied to the present (*Tht.* 179C)²⁰³.

Second, the realist reading commits Socrates to a view that ‘attaining being’ in the sense of correctly settling the question whether something, e.g. is hard, is impossible to accomplish without reasoning and education. What could he mean by this? Is it not possible for someone without any education to reach the being of hardness or softness in case of, say, rocks or pillows, i.e. to decide that ‘this rock is hard’ or that ‘this pillow is soft’, while attaining the οὐσία of hardness in relation to rocks? This passage has been the main motivation behind the reading of οὐσία as essences or Forms²⁰⁴, since it does make sense to say that one cannot grasp the essence or a Form of softness without going through long and arduous education. However, as I have tried to indicate, οὐσία in the sense of essences or Forms does not fit with how οὐσία is used within the rest of the Passage of the Commons. Thus, the question is whether it is possible to explain why Theaetetus would think that it is necessary to go through a great deal of

511D7). Thus the term does not have to mean ‘non-cognitive passive affection’ (although this meaning might be expressed in *Phlb.* 39A), as it is sometimes taken.

²⁰² I thank Blake Hestir for bringing this problem to my attention.

²⁰³ Aristotle, too, takes perception to be only of the present, see e.g. *De Mem.* 449B

²⁰⁴ For references, see footnotes to p. 68 and p. 71 of this dissertation.

education in order to settle the question about whether the παθήματα correspond to reality?

It might seem odd to say that determining adequately whether a given perceptual property really applies to a given thing requires education (and taking into account future and past, etc.). But the underlying assumption here is thoroughly Platonic. It is important to note that Socrates is not referring to *all* properties, but to properties that in fact have *opposites*²⁰⁵: good and bad, hardness and softness, beautiful and ugly, etc. It is somewhat remarkable that although Plato begins by discussing sound and color at stage one, he suddenly switches to hardness and softness at stage two. This is probably because he feels that the point he is endeavoring to make would be more clearly presented by relying on hardness and softness. It is well attested in the dialogues (e.g. *Rep.* 522E–524D) that Plato is inclined to think that determining whether perceptual properties that have opposites are instantiated is especially difficult, since they are contextual in at least two senses: a given thing is beautiful compared to one thing but ugly compared to another thing; and a given thing seems ugly to some but beautiful to others. The same applies to other opposites, including hard and soft, etc.²⁰⁶.

This proposal is supported by the prominent place given to ‘oppositeness’ in the preceding sentence – in order to determine whether a given property of this kind is really instantiated, one has to be clear on how, exactly, hardness and softness are opposite to each other. Thus, I propose that the thought behind Socrates’ claim for the necessity of education relies on the Platonic assumption about certain perceptual properties. This assumption is, then, expanded to cover all perceptual predicates. Socrates makes an ampliative inference (with Theaetetus’ consent) from the claim that (i) in the case of some perceptual properties, it is necessary to engage in reasoning in order to ‘attain being’, to the claim that (ii) reasoning is necessary to ‘attain being’ in case of all perceptual predicates. Now, since the inference is ampliative, it leaves open the possibility that there might be some perceptual properties where this is not the case. However, it is not easy to give examples of perceptual properties that are not context-dependent in the above sense. For example, Plato does not take colors to have opposites (*Tim.* 67D–68D). But colors could still be seen to be context-dependent, and in order to determine whether a given thing really instantiates, e.g. redness, one has to take into account the possibility that a given thing appears red to one and, say, orange, to another person. Thus, it is easy to see how Socrates can infer that the soul has to make inferences and calculate (taking into account the past and present) when trying to decide the being (reality) of any perceptual predicate. Therefore, given the assumptions Plato works with, the conclusion of the Passage of the Commons is completely justified.

²⁰⁵ This is usually neglected in the scholarly literature.

²⁰⁶ See, especially *Rep.* 523–5 and Irwin’s (1999) and Annas’s (1981) discussion of this passage.

We have now reached the final stage of the Passage of the Commons. Socrates and Theaetetus have isolated two different kinds of cognitive activities of the soul and two corresponding sets of objects. Theaetetus has agreed, in stage one, that there are commons that cannot be accessed by means of the senses. He has, further, come to realize that the access to commons, in particular to the common ‘being’, is something that requires a great deal of activity from the soul. The soul has to be able to calculate, compare, and take into account the past and future in order to reach ‘being’. In order to engage in these activities, the soul has to have received education. I have argued that ‘being’ should be understood as ‘reality’. I have also argued that calculating and comparing should not be equated with framing a propositional structure (as suggested by the standard account), but rather with inference-making, aiming to find out how things are. What Socrates has established is that the soul has to work hard to discover whether any property (a common property or perceptual property) is instantiated by a given thing.

The final argument moves extremely quickly.

S. Well now, is it possible that someone should attain truth if he doesn't attain being? (οἷόν τε οὖν ἀληθείας τυχεῖν, ὃ μὴδὲ οὐσίας) T. No (ἀδύνατον). S. And will someone ever have knowledge of something whose truth he doesn't attain (οὗ δὲ ἀληθείας τις ἀτυχήσει, ποτὲ τοῦτου ἐπιστήμων ἔσται)? S. So knowledge is not located in our experiences, but in our reasoning about those things we mentioned, because it's possible, apparently, to grasp being in the latter, but impossible in the former (ἐν μὲν ἄρα τοῖς παθήμασιν οὐκ ἐνι ἐπιστήμῃ, ἐν δὲ τῷ περὶ ἐκείνων συλλογισμῷ: οὐσίας γὰρ καὶ ἀληθείας ἐνταῦθα μὲν, ὡς ἔοικε, δυνατόν ἄψασθαι, ἐκεῖ δὲ ἀδύνατον). T. Evidently (φαίνεται). S. Well now, are you going to call them by the same name, when they have such great differences (ἢ οὖν ταῦτόν ἐκεῖνό τε καὶ τοῦτο καλεῖς, τοσαύτας διαφορὰς ἔχοντε;). T. No, that wouldn't be just/right (οὐκ οὖν δὴ δίκαιόν γε). S. Then what name do you give the: seeing, hearing, smelling, feeling hot? (τί οὖν δὴ ἐκείνῳ ἀποδίδως ὄνομα, τῷ ὁρᾶν ἀκούειν ὀσφραίνεσθαι ψύχεσθαι θερμαίνεσθαι) T. Perceiving, of course (αἰσθάνεσθαι ἔγωγε: τί γὰρ ἄλλο). S. So you call all of that, taken together, perception (σὺμπαν ἄρ' αὐτὸ καλεῖς αἴσθησιν)? T. Yes, one must (ἀνάγκη). And we say it has no share in the grasping of truth, because it has no share in the grasping of being either (ὦι γε, φαμέν, οὐ μέτεστιν ἀληθείας ἄψασθαι: οὐδὲ γὰρ οὐσίας). T. No (οὐ γὰρ οὖν). S. So it has no share in knowledge, either (οὐδ' ἄρ' ἐπιστήμης)? T. No (οὐ γάρ). So knowledge and perception could never be the same things, Theaetetus (οὐκ ἄρ' ἂν εἴη ποτέ, ὃ Θεαίτητε, αἴσθησις τε καὶ ἐπιστήμη ταυτόν). T. Evidently not, it has now become absolutely clear that knowledge is something other than perception (οὐ φαίνεται, ὃ Σώκρατες. καὶ μάλιστα γὰρ νῦν καταφανέστατον γέγονεν ἄλλο ὄν αἰσθήσεως ἐπιστήμη).

Socrates asks rhetorically, whether it is ‘possible for something to attain truth if it does not attain being?’²⁰⁷ (186C6–7). Theaetetus says that it is not. For the

²⁰⁷ The standard translation (e.g. McDowell's) is the following: ‘Is it possible for someone to attain truth if it does not *even* attain being?’. However, Schmidt (1878:523–524) already

standard account this means that being (as a copula) is necessary for truth (i.e. for propositional structure as the primary truth bearer). However, for the realist reading the connection is closer. Attaining how things really stand, i.e. determining facts is the same as attaining truth. There is no grasp of being that is not simultaneously a grasp of truth and *vice versa*. For Plato, truth requires an existing object in the mind-independent reality. It has been plausibly maintained that Plato has a ‘realist notion of truth’²⁰⁸. The second stage of the Passage of the Commons suggests that this object (in modern language a ‘truth-maker’) should be understood as a state of affairs of a property objectively belonging to something, i.e. ‘being’ understood in the realist manner.

I have urged that throughout the Passage of the Commons, οὐσία should be understood as the reality (of something). This means that attaining οὐσία in the sense of reality is both necessary and sufficient for attaining truth. Since attaining being and truth was, quite at the beginning of the discussion of Theaetetus’ first definition, set as the criterion of knowledge (152C5–6), Socrates can now smoothly infer that attaining being is necessary for knowledge. In principle, this claim could have been made at the end of stage one as well. However, Socrates immediately draws attention to the results of stage two. Socrates goes on to point out that reasoning (συλλογισμῶ) is in fact necessary for attaining being (not, as one would suspect at the end of stage one, that it suffices to entertain a thought involving the term ‘is’). He then goes on to make a rather strong claim that *only* in reasoning is it possible to reach being

remarks that the alternative is just as possible. Cornford, for example, translates the sentence in the way I suggest (without the ‘even’): ‘Is it possible, then, to reach truth when one cannot reach existence?’ (Cornford 1935:107)

²⁰⁸ “‘True’ in these discussions always means “true of a real objective world,” and that is how the word “true” had been used since Protagoras and before. Protagoras’ book was called *Truth* precisely because it offered an account of the conditions under which things really are as they appear to be. The Greek use of the predicates “true” and “false” embodies the assumption of realism on which I have been insisting all along.” (Burnyeat 1982: 26). In light of this claim it is especially puzzling that in his (1976) Burnyeat rejects reading ‘being’ in the Passage of the Commons as reality, on the account that ‘No defence is offered of the idea that knowledge, let alone truth, pre-supposes a grasp of being in the specific sense of existence, reality or essence, and if any such narrow notion of being were intended, the argument would be left to limp on an unargued assumption of the first magnitude. That is not Plato’s manner in this dialogue’ (Burnyeat 1976: 25). However, if ‘truth’ always involves ‘true of a real objective world’, then ‘reality’ would not be a too narrow notion of ‘being’ after all, in fact it becomes perfectly understandable why Plato connects ‘being’ (as reality) and ‘truth’ in the Passage of the Commons. For Plato’s ‘realist notion of truth’, see also Szaif (1998: esp. 332–343). Further, Plato’s realism about truth does not have to mean that he supports a correspondence theory of truth in any pregnant sense (i.e. as introducing some form of a relation of mirroring between statements (beliefs) and facts), see Hestir (2003). In the *Theaetetus* Plato takes the relation between being and truth to be obvious and not in need of any explanation. He uses the expressions ‘x is F for S’ and ‘x is F’ is true for S’ interchangeably throughout the discussion of Protagoras’ relativism. There no additional argument in the Passage of the Commons that would connect the notions of ‘attaining being’ and ‘attaining truth’, it seems that for Plato the one simply implies the other.

and truth. Again, the copula reading takes συλλογισμός to mean something like ‘framing a propositional structure’ (I argued in Chapter 2 that this is quite implausible). It seems more natural to take Socrates’ point to be that it is impossible to determine what is really the case without engaging in reasoning. He then sums up the results of the earlier discussion, where perception was identified as a process requiring bodily organs. It is only here, quite at the end of the discussion where the narrow notion of αἴσθησις is clearly out in the open – αἴσθησις is comprised of seeing, hearing, smelling and feeling hot (curiously the sense of taste is omitted, but since it was mentioned at 185C3 it can easily be added to the list). And then Socrates goes on to claim that perception cannot be knowledge. The argument is simple:

- (1) Perception does not grasp being.
- (2) Grasping being is necessary (and sufficient) for grasping on truth.
- (3) Grasping truth is necessary for knowledge.
- (4) Therefore, perception is not the same as knowledge.

Of course, stated in this way, the argument does not do justice to what Socrates’ midwifery has achieved in the Passage of the Commons. First, Socrates has helped Theaetetus to ‘give birth’ to a novel notion of perception. Second, while relying on Theaetetus’ framework of beliefs, Socrates has managed to isolate certain properties of things that are not perceptual, i.e. the commons. Thirdly, at stage two, Socrates has pointed out that the aesthetic model of cognition does not apply to the common ‘being’. The soul has to engage in reasoning in order to ‘attain being’. I do not think that the ‘propositional nature of thought’ and commons as semantic entities are ever the issue in the Passage of the Commons. The argument simply shows that (i) ‘being’ and the rest of the commons are not perceptible and (ii) the soul needs to reason and work in order to ‘attain being’. The *Theaetetus* never claims that the soul has to have ‘attained being’ in order to engage in reasoning.

Before closing this section, I would like to raise one final issue. I have maintained that Plato’s goal in *Theaetetus* 184B–187A is to stress the activity of *reasoning* in regard to ‘attaining being’. I have also suggested that the main argument of the passage does not consist in contrasting the complexity of propositional thought (i.e. the subject-copula-predicate structure) with the non-propositional nature of perception. One might ask, however, whether Plato nevertheless maintains, in the course of the argument, that thoughts do have propositional structure? This question can be understood in two ways. First, one could inquire whether Plato recognizes that the notion of ‘being’ implies ontological *complexity* of states of affair? Plato might, by contrast, assume that the term ‘being’ refers to a (simple) property, just like the terms ‘beauty’ or ‘hardness’. Secondly, one could ask whether Plato recognizes that the process of forming beliefs involves (among other things) connecting the subject with a predicate? He might, by contrast, assume that holding a true belief involves a

direct mental grasp of its object (even though this mental grasp is a result of calculations and reasoning).²⁰⁹

It seems that the Passage of the Commons remains systematically ambiguous concerning both issues. As to the first question, at stage one the term ‘being’ refers to a non-complex property that all things share. At stage two, on the other hand, ‘being’ refers to the relation (of instantiation) between the property and its bearer (*F-being-about-x*). Thus, it seems that Plato is inclined to view being both as a relation on the one hand *and* as a property in its own right, on the other. He does not distinguish between the two ways to understand the role of term ‘being’ in the Passage of the Commons, although perhaps he draws this distinction later, in the *Sophist*.

A similar ambiguity pertains to the second question. At stage one, verbs such as ‘thinking’ and ‘grasping’ are very often used in about-constructions (i.e. ‘S thinks *F* about *x*’), which might indicate that Plato takes thoughts to necessarily involve complexity. However, at stage two the about-constructions virtually disappear and ‘being’ is used as a direct object in constructions with verbs for thinking or calculating. This could indicate that Plato, at times, implies that holding a true belief involves a direct grasp of its object (e.g. an obtaining state of affairs or a fact). Thus, it is hard to determine Plato’s position on this matter in the Passage of the Commons. In any case, in the *Sophist* (262D–264A) Plato arrives at a much clearer conception about these issues. Plato says, namely, that thinking minimally involves connecting a noun with a verb, and that a thought must always predicate something *about* something.

Thus, Plato might be, at the time of writing the *Theaetetus*, somewhat unclear about the issues surrounding the ontology of states of affair and the semantic complexity of thought. However, I do not think that this should be seen as a serious problem in the context of interpreting the Passage of the Commons. In this passage Plato aims to make an epistemological point that finding out how things are requires the activity of *reasoning*. Therefore, I think it is a mistake to look for well-developed ontology or semantic theory in *Theaetetus* 184B–187A.

²⁰⁹ Even if Plato believes that the objects of thought are complex states of affair, he could still think that the relation of true beliefs to these complex states of affair is best understood as direct mental grasping of these states of affair. This would generate the paradox of false belief ‘by way of being and not-being’ (*Tht.* 188D–189B). When Socrates presents the second paradox of false belief, it is, indeed, possible to understand the notions of ‘that which is’ (τὸ ὄν) and ‘that which is not’ (τὸ μὴ ὄν) (and the corresponding notions of ‘one thing’, ‘something’ and ‘no one thing’, ‘nothing’) as referring to states of affair (e.g. Socrates-being-snubnosed and Socrates-being-tall, respectively). Thus, if one thinks that Socrates is tall, then one grasps *nothing* (Socrates is not tall, the state of affairs of Socrates-being-tall *is not*). This was suggested to me by B. Hestir. However, since Socrates (at 188C7) indicates that it is also not possible to grasp ‘things that are not’ *about* other things that are, it might be the case that τὸ ὄν and τὸ μὴ ὄν refer to properties, rather than (complex) states of affair. It might also be that τὸ ὄν and τὸ μὴ ὄν refer to *both* properties *and* states of affair.

2. The Notion of Belief

Plato does not endorse the claim that commons are grasped in all thoughts, i.e. that commons are ‘semantic’ or conceptual entities. I would now like to consider the notion of belief-formation that emerges from the passage. This notion is novel in Plato’s thinking, and it can also help to explain the differences between the middle and late dialogues’ claims about belief. That is, it explains why Plato starts to regard belief-formation as a rational capacity. To put the point briefly, I think that the Passage of the Commons could be seen as advocating for a notion of belief that takes ‘aiming at being’ or ‘aiming at reality’ as a necessary feature of belief-formation.

To set out my proposal it is useful to recall the outlines of the standard account. According to the standard account, grasping intelligibles like ‘being’ and ‘opposition’ is a cognitive *precondition* for engaging in predication. Broadly speaking, there are two versions of the standard account. According to one view, one has to grasp the copula ‘be’ (οὐσία) in order to form any beliefs and to engage in propositional thought in general. According to the second view, one has to be able to ‘recognize’ or ‘identify’ properties in order to predicate these properties about something. This ‘recognition’ requires that one have access to intelligibles like sameness, difference and opposition, i.e. one has to be able to distinguish the predicate from others (i.e. ‘grasp difference or opposition’) and identify it as what it is (i.e. to ‘grasp the sameness’). According to both versions, the activities of reasoning, comparing, reviewing, and calculating are the mental *prerequisites* of forming beliefs (framing a propositional structure or predicating).

I have been urging that this view cannot be correct. Plato is not concerned with what enables one to form beliefs (in general) but with the necessary conditions for ‘attaining being’, i.e. for grasping how things really are. In order to ‘attain being’, one has to engage in comparing, reviewing, and calculating. After Theaetetus and Socrates have reached the conclusion that perception is not knowledge, they identify belief-formation with ‘what the soul is doing when it’s busying itself, by itself, about the things that are (πραγματεύηται περὶ τὰ ὄντα)’ (187A). The activity picked up by the expression ‘πραγματεύηται περὶ τὰ ὄντα’ must be the same activity described at stage two, i.e. reasoning, reviewing and calculating. In forming beliefs, the soul has to work and cannot rely exclusively on perceptual input. The question is why Socrates and Theaetetus insist that reasoning is part and parcel of belief-formation? Can one not arrive at a belief by simply asserting – e.g. ‘this is hard’ or ‘this is beautiful’, without reasoning about it?

I propose that the answer is roughly the following. Throughout stage two Socrates and Theaetetus take being (objectivity, facts) to be something that the soul ‘yearns for’ or ‘tries to decide’ (by means of itself). I take this to be included in the scope of the expression ‘busying itself about things that are’ (at 187A8). Therefore, belief-formation is an activity where the soul is actively searching for ‘being’, where it is trying to determine how things are (not the

way they seem). It is quite natural to suppose that comparing, reviewing, and calculating are the means to reach this goal, i.e. to establish whether a certain property is instantiated.

In what sense, exactly, can the soul be said to have being as its *goal* in forming beliefs? There are two questions that need to be answered in order to clarify this rather obscure notion of ‘aiming at facts’ or ‘aiming at being’ (or, to connect these notions with contemporary epistemology, ‘aiming at truth’). First, it is important to distinguish goals that are intrinsic to (or constitutive of) an activity from extrinsic goals (see, e.g. Vahid 2009:27). For example, one can play chess with the aim of appearing intelligent. This is not an intrinsic or constitutive aim of playing chess, for one could play chess without aiming to appear intelligent. On the other hand, aiming to win the game by means of legal moves seems to be an intrinsic goal of playing chess; unless one does this, one is simply not engaged in chess playing. If ‘attaining being’ is an intrinsic goal, then belief formation is *by its very nature* aiming at representing facts. If representing facts is an extrinsic goal, then beliefs can be formed having in mind exclusively other goals as well (pleasantness, instrumental value, etc.). Secondly, one should also distinguish between explicit and implicit goals of an action or a state. An action can be performed without the conscious recognition of what the goal of an action is. To use the same example, one can aim to look intelligent by playing chess without being aware of this aim at all, or, on the other hand, one can be perfectly aware of what one is doing. Similarly, when forming beliefs, one can aim at representing facts in forming beliefs without being aware of that this is indeed what one is doing, or one can consciously aim at finding out how things are²¹⁰. So the question is the following. If I am right that forming beliefs has ‘reality (of something)’ as its goal, then is this goal (i) intrinsic or extrinsic, and (ii) implicit or explicit? In what follows I will offer some reasons for thinking that the Passage of the Commons takes ‘attaining reality’ to be an intrinsic and explicit goal of forming beliefs.

First, Plato takes ‘attaining being’ to be an intrinsic goal of forming beliefs. This is supported by the following consideration. Only when ‘attaining being’ is taken as an intrinsic goal of forming beliefs does it make sense to include

²¹⁰ For example, in the literature (especially Engel 2004) a distinction has been made between three kinds of truth-directedness of belief: (1) Causal truth-directedness. According to this account, truth-directedness is simply a fact about beliefs – belief has a function of yielding true information, and the contents of beliefs can be either true or false. (2) Normative truth-directedness. According to this account, beliefs enter into rational relations and have normative properties – in other words, belief is governed by the Norm of Truth (NT): For all *p* one ought to believe that *p* only if *p*. ‘To think of oneself as believing that *p* involves the recognition of (NT)’ (Engel 2004). The recognition of (NT) is necessary for belief-ascription, but not for having beliefs. Children and animals have beliefs but don’t recognize the norm (Engel 2004). Thus both (1) and (2) involve truth as an *implicit goal*; (3) Teleological truth-directedness: believing involves the *conscious recognition* of (NT), and (b) an intention to respect (NT) (Velleman 2000). This involves truth as the *explicit goal*. According to this account, a cognitive state counts as a belief only if the agent has a concept/conception of what it is for a belief to be true.

reasoning, comparing, and reviewing within the scope of forming beliefs (as Plato clearly does). The whole point of these activities is to determine whether *F* ‘has being’ (whether it is real, whether the fact containing the property *F* obtains). If ‘attaining being’ were an external goal of forming beliefs, the activities of comparing, reviewing, and reasoning would not be a necessary part of forming beliefs. On the other hand, if belief formation is, by its very nature, directed at grasping objectively obtaining facts, then belief formation is also an activity that is sensitive to reasoning and inference. This is the message of the Passage of the Commons—belief formation is by its very nature an activity that tries to reach objective being. Since the realist reading insists on the close connection between being and truth, one could say that it is part of the very notion of belief that it aims at being true, i.e. it aims at reflecting objectively obtaining facts ‘out there’. The Passage of the Commons insists on what has been recently called an ‘alethic notion of belief’:

Consider, first, the possibility that Plato endorses what I shall call an *alethic notion of belief*. On this way of thinking about belief, believing that *p* requires more than merely being disposed to act as if *p*; one must also have the aim of believing *p* only if *p* is true. According to the alethic account, beliefs are products of goal-directed behaviour. Part of what makes something a belief is the way it comes about: beliefs are products of the practices we engage in with the aim of determining how things are (Ganson 2009:184).

Ganson thinks that this notion of belief is already applicable to the *Republic*. However, I will argue below that the ‘alethic notion of belief’ only applies to the late dialogues. In the *Republic* Plato does not yet recognize that beliefs are aimed at ‘attaining being’. As to the second question, I believe that Socrates and Theaetetus take ‘attaining being’ to be an *explicit* goal of forming beliefs. This is, for example, the reason why animals and babies are incapable of forming beliefs, i.e. incapable of reasoning and inference that is explicitly (or reflectively) directed at ‘attaining being’. As I argued in Chapter II (Section III), there is ample evidence that Plato takes animals and babies to be capable of representing the world around them. However, they are not capable of reasoning, i.e. of the internal dialogue meant to find out how things are in the world, and this is why they lack beliefs.

Beliefs, for later Plato, have the following characteristics (based on the Passage of the Commons):

- (A) Forming beliefs is, intrinsically and explicitly, aimed at ‘attaining being’, i.e. at finding out how things are in the (mind-independent) world.
- (R) Forming beliefs necessarily involves reviewing, calculating, and comparing, i.e. reasoning.

According to this interpretation, for Plato belief is a rather special cognitive state – it is formed with the explicit intention of finding out how things are. Unless the soul engages in explicit reasoning, reviewing, and calculating, the resulting ‘mental state’ does not qualify as a belief (this rules out perceptual

appearances, images, etc.). In what follows I will call this notion of belief the ‘teleological’ notion, in virtue of the centrality of the goal-directedness.

It is also important to note what is not included – namely the two central claims of the standard account – that forming beliefs is rational because it requires a prior grasp of intelligibles, and that belief for Plato is distinguished from other representation mental states by being ‘propositional’ (there might be propositional representations that do not count as beliefs since they are not goal-directed in the way belief is). I will now briefly consider two possible objections.

Objection 1. It can be objected, however, that I am committed to these two claims anyway: do not (A) and (R) imply that belief has a propositional structure and that one has to have a prior cognitive grasp of intelligibles, e.g. being in order to form beliefs? That is, isn’t ‘aiming to attain being’ a cognitive attitude towards being? As to the first half of the objection, I think that belief indeed does have a propositional structure for later Plato (this is made clear in the *Sophist* 264A), but this is *not* the feature that sets beliefs apart from other propositional attitudes. What is specific about belief (and what is not the case with all propositional attitudes, such as, e.g. fear) is that it is formed in a way that is explicitly and intrinsically directed at ‘attaining being’, i.e. how things are. But what about the second part of the objection – if belief is a cognitive attitude that has a goal of ‘attaining being’, does it not mean that in order to engage in forming beliefs the soul has to have prior cognitive access to ‘being’? A great deal depends, of course, on how ‘cognitive access’ is understood here. In a way, ‘yearning after being’ does seem to require some understanding of ‘what it is to be’, i.e. it might require possessing the concept ‘being’. However, I do not think that this sort of ‘concept’ of being is what Plato has in mind when he addresses the issue of ‘attaining being’. Being, in the Passage of the Commons, is always addressed in the material mode. And perhaps it is even plausible that one does not need the concept of ‘being’ in order to determine the fact that ‘Theaetetus sits’, for example. In any case, this notion of being (the concept of ‘being as a something to be attained’) is certainly not what the scholars have in mind when they mention ‘cognitive access’ to being – rather, their idea as expressed in the language of the Passage of the Commons, is that one has to *already* have ‘attained being’ in order to form beliefs. And I do think that I have shown that this is not the case.

Objection 2. The second possible objection is more general. (R) seems simply too strong a claim to attribute to Plato. Is it not plausible that beliefs can be formed on the basis of immediate perceptual recognition and that forming these beliefs does not require any reasoning or deliberation? For example, when something is clearly present to the sight, there is no need to deliberate as to what this something might be in order to form a relevant belief. Thus, it is not clear why Plato would require that *all* belief formation involve deliberation and reasoning. Thus it seems that (R) is false.

There are two possible replies to this objection. The first reply²¹¹ would consist in relaxing the necessity requirement and maintain, that instead of (R), Plato subscribes to (R*): Forming beliefs *can* require reviewing, calculating and comparing, i.e. reasoning (e.g. in case where perceptual objects are not clearly presented to the sight). (R*) allows that beliefs can be formed without reasoning. However, (R*) seems to be too weak to capture Plato's intent in the passages where he discusses the notion of belief. First of all, the Passage of the Commons clearly implies that reasoning (the soul's 'busying itself by itself about the things that are') is a necessary component of forming beliefs. Otherwise stage two (186A–C) of the Passage of the Commons would be simply redundant (as I stressed above). Further, all passages (esp. *Phlb.* 38C–E and *Tht.* 189D–190A) in Plato's later dialogues where he discusses forming beliefs, the cognitive process *always* involves a complex inner dialogue. It is difficult to explain why Plato would, in *defining* the notion of belief, focus on the cases which involve a complex inner dialogue (involving reasoning), if he did not take it to be a necessary component of forming beliefs. This would be highly misleading. I believe, therefore, that the first reply to the second objection is somewhat problematic.

The second possible reply (which I take to be the correct one) is that, for Plato, forming beliefs indeed *always* requires reasoning, i.e. the (R) is correct as it stands. The reason why (in defining the notion of belief) he focuses on, e.g. cases where the observer cannot get a clear view of the object seen (*Phlb.* 38C–E), and where an especially long explicit inner dialogue is required, is that in these situations the inner dialogue is presented especially *vividly*. It is very likely that Plato thinks that even when an object is in plain sight, there occurs a similar inner dialogue. However, in these, perhaps more typical, cases this inner dialogue is less explicit. From a phenomenological point of view, this position is not at all absurd. There is an obvious difference between perceptually representing an object in one's vicinity (I assume that for Plato perceptual representations are *not* beliefs) and forming a belief (or judgment) about what this particular object is. The second cognitive process clearly involves a more significant effort, and it is easy to see why Plato would think that in forming a belief, e.g. 'this is a book', involves a (quick) comparison of this object with other books one has seen, and perhaps distinguishing this book from other things that might look like books. Thus, I think that in face of the second objection, it is more reasonable to simply bite the bullet, and assume that, for Plato (in his later dialogues), belief formation always requires reasoning and deliberation²¹².

²¹¹ The objection was raised by J. Szaif who also suggested the first reply.

²¹² Plato's notion of belief is perhaps close to what some contemporary philosophers have called 'acceptance' (Cohen 1992: 1–20) or 'opinion' (Dennett 1981). For example, Cohen takes acceptance to be formed in an active manner, as a result of an occurrent thought (whereas beliefs are dispositions and are essentially passive). Acceptance is also tied to linguistic formulation, and acceptances are outside the cognitive reach of infants and animals (whereas beliefs are not). In this sense, Cohen's notion of acceptance is close to Plato's later

Now I want to consider the questions as to why is the *Theaetetus* the one dialogue where Plato changes his mind about what is involved in forming beliefs and starts to view belief formation as a rational capacity? I think that the teleological notion of belief provides a defense for Socrates' method against Protagoras' relativistic charges. I pointed out (Chapter 3, Section 2) that Protagoras' notion of belief formation has three distinctive features. Protagoras takes belief formation to be passive, flat and atomistic. According to Protagoras, belief formation is passive, since beliefs are equated with 'appearances'; forming beliefs does not require any activity; beliefs just 'come to' one (the wine appearing sweet constitutes a belief that the wine is sweet). Forming beliefs is flat, since second order considerations (e.g. is the wine really sweet or does it simply appear to be sweet) never play any role. Finally, forming beliefs is atomistic – whether or not a particular belief we hold is consistent with other beliefs we hold never plays any part in forming beliefs, for the simple reason that, according to Protagoras, each person can hold only one belief.

All these features of forming beliefs derive from Protagoras' complex ontology, according to which all beliefs are true (*tout court*); jointly they constitute a serious challenge to Socrates' dialectical method (as Socrates recognizes at 161E–162A). Why should this be? Socrates' method is designed to detect inconsistencies within the interlocutor's framework of beliefs (*Tht.* 154E). This is the main reason why, throughout the dialogues (and in the *Theaetetus* as well, e.g. 181C.) Socrates insists that his interlocutors say what they really believe. In case an inconsistency is detected, the interlocutor has to give up one of his beliefs (usually it is the definition that the interlocutor has offered for discussion)²¹³.

Socratic method, then, assumes that the interlocutor aims at maintaining a consistent framework of beliefs. Otherwise the interlocutor would gladly accept that his beliefs are inconsistent and Socrates' method would end up being powerless. Therefore, Socratic method assumes that beliefs are formed in a holistic manner – they are formed (and given up) in relation to the background of other beliefs that the interlocutor holds, and questions are posed as to whether or not a given belief is consistent with the rest of the beliefs that the interlocutor holds²¹⁴. Further, since the interlocutor has to be able to *detect* the

notion of belief. However, for Cohen, acceptance is not truth-directed in the same way belief is for Plato. Acceptances are 'policies of reasoning'. One can accept a proposition without believing it to be true. In this sense, Plato's notion of belief is different from acceptance. Dennett's 'opinion' is also not available to animals, is a result of mental activity (is not passive), and has a linguistic form. In this sense, it resembles Plato's notion of belief. However, Dennett thinks that 'opinions' come about only when one *changes* one's mind. This is importantly different from Plato's notion of belief, since Plato does not require that beliefs arise in this manner.

²¹³ 'When such a conflict [Robinson is referring to the passage in *Tht.* 154C–D] arose between consistency and 'what I really think', consistency won the day, and the answerer had to abandon one of his opinions, whichever he chose' (Robinson 1953: 78).

²¹⁴ That Plato recognizes the connection between Socratic method and desire for truth (or desire for reality) is also indicated by a passage in the *Sophist*. First, the Eleatic Visitor

inconsistencies within his own framework of beliefs and form new beliefs accordingly, the interlocutor has to be able to consider what it is that he himself believes; he has to be able make his own beliefs into objects of reflective thought. Socratic method assumes that belief formation cannot be flat. And of course, given the fact that forming beliefs is a reflective attempt to maintain consistency, it is by its very nature an *activity*. For Socrates, forming beliefs is not tantamount to a passive reception of an appearance.

Plato's teleological account of belief formation takes these fundamentally Socratic assumptions about belief and forms them into a single coherent notion of what it is to form beliefs. Forming beliefs is an intrinsically and explicitly goal-directed activity aimed at representing the world as it is, i.e. aimed at forming true beliefs. It is easy to see how this fundamental fact about belief formation justifies Socratic method. Since, in forming our beliefs, we engage in an activity of finding out how things are, it is natural that we aim at holding consistent beliefs, for the simple reason that two inconsistent beliefs cannot both be true (by definition). Further, since for Plato forming beliefs is *explicitly* aimed at finding out how things are, it is a reflective activity, in which the soul engages in an inner dialogue. If forming beliefs is understood in this manner, Socrates is perfectly justified in expecting that his interlocutors would have to revise their beliefs if Socrates' *elenchus* shows these beliefs to be inconsistent. Therefore, a plausible reason behind Plato's adopting a novel notion of belief in the *Theaetetus* (the only late dialogue that depicts Socratic method in action) can be seen in Plato's attempt to justify the method of his teacher²¹⁵.

points out to Theaetetus that ignorance always involves missing an aim – truth: ‘Well then, suppose something that’s in motion aims at a target and tries to hit it (σκοπόν τινα θέμενα πειρώμενα τούτου τυγχάνειν), but on every try passes by it and misses (παράφορα αὐτοῦ γίγνεται καὶ ἀποτυγχάνη). Are we going to say that it does this because it’s properly proportioned (συμμετρίας) or because it’s out of proportion (ἀμετρίας)? – Out of proportion, obviously. – But we know that no soul is willingly ignorant of anything (ἴσμεν ἄκουσαν πᾶσαν πᾶν ἀγνοοῦσαν). – Definitely. – But ignorance occurs precisely when a soul tries for the truth (ἀγνοεῖν ἐστὶν ἐπ’ ἀλήθειαν ὀρμωμένης ψυχῆς), but swerves aside from understanding (συνέσεως) and so is beside itself.’ (*Soph.* 228C–D) Then, shortly after that the Visitor gives a description of the ‘sophist of the noble lineage’, who is probably Socrates: ‘They cross-examine (διερωτῶσιν) someone when he thinks he’s saying something though he’s saying nothing. Then, since his opinions will vary inconsistently (πλανωμένων τὰς δόξας), these people will easily scrutinize (ἐξετάζουσι) them. They collect his opinions together during the discussion, put them side by side, and show that they conflict with each other at the same time on the same subjects in relation to the same things and in the same respects (ἐπιδεικνύουσιν αὐτάς αὐταῖς ἅμα περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν πρὸς τὰ αὐτὰ κατὰ ταῦτα ἐναντίας).’ (*Soph.* 230B). Socratic method would be pointless if people did not try to maintain consistency in their beliefs. This desire for consistency derives from the desire to attain truth.

²¹⁵ A further reason why Plato starts to think of belief formation as aiming at reality might be that in later dialogues Plato has a more relaxed notion of ‘reality’. In the middle dialogues, the notion of οὐσία was firmly attached to Platonic Forms. In the later dialogues Plato takes the material world and the properties instantiated therein to have their own, divisible reality. In the *Timaeus* (35A1–3) Plato speaks of two kinds of οὐσία, one that is ‘indivisible and

I shall now explain how Plato's teleological notion of belief accounts for the differences between Plato's conceptions of belief in the middle and late dialogues. I remind the reader that the differences are the following:

In the middle dialogues Plato thinks that:

- (i) all parts of the soul and the body are capable of forming beliefs (*Rep.* 602C–603A; cf. *Phd.* 83D),
- (ii) non-human animals are capable of forming beliefs (*Rep.* 430B),
- (iii) beliefs include sensory appearances (*Rep.* 602C–603A, *Th.* 152D–179D),
- (iv) beliefs include blind and non-reflective acceptances (*Rep.* 602C–606D).

Whereas in the late dialogues Plato is committed to the claims according to which:

- (i*) only reason is capable of forming beliefs (*Tim.* 37C, 77B),
- (ii*) non-human animals are incapable of forming beliefs (*Th.* 186C),
- (iii*) beliefs differ from sensory appearances (*Phlb.* 38C–E),
- (iv*) belief-formation necessarily involves reasoning and deliberation (*Th.* 189E–190A, *Phlb.* 38C–E).

In what follows I will argue that the differences between (i–iv) and (i*–iv*) can be accounted for by the novel teleological notion of belief formation, together with ancillary assumptions Plato is inclined to make about the cognitive abilities of the reasoning part of the soul, animals, and the irrational parts of the soul.

First, the shift between (i) and (i*) can be explained as follows. In Plato's middle dialogues the distinguishing epistemic²¹⁶ feature of the reasoning part of the soul is its desire for truth and learning. Reason is 'always wholly straining to know where the truth lies' (*Rep.* 581B), whereas the irrational parts of the soul desire bodily pleasures, money and honor, among other things. The desire for truth accounts for why the reasoning part is never satisfied with how things appear, but uses calculation in order to find out how things really are (*Rep.* 602C–603A). This is exactly parallel to 'yearning after' and 'trying to decide' being (in the sense of 'reality' in the *Theaetetus*). The cognitive desire to view reality is a primitive feature of reason that cannot be explained by anything more fundamental (e.g. previous acquaintance with Forms).

For example, in Socrates' second speech on love in the *Phaedrus*, all souls (before they are incarnated) are striving to view the reality of Forms, regardless of whether or not they have seen it before.

always changeless (ἀεὶ κατὰ ταῦτὰ ἐχούσης) and the one that divisible and comes to be in the corporeal realm (αὐτὸ περὶ τὰ σώματα γιγνομένης μεριστῇ). Further, in the *Philebus* Plato speaks of the 'third kind: I treat the joint offspring of these two other kinds [the limit and the unlimited] as a unity, a-coming-into-being (γένεσιν εἰς οὐσίαν) created through the measures imposed by the limit' (26D). See also *Phlb.* 27B. Both passages say that perceptible objects (and their properties) share in οὐσία. I only briefly mention this here, because the topic would require a lengthy treatment and a thorough discussion of both the relevant passages (and their context) of the *Timaeus* and the *Philebus*. The ontology presented in these dialogues is not, at least not obviously relevant to the *Theaetetus*.

²¹⁶ In the moral sense the distinguishing feature of reason is its desire for the good (for the whole soul). For some discussion, see Irwin 1995: 203–23 and 287–298.

Many souls are crippled by the incompetence of the drivers, and many wings break much of their plumage. After so much trouble, they all leave without having seen reality (τοῦ ὄντος), uninitiated, and when they have gone they will depend on what they think is nourishment – their own opinions (δοξαστῇ χρῶνται). The reason there is so much eagerness to see the plain where the truth (ἀληθείας) stands is that this pasture has the grass that is the right food for the best part of the soul ψυχῆς τῷ ἀρίστῳ [i.e. the rational part], and it is the nature of the wings that lift up the soul to be nourished by it. (*Phdr.* 248B–C)

Here Plato makes two important claims (I am disregarding the fact that Plato speaks of reality in an elevated sense, as the reality of Forms). First, it is the desire of *reason* to view reality²¹⁷. Secondly, beliefs are seen as the inferior cognitive states of those souls who have *failed* to see the reality of Forms. One reason²¹⁸ why Plato is committed to the second claim is the fact that in his middle period writings, Plato does not take beliefs to be intrinsically directed at grasping how things are. Since beliefs are, for the middle period Plato, not intrinsically aimed at being, he might easily think that beliefs have to be separated from what he takes to be reality (i.e. the Forms). The claim that Plato does not take beliefs to be intrinsically aimed at reality can be substantiated by the following passage from the *Republic*:

And isn't this also clear? In the case of just and beautiful things, many people are content (ἔλουντο) with what are believed (τὰ δοκοῦντα) [to be so], even if they aren't really [so], and they act (πράττειν), acquire (κεκτηῖσθαι), and form their own beliefs (δοκεῖν) on that basis. Nobody is satisfied to acquire things that are merely believed to be good, however, but everyone wants the things that really are good (τὰ ὄντα ζητοῦσιν) and disdains (ἀτιμάζει) mere belief (δόξα) here. (*Rep.* 505D)

In the *Republic* Plato does not take beliefs to be a result of a goal-directed behavior, aiming to find out how things are. As the above passage shows, most of the people do not care whether the beliefs about, e.g. beauty that they act upon are in fact true. The beliefs simply are seemings (note the shift from δοκεῖν to δόξα in the above passage). For this reason beliefs are not taken to be

²¹⁷ Already as early as the *Phaedo* Plato assumes that the soul reaches out or yearns for what is real: ‘And indeed the soul reasons best when none of these senses troubles it, neither hearing or sight, nor pain nor pleasure, but when it is most by itself, taking leave of the body and as far as possible having no contact or association with it in its search for reality (ὁρέγεται τοῦ ὄντος)’ (*Phd.* 65C). Grube’s translation of ὁρέγεται as ‘search’ does not quite correspond to the verb’s basic meaning, which according to Liddell-Scott Dictionary is ‘reach at’, ‘grasp at’, ‘aim at’ and, metaphorically, ‘yearn for’. Again, here Plato has in mind reality in an elevated sense (Forms). The later Plato allows for sensibles, too, their share in the real (see above, fn. 215)

²¹⁸ Of course, this is by no means the only reason. For an illuminating discussion of the alternative interpretations as to why Plato might be inclined to think that Forms are outside the reach of forming beliefs, see Szaif 1998: 183–210 and 292–324.

rational cognitive states – they simply lack the required intrinsic goal to represent reality. The Passage of the Commons, on the other hand, emphasizes that it is even in the case of beautiful or same or indeed hard and soft, that the soul tries to ‘judge being’, i.e. to attain how things objectively stand. I think that this is the crucial new aspect in Plato’s understanding of the notion of belief – that belief formation is not simply the acceptance how things seem but the aiming at representing the facts, i.e. aiming at how things are. Reality is something that the soul is ‘yearning for’ and it engages in comparing, reviewing and calculations in order to achieve this. Since the desire for reality is a distinguishing feature of reason, it is natural that Plato starts to think of beliefs as a specifically rational capacity. In other words, if Plato comes to recognize in the *Theaetetus* that belief formation is intrinsically directed at grasping how things are, then it is only natural that in the dialogues that come after the *Theaetetus*, he would assign beliefs exclusively to the rational part of the soul. Here it is possible to raise another, textual, objection.

Objection 3. I have claimed that the teleological notion of belief is novel in Plato’s dialogues. However, there is a passage the *Republic* that might suggest that forming true beliefs (or at least avoiding falsehood) is the aim of all human beings.²¹⁹

I simply mean that to be false in one’s soul about the things that are (περὶ τὰ ὄντα ψεύδεσθαι), to be ignorant and to have and hold falsehood there, is what everyone would least of all accept, for everyone hates a falsehood (τὸ ψεῦδος) in that place most of all. – That’s right. – Surely, as I said just now, this would be most correctly called true falsehood (ἀληθῶς ψεῦδος) – ignorance (ἄγνοια) in the soul of someone who has been told a falsehood. Falsehood in words is a kind of imitation (μίμημα) of this affection (παθήματος) in the soul, an image (εἶδωλον) of it that comes into being after it and is not a pure falsehood (ἄκρατον ψεῦδος). Isn’t that so? – Certainly. – And the thing that is really a falsehood is hated not only by the gods, but by human beings as well. (*Rep.* 382B–C)

As with many passages in Plato, the interpretation is controversial²²⁰. It is possible that Plato says that everyone hates false beliefs (and that everyone abandons a belief when they become aware that the belief is false). If so, it could be maintained that, already in the *Republic*, forming beliefs aims at grasping ‘things that are’. The expression ‘τὰ ὄντα’ should probably be here understood in its pre-philosophical sense as ‘facts’ or ‘how the world is’ (since Forms have not yet been introduced to the dialogue). The passage could then be interpreted as saying that belief formation aims at representing reality correctly, i.e. it might express the teleological notion of belief. However, this is probably not so. It is important to notice that the notion of *belief* is not at all mentioned in

²¹⁹ I am grateful to J. Szaif for bringing this passage to my attention.

²²⁰ For some discussion of the passage, see Woolf (2009) and Harte (2010).

the passage²²¹. Thus, although Plato does stress that everyone avoids falsehood, he does not say that forming *beliefs* as a cognitive process necessarily manifests this desire. In fact, later on in the *Republic* (505D) he plainly denies that people form their beliefs with the intention of getting things right. Rather, the above passage might be the first expression, in the *Republic*, of the primitive desire of *reason* for truth and learning (581B). Of course, Socrates cannot refer to this desire as specifically *rational*, since the parts of the soul are introduced later in the dialogue, in Book IV. Since every human being has (or is) a rational soul-part, it is natural that every human being desires to avoid falsehood²²². It is actually quite telling that Plato does *not* mention belief in this passage. This suggests that he does not, in the *Republic*, consider belief formation to be a cognitive process that aims to ‘attain being’, i.e. that he is not inclined to take forming beliefs as a rational capacity. It is for this reason, I think, that Objection 3 fails.

As to the difference between (ii) and (ii*), Plato explicitly denies animals the capacity to *reason* (e.g. *Rep.* 441A-B). We have seen that he takes reasoning, calculating, and comparing to be necessary features of belief-formation, since belief-formation is intrinsically and explicitly aimed at grasping objective facts. Since animals do not reason, they do not form beliefs (see Sorabji 1995 on this issue). Now, why does Plato think that animals do not reason? I think that that the Passage of Commons offers an answer to this question as well – namely, that reasoning requires *education* (παιδεία). Plato also takes education to be something that only human beings can receive; it requires the social background of tradition and language (see. *Rep.* Book III and esp. *Laws* Books II and III). Therefore, infants and animals are incapable of reasoning and, consequently, forming beliefs. Infants have yet to receive education, whereas animals simply lack the necessary social framework to be educated into the demands of reason. However, this does not mean that infants and animals do not *represent* the world in any way, which brings me to the next point.

Third, the difference between (iii) and (iii*) is also accounted for if one takes Plato to have a teleological notion of belief. The middle dialogues (esp. *Rep.* 602C–603A) took perceptual appearances themselves to be beliefs. This is no longer the case in the late dialogues. There rational belief formation usually enters the scene when there is an indication that something is *wrong* with how things appear (when the soul is for some reason ‘divided’ (*Tht.* 190A)), for example, when the perceptual appearances are simply too indeterminate. This is

²²¹ Some scholars have questioned, I think correctly, whether ‘falsehood in one’s soul’ is equivalent to false beliefs, and have suggested that it should rather be understood as *ignorance* (Harte 2010). Others have maintained that Plato has in mind only false beliefs concerning important, philosophical matters, and not false beliefs *tout court* (Woolf 2009).

²²² There is a complication here. For Plato, not every human being is governed by the reasoning part of the soul. So why does he say that *everyone* desires to avoid falsehood? I think that Harte (2010: 49) might be right in saying that that the above passage says what the rational person *should* so, rather than what everyone does. Thus the account given by Socrates is normative, rather than descriptive.

made amply clear by the description of belief formation in the *Philebus* (38B-E).

And is it not memory (μνήμης) and perception (αἰσθήσεως) that lead to belief (δόξα) or the attempt to come to a definite belief, (διαδοξάζειν) as the case may be? /--/ Wouldn't you say that it often happens that someone who cannot get a clear view because he is looking from a distance (πόρρωθεν μὴ πάνυ σαφῶς) wants to make up his mind about/discern (βούλεσθαι κρίνειν) what he sees? /--/ And might he then not raise another question for himself? 'What could that be that appears to (φανταζόμενον) stand near the rock under a tree?' Do you find it plausible that someone might say these words to himself when he sets his eyes on such appearances (φαντασθέντα)? (*Phlb.* 38CD)

When someone is presented an appearance that is too indeterminate ('when someone cannot get a clear view') the soul starts a dialogue with herself: 'What could that be that appears to stand near that rock under a tree?' (37D). It is also important to note that the expression 'wants to decide' (βούλεσθαι κρίνειν) is almost exactly parallel to the expression used in the Passage of the Commons (186C), where the soul also 'tries to decide' (κρίνειν πειρᾶται) the being of hardness and softness. It seems that the *Philebus* passage also supports the view that belief formation for late Plato always involves an explicit desire to 'attain being'. After weighing the possible answers the soul comes to a conclusion: 'this is a man', for example. Belief is a result of this kind of inner dialogue, by means of which the soul tries to find out how things are. Beliefs, for later Plato, are formed in an explicitly truth-directed manner. It is important to note that the soul is presented by an *appearance* (φανταζόμενον, 38D1) *prior* to forming any beliefs about what it is that it sees. These pre-belief appearances have representational (and, perhaps, propositional) content. But since these appearances are formed in a manner that is not explicitly and intrinsically truth-directed, they are not *beliefs*. As the above *Philebus* passage shows, Plato takes appearances to have content that is independent of reasoning and forming beliefs. Similar passages are also found in the *Timaeus* (42E–44D, 46A, 71D–E)²²³. To repeat – belief is, for later Plato, the result of a cognitive behavior that is explicitly and intrinsically directed at grasping how things are. For Plato *there is representation below belief*²²⁴.

²²³ For the argument that Plato, in both the *Timaeus* and the *Philebus* takes some representational content to be independent from reason, see Moss (2012).

²²⁴ It is sometimes suggested that, for later Plato, all perceptual appearances involve a corresponding belief. This claim can be supported by referring to a passage in the *Sophist* (263E–264B). The Visitor from Elea and Theaetetus discuss how false sentences come about. When they have reached the conclusion that false statement is possible, the visitor inquires into what kind of cognitive states do admit falsity. It turns out that thought, belief and appearance (διάνοιᾶ τε καὶ δόξᾳ καὶ φαντασίᾳ) can be false; φαντασία is described as a 'blending of perception and belief' (σύμμιξις αἰσθήσεως καὶ δόξης) and a belief by means of perception (δι' αἰσθήσεως). Now, this description of φαντασία does not, at first sight, square well with my proposed interpretation. According to my interpretation, there are appearances (representations) that do not involve beliefs. And this, indeed, seems to be strongly suggested by the above

It has been argued (Bobonich 2002) that recognizing belief as a rational capacity undermines Plato's theory of the tri-partite soul and that this is (one of) the reason(s) why Plato is thought to have abandoned this theory in his later thought. This would be plausible, if Plato had conceived of beliefs as paradigmatic cognitive states, and if he had regarded all representations as involving a belief-element. Since beliefs, in the later dialogues, are attributed only to reason, according to this line of thought the lower parts of the soul would become devoid of all representational content and the notion of a 'non-rational soul-part' would eventually turn out to lose its psychological and moral explanatory force. However, according to the interpretation defended here, belief is *not* a paradigmatic representational state. Therefore, assigning beliefs exclusively to the reasoning part of the soul does not significantly affect the psychological life of the lower parts of the soul. They can still generate action and stand in representational conflict with the reasoning part of the soul, just as they did in the *Republic*. Therefore, Plato is not forced to abandon his theory of the tri-partite soul (at least his novel notion of belief does not force him to). In this I am broadly in agreement with Lorenz's (2006) account. However, I disagree with Lorenz where he takes the distinctive feature of belief to be its 'propositional' or 'predicational' nature²²⁵. I believe that the distinction between the cognitive states of the reasoning part of the soul and the rest of the soul-parts should be drawn as a distinction between those representational states that are a product of an explicitly goal-directed behavior (aiming at grasping how things are) and those representational states that are not formed in this manner. In the *Timaeus*, the latter may include 'propositional' states of the rational part that do not count as beliefs (*Tim.* 44A), but also 'propositional' states of the non-rational spirit, that can have expectations (ἐλπίδα, *Tim.* 69D3), that can listen to reason (λόγου κατήκοον, *Tim.* 70A5), and understand its reports (παραγγείλαντος, 70B4). The non-rational appetitive soul-part can certainly enjoy images (71B-E) and, being able to perceive (*Tim.* 77B), it can presumably also enjoy perceptual appearances (*Tim.* 45E–46A). These passages indicate that non-rational soul-parts engage in *both* propositional (at least the spirited soul-part) and non-propositional representation²²⁶. The *Timaeus* suggests that

passage from the *Philebus*. On the other hand, appearing is described in the *Sophist* as a mixture or blending of perception and belief. This suggests that each perceptual appearance involves a belief. Is Plato inconsistent? Not necessarily. Plato can very well mean that φαντασία is a kind of belief that is *based* on or is *derived from* perception. This means φαντασία is not itself a perceptual appearance, crucially involving a belief-element, but rather a belief that is formed on the basis of what is perceived. For a reading along these lines, see Kanayama 1987. For an opposite interpretation, see Silverman 1991.

²²⁵ In fact, Lorenz and Bobonich in agreement concerning this. The difference is simply that for Bobonich there is no non-propositional (non-conceptual) content while for Lorenz there is. I think that this distinction is not a very fortunate heuristic device, because it is anachronistic with respect to interpreting Plato's theory of cognition.

²²⁶ Sometimes commentators (e.g. Bobonich) take Plato's talk to be (somewhat) metaphorical. The reason behind this is that Plato identifies the 'cognitive abilities' of the non-rational soul-parts with bodily processes and states (blood-flow, pounding of heart, bile in the liver, etc.) It

Plato allows for: (1) propositional representations that belong to the reasoning part of the soul, i.e. beliefs that explicitly aim to ‘attain being’, (2) propositional representations of the non-reasoning parts of the soul that are not explicitly aimed at being (e.g. expectation, fear, etc.), and (3) non-propositional representations of the appetite (perceptions, images, etc.).

Therefore, if one does not wish to maintain (with the standard account) that beliefs are special representational states requiring ‘cognitive access’ to Forms (which seems to be flatly denied anyway at *Tim.* 37B–C), it is reasonable to think that beliefs are specifically rational because of their cognitive goal – to represent reality correctly²²⁷.

Fourth, we must consider the difference between (iv) and (iv*). The most comprehensive descriptions of belief formation in the late dialogues, in the *Theaetetus* 189E–190A and the *Philebus* 38B–E (quoted in Chapter One) stress the activity of reasoning and calculating. Plato takes beliefs to be a result of a complex inner dialogue. This is sometimes taken to be a curiosity, that Plato is ‘inclined to exaggerate the mental preconditions of belief’ (Cooper). However, the teleological notion of belief formation explains this ‘curiosity’ quite well. As the Passage of the Commons shows, for later Plato beliefs are necessarily formed as a result of reasoning and deliberation. This is so because belief formation is an activity that is intrinsically and explicitly aimed at representing reality correctly. Since, for Plato, attaining being is an explicit goal of forming beliefs, it is quite natural that he takes belief-formation to involve an explicit (even if silent) dialogue within the soul. But as *Tht.* 189E–190A clearly shows, the reason why the soul engages in this dialogue is to consider candidate answers in order to finally reach a belief that ‘this is so’. Thus the whole internal dialogue of the soul is aimed at reaching an agreement as to how matters objectively stand.

The teleological notion of forming beliefs as explicit inner dialogue stands in striking contrast to descriptions of belief formation in the *Republic* X (quoted in Chapter One, Section 1), where the non-rational parts of the soul blindly accept how things appear, without any previous deliberation. In the *Republic* Plato

might therefore seem plausible that these ‘representational states’ are simply bodily states that are the somehow ‘conceptualized’ by the rational part. To me this seems an anachronism. Plato has no mind - body dualism, and there is no reason why he could not think that bodily movements simply *are* cognitive states. After all, he even claims that the cognitive states of *reason* consist in revolutions of the circle of the same and circles of the different (*Tim.* 37B–C). Thus, for Plato, movement of the body and movement of the soul are simply cognitive states. Reason does not conceptualize or interpret the processes in the body. These processes are themselves representational. This does mean that reason cannot affect the course of these bodily processes (and the corresponding representations). It can, but precisely because reasoning itself is also a movement (see Johansen 2004: 137–159).

²²⁷ It is possible, that the *reasoning* part of the soul can also enjoy non-propositional representations, i.e. that late Plato takes knowledge to be non-propositional (intuition-like). This view is defended in Gerson (2003). It is also possible that knowledge is non-propositional in a way that *understanding* is non-propositional. This position does not imply that knowledge is an intuition-like direct grasp of Forms. See below, pp. 183–184, esp. fn. 236.

calls these acceptances *beliefs*. He also thinks that the rational part uses calculation and measurement in order to form its beliefs about how matters stand, e.g. is the oar in the water really crooked or does it simply appear to be? In the *Republic*, Plato does not offer reasons why blind acceptances and the deliberative belief formation of the rational part should both have end results that count as *beliefs*. I suggest that, at the time of writing the *Republic*, Plato did not yet take beliefs to be teleological in the sense he does in the *Theaetetus*. In the *Republic*, the rational part of the soul indeed does form its beliefs in a truth-directed manner, but this is due to the specific constitution of the rational part. Even though beliefs can be true, for Plato of the middle period, there is nothing in the *nature* of belief that would intrinsically tie it to truth and objectivity. In the *Republic*, truth and falsehood of beliefs are an external matter – some beliefs simply happen to be true and some false. In the *Theaetetus* this changes. Plato recognizes that we form beliefs with the explicit aim of getting things right. If belief formation is by its very nature meant to determine how things are, then it is only natural that non-reflective acceptances do not count as beliefs in late Plato (although I suspect that, for him, both would count as ‘propositional attitudes’).

Thus, I conclude that the teleological account of forming beliefs successfully explains well all the significant differences between Plato’s understanding of the notion of belief in his middle and late dialogues.

The last issue I would like to raise is whether Plato provides an answer to the question of where the *contents* of our beliefs derive from, if they are not the result of ‘cognitive access’ or ‘acquaintance’ with the commons or Forms. Based on the *Theaetetus* one can offer the following answer: the content of our beliefs is provided by language, perception, and memory. Contrary to what the standard account suggests, Platonic Forms need not be apprehended at all in order to form beliefs. I suggest that the soul can refer to abstract properties simply because it has the relevant *words* in its vocabulary. The soul need not grasp *what* these properties are; in fact it can easily have many false beliefs about these properties. That words or names (Plato’s Greek does not contain separate terms for ‘word’ and ‘name’) are relevant in this context is suggested by something Socrates says at *Theaetetus* 185C4–6: ‘But what about the power which reveals to you that which is common to everything, including these things: that *which you call by the name of* (ἐπωνομάζεις) ‘is’, ‘is not’ and the others we used in our questions just now?’ (185B6–C8). Commentators have not sufficiently stressed the act of *naming* in this passage. According to (CA), to form a belief one has to ‘grasp the ‘terms’ employed in it’ (Bostock 1988:119) and, consequently, naming is just ‘a small point’ (ibid. 124). However, if, as I have suggested, the commons are *not* grasped (or revealed) in every thought (and if Socrates agrees to this only for dialectical reasons), naming becomes more important.²²⁸ It has been quite convincingly maintained that Plato’s theory

²²⁸ In fact, there is an alternative translation of the whole sentence according to which it *stresses* the act of naming. The masculine dative at 185B5 can be read as *dativus*

of naming as it occurs in the *Cratylus*, for example, does not require that the person who uses the name should have understanding of the property to which the name refers. Although Plato says in the *Cratylus* that correct names preserve the ‘outline’ of a thing (*Crat.* 432B–433B), and that in this sense names have descriptive content (Fine 1977: 125–131), this content is objectively attached to the name, and it does not have to match the content in the ‘heads of the speakers’. For Plato, it is possible for a person (especially a non-philosopher) to have a name in one’s vocabulary and at the same time to misunderstand its descriptive content.

...words such as ‘justice’ or ‘the fine’ have a descriptive content by themselves, but this descriptive content is not fixed by what the speaker has in mind. Rather, the descriptive content has been fixed by the name-giving of the original name-giver who coined, e.g., ‘jus- tice’. This descriptive content picks out something and when the name is correct, it picks out the real nature of a natural kind and correctly describes it. So the descriptive content of ‘justice’ might still correctly describe justice and pick out its real nature, even if what is ‘in the head’ of the speaker is badly mistaken. (Bobonich 2002: 311)

The (objective) descriptive content of a name fixes the reference of the name and, for Plato, whatever is associated with these names by the speakers does not have to correspond to the objective content of names²²⁹.

instrumentalis (just like the ones at 184B7ff), designating the particular activity of the soul, i.e. the ‘with’, as opposed to ‘by means of’. This is Schleiermacher’s translation. Most subsequent German translations have adopted it (e.g. Becker 2007). The sentence would then be the following: ‘But what about the power which reveals to you that which is common to everything, including these things; *with what* [i.e. the soul] do you apply the words ‘is’, ‘is not’ and the others we used in our questions just now?’ McDowell’s translation does not take the dative to be instrumental and the sentence runs: ‘But what about the power which reveals to you that which is common to everything, including these things; *that to which* [i.e. the commons] you apply the words ‘is’, ‘is not’ and the others we used in our questions just now?’ Deciding between these two translations would require an entire paper on its own. Grammatically both seem to be possible. Even though Schleiermacher’s translation would be helpful to my case, I think that McDowell’s translation is the more natural one. It makes it easier to see why Theaetetus, in his answer (185C9-D3), focuses on the features named and not on what does the naming.

²²⁹ Thus, Plato is an externalist about meaning (to use a somewhat anachronistic term). For classic discussions of modern externalism, see Kripke (1980) and Putnam (1975). For Plato, too, the meaning of a term is determined by factors *external* to what is in speakers’ minds, i.e. by the descriptive content of a name (which is, of course, different from what modern externalists think). I will leave open the large question whether Plato takes names to be referring to sensible things or to the Forms, i.e. whether the term ‘beautiful’ refers to beautiful things or to the property (Form) of Beauty. It seems likely, however, that Plato subscribes to the latter view, namely that names (those that actually do have have corresponding Forms), refer to properties (Forms), rather than things that have these properties (*Phd.* 78E, 102B, *Rep.* 596A, *Crat.* 423E).

Socrates' mentioning of naming in the Passage of the Commons might likewise be seen to hint that all one needs for holding beliefs and framing thoughts about the common properties is having a name for them in one's vocabulary. One can hold many false beliefs about the common that the name in fact (objectively) names. It would seem that, according to Plato, one could have a word or name in one's vocabulary without being *in cognitive contact* with the relevant property that the word refers to, without understanding *what* this property is. This is confirmed by what Plato says in other dialogues. Non-philosophers systematically misapply the names/words they (think they) know. Most famously, the prisoners in *Republic's* Cave think that the words they use refer to the shadows on the wall of the cave, when in fact they refer to the things outside the cave.: 'And if they could talk to one another, don't you think they'd suppose that the names they used applied to the things they see passing before them?' (*Rep.* 515B, trans. Grube and Reeve). One does not need to be in contact with intelligibles in order to entertain a thought about them—all that is needed is having the relevant words in one's vocabulary, words that the agent can use incorrectly in some (most or even all) possible situations. In these cases the soul fails to be 'in contact' with commons.

What makes it the case that these beliefs are *about* particular sensible things? Plato's answer to this is based on memory and perception. Indeed, just a couple of pages later in the *Theaetetus*, Socrates discusses belief-formation exclusively in terms of perception and memory. This is the famous image of the Wax Block (191D–E). Socrates explains the formation of false beliefs (mistaking Theodorus for Theaetetus or *vice versa*) in the following way:

I know you and Theodorus, and have imprints of the two of you on that piece of wax, like those of signet rings. I see you both, some way off and not properly, and I'm eager (προθυμηθῶ) to assign the imprint which belongs to each, and to insert it and fit the seeing into its own trace, so that recognition may take place. But, missing that aim (ἀποτυχῶν), and making a transposition, I attach the seeing of each one to the imprint which belongs to the other, like people who put their shoes on the wrong feet; or alternatively my going wrong is because the same sort of thing happens to me as happens to sight in mirrors, when it flows in such a way as to transpose left and right. It's then that other judging/believing and making of false judgments/beliefs occur (193B9–D3)

The Wax-Block model of beliefs takes forming beliefs about *x* to require no other mental prerequisite than simply a previous (perceptual) encounter with *x*. This encounter leaves a memory-trace on the Wax-Block of the soul. This memory-trace is then fitted (or mis-fitted) to the thing perceived. Nothing else is required – a perceptual interaction between the object and the soul that has occurred in the past creates a memory-trace and a novel perception is brought into relation with the existing memory trace. This is a purely empiricist account of forming beliefs. In the *Philebus*, too, belief is analyzed in terms perception and memory (38B), and the mechanics of belief formation are described

roughly in the same manner. Memory is merely the retaining of perceptions (σωτηρία αἰσθήσεως) (34A). Thus, it seems that Plato does allow beliefs to be based on perception and empirical memory, i.e. the ability to retain perceptions. Again, commons or intelligibles or Forms are completely absent from these descriptions of forming beliefs. However, the passage just quoted suggests that forming beliefs involves the *desire* to fit the memory trace to the occurrent perception *correctly*. While forming his belief, Socrates ‘is eager to assign the imprint which belongs to each’ but doing it falsely, he ‘misses that aim’. Thus, the Wax Block supports my interpretation of belief formation as ‘aiming at being’.

All in all, then, there are two possible ways to construe Plato’s account of where the content of belief derives from – one is based on language and the other on perception and memory. In fact, it might well be possible that these two models support each other – the contents of beliefs that refer to abstract objects are acquired by language learning and the contents of beliefs about perceptual objects are acquired by perception and memory. The beliefs that include both (e.g. ‘Theaetetus is beautiful’) require both. Neither, however, requires ‘cognitive access’ to Forms, intelligibles, or commons. Indeed, this seems to be exactly how one of the first Platonic commentators, Alcinous, understood the matter:

Opinion is the combination of memory and perception (Δόξα δέ ἐστι συμπλοκή μνήμης καὶ αἰσθήσεως). For when we first encounter some perceptible, and from it we get a perception, and from that a memory, and later we encounter the same perceptible again, we connect the pre-existing memory with the subsequent perception and say within ourselves ‘Socrates!’, ‘Horse!’, ‘Fire!’, etc. And this is called opinion (ἐν ἑαυτοῖς λέγομεν φέρε Σωκράτης, ἵππος, πῦρ, καὶ ὅσα τοιαῦτα· καὶ τοῦτο καλεῖται δόξα) – our connecting the pre-existing perception with the newly produced perception. *Didaskalikos* 154,40–155, 5 (Trans. Dillon)

It is noteworthy that, for Alcinous, the perceptual fitting is (always) accompanied by the act of *saying*. In fact, Alcinous combines Plato’s account of memory and recognition as fitting the current perception with the perceptual trace (*Theaetetus* 193B–C) with Plato’s account of thought as silent speech (*Theaetetus* 189E–190A)²³⁰. I see no reason why Alcinous’ interpretation of the *genesis* of the content of perceptual beliefs could not generally be along the right lines, provided that one *also* maintains that the ability to speak does not require understanding of ‘what it is’ that the general terms refer to. One could easily say ‘this is fire!’ and be completely oblivious as to what the (non-sensible) essence of fire might be. In the *Timaeus* Plato offers an account of fire in terms of ‘elementary triangles’ that he himself declares to be quite ‘unusual’ (*Tim.* 53C). In addition, Alcinous unfortunately fails to notice that the *goal* of

²³⁰ The exact relation that Alcinous sees between speech and fitting of perception to a memory-trace is not that clear. See Sedley (1996a: 307–308).

belief-formation is representing reality, i.e. fitting the memory trace to the perception *correctly*.

Thus, in order to form beliefs, one does not need to have understanding of *what* a particular thing is – it suffices either to have a word for a particular thing in one’s vocabulary or to have a memory trace of this particular thing (or even both). Belief formation is not rational for Plato because it *assumes* understanding of what the object of beliefs is. Belief is rational because it aims to represent reality.

It might be objected that the subsequent discussion in the *Theaetetus* shows that Plato cannot subscribe to this rather pessimistic account of forming beliefs. First of all, Socrates and Theaetetus agree (at *Tht.* 188A–188D and 190B–E) that in order to hold a belief about something one must *know* or *grasp* this something. This certainly suggests that one must have understanding of what the terms involved in one’s beliefs refer to. Secondly, quite at the end of the dialogue (209A–E) Socrates suggests that one needs to be in possession of a ‘distinguishing mark’ of something in order to have beliefs about this something, i.e. that one needs to be able to distinguish a thing from everything else in order to form beliefs about it. Both of these claims obviously conflict with the account of belief formation outlined above.

However, here one should note the context. The first claim derives from the discussion of the puzzles of false beliefs. According to the puzzle of ‘knowing and not-knowing’, one either knows the terms involved in belief, and consequently cannot make mistakes in using these terms (since knowledge implies infallibility), or one does not know the terms involved in a belief and is therefore incapable of forming any beliefs at all involving these terms. The interpretation of this whole section (*Tht.* 187C–200C) is highly controversial. One line of interpretation²³¹ suggests that Plato himself is (somewhat) puzzled by how false beliefs come about. This would imply that Plato indeed takes belief formation to involve knowledge of the terms involved. The second line of interpretation²³² sees the puzzles of false belief as mainly dialectical, and maintains that Plato is, indirectly, trying to show that there is a (set of) false assumption(s) that create these puzzles.

I believe that the second line of interpretation is much more promising. Indeed, one of the assumptions that can be seen as being responsible for the

²³¹ See, e.g. Bostock (1988). Bostock (1988: 272) thinks that the whole discussion of false beliefs shows that Plato is struggling with accounting for lower-level knowledge, required to use terms in sentences and thoughts (i.e. linguistic understanding). Lorenz makes a similar claim (2006: 91–92). However, it is much more likely that the puzzles of false belief arise because Theaetetus defines knowledge as true belief. Thus the whole section should be viewed as a *reductio* of Theaetetus’ definition. The false belief section suggests that Plato takes knowledge always to be *infallible* (this is what generates the puzzles), which is why linguistic understanding does not count as knowledge for Plato (linguistic understanding is also not discussed in the *Theaetetus*, *pace* Bostock).

²³² See, for instance, Cornford (1935), Fine (1979), Benson (1992), Adalier (2001). See also above, p. 82, fn. 109.

puzzles of false beliefs is precisely the over-optimistic premiss that the ability to form beliefs about *x* necessarily involves knowledge of *x*. But this assumption is *not* Plato's own, it follows from Theaetetus' definition of knowledge as true belief (as Benson persuasively and at length argues in Benson (1992)). It can, for example, be the case that, for Plato, forming beliefs about *x* simply requires having (at least) *one* true belief about *x*. Theaetetus' (false) definition that knowledge is true belief and the (Platonic) premiss that one needs at least one true belief about *x* in order to think about *x*, add up to the claim that one must have knowledge of *x* in order to think about *x*. This leads to the paradoxical conclusion that false belief is impossible (since knowledge is infallible). Thus the puzzles of false belief can be read as a *reductio* of Theaetetus' second definition of knowledge. I do not think that the assumptions made during the puzzles of false belief should be seen to commit Plato to a more demanding account of what is required to form beliefs.

What about the second claim? Is it correct to attribute to Plato the position that to form any beliefs about *x*, one must be able to distinguish *x* from everything else? A closer look at the text shows that Socrates is not discussing any beliefs (true or false)²³³ – he is discussing the genesis of *true* beliefs:

S. In fact it won't, I think, be Theaetetus who figures in a judgment/belief in me until precisely that snubness has imprinted and deposited in me a memory trace different (διάφορόν τι μνημεῖον) from those of the other snubnesses I've seen, and similarly with the other things you're composed of. Then if I meet you tomorrow, that snubness will remind me and make me judge/form a belief correctly about you (ποιήσει ὁρθὰ δοξάζειν περὶ σοῦ). – T. Yes, that's quite true. – S. So correct judgment/belief (ὁρθὴ δόξα) about anything, too, would seem to be about its differentness (διαφορότητα). (209C4-D1)

Socrates' point seems to be that in order to reach true beliefs about *x*, one should take into account the differentness of *x* from all other things. Nothing is implied about what it takes to have beliefs *tout court*. Even so, this seems to be a suspiciously strong requirement for forming true beliefs²³⁴. Can Socrates really mean that in order to reach a true belief about something, one must be able to distinguish this particular thing from everything else in the universe? In order to form a true belief about Theaetetus, must one really be able to distinguish him from 'the remotest peasant in Asia' (209B)? This seems an implausible requirement. Perhaps one must be able to distinguish Theaetetus from the rest of his surroundings, in order to form a true belief about him, but it is certainly not necessary that one should be able to distinguish him (at all times) from all there is in the universe. Even if this requirement might seem plausible in case of persons, such as Theaetetus, does it make sense to say that in order to have a true belief about e.g. this stick or this stone, I must be able to

²³³ See Burnyeat (1990: 227, n. 112).

²³⁴ See Bostock (1988: 233).

distinguish this stick or stone from all other sticks and stones in the world? Further, can any imprinted perceptual memory-trace achieve such a feat? It is hard to understand how a particular perceptual memory-trace will *always* and in all circumstances enable one to cognitively pick out the thing that left this memory-trace.

I suggest that this passage should not be read as making a claim about what it takes to have true beliefs. Rather, at the close of the dialogue, Plato hints at a correct answer as to what he takes *knowledge* to require (although the dialogue ends, officially, in an *aporia*). Plato suggests that knowledge of a thing involves the ability to distinguish this particular thing from everything else. The aporetic form of the dialogue leaves it undecided whether perceptual particulars, such as Theaetetus, are knowable in this sense at all. Furthermore, it leaves undecided whether a particular (true) belief can ever become knowledge, i.e. whether there is a suitable interpretation of ‘account’ in the formula ‘knowledge is true belief with an account’. Account as ‘a distinguishing mark’ might contain a hint as to what knowledge requires – the ability to distinguish a thing from everything else. We have seen that a perceptual memory-trace is (sometimes) required in order to form belief about a perceptual object (such as Theaetetus). Could perceptual memory also account for the ability to distinguish a thing from *everything* else? I believe that Plato’s answer to this question is decidedly ‘no’. Rather, in order to have knowledge, what one needs is the ability to grasp how something is *different* from something else, and how it is the *same* as itself (or the members of its class). And the Passage of the Commons has taught us that perception on its own can never account for this; one needs to *reason* in order to grasp the sameness, difference and being.

I have suggested that the commons are properties of things (not meanings or concepts). These properties are not grasped simply in virtue of entertaining a thought involving a term that designates the commons. Sameness and difference, then, would be *relational properties*. What is their relevance in regard to Plato’s conception of knowledge?

As I understand it²³⁵, knowledge for later Plato is essentially holistic – to have knowledge of something requires placing the particular thing into a large network of connections with other things in the same subject area. However, this is precisely what grasping the sameness and difference of a thing is – to be able to tell how a thing differs from others and how and in what respect is it the same (*Pol.* 278A–D, *Phlb.* 17A–119A, *Tim.* 37A–D, *Soph.* 253D–E). In this sense it can be maintained that sameness and difference are properties that have a certain explanatory role; they have to figure in all accounts that explain *what* a particular thing is (in what relation it is the same as something and in what relation it is different from something). It is doubtful whether this grasp of difference and sameness of a thing or a kind, the ability to situate a thing or a kind in a complex web of interconnections, can ever be expressed in a *single*

²³⁵ Many scholars share this view. See, for example: Fine (1979a), (1990), McCabe (2000), D. Frede (1989), etc.

belief (and this might be one of the reasons why the *Theaetetus* ends aporetically). It seems that to this extent knowledge, for Plato, is non-propositional – it can never be expressed by a *single* proposition. Since knowledge is essentially ability, there might not even be a particular *body* of propositions that expresses a particular kind of knowledge (say, carpentry). There is no body of propositions that one can learn by heart and thus acquire knowledge (I suggested in Chapter 3, Section 1 that a similar intuition might plausibly be seen behind Socrates’ peculiar pedagogical methods). Non-propositionality does not mean that knowledge consists of some sort of quasi-mystical gaze at the eternal Forms (although Forms as explanatory properties might be seen as a necessary component of all knowledge). Knowledge, for Plato, is similar to what contemporary epistemologists sometimes call ‘(objectual) understanding’²³⁶ – a non-propositional ability to grasp the connections in a given subject-area. For Plato this understanding always involves the grasp of sameness and difference. It is in regard to *knowledge* that the ‘intelligibles’ of sameness and difference matter the most, not (as the standard account suggests) in regard to the ability to form beliefs.

Indeed, it can be argued that the method of collection and division practiced in the *Phaedrus*, *Sophist* and *Statesman* aims at precisely this – placing a thing or a kind in a network of connections with other things or kinds, taking into account the object’s (or kind’s) sameness to and difference from other, related objects (or kind’s). It is all the more surprising that commons (playing such an important role in Plato’s account of knowledge) are dropped from the discussion in the *Theaetetus* (but see D. Frede 1989). There are several ways to understand this curious phenomenon. One of the possibilities is that commons are simply not relevant to the definition of knowledge at this stage of Plato’s thought; that Plato aims at defining knowledge without any appeal to the specific *kind of objects* of knowledge. The other possibility is that the subsequent definitions of knowledge fail precisely *because* commons are neglected and that this points to the true (non-aporetic) conclusion of the dialogue.

I will not even attempt to answer this very large question here. What is important for my purposes is that the notion of belief that I have been extracting from the Passage of the Commons can accommodate both of these possible readings. Belief formation is an activity that aims at finding out how things are

²³⁶ ‘Understanding requires the grasping of explanatory and other coherence-making relationships in a large and comprehensive body of information. One can know many unrelated pieces of information, but understanding is achieved only when informational items are pieced together by the subject in question. One might even propose a more radical thesis, to the effect that a change occurs metaphysically when understanding is achieved. Whereas knowledge can have as its object individual propositions, understanding may not. It may be that when understanding is achieved, the object of understanding is an ‘informational chunk’ rather than a number of single propositions. In such a view, propositional understanding is not the primary form of understanding, but results via abstraction from this primary form.’ (Kvanvig 2003: 198) I think Plato would gladly accept that there is a *metaphysical* shift from a particular true belief to knowledge and that one isolated true belief can never be identified with knowledge.

and for that reason it necessarily involves reasoning. What exactly are the objects that have to be included in the reasoning if belief is to become *knowledge* (or whether that is even possible) can be left an open question. It might be the case that, in order to become knowledge, forming beliefs has to include reasoning about non-sensible explanatory properties such as Forms (or commons). However, it might also be the case that, for Plato during the writing of the *Theaetetus*, knowledge could be achieved without reasoning involving Forms. It can *also* be the case (which to me seems to be the most promising approach to the dialogue) that Plato intends us, the readers, to ask this very question and come up with our own answer (Burnyeat 1990: 2–3). Whichever way this question is handled, I hope that the lesson of the Passage of the Commons can still be appreciated – namely that in order to grasp how things are, one must engage in reasoning and deliberation – it does not suffice to simply open our eyes and see, and it *also* does not suffice to simply entertain a thought that something is the case. The soul has to work in order to find out how things are. ‘Attaining being’ has to be achieved. Aiming for this already begins at the level of forming beliefs. Perhaps these beliefs will one day become knowledge.

[The name for] δόξα either derives from the pursuit (τῇ διώξει) the soul engages in when it hunts for the knowledge (τὸ εἰδέναι) of how things are (ὅπῃ ἔχει τὰ πράγματα) or it derives from the shooting of a bow (τόξου). (*Crat.* 420B)

CONCLUSION

This dissertation offered an explanation as to why Plato, in his later dialogues, begins to view the capacity to form beliefs as necessarily involving the reasoning part of the soul, i.e. why later Plato thinks of belief as rational. This problem has surfaced quite recently in Plato-scholarship. According to the standard account, later Plato starts to think that forming beliefs requires cognitive access to intelligibles (Forms), and this, in turn, requires exercise of rational capacities. In this dissertation I argued, first, that the standard account is unsatisfactory. Later Plato does not take apprehension of Forms to be necessary for forming beliefs. Plato's Forms are not semantic entities grasped in everyday thought and beliefs. For both middle and late Plato, Forms are meant to explain how knowledge is possible. Knowledge, on the other hand, is a demanding cognitive state that is not achieved by non-philosophers. The cognitive preconditions of forming beliefs of non-philosophers include perception, memory and, in case of more complex beliefs, language. Thus, we could say that Plato is an empiricist when it comes to explaining how beliefs are formed, but rationalist when it comes to the question of how knowledge is acquired. The standard account fails, since it falsely assumes that later Plato changes his mind about Forms and begins to see them relevant for explaining ordinary non-philosophical thinking. Therefore, an alternative explanation to the shift in Plato's notion of belief is required. Providing this alternative account was my main aim in this dissertation.

I developed the alternative explanation to the rationality of belief by relying on an important and notoriously difficult passage in Plato's *Theaetetus* (184B–187A). I argued that this passage is crucial for understanding Plato's later notion of belief. I also argued that the passage does not support the standard account (as is usually maintained), and developed a novel reading of the passage. I argued that *Theaetetus* 184B–187A should not be read as a straightforwardly doctrinarian piece of reasoning. *Theaetetus* is a dialogue with multiple levels and not all claims made in the dialogue can be attributed to Plato. If one takes into account the dialectical context of the passage (especially Socrates' method of midwifery), as indeed one should, it can be shown that Plato aims to convey an account of belief, according to which forming a belief is a goal-directed activity aiming at representing reality correctly ('attaining being'). That beliefs are formed in this manner is simultaneously an argument against both Protagorean relativism and *Theaetetus*' definition according to which knowledge is perception.

Thus, *Theaetetus* supports a teleological account of belief formation. 'Attaining being' is the epistemic goal of forming beliefs. Since Plato takes the distinguishing feature of rationality to be the cognitive desire for grasping truth and reality, he naturally starts to view belief formation as an activity involving reason. This explanation has the advantage over the standard account, since it grounds the rationality of belief on a condition that is both necessary and

sufficient for rationality, rather than merely on the sufficient condition (apprehension of Forms) like the standard account suggests.

For Plato, beliefs are formed with the explicit and intrinsic goal of representing correctly the reality independent from us. This makes forming beliefs sensitive to reasoning. It furthermore suggests that beliefs are formed (and abandoned) depending on whether a particular belief is consistent with other beliefs we might have. In Plato's middle dialogues beliefs were not formed in this manner. Plato took beliefs to involve unreflective and passive acceptances; the relation between beliefs and truth was taken to be external, some beliefs simply happen to be true and some don't. In the middle dialogues Plato also assigned beliefs to non-human animals and very young children. In his later dialogues he denies belief to animals and children, and he maintains that all belief-formation involves reasoning and reflection, and that reasoning requires education. The teleological notion of belief smoothly explains all the differences between Plato's conception of belief in the middle compared to the late dialogues.

Interestingly, the teleological notion of belief was tacit in Plato's early Socratic dialogues – Socrates' elenctic method assumes that his interlocutors aim for consistency in forming their beliefs since Socrates expects the interlocutors to abandon their proposed definitions after Socrates has shown that the definitions they propose are inconsistent with other beliefs that his interlocutors hold. Thus Plato, in his later dialogues, comes to incorporate elements of Socratic epistemology into his own. It is all the more natural that he expresses this in the only Socratic dialogue written in his later years, the *Theaetetus*.

RESÜMEE

Minu väitekirja „Plato on Belief (*doxa*). *Theaetetus* 184B–187A” („Platon uskumusest (*doxa*). „*Theaitetos*“ 184A–187B“) eesmärk on analüüsida „*doxa*“ ehk „uskumuse“ mõistet Platoni hilisdialoogides, tuginedes peaaasjalikult dialoogile „*Theaitetos*“. Ma püüan vastata küsimusele, kuidas selgitada seda, et Platon käsitleb uskumust oma hilistes tekstides („*Theaitetos*“, „*Philebos*“, „*Timaios*“ ja „*Sofist*“) erinevalt võrdluses nn. keskmiste dialoogidega (nt. „*Phaidon*“ ja „*Politeia*“). Kõige silmatorkavamad erinevused Platoni keskmiste ja hiliste dialoogide vahel on järgnevad. *Esiteks* omistab Platon keskmistes dialoogides uskumused kõigile kolmele hingejaole: mõistuslikule (*logistikon*), söakale (*thymoeides*) ja ihalevale (*epithymetikon*). Lisaks sellele omistab Platon „*Phaidonis*“ uskumused ka kehale. Seevastu hilistes dialoogides (nt. „*Timaios*“) kõneldakse uskumustest ainult mõistusliku hingejao puhul. Mitte-mõistuslikud hingejaod ja keha pole siin võimelised uskumusi kujundama. *Teiseks* keskmistes dialoogides kõneleb Platon ka loomade ja väikeste laste uskumustest, hiljem ta aga eitab, et loomadel ja lastel on uskumused. *Kolmandaks* keskmistes dialoogides kuuluvad tajusisud samuti uskumuste hulka, samas kui hilistes dialoogides eristab Platon tajusisud uskumustest. *Neljandaks* keskmistes dialoogides peetakse uskumusteks kõikvõimalikke mitte-reflektiivseid representatsioonilisi seisundeid. Hilistes dialoogides käsitleb Platon uskumuste kujundamist aga reflektiivse protsessina, milles hing vaeb poolt- ja vastuargumente ning lõpuks jõuab kaalutava väitega nõustumiseni või lükkab selle tagasi. Niisiis seisneb üks hiliste ja keskmiste dialoogide peamisi erinevusi selles, et uskumuse kujundamise võime muutub hilistes dialoogides mõistuslikuks võimeks. Minu väitekirja eesmärk on selgitada, miks uskumuse kujundamine on hilise Platoni jaoks ratsionaalne võime ning milles seisneb uskumuse ratsionaalsus.

Minu tõlgenduse kohaselt tugineb Platon oma hilistes dialoogides teleoloogilisele või eesmärgipärasele uskumuse mõistele. Uskumuse kujundamise eesmärk on kujundada *tõeseid* uskumusi, peegeldada oma uskumustes maailma sellisel kujul, nagu ta on, sõltumatuna meie soovidest, vajadustest ja kalduvustest. Selline teleoloogiline uskumuse mõiste selgitab hästi ülaltoodud erinevusi keskmiste ja hiliste dialoogide vahel. Kuna iha tõe järele on omane üksnes hinge mõistuslikule osale, siis on mõistetav, miks Platon oma hilistes dialoogides omistab uskumused ainult mõistuslikule hingeosale – uskumuste kujundamine hinges väljendabki soovi peegeldada maailma nii, nagu see on. Uskumused on tõekspidamised. Kuna uskumus on tõe suunatud, siis peab uskumuste kujundamise mehhanism võtma arvesse loogilisi suhteid teiste uskumustega, sest suhestades kaalutavat väidet meie teiste tõekspidamistega, langetame otsuse, kas nõustuda väitega või mitte. Teleoloogiline uskumuse mõiste toob endaga kaasa uskumuse kujundamise holistliku kontseptsiooni, s.t. uskumusi kujundades on hinge eesmärgiks kujundada harmooniliselt kokkusobiv uskumuste süsteem. Seega kuulub hilise Platoni jaoks uskumuse kujundamise juurde alati kaalutlemine ja reflekteerimine, teiste tõekspidamistega

seostamine. Platon loobub siin oma keskmise perioodi atomistlikust uskumuse mõistest, mitte-reflektiivsed representatsioonilised seisundid pole hilise Platoni jaoks enam uskumused. Kaalutlemine ja vaagimine nõuab Platoni järgi haridust ning kuna loomad pole hariduse saamiseks võimelised ja väikesed lapsed ei ole veel haridust omandanud, ei kvalifitseeru loomade ega laste representsioonilised seisundid enam uskumustena.

Minu dissertatsioonis on kesksel kohal dialoog „Theaitetos“ ja eriti selle lõik 184B–187A. Olgugi et ka teised hilised dialoogid näitavad, et Platoni uskumuse käsitlemises on aset leidnud märkimisväärne nihe, ei võimalda need selgitada, millised on selle nihke põhjused. „Theaitetoses“ aga tuuakse sellele ka põhjendus. Nii moodustab suure osa minu tööst just „Theaitetose“ interpretatsioon. „Theaitetos“ on ülesehituselt ilmselt kõige komplitseeritum Platoni dialoog, mistõttu selle erinevad osad võimaldavad väga erinevaid tõlgendusi. Ma tuginen „Theaitetose“ analüüsis metoodilisele eeldusele (vt Sedley 2004), et tegu on dialoogiga, milles tuleb eristada kaht tasandit – sokraatilist ja platoonilist tasandit. Tuginedes nimetatud eristusele, näitan ma oma töös, et „Theaitetose“ keskset osa tuleks vaadelda just teleoloogilise uskumuse mõiste väljatöötamisena. „Theaitetoses“ (186A–E) väidab Platon sõnaselgelt, et uskumusi kujundades pürib (*eporegetai*) hing „olemise“ (*ousia*) poole, vaagides sealjuures tuleviku ja mineviku sündmusi ning tehes järeldusi. Ma näitan, et kõigist erinevatest võimalikest „ousia“ tõlgendusest tuleks „Theaitetose“ kontekstis eelistada „ousia“ tõlgendamist *reaalsusena*, sellena, mis meist sõltumatult maailmas olemas on. Nõnda võibki „Theaitetost“ pidada teleoloogilise uskumuse mõiste esmakordseks väljatöötamiseks Platoni dialoogides.

Miks on just „Theaitetos“ see dialoog, kus Platon teleoloogilise uskumuse mõisteni jõuab? Minu põhjendus koosneb kahest osast. Esiteks, teleoloogiline uskumuse kontseptsioon töötatakse välja, et eristada uskumust meeletajust (Theaitetose esimene teadmise definitsioon on „teadmine on taju“). Teiseks, teleoloogiline uskumuse mõiste on tarvilik Protagorase relativismi kummutamiseks. Protagoras väidab, et kõik uskumused on tõesed (nende jaoks, kellel need uskumused on). Platoni argument seisneb näitamises, et uskumuse mõiste kui selline eeldab objektiivse, meist sõltumatu maailma olemasolu.

Hilise Platoni uskumuse mõiste teleoloogilisel käsitlemisel on mitmeid eeliseid standardse käsitluse ees. Standardse käsitluse (Bobonich 2002, Lorenz 2006) järgi hakkavad ideed hilistes dialoogides täitma semantilist rolli – ideede haaramine selgitab mõistete omandamist, kontseptualisatsiooni ja predikatsiooni. Nõnda muutuvad ideed ka mittefilosoofidele kognitiivselt ligipääsetavaks. Uskumuse kujundamine muutub ratsionaalseks võimeks, kuna Platon eeldab, et uskumuste kujundamiseks on tarvis teatud kognitiivset eeltingimust, nimelt ideede haaramist. Käesolevas dissertatsioonis väidan ma, et standardne käsitus on ekslik. Esiteks ei ole standardse käsitluse alusväide, nimelt et ideedeõpetus muutub (osaliselt) teooriaks selle kohta, kuidas inimesed omandavad mõisted, tekstuaalselt põhjendatud. Ka Platoni hilisdialoogides tähistavad ideed asjade olemusi, mis on ligipääsetavad ainult neile, kellel on *teadmine*. Enamikul inimestest on kõigest uskumused ja mitte teadmine. Seega

jäävad ka hilistes dialoogides ideed mittefilosoofidele kättesaamatuks. Teiseks isegi siis, kui kognitiivne ligipääs ideedele oleks predikatsiooni ja kontseptualisatsiooni eeltingimuseks, ei selgitaks see sugugi, miks Platon leiab, et uskumuse kujundamiseks on tarvilik kaalutlemine ja hinge kahekõne iseendaga. Nendel põhjustel on tarvilik alternatiivse selgituse väljatöötamine, mis ongi olnud minu väitekirja eesmärgiks. Teleoloogiline uskumuse mõiste ei eelda, et uskumuste kujundamiseks on tarvilik haarata ideesid. Ideede haaramine on vajalik tingimus *teadmise* omandamiseks. Uskumuste kujundamine eeldab aga meeletaju, mälu ja keeleoskuse koosmõju. Ükski neist kolmest kognitiivsest võimest ei tarvitse ligipääsu ideedele.

Siin töös välja pakutud Platoni uskumuse mõiste interpretatsiooni eelis seisneb selle sõltumatuses küsimusest, kuidas täpselt mõista Platoni hilist ideedeteooriat (see on üks vastuolulisemaid küsimusi kogu kaasaegses Platoniuurimises). Ühtlasi osutab siin kaitstud tõlgendus, et kõnealune osa Platoni epistemoloogiast on jätkuvalt tähtis, sest uskumuse tõesuunatusega seotud problemaatika on keskne ka tänapäeva filosoofias (vt. näiteks Velleman 2000 ja Vahid 2009). Eriti tähtis on Platoni tähelepanek, et oma uskumusi kujundades oleme kõik anti-relativistid, sest meie uskumuste kujundamise seesmiseks eesmärgiks on peegeldada maailma säärasena, nagu ta meist sõltumatult on. Meie uskumused ei ole samastatavad sellega, kuidas asjad meile paistavad, nagu väidab relativist Protagoras, uskumuste kujundamisel on keskses rollis eesmärk uskuda tõeselt.

APPENDIX. Theaetetus 184B4–187A9²³⁷

- 184.b.5 {ΣΩ.} Ἔτι τοίνυν, ὦ Θεαίτητε, τοσόνδε περὶ τῶν εἰρη-
μένων ἐπίσκεψαι. αἰσθησιν γὰρ δὴ ἐπιστήμην ἀπεκρίνω·
ἢ γάρ;
{ΘΕΑΙ.} Ναί.
{ΣΩ.} Εἰ οὖν τίς σε ὥδ' ἐρωτῶ· 'Τῷ τὰ λευκὰ καὶ μέλανα
ὁρᾷ ἄνθρωπος καὶ τῷ τὰ ὀξεῖα καὶ βαρέα ἀκούει;' εἴποις ἂν
οἷμαι 'Ὅμμασί τε καὶ ὤσιν.'
184.b.10 {ΘΕΑΙ.} Ἐγώ γε.
184.c.1 {ΣΩ.} Τὸ δὲ εὐχερὲς τῶν ὀνομάτων τε καὶ ῥημάτων καὶ
μὴ δι' ἀκριβείας ἐξεταζόμενον τὰ μὲν πολλὰ οὐκ ἀγεννές,
ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον τὸ τούτου ἐναντίον ἀνελεύθερον, ἔστι δὲ ὅτε
ἀναγκαῖον, οἷον καὶ νῦν ἀνάγκη ἐπιλαβέσθαι τῆς ἀποκρίσεως
184.c.5 ἣν ἀποκρίνη, ἢ οὐκ ὀρθή. σκόπει γάρ· ἀποκρίσις ποτέρα
ὀρθότερα, ὧ ὁρῶμεν τοῦτο εἶναι ὀφθαλμούς, ἢ δι' οὗ ὁρῶμεν,
καὶ ὧ ἀκούομεν ὅσα, ἢ δι' οὗ ἀκούομεν;
{ΘΕΑΙ.} Δι' ὧν ἕκαστα αἰσθανόμεθα, ἔμοιγε δοκεῖ, ὦ
Σώκρατες, μᾶλλον ἢ οἷς.
184.d.1 {ΣΩ.} Δεινὸν γάρ που, ὦ παῖ, εἰ πολλαί τινες ἐν ἡμῖν
ὥσπερ ἐν δουρείοις ἵπποις αἰσθήσεις ἐγκάθηνται, ἀλλὰ μὴ
εἰς μίαν τινὰ ἰδέαν, εἴτε ψυχὴν εἴτε ὅτι δεῖ καλεῖν, πάντα
ταῦτα συντείνει, ἢ διὰ τούτων οἷον ὀργάνων αἰσθανόμεθα
184.d.5 ὅσα αἰσθητά.
{ΘΕΑΙ.} Ἀλλὰ μοι δοκεῖ οὕτω μᾶλλον ἢ ἐκείνως.
{ΣΩ.} Τοῦδ' ἐμοὶ ἔνεκα αὐτὰ σοὶ διακριβοῦμαι, εἴ τι νῦν ἡμῶν
αὐτῶν τῷ αὐτῷ διὰ μὲν ὀφθαλμῶν ἐφικνούμεθα λευκῶν τε
184.e.1 καὶ μελάνων, διὰ δὲ τῶν ἄλλων ἐτέρων αὐτῶν καὶ ἑξῆς
ἐρωτώμενος πάντα τὰ τοιαῦτα εἰς τὸ σῶμα ἀναφέρειν; ἴσως
δὲ βέλτιον σὲ λέγειν αὐτὰ ἀποκρινόμενον μᾶλλον ἢ ἐμὲ
ὑπὲρ σοῦ πολυπραγμονεῖν. καί μοι λέγε· θερμὰ καὶ σκληρὰ
184.e.5 καὶ κοῦφα καὶ γλυκεῖα δι' ὧν αἰσθάνη, ἄρα οὐ τοῦ σώματος
ἕκαστα τίθης; ἢ ἄλλου τινός;
{ΘΕΑΙ.} Οὐδενὸς ἄλλου.
{ΣΩ.} Ἡ καὶ ἐθελήσεις ὁμολογεῖν ἃ δι' ἐτέρας δυνάμεως
185.a.1 αἰσθάνη, ἀδύνατον εἶναι δι' ἄλλης ταῦτ' αἰσθέσθαι, οἷον ἃ
δι' ἀκοῆς, δι' ὄψεως, ἢ ἃ δι' ὄψεως, δι' ἀκοῆς;
{ΘΕΑΙ.} Πῶς γὰρ οὐκ ἐθελήσω;
{ΣΩ.} Εἴ τι ἄρα περὶ ἀμφοτέρων διανοῇ, οὐκ ἂν διὰ γε
185.a.5 τοῦ ἐτέρου ὀργάνου, οὐδ' αὖ διὰ τοῦ ἐτέρου περὶ ἀμφοτέρων
αἰσθάνοι ἂν.
{ΘΕΑΙ.} Οὐ γὰρ οὖν.
{ΣΩ.} Περὶ δὴ φωνῆς καὶ περὶ χροῆς πρῶτον μὲν αὐτὸ

²³⁷ Ed. Burnet, revised for 1995 Oxford edition.

- 185.a.10 τοῦτο περὶ ἀμφοτέρων ἢ διανοῇ, ὅτι ἀμφοτέρω ἐστόν;
{ΘΕΑΙ.} Ἐγώ γε.
{ΣΩ.} Οὐκοῦν καὶ ὅτι ἐκάτερον ἐκατέρου μὲν ἕτερον, ἐαυτῷ δὲ ταυτόν;
- 185.b.1 {ΘΕΑΙ.} Τί μήν;
{ΣΩ.} Καὶ ὅτι ἀμφοτέρω δύο, ἐκάτερον δὲ ἓν;
{ΘΕΑΙ.} Καὶ τοῦτο.
{ΣΩ.} Οὐκοῦν καὶ εἴτε ἀνομοίω εἴτε ὁμοίω ἀλλήλοιν,
- 185.b.5 δυνατός εἰ ἐπισκέψασθαι;
{ΘΕΑΙ.} Ἴσως.
{ΣΩ.} Ταῦτα δὴ πάντα διὰ τίνος περὶ αὐτοῖν διανοῇ; οὔτε γὰρ δι' ἀκοῆς οὔτε δι' ὅψεως οἶόν τε τὸ κοινὸν λαμβάνειν περὶ αὐτῶν. ἔτι δὲ καὶ τόδε τεκμήριον περὶ οὗ λέγομεν· εἰ γὰρ δυνατόν εἴη ἀμφοτέρω σκέψασθαι ἅρ' ἐστόν ἀλμυρῷ ἢ οὐ, οἷσθ' ὅτι ἕξεις εἰπεῖν ὃ ἐπισκέψη, καὶ τοῦτο οὔτε ὅψις οὔτε ἀκοή φαίνεται, ἀλλὰ τι ἄλλο.
- 185.b.10 {ΘΕΑΙ.} Τί δ' οὐ μέλλει, ἢ γε διὰ τῆς γλώττης δύναμις;
185.c.1 {ΣΩ.} Καλῶς λέγεις. ἢ δὲ διὰ τίνος δύναμις τό τ' ἐπὶ πᾶσι κοινὸν καὶ τὸ ἐπὶ τούτοις δηλοῖ σοι, ὃ τὸ ἔστιν ἐπονομάζεις καὶ τὸ 'οὐκ ἔστι' καὶ ἃ νυνδὴ ἠρωτῶμεν περὶ αὐτῶν; τούτοις πᾶσι ποῖα ἀποδώσεις ὄργανα δι' ὧν αἰσθάνεται ἡμῶν τὸ αἰσθανόμενον ἕκαστα;
- 185.c.10 {ΘΕΑΙ.} Οὐσίαν λέγεις καὶ τὸ μὴ εἶναι, καὶ ὁμοιότητα
185.d.1 καὶ ἀνομοιότητα, καὶ τὸ ταυτόν τε καὶ [τὸ] ἕτερον, ἔτι δὲ ἔν τε καὶ τὸν ἄλλον ἀριθμὸν περὶ αὐτῶν. δηλὸν δὲ ὅτι καὶ ἄρτιόν τε καὶ περιττὸν ἐρωτᾷς, καὶ τᾶλλα ὅσα τούτοις ἔπεται, διὰ τίνος ποτὲ τῶν τοῦ σώματος τῇ ψυχῇ αἰσθανόμεθα.
- 185.d.5 {ΣΩ.} Ὑπέρεν, ὃ Θεαίτητε, ἀκολουθεῖς, καὶ ἔστιν ἃ ἐρωτῶ αὐτὰ ταῦτα.
{ΘΕΑΙ.} Ἀλλὰ μὰ Δία, ὃ Σώκρατες, ἔγωγε οὐκ ἂν ἔχοιμι εἰπεῖν, πλὴν γ' ὅτι μοι δοκεῖ τὴν ἀρχὴν οὐδ' εἶναι τοιοῦτον οὐδὲν τούτοις ὄργανον ἴδιον ὥσπερ ἐκείνοις, ἀλλ' αὐτὴ δι' αὐτῆς ἡ ψυχὴ τὰ κοινὰ μοι φαίνεται περὶ πάντων ἐπισκοπεῖν.
- 185.e.1 {ΣΩ.} Καλὸς γὰρ εἶ, ὃ Θεαίτητε, καὶ οὐχ, ὥς ἔλεγε Θεόδωρος, αἰσchrός· ὁ γὰρ καλῶς λέγων καλός τε καὶ ἀγαθός. πρὸς δὲ τῷ καλῷ εὖ ἐποίησάς με μάλα συχνοῦ λόγου ἀπαλλάξας, εἰ φαίνεται σοι τὰ μὲν αὐτὴ δι' αὐτῆς ἡ ψυχὴ ἐπισκοπεῖν, τὰ δὲ διὰ τῶν τοῦ σώματος δυνάμεων. τοῦτο γὰρ ἦν ὃ καὶ αὐτῷ μοι ἐδόκει, ἐβουλόμην δὲ καὶ σοὶ δόξαι.
- 186.a.1 {ΘΕΑΙ.} Ἀλλὰ μήν φαίνεται γε.
{ΣΩ.} Ποτέρων οὖν τίθης τὴν οὐσίαν; τοῦτο γὰρ μάλιστα ἐπὶ πάντων παρέπεται.
{ΘΕΑΙ.} Ἐγὼ μὲν ὧν αὐτὴ ἡ ψυχὴ καθ' αὐτὴν ἐπορέγεται.

- 186.a.5 {ΣΩ.} Ἡ καὶ τὸ ὁμοιον καὶ τὸ ἀνόμοιον καὶ τὸ ταῦτόν καὶ ἕτερον;
{ΘΕΑΙ.} Ναί.
{ΣΩ.} Τί δέ; καλὸν καὶ αἰσχρὸν καὶ ἀγαθὸν καὶ κακόν;
{ΘΕΑΙ.} Καὶ τούτων μοι δοκεῖ ἐν τοῖς μάλιστα πρὸς
- 186.a.10 ἀλλήλα σκοπεῖσθαι τὴν οὐσίαν, ἀναλογιζομένη ἐν ἑαυτῇ τὰ
- 186.b.1 γεγονότα καὶ τὰ παρόντα πρὸς τὰ μέλλοντα.
{ΣΩ.} Ἔχε δὴ· ἄλλο τι τοῦ μὲν σκληροῦ τὴν σκληρότητα διὰ τῆς ἐπαφῆς αἰσθήσεται, καὶ τοῦ μαλακοῦ τὴν μαλακότητα ὡσαύτως;
{ΘΕΑΙ.} Ναί.
{ΣΩ.} Τὴν δέ γε οὐσίαν καὶ ὅτι ἐστὸν καὶ τὴν ἐναντιότητα πρὸς ἀλλήλῳ καὶ τὴν οὐσίαν αὐτῆς ἐναντιότητος αὐτὴ ἢ ψυχὴ ἐπανιοῦσα καὶ συμβάλλουσα πρὸς ἀλλήλα κρίνειν πειράται ἡμῖν.
- 186.b.10 {ΘΕΑΙ.} Πάνυ μὲν οὖν.
{ΣΩ.} Οὐκοῦν τὰ μὲν εὐθὺς γενομένοις πάρεστι φύσει αἰσθάνεσθαι ἀνθρώποις τε καὶ θηρίοις, ὅσα διὰ τοῦ σώματος παθήματα ἐπὶ τὴν ψυχὴν τείνει· τὰ δὲ περὶ τούτων ἀνα-
- 186.c.1 λογίσματα πρὸς τε οὐσίαν καὶ ὠφέλειαν μόγις καὶ ἐν χρόνῳ διὰ πολλῶν πραγμάτων καὶ παιδείας παραγίγνεται οἷς ἂν καὶ
- 186.c.5 παραγίγνηται;
{ΘΕΑΙ.} Παντάπασι μὲν οὖν.
{ΣΩ.} Οἷόν τε οὖν ἀληθείας τυχεῖν, ὃ μὴδὲ οὐσίας;
{ΘΕΑΙ.} Ἀδύνατον.
{ΣΩ.} Οὐ δὲ ἀληθείας τις ἀτυχήσει, ποτὲ τούτου ἐπιστήμων ἔσται;
- 186.c.10 {ΘΕΑΙ.} Καὶ πῶς ἂν, ὃ Σώκρατες;
- 186.d.1 {ΣΩ.} Ἐν μὲν ἄρα τοῖς παθήμασιν οὐκ ἐνὶ ἐπιστήμῃ, ἐν δὲ τῷ περὶ ἐκείνων συλλογισμῷ· οὐσίας γὰρ καὶ ἀληθείας ἐνταῦθα μὲν, ὡς ἔοικε, δυνατόν ἅψασθαι, ἐκεῖ δὲ
- 186.d.5 ἀδύνατον.
{ΘΕΑΙ.} Φαίνεται.
{ΣΩ.} Ἡ οὖν ταῦτόν ἐκεῖνό τε καὶ τοῦτο καλεῖς, τοσαύτας διαφορὰς ἔχοντες;
{ΘΕΑΙ.} Οὐκοῦν δὴ δίκαιόν γε.
- 186.d.10 {ΣΩ.} Τί οὖν δὴ ἐκείνῳ ἀποδίδως ὄνομα, τῷ ὁρᾶν ἀκούειν ὀσφραίνεσθαι ψύχεσθαι θερμαίνεσθαι;
- 186.e.1 {ΘΕΑΙ.} Αἰσθάνεσθαι ἔγωγε· τί γὰρ ἄλλο;
{ΣΩ.} Σύμπαν ἄρ' αὐτὸ καλεῖς αἴσθησιν;
{ΘΕΑΙ.} Ἀνάγκη.
{ΣΩ.} Ἦν γε, φαμέν, οὐ μέτεστιν ἀληθείας ἅψασθαι· οὐδὲ γὰρ οὐσίας.
- 186.e.5 {ΘΕΑΙ.} Οὐ γὰρ οὖν.
{ΣΩ.} Οὐδ' ἄρ' ἐπιστήμης.

- 186.e.10 {ΘΕΑΙ.} Οὐ γάρ.
 {ΣΩ.} Οὐκ ἄρ' ἂν εἴη ποτέ, ὦ Θεαίτητε, αἴσθησίς τε καὶ ἐπιστήμη ταυτόν.
 {ΘΕΑΙ.} Οὐ φαίνεται, ὦ Σώκρατες. καὶ μάλιστα γε νῦν καταφανέστατον γέγονεν ἄλλο ὄν αἰσθήσεως ἐπιστήμη.
- 187.a.1 {ΣΩ.} Ἄλλ' οὐ τι μὲν δὴ τούτου γε ἔνεκα ἡρχόμεθα διαλεγόμενοι, ἵνα εὕρωμεν τί ποτ' οὐκ ἔστ' ἐπιστήμη, ἀλλὰ τί ἔστιν. ὅμως δὲ τοσοῦτόν γε προβεβήκαμεν, ὥστε μὴ ζητεῖν αὐτὴν ἐν αἰσθήσει τὸ παράπαν ἀλλ' ἐν ἐκείνῳ τῷ ὀνόματι,
- 187.a.5 ὅτι ποτ' ἔχει ἡ ψυχὴ, ὅταν αὐτὴ καθ' αὐτὴν πραγματεύηται περὶ τὰ ὄντα.
 {ΘΕΑΙ.} Ἀλλὰ μὴν τοῦτό γε καλεῖται, ὦ Σώκρατες, ὡς ἐγῶμαι, δοξάζειν.

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Education

2004–2012 PhD-studies in philosophy, University of Tartu. The title of the doctoral dissertation: “Plato on Belief. *Theaetetus* 184B–187A”
2004 MA in Philosophy, University of Tartu
2001 BA in Philosophy (minor in Classical Philology), University of Tartu
1986–1997 Laagna Secondary School, Tallinn

Other pertinent information

- October 2010 to November 2010, Research at the University of Konstanz, Germany, supervisor Prof. Peter Stemmer
- March 2009 to July 2009, Research at the University of Konstanz, Germany, supervisor Prof. Peter Stemmer
- September 2008 to February 2009 Visiting Graduate Scholar at Cornell University, supervisor Prof. Gail Fine
- September 2006 to June 2007 Visiting Scholar at the University of Paris I (Pantheon-Sorbonne) and a visiting member of a research group on Ancient Philosophy at CNRS (*Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique*, UPR 76), supervisor Prof. Luc Brisson
- October 2003 to March 2004 exchange-student at the University of Freiburg, Germany

Research Interests

Greek Philosophy (Plato, Aristotle), epistemology

Academic Appointments

2009–2012 Research Fellow at University of Tartu
2006–2008 Adjunct Lecturer at University of Tartu
2006–2008 Adjunct Lecturer at the Estonian Academy of Arts
2004–2005 Adjunct Lecturer at the Estonian Institute for Humanities

(Latest) Courses taught

- *Introduction to the History of Philosophy* (University of Tartu)
- *Plato’s Theory of Forms* (University of Tartu)
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- *Plato’s Phaedrus* (University of Tartu)
- *Historical introduction to Philosophy* (University of Tartu)
- *Introduction to XXth Century Philosophy* (Academy of Arts, Tallinn)

Scientific Research

2008–2012 „Estonian Science Foundation Grant No. 8715 “Conceptions of the Soul and Immortality in the British Thought from 1640 to 1740”, researcher.

(Latest) Conferences attended

- “International Symposium Platonicum”, Keio University, Japan, August 2010
- “Keeling Colloquium on Self-Knowledge in Ancient Philosophy”, Kings College London, England, November 2009
- “Epistemology of Perceptual Judgment”, Brown University, USA, February 2009
- “Colloquium Conference: Metaphysics in the Aristotelian Tradition”, University of Western Ontario, Canada, November 2008
- “Platonic Epistemology and Metaphysics”, Cornell University, USA, October 2008

(Latest) Presentations

- “Plato on Rationality of Belief” (Poster Presentation), The First Canadian Colloquium for Ancient Philosophy, University of Alberta, Canada, May 3rd–May 5th, 2012
- “Commentary on Blake Hestir’s “The Foundations of Plato’s Late Semantic Theory””, The First Canadian Colloquium for Ancient Philosophy, University of Alberta, Canada, May 3rd–May 5th, 2012
- “Principle of Charity in the Study of History of Philosophy”, The VII Annual Conference of Estonian Philosophy „Pluralism of truth, knowledge, norms and values“, August 29th – September 1st, 2011, University of Tartu
- “Non-Conceptual Perceptual Content in Greek Philosophy”, Conference on the “Eschatology and Apocalypse. The Limits of Representation”, 13th of May, 2011, University of Tartu
- “Thought and its Relation to Ousia in Plato’s Theaetetus 185A–186E”, Research seminar on Ancient to Early Modern philosophy, February 8th, 2011, University of Helsinki, Finland
- “Plato’s Animals”, Conference on the “Archeologies of the Future”, March 19th, 2010, University of Tartu

Publications:

- “Plato on the Rationality of Belief” in *Trames. A Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2011, vol. 15, issue 4, 339–364
- “The Wax Tablet and False Belief in Plato’s “Theaetetus””, *Vikerkaar* 10–11, 2009 (in Estonian)
- “Walter Benjamin” in the almanach “The Main Currents of Thought in XXth Century philosophy”, 2008 (in Estonian)

Honors, Awards and Scholarships

2009 Herbert Quandt Scholarship from University of Konstanz

- 2008 Tuition Fellowship for Visiting Graduate Scholars from Cornell University
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Akadeemiline enesetäiendus

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- 2006–2007, külalisdoktorant ülikoolis Paris I (Pantheon-Sorbonne) ja külalisliige antiikfilosoofia uurimisgrupis CNRS-UPR 76 (*Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique*, UPR 76), juhendaja prof. Luc Brisson
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- *Sissejuhatus filosoofia ajalukku* (Tartu Ülikool)
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Teadustöö

2008–2012 Eesti Teadusfondi grant nr. 8715, “Conceptions of the Soul and Immortality in the British Thought from 1640 to 1740”, teadur.

Osalemisi konverentsidel

- “International Symposium Platonicum”, Keio University, Jaapan, august 2010
- “Keeling Colloquium on Self-Knowledge in Ancient Philosophy”, Kings College London, Inglismaa, november 2009
- “Epistemology of Perceptual Judgment”, Brown University, USA, veebruar 2009
- “Colloquium Conference: Metaphysics in the Aristotelian Tradition”, University of Western Ontario, Kanada, november 2008
- “Platonic Epistemology and Metaphysics”, Cornell University, USA, oktoober 2008

Ettekandeid

- “Plato on Rationality of Belief” (poster-ettekanne), konverentsil “The First Canadian Colloquium for Ancient Philosophy”, University of Alberta, Kanada, 3.–5. mai, 2012
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- “Filosoofia ajaloolased ja heauskusprintsip”, konverentsil “Eesti filosoofia VII aastakonverents “Tõe, teadmise, normide ja väärtuste paljus””, 29. aug – 1. sept 2011, Tartu Ülikool
- “Mitemõisteline tajusisu kreeka filosoofias”, ettekandepäeval “Eshatoloogia ja apokalüpsis. Representatsiooni piirid”, 13. mai 2011, Tartu Ülikool
- “Thought and its Relation to *Ousia* in Plato’s *Theaetetus* 185A–186E”, uurimisseminaris “Ancient to Early Modern philosophy”, 8. veebruar 2011, Helsinki Ülikool, Soome
- “Platoni elajad”, ettekandepäeval “Tuleviku arheoloogiad”, 19. märts 2010, Tartu Ülikool

Publikatsioonid:

- “Plato on the Rationality of Belief”. *Trames*, 2011, vol. 15 (4), lk 339–364.
- “Walter Benjamin”. Rmt: Annus, E. (toim) *20. sajandi mõttevoolud*. Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus, 2009, lk 569–598.
- “Vahatahvel ja eksitus *Theaitetos*”. *Vikerkaar*, 10–11/2009, lk 84–92.

Tunnustused ja stipendiumid

- 2009 Herbert Quandti stipendium Konstanzi Ülikoolilt
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3. **Endla Lõhkivi.** The sociology of scientific knowledge: a philosophical perspective. Tartu, 2002.
4. **Kadri Simm.** Benefit-sharing: an inquiry into justification. Tartu, 2005.
5. **Marek Volt.** The epistemic and logical role of definition in the evaluation of art. Tartu, 2006.
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