

What is It Like to Know Platonic Forms?: Knowing Meno, the Power of Dialogue, and the Cave and the Line

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There are some texts in Plato that suggest knowledge of Forms is for Plato a kind of experience comparable to direct acquaintance. Now, knowledge by acquaintance suggests (I) directness of experience implying that the observer is present; (II) simple character of experience that excludes a number of relationships being grasped at the same time. If it is taken in sense (I), knowledge of Forms can be legitimately called 'knowledge by acquaintance', but if in sense (II), no. Knowledge for Plato consists in the apprehension of a network of interrelated true propositions, which enquirers try to obtain through enduring quest for the target. The model of knowledge, displayed in the *Meno*, i.e. the case of knowing Meno, and that in the *Theaetetus*, i.e. the case of witnessing the crime, both support my interpretation.

It is also supported by the long process of climb to reach the Good in the *Republic*. Plato depicts such an enquiry through the Cave, with the Line as the ruler to judge stages of cognition different in respect of clearness and reality. When enquirers, including Socrates, Glaucon, Adeimantus and us readers, are seeing the Form of the Good on the one hand, through the Cave and the Sun, and Justice on the other, through the definition of justice obtained with the help of the model of just city, we are still watching their *eikones* (images) in water, although we are outside the cave (in the intelligible realm). The road ahead will be long. It is in this light that we should understand what it is like to know Platonic Forms.

1. Knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge consisting of interrelated propositions

Explaining the final stage of philosophical enquiries, it is often the case that Plato compares the act of acquiring knowledge to seeing its objects. Did Plato think of knowledge of Forms as some type of direct acquaintance?

There is some evidence to that effect but also some other to the contrary. For example, according to the *Republic*, it is necessary to learn geometry and related subjects in order to know Forms. However, what people usually try to do in learning geometry is to grasp how true propositions are related to each other, constructing some sort of network, just like Euclidean system. The agenda of learning mathematical studies in the *Republic* is introduced in the framework of the correct use of the hypothetical method, and this method also suggests the network-model of knowledge. How is knowledge attained, through something like direct acquaintance or through some more complex process?

What supports direct acquaintance model is as follows:

- (1) In the *Republic*, the supreme object of knowledge, the Form of the Good, is

described as something to be seen after arduous process of enquiry, just like the sun in the sensible world (515E–516B, 517B–C, 532A–E).

- (2) In the *Meno* knowledge of virtue is compared to knowledge of who Meno is, to the effect that it is only through knowing who Meno is that one can know whether he is beautiful, wealthy and noble (71B).
- (3) Also, in the *Meno*, when true opinion is introduced as a guide for success, people with knowledge are compared to those who have themselves traveled to Larisa, in contrast to those who have never been there. People who have actually traveled to Larisa can be regarded as directly acquainted with the road to Larisa (97A–B).
- (4) When Socrates draws a distinction between knowledge and true opinion, he refers to the jury who correctly judges without knowing. The jury cannot attain knowledge, because they lack direct experience of witnessing the incident (201B7–C2). Direct acquaintance is necessary to change true opinion into knowledge.

However, there is another factor, introduced in the *Theaetetus*, as a necessary condition to turn true opinion into knowledge (201A10–B4).¹ The shortage of time in the trial does not allow the jury to reach knowledge; it takes time to know what really happened in the crime. For that purpose, the jury will have to consider many factors. We can find such factors in that famous Hellenistic debate between Carneades and the Stoics concerning persuasive impressions. The jury have to take into consideration e.g. people involved, their features like colour, size, shape, motion, conversation, dress, foot-wear, and external circumstances like atmosphere, light, day, sky, earth, friends (Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Professors*, 7.177). The necessity of taking them into account suggests that knowledge is not a matter of direct experience. It can be attained if one succeeds in reconstructing what actually happened, making most of all the available pieces of evidence.

However, it should be noted here that in that Hellenistic debate it is after all impossible to break through the barrier of persuasive impressions, however minutely and exactly one may carry out consideration. To whatever level the persuasiveness of impressions may be raised, they are still apparently true impressions (Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Professors*, 7.173–175).² In fact after the jury brought in the verdict of death in the *Apology*, Socrates says merely that if he had been allowed many days to defend himself, the jury would have been *persuaded* (37A). He does not say that the jury would have been made to know. He limits the level of cognition attained by human consideration to that of being persuaded, i.e. opinion.

According to Greek view on human limitation in comparison with divine power, it is only gods who can know everything. They can know everything just because they can be present everywhere (Homer, *Iliad*, 2.485–6). Thus it may be in the last analysis only through direct experience comparable to eyewitness that one can attain knowledge. We human beings are unable to go beyond time and space that limit our capacity of cognition. We can obtain knowledge only when we are freed from the bond of our bodies, as Socrates claims in the *Phaedo*.

That having been said, there are two things to note. First, Socrates hopes in the *Phaedo* that he may be able to attain knowledge, just because he has been searching for truth through

his life, by means of the hypothetical method. Without such effort, just to get rid of the body would not help at all to reach the blessed state eagerly yearned after.

Second, personal experience of witnessing the crime may involve more than what direct acquaintance may suggest. Direct acquaintance implies either or both of the following two things.

- (I) Directness of experience implying that the observer is present.
- (II) Simple character of experience that excludes a number of relationships being grasped at the same time.

As far as we understand direct acquaintance simply in sense (I), there will be no problem. For when Plato draws attention to (1)–(4) above, he seems to imply at least (I). However, if we understand it in sense (II), we shall certainly miss Plato's intention. For as far as an eyewitness, who is mentioned in (4) as a model of person with knowledge, is concerned, an eyewitness of a crime usually seems to see so many things on the spot as to enable him to form his own interpretation of the incident. (3) Going to Larisa is also a complex experience that takes long time, during which the traveler passes many towns and cities and sees various pieces of scenery, all of which will serve him in the next journey as signposts of the way to take.

Even (2) the act of seeing Meno in person, which seems necessary for one to know who Meno is, involves many factors,³ even though Meno himself may have thought that it is such a simple matter of just having a glimpse of him. He may have thought that people who met him can instantly know that he is beautiful, wealthy and noble. But Socrates must have been of a different opinion. Consideration of Meno's state of mind must be necessary in order to know who he is. Socrates must have taken it that even in order to know whether Meno is a human being, it is necessary to be engaged in consideration. According to Socrates in the *Theaetetus* (174B3–6), a true philosopher asks what a human being is, and what is appropriate for her/him to do and to suffer. This means that in order to be able firmly to say that Meno is a human being, it is necessary to know what a human being is, and whether Meno is doing something appropriate for human beings to do. Just to have a glimpse of Meno's appearance is not enough. It is indeed necessary to examine closely his state of the soul, in order to decide whether he is a human or a wolf in human skin. This is why Socrates says in the *Meno* (76B4–C1):

Even someone who was blindfolded would know for sure from your engagement in dialogue that you are beautiful and still have lovers. ... Because you do nothing but giving orders in a discussion, as people do when they have their character spoiled, which comes from behaving like tyrants when they are young.

He says even someone who was blindfolded would know for sure that Meno is beautiful (*kalos*) and still has lovers. The reference to Meno's lovers allows us to understand that his real message is that Meno is not beautiful, being spoiled by his lovers and accustomed to behaving like tyrants.

Thus, even if knowing Meno can be described as a sort of direct acquaintance, it does not exclude that many aspects should be grasped in this acquaintance, contrary to (II) above. These aspects will never be apprehended just by having a glimpse of Meno. It has become possible

to know the truth about Meno only from Meno's actual engagement in dialogue. Socrates' insistence made Meno continue to engage in dialogue and helped to reveal the fact that he is not beautiful.⁴ Socrates says, 'Even someone who was blindfolded would know for sure ...'. However, ironically enough, the fact is that blindfolded people will be more easily able to discover the truth about Meno, because they are not deceived by his appearance.

According to the myth of the fate after death (*Gorgias*, 523–524), both the judges and those being judged used to be fully dressed long time ago in the trial deciding who lived a just life and who didn't. The judges then could not decide properly, having put their eyes and ears and their whole bodies up as screens in front of their souls. Therefore, Zeus made it a rule that when judges deliver their verdict, they themselves should be just their own souls, and those being judged also should be stripped naked of all the bodily things, becoming the souls themselves. Thus it is the case now that Rhadamanthus and Aeacus study the souls of the dead, and when they are perplexed, Minos comes to help them to render final judgement. Socrates' engagement in dialogue with Meno can be regarded as a process of stripping Meno naked of all his bodily vanities, and revealing his soul. In this process Socrates will also get his soul freed from his bodily bond, and purified. This can be called 'practice of death', as in the *Phaedo*. Just for this reason Socrates could make a correct judgement on Meno. However, Socrates is a mortal being, and Rhadamanthus, Aeacus and Minos too. They are not gods, although they are sons of Zeus. This is why there can be cases where they are perplexed.

2. Dialogue and approach towards the nature of interlocutors' souls and Forms

When Socrates made a correct judgement on Meno, he was directly acquainted with Meno in sense (I) above, getting rid of as many screens as possible on Meno's and Socrates' part. Besides, it was dialogue between them that made it possible for Socrates to get acquainted with Meno. We should understand the seeing of the Form of the Good in the *Republic* in this light. It is attainable only through long and painstaking process of enquiry by means of 'dialectic'. By the help of dialectic and by carrying out dialogue, an enquirer can get rid of screens, one by one, between her/him and her/his target. And at long last after enduring enquiry, she/he will be able to get directly acquainted with it, partly because there is no screen left that prevents face to face encounter. The removal of screens means on the part of an enquirer that she/he is refined into intelligence, and on the part of the target that it is refined into no other thing but itself, i.e. the Form.

Even in the case that the nature of some perceptible thing is sought after, some Form cannot help being involved as the target of enquiry. For instance, when enquiry concerns the question of whether Meno is beautiful or not, Socrates asks first whether the soul as well as the body of Meno is beautiful. But he also tries to know what it is to be beautiful, in order to reach a right judgement. When Socrates suggests at 76B4–C1 that Meno is not in fact beautiful (*kalos*), his understanding of Meno is of course deepened. However, it is also the case that the standard of beauty has been changed. At the first stage of the dialogue when Socrates pleased Meno by referring to his beauty (71B), the bodily beauty was the standard. But the emphasis has shifted to the beauty of the soul. The same kind of thing is taking place in the *Theaetetus*.

When Theaetetus, who was described as not beautiful at first (143E), came to be praised and described later as beautiful (185E), the standard of beauty has been certainly improved. Through this amendment both beauty and Theaetetus came to be more deeply understood, with the result that their close relationship is noticed.

3. What kind of process is dialectical enquiry?

In the *Republic* it is the power (*dunamis*) or knowledge (*epistêmê*) of carrying out dialogue (511B4, C5, 532D8, 533A8, D5), i.e. dialectic, that leads enquirers upwards towards the Form of the Good and enables them to see it. The essence of this power certainly lies in Socrates' own dialogue with his interlocutors. It will be legitimate to consider the dialectic in the *Republic* in the light of Socrates' dialogues in some such works of Plato as the *Meno*, the *Phaedo*, the *Republic* and the *Theaetetus*. In these dialogues except the *Theaetetus*, Socrates explains the method of hypothesis. Now, this method may be the same or different among them. We will consider this question as well, in due course.⁵

The enquiry by means of dialectic in the *Republic* occupies only part of a long series of cognitive stages. Those cognitive stages can be shown in Figure 1, the Line (509D–511E), and in Figure 2, the Cave (514A–521B, esp. 514A–516B).

The Line (Figure 1) has four stages.

- (1) *Eikasia* (conjecture through *eikones* (images)).
- (2) *Pistis* (belief).
- (3) *Dianoia* (thinking).
- (4) *Epistêmê* (knowledge 533E8) (or *noêsis* (understanding 511D8)).

Noêsis (understanding) is the name of (4) in 511D8. However, the area this name covers has been extended to (3) and (4) in 534A. *Noêsis* is here the cognition about *ousia* (being), in contrast with *doxa* (opinion) which covers (1) and (2). *Doxa* is the cognition about *genesis* (coming-to-be).

In the Cave (Figure 2), on the other hand, people are bound in stage 1, looking down at shadows cast on the wall in front of them by the fire above. In stage 2 they are forced to stand up, turn their heads, start walking and look towards the light; they try in pain to see things whose shadows they used to see before. Things passing in front of them are pointed out to them, and they are asked what these things are. However, they cannot give a correct reply. They do not know that the things in front of them are in fact nothing but artefacts (*skeuê* 514C1; *skeuaston* 515C2), statues of people, animals made of stone and wood and all kinds of materials. In stage 3 they are dragged upwards. In stage 4 they try to see things outside the cave, but at first, being unable to do so, they see shadows (*skia*, 516A6) and images (*eidôlon*, 516A7) of people and other things in water. Then, in stage 5 they begin to see directly people and other things. In stage 6 they come to see the heavenly bodies and the heavens (the light of stars and the moon) by night. Finally in stage 7 they are able to see the sun and its light, by day.

Socrates presents the Line and the Cave after the Sun, in which the Form of the Good in

(<i>genesis</i>)	(<i>genesis</i>)	(<i>ousia</i>)	(<i>ousia</i>)
<i>eikasia</i>	<i>pistis</i>	<i>dianoia</i>	<i>epistēmê</i>
(<i>doxa</i>)	(<i>doxa</i>)	(<i>noêsis</i>)	(<i>noêsis</i>)
<i>eikones, skiai, phantasmata</i> in water etc.	animals, plants and artefacts etc.	perceptible things as <i>eikones</i> ; downwards from hypotheses; mathematics	the field the <i>logos</i> itself lays hold of by the power of dialogue; upwards from hypotheses; without any use of perceived things; through Forms to Forms and ending with Forms

Figure 1 The Line (509D–511E)

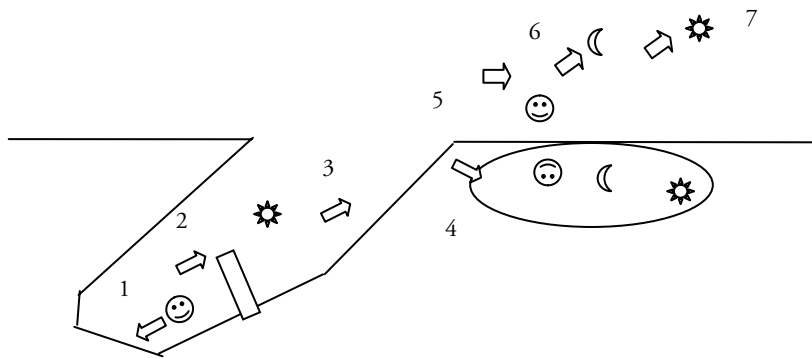


Figure 2 The Cave (514A–521B)

the intelligible realm is compared to the sun in this world. There is an important thing to note here: although the Sun and the Cave are called *eikôn*,⁶ the Line is never so called. Just after explaining the Sun, Socrates introduces the Line, further to explain the similarity between the sun and the Good (509C–D). However, there is no mention of the sun in the Line. It is only after explaining the Line, that is to say in the Cave, that he returns to the sun. This means that when Socrates promised to explain the similarity between the sun and the Good, he was already thinking of the Cave. In fact, the sun in the intelligible realm of the Cave is not just the sun as a star. Just as the sun in the Sun, it is something that bestows truth, reality and goodness. That is why the person who saw finally the sun in its location is said to be able to calculate (*sullogizoito* 516B9) that it causes the seasons and the years and governs all the things in the visible realm (516B–C). He must be calculating (*sullogistea* 517C1) that the Good is after all the cause of all right and beautiful things for all people/things. It gives birth, in the visible

realm, to the light and the sun, and in the intelligible realm it is itself sovereign, producing truth and intelligence (517C).

What, then, is the role of the Line, which is inserted just between the Sun and the Cave? It is true that Socrates refers to *eikôn* in the Line (509E1, 510B4, 8, E3, 511A6; also *apeikazein* 511A7), and that he calls the cognition corresponding to the lowest part ‘*eikasia*’ (511E2, 534A1, 5). However, this rather suggests that the Line is not an *eikôn*, but something like a ruler. This ruler serves to determine where to place four kinds of cognition (*eikasia*, *pistis*, *dianoia*, *epistêmê*) and their objects in the scale of clearness and reality. When this ruler is applied, even the kind of cognition that is usually judged to be clear may be judged to be merely *eikasia*. Even things that have been judged to be worthy of attention may come to be regarded merely as *eikôn*, *eidôlon*, *skia*, or *phantasma*.⁷ The Line is a sort of ruler of value judgement, and it is often the case that such rulers astonish people by forcing them to view the world in a completely different light. According to the Cave, Achilles in the Hades turns out to be a miserable person, who confesses that he prefers to work as a serf on the earth, serving any person whomsoever (516D5–6, Homer, *Odyssey* 11.489–491), even though he may be envied by most people. He appears in a new light, with the help of the measure of the Line.

The world-view exhibited in the Cave is the result of the application of this measure. We ordinary people appear in stage 1 as people who are looking at the shadows cast by the fire. The *eikones* in the Line are such things as shadows and reflections in water and a mirror, whereas stage 1 describes the state of ordinary people. Because of this discrepancy an objection may be raised against supposing that there is correspondence between *eikasia* in the Line and stage 1 in the Cave. It may be claimed that we, as ordinary people, don’t lead our lives just looking at shadows or reflections in water. However, this objection is missing the above-mentioned point that the Line is a ruler, not a representation of our life. With the help of this ruler we can recognize that our ordinary life is comparable to the kind of life led by looking at shadows and reflections in water.

In stage 2, enquirers are forced to turn their heads around, and if they are courageous enough to go upwards, the door to the intelligible realm is open, which means that they are standing at a crossroads. The Cave is an *eikôn* (cf. *apeikason*) of our education and lack of education (514A). If we refuse to turn the soul’s eye around, we lose the chance of learning, whereas if we do turn around, the chance of improving ourselves is open to us (518C–D). However, even after turning around there is a long way to go, which is the way to be taken, assisted by mathematical studies as well as the power of dialogue.

Then, how about stages 3–7? To what stages of education do they correspond? Now, stage 4 consists in consideration of shadows and images in water, and this indirectness may indicate the indirect character of mathematical studies, where people employ perceptible things as *eikones* (511A–B). However, this is unacceptable. First, in the enquiry of stage 4, it is human beings, animals, plants and the sun (516A, 532B) that is the target of consideration carried out by using shadows and images in water. If stage 4 corresponds to mathematical studies, the target whose images are reflected in water should be numbers, or geometrical figures. Second, if there is correspondence between mathematical studies and stage 4, it turns out that there is nothing left that corresponds to stage 3.

In fact, stage 3 is described as the process of being dragged up the steep and difficult path. Study of mathematical subjects in the *Republic* certainly constitutes such a steep and difficult path. It is true that enquiry is difficult to carry out both in stage 2, stage 3, and stages 4–7, but the kind of difficulty is different. In both stage 2 and stages 4–7, people cannot see things because of glare (*marmarygê* 515C9, 518A8; *augê* 516A2) and disturbances of eyes (518A2). They need to get accustomed (517A2, D7, 518A7), which means that difficulty here comes from a kind of culture shock. The difficulty in stage 3, on the other hand, seems to come from uncertainty about where they are dragged to. All the people want the good (505E), but they do not know where to find it. If they could see the light coming from outside into the cave, they would be certainly empowered for the journey, and would not be agonized by the dragging out (cf. 515E–516A). However, as it is, they are so much accustomed to shadows that they rather feel fear when they are dragged in the opposite direction, and even if they have decided to walk, the difficult path will certainly tire them. Isocrates did not regard the studies of astronomy and geometry as contributing to the good life, except in the sense that they give opportunities of practicing concentration and endurance (*Antidosis*, 265–266). For those who would be persuaded by Isocrates, the dragging out must be certainly painful.

In stage 4, enquirers who are now in the intelligible realm try to see things in water. This image may remind us of the enquiry in *logoi* in the *Phaedo* (99Dff.). There too, Socrates refers to the study of the sun (its eclipse) in water. However, we should not be deceived by this correspondence. For enquiry in *logoi* in the *Phaedo* can cover all the stages of higher enquiry that have to do with Forms, including the ultimate attainment to the Good itself. This is clear from the fact that one kind of enquiry in *logoi*, i.e. the one carried out by employing the method of hypothesis, is described as capable of going up and reaching something satisfactory (*Phaedo* 101D–E).⁸ Besides, as a matter of fact, enquiry in *logoi* should be taken to be carried out through Forms themselves, not through their images. For Socrates says concerning this enquiry in the *Phaedo* (100A1–3), ‘I don’t at all admit that one who studies the things that are in *logoi* is any more studying them in images than one who studies them in concrete’. He means here that studying in *logoi* involves nothing that corresponds to the distorted image of the sun reflected in water: although the eclipse-observer is forced to study the sun through its image in water, an enquirer who studies his objects in *logoi* studies them as directly and clearly as those who study in concrete, and what’s more, without any fear of being blinded by the employment of the senses.⁹

That having been said, this does not exclude the possibility of enquiry in *logoi* covering stage 4. Enquiry of something X in *logoi* can be carried out either by considering it directly (the kind of enquiry in stages 5–7), or by dealing with some other thing Y that is similar to it. We can regard the latter as belonging to enquiry in *logoi*, as long as *logoi* are media in which to observe X and perception is not the final arbiter of this enquiry. However, this enquiry is different from enquiry in stages 5–7 in that the nature of X is studied in its reflection in the *logoi* of Y, not of X itself. Nevertheless, this does not distort the enquiry. As long as an enquirer is aware of the *eikôn* status of the object directly observed in this enquiry, there will be no problem.

In fact, enquiry in the *Republic* is full of *eikones*, and without them it would not have

started. Things standing in *eikôn*/original relationship in the *Republic* are as follows:

- (i) Dogs/Guardians (375D5).
- (ii) Food and regimen/Music and song (404D–E (*apeikazein*)).
- (iii) Dyers' practice/Education of guardians (429D–430B (*apeikazein*)).
- (iv) Human being/City (464B (*apeikazein*)).
- (v) Ship/City; in order to explain the reason for the necessity of philosopher-king (488A–489A, 489C (*apeikazein*)).
- (vi) The sun/The Form of the Good (509Aff.).
- (vii) Perceptible things/Mathematical objects (510B–511A) [in mathematical studies, *dianoia*].
- (viii) The Cave/Our education and lack of education (514A (*apeikazein*), 515A, 517A, D).
- (ix) The argument in 506D–533A/The truth that will be revealed later (cf. *eikona* at 533A3).
- (x) Family/City (538C).
- (xi) Monster/Person who has a reputation for justice but is completely unjust (588B).

It is interesting that Socrates refers to *eikones* of letters reflected in water or in a mirror at 402B–C. He says there that the number of letters is limited but they appear in an unlimited number of things in an almost unlimited number of combinations, and until we become able to recognize them wherever they appear, we will not be regarded as having reached knowledge. Knowledge of letters here suggests knowledge of Forms. The same comparison¹⁰ appears when Socrates tries to embark on the demonstration that justice is more powerful than injustice, the former being good and the latter being bad (367Bff.). Socrates proposes to consider justice and injustice in the form in which they appear in something larger. To explain this procedure, he refers to the learning of letters where it is easier to read the same letters written in a larger scale on some larger surface (368C–D). Justice and injustice are written, just like letters, in a smaller scale in the soul of an individual and in a larger scale in a city. Therefore, in an attempt to understand the nature of justice, Socrates starts to consider what kind of thing the justice of a city is (368E–369A). These two texts suggest the following *eikôn*/original relationship as well.

- (xii) Just city/Just soul.
- (xiii) Just soul and just city/Justice.

There must be many cases among (i)–(xiii) that we can count as stage 4 type enquiry. Especially important for our interpretation of the Cave is *eikôn*/original relationship represented by (viii), (xii), (xiii). In (viii) the Cave is used as an *eikôn* to examine our education and lack of education. In (xii) the city is the *eikôn* of the soul to examine the justice of the soul, and in (xiii) just city and just soul are the *eikones* of Justice itself to examine the latter. Can we also count (vii) as stage 4 type enquiry? According to our interpretation, it rather belongs to stage 3 type enquiry, because it is the type of enquiry mathematicians engage in.

It is very often the case that when we try to find something new, we conduct our enquiry by comparing things, which stand apart. We try to find some similarities between them. When

there are two very similar cases, we examine first the easier case, and apply then what was found there to the more difficult case. This is the methodology of *paradeigma* in the *Statesman*. This methodology is introduced and explained by using the learning of letters as a *paradeigma* of 'the learning through *paradeigma*' (277Dff.). The consideration of just soul in a larger model, just city, which we can legitimately call a *paradeigma*, is such a consideration. It is also a type of consideration belonging to stage 4 type enquiry.

Does this mean that any enquiry carried out virtually by means of *paradeigma* belong to stage 4? If so, the number of enquiries that belong to stages 5–7 would be extremely reduced, for the method of *paradeigma* is such a common heuristic method.¹¹ Rather we should take it that the method of *paradeigma*, which is a very effective tool, serves the whole process of investigation that stretches from stage 4 to stage 7, whose part (stage 4) is constituted by the investigation of justice so far in the *Republic*.

There, when justice became the target of enquiry, Glaucon said that he wanted to be told what justice/injustice is, and what power (*dynamis*) each has just by itself, being present in the soul (358B). Adeimantus also said that he wanted to be told what effect justice/injustice has (*ti poioussa*) just by itself, on the person possessing it, justice being good and injustice being bad (367B, E). The concrete attempt to answer their queries was the enquiry in which just soul and just city were used as *eikones* of justice (stage 4). However, in 504A–E Socrates says that the explanation of justice, temperance, courage and wisdom so far falls short of complete accuracy, and guardians must go round by the longer road. The longer road (*makrotera periodos*) mentioned at 504B2 refers back to the very longer road (*makrotera kai pleiôn hodos*) mentioned in 435D, where Socrates said that it was not enough just to look at the soul's larger *eikôn*, the city. It is rather necessary to go round by the longer road, in order to achieve complete accuracy concerning the virtues of the soul. The enquiry by means of the soul's larger *eikôn*, the city, is supposed to belong to stage 4 enquiry, and this is certainly not the longer road. This means that the longer road is the enquiry after stage 5 onwards. Then, what is the difference between stage 4 enquiry and the enquiry of those stages, the difference between the shorter road and the longer road? Do we remain in stage 4, as long as we employ the just city as an *eikôn* of the just soul? What should we do in order to take the longer road?

In 504D Socrates says as follows.

Our guardian must go round by the longer road. ... Otherwise he will never reach the goal of the most important and appropriate subject of study [i.e. the good]. ... This goal is more important [than justice, temperance, courage and wisdom]. ... Also, with these virtues themselves, we should not be looking at a mere outline of them as we are doing now; we should not neglect the most perfect picture of them [justice, etc.] (504D2–8).

He has not yet taken the longer road in quest of justice, etc. However, without trying to take the longer road concerning these virtues he allows himself to be sidetracked from there and embarks on explaining the Good, by talking about something that is a child of the Good and very similar to it (506E). However, here again, he does not take the longer road. He still remains in stage 4, this time concerning the Good. He presents here the *eikôn* of the Good, the sun. Why does Socrates not try to go on the longer road? To help answer this question, let us

consider the type of enquiry carried out in the *Republic* as a whole.

4. The method of hypothesis and dialectic

The main part of enquiry Socrates himself carries out in the *Republic* belongs to stages 4–7. Socrates carries out this enquiry through dialogue, i.e. by using the power of dialogue (dialectic). Glaucon and Adeimantus are not made in the *Republic* to study mathematical studies. In this respect they are different from future guardians who need to be taught mathematics. According to the Line, mathematicians use concrete perceptible things as *eikones* of the subjects of enquiry. They also employ hypotheses, starting from hypotheses and regarding them as known and as plain to anyone (510B5–6, C3–D3, 511A3–6, C7–D1, 533B6–C5). For these two reasons mathematicians are only dreaming about what is (533B8–C1). Dialectical enquiry, on the other hand, does not use perceptible things. It also does away its hypotheses; it uses hypotheses not as first principles but truly as hypotheses (510B6–9, 511B3–C2, 533C7–D4).

Here then occurs a question to us. There are two criteria envisaged by the ruler of the Line:

- (A) The non-usage of perceptible *eikones*.
- (B) The abolishing of hypotheses.

Enquiry in stages 5–7 is supposed to satisfy both (A) and (B). Then, how about enquiry in stage 4, where *eikones* are watched in water?

We have counted above the following cases as stage 4 type enquiry.

- (viii) The Cave is the *eikôn* of our education and lack of education.
- (xii) The just city is the *eikôn* of the just soul.
- (xiii) The just city and the just soul are *eikones* of Justice itself.

In fact these *eikones* are not perceptible things, and thus (A) is satisfied. They are rather *eikones* depicted by Socrates (or Plato) with the help of *logoi*. He has employed *logoi* to depict those *eikones* in the souls of interlocutors and readers (cf. *Philebus*, 39B–40B). When people see these pictures, they don't use sense organs, whereas when mathematicians see perceptible *eikones* of e.g. triangle itself, they use their sense organs. In this respect, stage 4 enquiry differs from the enquiry of mathematical studies. How about (B), then?

One of the reasons why the enquiry concerning justice etc. in the *Republic* remains at the level of stage 4 is the fact that hypotheses are left as hypotheses without grounding them from upper principles. Socrates thus says in 437A6–7, 'Let us proceed, hypothesizing (*hypothenenoi*) that this is so'. He means here that he leaves aside the question of the validity of the proposition (the law of contradiction), even though the definitions of justice etc. are grounded on it. Socrates says also in 550C5–6, 'Let us rather talk of the city first, according to our hypothesis (*hypothesis*)'. This hypothesis is that moral qualities are clearer in individuals than in cities (cf. 368D–369A, 545B2–4). As long as they do not abolish them by means of dialectic, but leave them untouched as hypotheses, the cognitive state will remain at stage

4. However, it does not necessarily follow that stage 4 enquiry remains at the same level as mathematical studies. Experts in mathematical studies take their hypotheses to be known and plain to anyone. Socrates and his interlocutors, on the other hand, do not regard them as known or plain. They are conscious of the need to ground them, but because it takes long, they accept them for the moment, allowing for the possibility of them being inadmissible (437A). As long as they are conscious of the necessity of grounding them in the future, they are regarded as moving towards the goal.

It may sound strange that in 436E–437A Socrates admits some possibility of treating as a hypothesis even the law of contradiction, ‘It is not possible for the same thing, in the same part of it, with respect to the same thing, to be at the same time in two opposite states, or to be or do two opposite things’. However, this radical attitude is the principle of dialectic, for it tries to abolish hypotheses (533C8). It does not leave hypotheses unmovable (*akinêtous* 533C2), but tries to give an explanation of them (510C6–D3, 511B5–8, 533C1–3). In the Euclidean system, definitions, postulates and common notions are admitted as unmovable propositions. We can regard some of them as hypotheses, although Euclid does not explicitly call them hypotheses. For instance, Definition 1, ‘A point is that which has no part’, or Common Notion 1, ‘Things which are equal to the same thing are also equal to one another’, may have the status of hypotheses. These propositions look so plain that mathematicians may feel no need to ground them on upper propositions. However, the dialectic of the *Republic* will treat even these propositions as lacking perfect exactness. Then, it is natural for it to treat the law of contradiction as lacking necessary accuracy. It will try to give an account of its validity.

However, what kind of explanation can it give? Dialectic tries to explain hypotheses just by going up to the first principle, the Good. This means that the explanation will take the form, (a) ‘Because it is good for a point to be that which has no part’; (b) ‘Because it is good for things which are equal to the same thing to be also equal to one another’; (c) ‘Because it is good for the same thing, in the same part of it, with respect to the same thing, not to be at the same time in two opposite states, or to be or do two opposite things’. If I, a novice in mathematics, make these statements, it may sound silly. However, suppose a genius for mathematics makes this statement, it will then sound deep in meaning. His remark will be understood in the sense that for the whole system of mathematics to stand, it is good for a point to be that which has no part. As to (b) and (c), it will be not only for the sake of the whole system of mathematics but also of that of knowledge that (b) and (c) must be accepted. Socrates says in 437A6–9, ‘Let us proceed, hypothesizing that this is so [i.e. hypothesizing the validity of the law of contradiction], while agreeing that if this is not how things turn out to be, all our conclusions based on this hypothesis will have been dissolved (*lelymena*)’. The expression ‘dissolved’ reminds us of its antonym ‘binding’. Plato says in the *Meno* (98A) that the binding of true opinions through the calculation of causes turn them into knowledge, and in the *Phaedo* (99C5–6) that all things are bound and held together by the good and binding. If anybody could abolish the status of the law of contradiction as a hypothesis, it would be just because she/he would have succeeded in binding conclusions drawn from it and other true propositions in various fields together, comprehending the whole system of knowledge.

This claim of mine may sound strange, and an opposition may be raised:

The above mentioned proof of the law of contradiction consists in drawing conclusions from it, but isn't this virtually the same as using it as a hypothesis in order to draw conclusions?

However, there is a crucial difference. Mathematicians' interest lies in demonstrating a certain proposition, and for this purpose they use some common notion, this time the law of contradiction, whereas a dialectician's interest lies in the status of the common notion itself, and she/he draws conclusions from it for that purpose. Therefore, mathematicians' view is limited to a very small portion of realities, while the dialectician's view covers the whole universe. By calling into question the validity of the law of contradiction, dialecticians can widen their scope to the entire world.

Another proposition which Socrates and his interlocutors, Glaucon and Adeimantus, left untouched, in order to proceed forward in their enquiry, was the proposition that moral qualities are clearer in individuals than in cities (cf. 368D–369A, 545B2–4). They proceeded forward without proving that justice and injustice are working the same way in individuals and cities. This is why when they have reached the definitions of justice etc., Socrates says in 435C4–6 that once again they have come upon another simple little enquiry ('little' is of course an irony), as to whether the soul contains the same three elements as a city. He also says in 435C8–D3 that they shall not attain any precise answer by following the same kind of methods they are using; they need to take the longer and fuller road in order to reach such an answer. However, this did not lead them to embark on the longer road. With Glaucon's approval for proceeding the same way (435D4–9), they continued employing the same method, with the eventual result that they stumbled on the question of the validity of the law of contradiction. Even then, they skipped it not to spend hours (437A), and thus continuing to evade the longer road and take a shortcut, they finally arrived at the definitions of justice etc. in the soul (441C–442D), which then enabled them to obtain Glaucon's agreement that justice is good, and injustice bad (445A).

However, as we have seen, this way of enquiry without embarking on the longer road was nothing but stage 4 enquiry, which consists in seeing images of people and other things in water (516A). It may make it easier for enquirers to proceed to stage 5 enquiry, but there is still a long way to go. It must be for this reason that Socrates introduces the greatest things to learn in 503E_{ff}. This leads him to refer to the necessity of the longer road again, in quest for justice etc. (504B–E). It also leads to the introduction of the Form of the Good (505A). According to Socrates, no one will have a satisfactory knowledge of justice and beauty before he knows the good (506A). However, here again they did not embark on the longer road. When Glaucon asks Socrates to give an explanation of the Good, he says he will be satisfied if he is given just the kind of explanation that he received concerning justice, temperance and the other virtues (506D). Socrates shows some sign of uncertainty but tries anyway to explain the Good by comparing it to the sun (506D_{ff}). Thus, here again another enquiry belonging to stage 4 starts. In the previous stage 4 enquiry, it was justice and the other virtues that Socrates and his interlocutors tried to see in water, but this time it is the Good itself.

However, Socrates' uncertainty concerning his ability to give the same kind of explanation

as of justice etc. suggests that the situation is now different with the Good. In the previous search for justice, Socrates, Glaukon and Adeimantus themselves were engaging in enquiry. They were considering what justice is, standing, as it were, beside the pond and looking at its *eikôn* in water. In this quest for the Good too, they first try to see the Good in water, having the reflection of the sun displayed. However, when they are given the Line as the ruler to use, and get the Cave presented in front of them, it is no longer merely the Good itself that is reflected in the pond. They are now seeing in water the *eikôn* of their education and lack of education as well. They watch themselves reflected in this *eikôn*, and at one stage in this *eikôn* (stage 4), they observe that the sun, which is the *eikôn* of the Good, shining over the pond and over the people looking into the pond, among whom Socrates, Glaucon and Adeimantus are counted, together with future guardians.

Thus, although they have not yet embarked on the longer road themselves, they are taught in the Cave to embark on it, with the information of the route to take. They are taught even what kind of education they should receive, when they are dragged up the steep and difficult path.

Now, as was shown above, in order to proceed to stage 5 and further to stages 6 and 7, it is necessary to be able to see the same principles working in different fields of studies. In fact after showing what kind of mathematical education is needed for future guardians, Socrates says in 531C9–D4 as follows:

If the method of enquiry of all the subjects we have gone through (*dielêlythamen*) arrives at their association (*koinônia*) and kinship (*syngeneia*) with one another, and if the way they are related to one another is calculated (*sylogisthêi*), then the investigation of them does make some contribution to what we want, and the labour is not in vain, but otherwise it is vain.

When Socrates uses the expression ‘the subjects we have gone through (*dielêlythamen*)’, we can take it either (1) in the sense of ‘the subjects we have explained’, or (2) in the sense of ‘the subjects we ourselves have studied as learners’. Plato must have intended both. If Socrates and his friends are looking as outsiders at the *eikôn* of their own education in water, it is in sense (1). If Socrates and his friends are insiders, standing together with future guardians and looking into water, it is in sense (2).

Philosophers are ‘accustomed to envisage the whole earth’, not a tiny part of it (*Theaetetus* 175E2–5). Philosophers are in love with the whole reality and they will not willingly give up any part of it, small or large, more valuable or less valuable (*Republic* 485B5–7, cf. 474C–475C). Their love with the entire world makes them look for the meaning (goodness) of each and every proposition in the whole network of propositions having to do with all the entities. The necessary but difficult study of mathematical subjects referred to in the text above helps future guardians to arrive at the association and kinship of all the subjects, which must further lead them to look for the Good. Therefore, *pace* Isocrates (*Antidosis*, 265–266), studies of astronomy and geometry do make a substantial contribution to the good life.

As is clear from our journey so far, the experience of seeing the Form of the Good is never simple experience that excludes a number of relationships being grasped at the same

time. Not only mathematical studies but also all other studies are in association (*koinônia*) and kinship (*syngeneia*) with one another. Therefore, we must find their relationship by calculating (cf. *sylogisthêi*) how they are related with one another (531C–D). Then, at long last, we may finally be able to calculate (*sullogizoito* 516B9) that the Good causes the seasons and the years and governs all the things in the visible realm (516B–C), giving birth in the visible realm to the light and the sun, and also being itself sovereign in the intelligible realm, producing truth and intelligence (517C). If we could arrive at this stage, we would be able to give a teleological account of everything, from bird’s eye view perspective, to the effect that it is good for such and such to be the case.

We readers are also standing together with Socrates, Glaucon, Adeimantus and future guardians by the pond, trying to obtain a better understanding of the Good, through the Sun. We are also trying through the Cave to find out what kind of enquiry is to be carried out. We need most urgently to embark ourselves on the longer road, in order really to understand the Good and to find the course of enquiry waiting for us. The road ahead will be long. But we enquirers must be able to get there, if we bravely keep searching for what we do not know (*Meno* 81D, 86B–C).

Notes

- 1 Cf. M. F. Burnyeat, ‘Socrates and the Jury: Paradoxes in Plato’s Distinction between Knowledge and True Belief’, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Suppl., 54, 1980, 173–191.
- 2 Cf. A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, vol. 1, Cambridge, 1987, 458.
- 3 For detailed argument, cf. Y. Kanayama, ‘Meno’s Paradox, Recollection, the Method of Hypothesis, the Calculation of the Cause and the Road to Larisa: The Beginning of Epistemology in Ancient Greek Philosophy’ [Meno’s Paradox], *The Journal of Philosophical Studies (The Tetsugaku Kenkyu)* [In Japanese: 「メノンのパラドクス、想起、仮設法、根拠の推理とラリサへの道——古代ギリシアにおける本格的認識論の始まり——」 『哲学研究』] 580, 2005, 59–83.
- 4 Cf. Kanayama, ‘Meno’s Paradox’, 71.
- 5 Not in this paper.
- 6 As to the Sun at 509A9 and as to the Cave at 514A1 (*apeikazein*), 515A4, 517A8, D1.
- 7 *Eidolon* in 516A7, 520C4, 532B7, 532C2, 534C5, *skia* in 510A1, E2, 515A7, B9, C2, D1, 516A6, E8, 517D9, 532C1–3, *phantasma* in 510A1, 516B5, 532C1.
- 8 For detailed argument, cf. Y. Kanayama, ‘The Methodology of the Second Voyage and the Proof of the Soul’s Indestructibility in Plato’s *Phaedo*’ [‘The Second Voyage’], *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, XVIII, 2000, 41–100.
- 9 Cf. Kanayama, ‘The Second Voyage’, 47.
- 10 This is itself an *eikôn*, which is in the *Statesman* called ‘*paradeigma*’.
- 11 Cf. e.g. D. Gentner, ‘Structure-Mapping: A Theoretical Framework for Analogy’, *Cognitive Science*, 7, 1983, 155–170.