

From Wonder to the Wonderful: A Discussion of the Role of Wonder in the Philosophy of Plato

Shane Fair

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Department of Philosophy
Faculty of Arts
University of Ottawa

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Abstract

Keywords: wonder, aporia, contemplation, cross-examination, philosophy, pathos, origin (ἀρχή), noesis (νόησις), dianoia (διάνοια), subjective, objective.

This dissertation takes as its starting point the claim made by Plato in the *Theaetetus* that wonder is the origin of philosophy. The aim of the dissertation is to understand this claim and to propose a reading of Plato's dialogues which shows that this claim applies to at least two kinds of philosophical act, though in different ways. We accomplish this aim through a thorough examination of cross-examination and contemplation as distinct acts of philosophy and through an examination of where and how the notion of wonder appears and operates in these philosophical contexts. In the end, we see two distinct kinds of philosophical wonder (aporetic wonder and contemplative wonder), each corresponding to a distinct philosophical act, and each complying with Plato's claim about wonder in different but complimentary ways. Aporetic wonder arises within a subject as the result of cross-examination, and contemplative wonder arises when the philosopher is confronted by the wonderful objects of contemplation (i.e., the forms).

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General Introduction

μάλα γὰρ φιλοσόφου τοῦτο τὸ πάθος, τὸ θαυμάζειν: οὐ γὰρ ἄλλη ἀρχὴ φιλοσοφίας ἢ αὕτη.

For truly this is the pathos of the philosopher, to wonder; there is *no other principle/beginning* of philosophy than this (*Tht.* 155d2-4).

This claim which Plato makes in the *Theaetetus* is a truly remarkable claim. All at once, a relationship is established between the philosopher and philosophy, a relationship which is born from and mediated by wonder. The philosopher *qua* philosopher is characterised by their capacity to wonder.

Despite the power and remarkableness of this claim, Plato does not further elucidate its meaning. It is stated in a particular context and never really mentioned again. Moreover, history has done a rather poor job of examining this claim, as many scholars have pointed out.¹

In this dissertation, we will examine this claim in detail, seeking to understand the meaning and role of philosophical wonder in Plato's dialogues. Throughout the dissertation, we shall refer to it as the "wonder claim." We are proposing a reading of the dialogues which takes as its thesis that there are at least two distinct kinds of wonder that meet the criteria of this claim, each kind corresponding to a distinct philosophical act in the dialogues.

In order to show that this is the case, we will need to examine the two kinds of philosophical act and the role of wonder in these contexts. These two kinds of philosophical act that we will examine are cross-examination and contemplation such as they appear in Plato's dialogues. We maintain that to each of these acts corresponds a kind of philosophical wonder:

¹ Though there is very little of substance written on the topic of philosophical wonder in Plato (or in any other philosopher for that matter), virtually every author that writes on this topic prefaces their work with a similar statement, along the lines that wonder has been forgotten despite its important role.

aporetic wonder and contemplative wonder respectively. Another way of understanding the aim of this thesis is as an exploration of different applications of wonder in different contexts: contemplative wonder will arise in one context, under certain conditions, and be experienced in one way, and that this will be fundamentally different from the conditions and experience of aporetic wonder.

In some sense, this is a totally novel reading of Plato, as, historically, virtually no attention is paid to the philosophical role of wonder in the Platonic act of contemplation.

0.01. Contextualising the Issue

Certainly, to state that philosophy begins in wonder is not a foreign concept to most philosophers. Many have affirmed this to be the case throughout the history of philosophy. Indeed, it seems to be a truism of philosophy. Plato appears to be the first philosopher in western philosophy to have made this claim – at least based on the extant literature. Unfortunately, this claim seems to have taken on a nominal importance. Most understand that wonder plays an important role, but no one stops to ask why it is important or what role it actually plays – or what it means for wonder to occupy this central role in philosophy. In Plato’s dialogues alone, there are over 450 instances of the word θαῦμα (wonder) and its cognates, yet only a handful of authors have examined this topic and fewer still have looked beyond the wonder claim of the *Theaetetus*.

As stated, Plato himself offers no explanation of his claim. This may be that his meaning was obvious to both him and his audience, but that does not mean that it will be obvious to us.²

² Contrary to some scholars, it does not seem so easy to equate the wonder of Plato’s wonder claim with a kind of misty-eyed, childlike wonder. Nor is it reducible to something like curiosity. This will become abundantly clear as we proceed.

Despite this lack of explanation, we can still point out a few things in order to set the stage for the rest of the dissertation.

The immediate context of Plato's wonder claim is the *Theaetetus* dialogue – a dialogue which employs a specific kind of philosophical act, namely, the maieutic method. This method is, itself, a special form of cross-examination. So, one way of understanding the claim is through the lens of the maieutic method. This interpretation would strongly link wonder to the processes and outcomes of cross-examination, most prominently with perplexity. Certainly, there is an argument that wonder and perplexity are linked – especially in cross-examination. This seems to be the prevailing interpretation of wonder thanks, in no small part, to a similar claim about wonder made by Aristotle in his *Metaphysics*, yoking wonder to perplexity and ignorance.³ Indeed, it is Aristotle's version of the claim which seems to be most remembered and favoured historically.

Plato's claim, however, is not limited in this way. The claim is that wonder is the origin of *philosophy* and the pathos of the *philosopher*. He does not say that wonder is the origin of the maieutic method or the pathos of an interlocutor under examination. By our reading, Plato is making a generalizable claim about wonder and its relationship to philosophy. As we know from the dialogues, philosophy for Plato is an activity which can play out in a multitude of ways, one

³ See Aristotle (*Met.* 982b11 ff.), “For it is owing to their wonder that men both now begin and at the first began to philosophize; they wondered originally at the obvious difficulties, then advanced little by little and stated difficulties about the greater matters... And a man who is puzzled and wonders thinks himself ignorant ... therefore since they philosophized in order to escape from ignorance, evidently, they were pursuing science in order to know, and not for any utilitarian end.” We will return to this later in the dissertation. As Plato's claim is the express topic of the dissertation, it is not germane to our efforts to formally thematize Aristotle's claim. It is nevertheless important to be aware of the latter claim, as much of the scholarship on wonder treats both claims as more or less equivalent. We, however, do not endorse this equivalency.

of which happens to be maieutic cross-examination. Moreover, the word “θαῦμα” appears in dialogues which do not deal with cross-examination.

This is where our thesis has room to grow. By applying the claim more broadly, we are encouraged to examine other philosophical contexts. As the *Theaetetus* has as its nominal aim the definition of knowledge, a natural choice would be to examine a philosophical act which is closely related to true knowledge. For this reason, we chose to examine wonder’s role in the contemplation of the forms. As we will see as we progress, contemplation is, moreover, an act which is fundamentally different from cross-examination. It is interesting, then, to examine whether these differences translate to differences in its corresponding kind of philosophical wonder.

0.02. Vocabulary and Typology

In order to facilitate discussions, it is best to lay out some preliminary vocabulary which will be integral to the dissertation. Most of this vocabulary comes from the wonder claim itself or is otherwise related to it in some way. These terms will be further discussed in later chapters, but a cursory overview will help avoid questions as we trundle along initially.

The first term is “πάθος” (*pathos*). Normally, this term is translated as “emotion;” however, this translation is misleading in the current context. We will shy away from the translation of “emotion” as this can carry with it an immanently (and problematically) passive connotation.⁴ The wonder passage, by contrast, has both a passive phase and an active one. Not only is wonder felt (passive aspect), it also pushes one to act (active aspect). Specifically, it

⁴ We want to avoid any possible confusion that could arise as a result of thinking of emotions as “feelings.” Moreover, translating *pathos* as “emotion” could also result in trying to understand the wonder claim in terms of modern emotional theory, whose methods and categories are likely to be rather foreign to ancient Greek philosophy.

pushes one to act philosophically. In this sense, we suggest the translation of “affect,” which more commonly carries this double aspect.

The second term is “ἀρχή” (*arche*), which is a tricky word. It is translated variously as “origin,” “principle,” “source,” or “cause.” For our initial purposes, we will be using it in the sense of “origin,” which is suitably simple to meet our explanatory needs. Essentially, what we are aiming for is a sense of “a point from which something is produced or comes to be” or “that which results in some thing or state.” In this way, the wonder claim would mean that wonder is the ἀρχή of philosophy in that it results in further philosophical activity.

Third, we have the term “ἀπορία” (*aporia*). In general, this term simply means “impasse,” “difficulty,” or “perplexity.” Though in Greek the term applies quite broadly to a number of situations in daily life, its philosophical use in Plato’s dialogues tends to correspond to difficulties or perplexities which result from logical contradictions. In many of the dialogues, these contradictions and perplexities come from the examination of one’s own beliefs and hypotheses. This term will get a rather extensive treatment in Part I, as it is one of the principal outcomes of cross-examination. Within this philosophical act, we will see that it also has some important relation to θαῦμα.

Throughout the dissertation, we will be using philosophical terminology which may be considered anachronistic when applied to Plato’s dialogues. Though there are authors that try to avoid such anachronisms, it is often at the expense of ease of reading. We have elected to use certain terms to facilitate our efforts somewhat. The chief example here is the use of “subject”/“subjectivity” and “object”/“objectivity”. Though these concepts are not necessarily known in Attic Greek, Plato nevertheless makes these same distinctions performatively. In fact,

the subjective-objective distinction plays an important role in distinguishing between aporetic and contemplative wonder.

Finally, in terms of a “typology,” throughout the dissertation we will be referring to two kinds of wonder: aporetic wonder and contemplative wonder. The former refers simply to the kind of wonder which accompanies cross-examination; the latter refers to the kind of wonder which accompanies contemplation. Though we maintain their distinctness throughout the dissertation in virtue of their sources, temporal aspects, phenomenological experience, etc., as we advance throughout the dissertation, it will become clear that they are not totally unrelated. In many important ways, they are complimentary, just as the acts that they accompany are in some way complimentary.

0.03. Methodological Considerations

Before addressing how the dissertation will proceed, we must first explain the way that we are reading Plato.

The first and most important point is that we are taking the claim about wonder seriously. Despite its lack of explanation, it is stated in a serious (i.e., non-ironic) way and in a serious context – namely, as Theaetetus is first realising the limitations of his beliefs. Socrates makes the claim in a way and at a time that makes sense to assert it. That is, the wonder claim is not simply some hyperbolic, poetic flourish. Plato assigns an important role to wonder in this dialogue: it is the pathos of the philosopher and the ἀρχή of philosophy. Therefore, come what may, we have certainty about the importance of wonder in Plato’s dialogues.

Because, as we shall see shortly, there is so little written on the topic of wonder in general, our dissertation will have a very exegetical character. In researching for this dissertation, we have needed to examine the dialogues carefully, paying attention to the Greek vocabulary

employed, and searching for patterns and relations between the various concepts which we have taken to be crucial for the thesis. This has had an impact on the scope of the dissertation as well, as we have had to limit the number of themes and associated vocabulary in our considerations. For example, the explicit theme of this dissertation is “wonder” and the Greek word used to express this in the wonder claim is “θαυμάζειν.” For this reason, we will be limiting our focus to this word and its cognates. There are other words in Greek which also translate as “wonder” (such as, θάμβειν and ἄγασθαι), but each have slightly different connotations. Importantly, these words are not to be found in the wonder claim and would hence seem to be unimportant for our aims – relatively speaking. Therefore, by limiting our scope, we avoid diluting our understanding of the philosophical wonder of Plato’s claim. We also avoid an overly speculative interpretation.

These first few points are rooted in a reading of Plato’s critique of writing in the *Phaedrus* (274c5 ff.) and the *Letters* (VII, 344c1 ff.). Without entering into the details of this critique, the main point that Plato makes is that one should not write down one’s best thoughts, as the written word cannot defend itself against critique in the absence of its author, the dynamism of dialectical thought dies once it has been fixed in place by being written down. Some take this critique as Plato distinguishing between public (exoteric) teachings and private (esoteric) teachings and that the dialogues, as exoteric teachings, do not contain Plato’s real thoughts – though some believe that he plants the seeds or makes allusion to them in the dialogues. We are avoiding this reading, preferring to interpret this critique to suggest that Plato wrote his dialogues in a deliberate way, choosing his words carefully, knowing that they could be misinterpreted. Moreover, Plato himself seems to avoid the pitfalls of his critique by writing dialogues which engage the reader in a protreptic, dialogical exercise, and rather than positing

his own ideas or doctrines, invites the reader to join the conversation or debate vicariously through the interlocutors.

We will also look to complete our understanding of wonder by looking at similar accounts in the literature that would have been readily available to both Plato and his audience. We will use the writings of Homer and the tragic poets to build up a cultural and linguistic picture and to fill in the blanks of our understanding of philosophical wonder as Plato employs it in the dialogues. This is, again, due to a lack of literature on the topic of wonder. We mentioned earlier that the reason that Plato does not explain his wonder claim could be that he expected his audience to understand it in some relatively obvious way, but that this would not guarantee that it would be obvious to us. By looking at contemporary, culturally important, and readily available texts, we may be able to construct a “hermeneutic window” through which to contextualise the claim to some degree.

Due to the exegetical nature of the dissertation, we must further clarify that, even though each dialogue can be read, studied, and understood as a self-contained, discrete whole, there is nevertheless a kind of continuity between the dialogues. There are, as it were, themes, similarities, echoes of philosophical ideas and methodologies, arguments, etc. which run throughout the various dialogues. Indeed, one such echo is the topic of the first part of the dissertation, namely, the use of cross-examination in different dialogues and, importantly the different outcomes of these examinations – both epistemic and affective. In other words, we will be focused more on that which ties the dialogues together in a continuous way rather than an episodic way. For this reason, we will also not be terribly concerned with the division of the dialogues into early, middle, and late periods.

Finally, the division of the dissertation into two main parts, each dealing with different kinds of philosophical act, translates to a consideration of two different groups of dialogues. Our first part is focused on cross-examination and hence deals with the more “elenchic” or aporia-based dialogues. Obviously, we start with the *Theaetetus*, as that is where the wonder claim is made, but we will also examine other aporetic dialogues such as the *Meno*, the *Gorgias* and others. These dialogues have as their aim the provision of a definition and play out as an examination of this definition. The second part of the dissertation is focused on contemplation of the forms and therefore examines dialogues which discuss the forms, such as the *Republic*, *Symposium*, *Phaedo*, *Phaedrus*, *Timaeus*, and *Parmenides*. This does not mean that there are not elements of both philosophical acts in both groups of dialogues. Our focus, nevertheless, will be to examine them according to these groups.

As for the dissertation itself, as we said, our argument is broken down into two main parts, according to the specific act at play. Both of these parts will have slightly different approaches. In some sense, the first part is “easier,” as the broad historical approach to the question of wonder has been to treat Plato’s claim as essentially identical to Aristotle’s claim – that is, that both claims are about wonder as an emotive extension of ignorance or aporia. There is more scholarly work written on this interpretation than there is on the contemplative aspects and role of wonder. For this reason, the second part will be much more concerned with exegetical analysis, relying predominantly on a careful reading of the dialogues.

Our first chapter examines the immediate context of the wonder claim, namely, the *Theaetetus* and the maieutic method employed therein as a special instance of cross-examination. This chapter is an examination of the conditions which lead to Theaetetus’ wondering response, which in turn leads to Socrates making the claim about wonder. This chapter breaks down further

into an examination of what the maieutic method is in itself, how it relates to aporia, and how aporia relates to wonder.

Our first chapter ends with a picture of the maieutic method resulting in wonder and having some meaningful relationship with aporia – hence “aporetic wonder.” Our second chapter looks at the question of whether this aporia-wonder relationship is true of any cross-examination resulting in aporia. We therefore look at cross-examination more broadly through a discussion of the elenchus. Here we find that *not* all aporia results in wonder. Indeed, despite the logical possibility of wonder arising from elenchic cross-examination, wonder is somewhat of a rarity in elenchic dialogues. The remainder of the second chapter looks at why this is the case, comparing the logical and argumentative structures of both elenchus and maieutic methods as well as other conditions which seem to play some non-negligible role in producing a wonder outcome. This is not to say that wonder cannot arise in both methods, it simply seems that the maieutic method is structured (and practiced) in a way that it results in wonder more reliably.

Given the prevalent historical interpretation which links wonder to perplexity and ignorance, this first part would be perfectly unobjectionable as it is; however, we contend that to leave the discussion with just its aporetic component would be a reduction of the richness of Plato’s conception and use of wonder in the dialogues. Indeed, it would be to fall into the same pitfall as other authors who only see wonder as some extension of aporia – which we will have seen in chapter 2 to be a limited interpretation, as not all instances of aporia result in wonder. There is another kind of wonder which has nothing to do with cross-examination or aporia. This second kind of wonder is contemplative wonder and is the subject of the second part of the dissertation.

Whereas the first part of the thesis focusses more on the structure of the philosophical act and where and how wonder arises within this structure, the second part of the dissertation is more focused on first distinguishing contemplation from cross-examination and then looking at the role that wonder plays in this distinct context. Our exegetical toolkit is even more important here, as there is far less secondary literature with a focus on the topic of contemplative wonder, and we are in some sense “breaking new ground,” offering a new reading of the dialogues not shared by many.

The third chapter goes to great lengths to make the distinction between the two philosophical acts, relying on the repeated imagery of sight and light in the dialogues, comparing contemplation to the cultural practice of *theoria*, and defining the differences between intuition and discursive thought. This means a detailed examination and careful reading of our contemplation dialogues, with a focus on the characteristics of the so-called “vision” of the forms itself.

Having thus distinguished the two philosophical acts, the fourth chapter is spent looking at the wonder language used in these contemplative dialogues. Here there are a number of important philological and literary considerations which impact our understanding of contemplative wonder. We see, for example, the etymological and historical association between θαῦμα (wonder) and sight. This is fortuitous, as much of the third chapter will have been spent drawing a similar comparison between contemplation (θέασθαι) and sight. This etymological, literary, and historical link also shows that there is a totally different and equally valuable use of the term θαῦμα which is readily distinguishable from its dialogical, perplexity-laden use seen in Part I. In other words, we have a cultural, historical reason to posit our second, contemplative kind of philosophical wonder.

The remainder of the fourth chapter will be spent reinforcing as much as possible the relationship between the forms and wonder. This is facilitated by the *Symposium* which outright states that the form of Beauty is wonderful (θαυμαστόν). The chapter ends by examining whether this new kind of philosophical wonder still responds to the wonder claim of the *Theaetetus*, whether it still meets the criteria of both *pathos* and ἀρχή.

We will leave this cursory outline here for the moment and turn our attention to one of the greater challenges of the dissertation.

0.04. Previous Work in the Field

We have already alluded to the lack of existing literature on the topic of the role of philosophical wonder in Plato. This statement bears some clarification. Certainly, there is a seemingly inexhaustible amount of literature on Plato's philosophy: Plato and metaphor, Plato and elenchus, Plato and epistemology, Plato and the forms, Plato and the emotions, etc. ... In this sense, we are not starting from scratch. However, whereas there is a robust, established body of literature on these topics, sources on Plato and wonder are virtually non-existent. Italian and German scholarship do a bit better than English scholarship – though the amount of English scholarship seems to be growing. Perhaps surprisingly, even commentaries on the *Theaetetus* tend to skip over the wonder claim when explaining their interpretation of the dialogue. In these commentaries, where the wonder claim is mentioned, it is generally in a few hurried lines, tying it to the genealogical account of Thaumias and Iris which immediately follows.⁵ Even here, however, the wonder claim is waived away as some kind of literary flourish and vague mythological analogue to philosophy. Indeed, one could argue that some of these accounts are

⁵ Benardete (1986); Chappell (2005).

simplifications of the application of the mythology to the philosophical situation that they are meant to elucidate. There remains no systematic attempt to understand the claim.

Where literature on wonder does exist, there is no one established “tradition.” Indeed, as with most topics of study in Plato, there are some points of agreement, but many more divergent opinions about wonder and its role. Again, we are speaking about a very small number of texts.

This issue is not exclusive to Plato, there seems to be a blind spot throughout the history of philosophy when it comes to explanations of wonder’s role and purpose in philosophy outside of a sort of perfunctory nod of acknowledgement that it is important – like a courtesy wave at one’s elderly neighbour while walking to work, all the while speeding up lest one be forced into a conversation about the weather...

In addition to the scholarship on Plato, there is also a non-negligible amount of literature on emotional theory. Where possible, we have tried to limit the literature to authors which treat of the emotions and psychology through the lens of ancient and archaic Greek.⁶ There are nevertheless some more modern (and perennial) sources on emotional theory which are helpful to understand the “timeline” of emotional and affective processes, which are hard to ignore.⁷ Here too, however, we have a curious lack of consideration for the affect of wonder. Occasionally, it will be grouped into the same category as surprise, but without any clear sense of its importance or primacy. Indeed, it is totally absent from modern theories of “core

⁶ Aristotle, *Ars Rh.*, Book 2; Sullivan (1995); Miller (1999); Nussbaum (2001); Konstan (2006 (1&2)); Macé (2006). Konstan and Nussbaum both espouse views which link emotions to value judgements. Nussbaum frames this in terms of “eudaimonia” – that is, emotions as relating to personal fulfilment. She classifies wonder as a “non-eudaimonistic” emotion, in that it is not clear how the objects of wonder relate to personal fulfilment. We will see much later that this view is not without issue. Nussbaum’s view on wonder is accepted and echoed by other authors such as Fuller (2006) and Vasalou (2015).

⁷ Frijda (1987); Onians (1994); Wollheim (1999); Altieri (2003).

emotions,” even in the more capacious and generous accounts of core emotions that expand from four to six or eight.

Along these lines, Aristotle, who makes a similar claim about the philosophical import of wonder, is curiously silent about wonder in his thorough explanation of the emotions in Book 2 of the *Rhetoric*.

As stated, where the literature on wonder does exist, there are some difficulties and limitations as to how it can be used in the dissertation. These limitations, we can say, are on a spectrum ranging from “not very helpful” to “excellent, but not quite bold enough to go where we need to go.” The literature breaks down into a few categories.

One of the most difficult categories of literature to leverage for our purposes is the “historically homogenous” account of wonder. That is, the literature which treats all historical instances and uses of wonder, across philosophers and across the centuries, as essentially identical. It is easily verifiable that many philosophers posit the importance of wonder; however, it is equally easily verifiable that the account of wonder in, for example, Descartes is fundamentally different from the account of Aristotle, or Adam Smith, or Heidegger. This category of literature can be quite tricky, as often it will state something which is no doubt true of wonder as we are interpreting it; however, it may be problematic to use these conclusions to support our argument, as the way that the author arrives at their conclusion may not be totally congruent or compatible with our own argument. The primary example here is Vasalou (2015).⁸ This author has a number of important insights about wonder, a number of which have some homologue in our account. Yet, these insights often result from combining different or disparate historical accounts of wonder, rather than a rigorous examination of one author. Though such an

⁸ Though Hersch (1981) would also fall comfortably into this category.

approach certainly does build up a picture of wonder, it does little to help us understand what wonder may have meant *for Plato*. In this sense, it is important, where possible, to contextualise our use of these sources.

A special case of the homogenous category – and one which one might be forgiven for accepting on face value – is the literature which equates Plato’s claim with Aristotle’s claim. As we have already hinted, this is problematic since Aristotle does not have a mechanism for dealing with contemplative wonder. Even his account of “aporetic” wonder, which he associates with ignorance, sees it in a less than favourable light. The preferred state is one of certainty by means of causal knowledge, which results in the dissolution of wonder. Authors who equate the two claims are doing an injustice to Plato, as Plato does not see ignorance as a negative thing to be avoided, but also because Plato has a wholly other dimension to his use of wonder – contemplative wonder, which in many ways is a version of certainty, because it accompanies knowledge of the forms. Within this category, we have Matthews (1999), who prizes philosophical perplexity and, indeed, proposes to amend Plato’s claim to state that perplexity (aporia) is the ἀρχή of philosophy.

The second category of literature is the literature which treats wonder in an overly aesthetic or religious way. This literature is in some ways like the homogenous category in that it takes various accounts of wonder and seeks to understand them as having some relation to religious experience (awe, rapture, *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*) or some relation to a particularly striking aesthetic experience (the sublime, artistic pathos, greatness of natural beauty). Here we have accounts of wonder which are, on face value, useful for helping to explain contemplative wonder, because, as we will see, this kind of wonder is elicited by external means – namely, by the perception of the forms. In this literature there are important considerations:

again, we have the issue of how an author arrives at their conclusions and whether these arguments are compatible with Plato's view and our account of Plato's view; one must also be careful when applying categories like "religious" and "sense perception" to a Platonic interaction with the forms. Though contemplation is easily seen to be transformative, it is not so clear that this is coextensive with a religious experience. There are nevertheless interesting parallels to be drawn through the aesthetic lens through the analogies of sight and light used to explain the contemplative act.

Within this category, we have authors like Fuller (2006) and Fisher (1989). The former espouses a more "religious" approach, the latter a more aesthetic approach. The intrigue with Fuller is that, contrary to almost all of the literature about philosophical wonder, he takes wonder to be a predominantly contemplative emotion – though, again, in a predominantly (and perhaps problematically) religious way.⁹

The third category is broken down into two similar sub-categories. The first of these is the literature that speaks of both aporetic and contemplative wonder without forasmuch drawing a clear and formal distinction between the two kinds of wonder. This is intriguing in its own right, since, as we will see, the two admit a number of non-negligible differences, and yet there is a persistent tendency to speak of them somewhat interchangeably. Here too would be authors who speak of the differences between the two types of wonder, but don't quite highlight the nuances between how one arrives at both. An example of this would be Nightingale's account of philosophical *theoria* (2004), where she speaks about the wonder of the wanderer, and the

⁹ This is not to discount the potential value of a religious or pseudo-religious perspective. For example, Fuller is not committed to any one denomination. In fact, some of our argument in the second part of the dissertation will look at the divine aspect of the forms as important for the wondering response of contemplation. What is not clear is whether or not, despite the divine nature of the forms, this is strictly speaking a religious experience for Plato or if the language employed is a mere continuation of the metaphor of contemplation as *theoria* (see chapter 3).

wonder at the *theoric* spectacle, but does not always clearly distinguish them as two distinct philosophical moments and two distinct kinds of wonder.¹⁰

The second sub-category is one where both aporetic and contemplative wonder are clearly distinguished, but where one is explicitly favoured. Here the example would be Napolitano Valditara's account (2014) of *meraviglia interrogante* (interrogative wonder, i.e., aporetic wonder) which is more philosophically valuable than *meraviglia contemplante* (contemplative wonder). The former is considered more philosophical because it drives philosophy in a more visible way; whereas contemplative wonder seems to be more of a passive, aesthetic pathos. Certainly, the treatment of aporetic wonder will be useful; however, as one might guess, we cannot accept this interpretation of contemplative wonder.

The final category of literature on Plato's account of wonder is the Heideggerian and post-Heideggerian literature. Heidegger has a rather intriguing interpretation of the role and importance of philosophical wonder which he roots in Greek θαυμάζειν and which he ties to the claims of both Plato and Aristotle. Heidegger's interpretation (1994) is quite interesting, and probably does more justice to the Greek authors than one might initially think. He acknowledges different types of wonder and makes of wonder a "fundamental attunement" (*Grundstimmung*) of philosophical activity (in the same company as the better-known *Angst*). Despite this admission of multiple types of wonder, Heideggerian authors still tend to fall into the category of writers who only focus on the aporetic extension of wonder. Rubenstein (2008) and Llewelyn (1988) fit comfortably into this group. Despite the potentially fruitful avenues of inquiry afforded by

¹⁰ Nightingale's book is perhaps the best source in the English literature on the topic of philosophical wonder in Plato and Aristotle. In many ways, this book made it possible to write the second part of the dissertation (at least convincingly).

Heidegger's writing, we will be limiting our use and dependence on these writings, preferring to let the Greek texts speak and shine forth for themselves where possible.

In addition to the scholarship on Plato's dialogues, there are also the texts which Plato would have been familiar with, as well as the scholarship on these texts. We are speaking here of Tragic and Epic poetry which we mentioned earlier. These sources help us to complete the cultural and linguistic picture within which Plato is operating and writing. The way that these classical authors use wonder in their own respective works will help us to understand how Plato and his contemporaries may have understood and used the concept of θαυμάζειν. In addition to this classical literature, we have the scholarship on this literature. Two authors of note in this field are Mette (1960) and Prier (1989) who both have important insights on the notion of wonder in Attic and Archaic Greek. Indeed, Mette is considered *the* expert on the topic of the etymology of wonder and sight words, which play an important role in the second part of the dissertation.

Despite some of the limitations we have highlighted, much of this literature will find its uses in the dissertation. It is a function of qualifying our uses where the literature could be considered more problematic, understanding that an author may hit upon something true even if they arrive there by a different route than we do. The beauty of that truth is worth preserving wherever and whenever possible.

With that, we must turn now to the dissertation proper and begin to fill in what we have only outlined here.

Part I: Philosophy as Cross-Examination

1.01. Opening Remarks

μάλα γὰρ φιλοσόφου τοῦτο τὸ πάθος, τὸ θαυμάζειν: οὐ γὰρ ἄλλη ἀρχὴ φιλοσοφίας ἢ αὕτη.

For truly this is the pathos of the philosopher, to wonder. For there is no other ἀρχή of philosophy than this (*Tht.* 155d2-4).

We reiterate here the passage that we have taken as central to this dissertation. As we stated in the general introduction, we will be examining this claim in two different philosophical contexts in order to ascertain how this claim applies to these two contexts. The thesis that we are operating under states that there are two different kinds of wonder, one corresponding to each of these two types of philosophical action.

We turn our attention now to the first of these contexts, namely cross-examination, as a form of philosophical activity. In terms of the immediate applicability of the claim about philosophical wonder, we have a somewhat easier job ahead of us in linking wonder to the philosophical exercise of cross-examination. The claim about wonder occurs within a dialogue which uses a method of cross-examination, namely, the maieutic method employed in the *Theaetetus*. This we can call the immediate context of the wonder claim.

This first part of the dissertation will be broken up into two chapters, the first of which will examine the immediate context of the wonder claim, looking to answer some basic questions: how does wonder arise in the specific context of the maieutic method? What does the claim about wonder mean? What does it tell us about the nature of wonder? What is the relationship between wonder and *aporia* (perplexity or difficulty)?

This last question is of particular importance, as it naturally leads to the second chapter. The second chapter looks at another method of cross-examination, one which also has a strong relationship with *aporia* – the *elenchus*. Part of this exercise is to see whether the claim about

wonder can be generalized or expanded beyond its immediate context, from the maieutic method to broader practices of cross-examination.

This exercise will bring up the question of the limitations of philosophical wonder and will lead to a discussion concerning the proper conditions for philosophical wonder. This discussion will also help us better understand the relationship between aporia and wonder.

The second chapter ends with a return to the notion of wonder as the ἀρχή of philosophy and in what way we are meant to understand this part of the wonder claim in the context of cross-examination.

The conclusion of the first part will bring together all of the salient points raised and provide a picture of the role of philosophical wonder in cross-examination. This exercise will help build a mental picture of what we will be calling “aporetic wonder” or wonder arising from an aporetic situation, before moving on the second part of the dissertation which will deal with philosophy as contemplation.

Along these lines, it may feel that this first part does not deviate from what one might take to be the conventionally accepted understanding of philosophical wonder – that is, the view of wonder as having to do with ignorance and philosophy as the attempt escape from ignorance. In some ways this is true – though our treatment of the topic of aporetic wonder will be much more detailed and nuanced than much of the existing literature. Part of the aim of this first part of the dissertation is to *thoroughly* explore this characterisation of wonder, looking at which conditions result in wonder and which do not. We will find that not all situations relating to ignorance and aporia result in wonder. A secondary aim of this first part is to set up a model of philosophical wonder which is largely accepted against which to compare the second part and a second kind of philosophical wonder, to highlight that the two kinds of wonder are different.

We turn our attention now to some general characteristics of cross-examination to set the stage for the chapters to follow.

1.02. General Characteristics of Cross-Examination

Before we can dive into the meat of this investigation of wonder in the context of the philosophical practice of cross-examination, we must first look at the general characteristics of this practice. We are looking at the general characteristics in order to better understand how and where wonder falls within the practice of cross-examination, how wonder relates to the exercise of philosophical cross-examination, and to explore the conditions under which wonder arises within the interlocutors under examination. Finally, what can we say about the kind of wonder which arises in cross-examination, or, as we have termed it, “aporetic wonder?”

In the end, we are really looking at the claim predominantly through the lens of the maieutic method as it is the immediate context of the wonder passage. It seems clear that the claim would obtain in at least the context of the maieutic method, given that it is explicitly linked to that method. Once we have understood the claim in this context, we will broaden the scope to another form of cross-examination (the elenchus) in order to see whether the claim applies more broadly, and if so, how and why? And if not, how and why not?

In the most general terms, cross-examination is a method of question and answer. It is a dialogical exercise, that is, it plays out as a dialogue between at least two individuals. Within the context of Plato’s dialogues, the *Dramatis Personae* are generally Socrates, who poses the questions, and some interlocutor, who answers the questions. These interlocutors are as varied as the dialogues are themselves, ranging from self-professed experts, famous orators and sophists, to young men, still in the thick of their studies.

The examination begins with the examiner asking a question of his interlocutor. These questions are always requests for information from the interlocutor, and most often are requests for definitions.¹¹ This principle question, which guides the whole of the dialogue, is normally posed as τὶ ἐστὶ (*ti esti*... “What is ...?”). Once a response has been tendered, the remainder of the dialogue focuses on examining this response in light of other considerations. Does the definition fit? Is it adequate? Is it the only, or the best possible definition? The response is put to the test by means of logic, objections, counterexamples, observations, etc. And, in the end, the definition will either stand up to the scrutiny, or it will be found wanting or inconsistent with other, competing premises. If it falls in the latter case, being found wanting, then the expectation is that the interlocutor will abandon the initial, now-refuted response, definition, or theory.

We will develop these general characteristics more as we continue this first part of the dissertation, examining the specific shapes that cross-examination takes, and the different ways that it is practiced in the dialogues. Most importantly, however, we will be looking at these characteristics to see whether and how they relate to Plato’s claim about wonder and its role within and relationship to philosophy. If wonder truly is the pathos of the philosopher, and that there really is no other ἀρχή, then what is it about the philosophical context at play (cross-examination in this case) which results in wonder, and how does this wonder result in philosophical activity?

¹¹ Depending on the kind of question asked, we might broaden the term “definition” to include beliefs, theories, hypotheses, and other similar terms. In this sense, “definition” could be provided in the following formats: “x seems to be y” or “I believe x to be y,” in addition to the more traditional format “x is y.”

Chapter 1: Wonder and the Maieutic Method

1.1. *What is the Maieutic Method*

In this chapter we will be examining the wonder claim in its immediate context. The claim is made in a specific dialogue, namely, the *Theaetetus*. This dialogue makes use of a specific method of philosophical inquiry: the maieutic method. The method gets its name from the Greek word for “the art of the midwife,” μαιευτική τέχνη (*maieutike techne*). The image of the midwife is a metaphorical representation which likens cross-examination to giving birth. Because the wonder claim is fundamentally a claim about philosophy, and it appears within a dialogue that employs a special way of doing philosophy, by examining the philosophical method at play in the *Theaetetus*, we should be able to shed light on the nature of the claim about wonder and its role in philosophical inquiry.

What, then, is the maieutic method? We have already seen some general characteristics of cross-examination as it applies more broadly, but now we will approach the topic more rigorously. What does it mean to be spiritually pregnant? How does one recognize it? What are its characteristics? What is “Socratic” maieutics? What does it mean for Theaetetus to be pregnant? Most importantly, what does the maieutic method have to do with the notions of *aporia* and *thaumazein*?

In order to better understand the maieutic method we will first situate the important passage within the context of the *Theaetetus* dialogue. This includes the passage on the maieutic method, and the passage where the claim about the relationship between wonder and philosophy is made. We will then look at the metaphor of the midwife itself and how it breaks down for the purposes of cross-examination. Then we will look at the structure of the maieutic method as it plays out in the dialogue. This will link the maieutic method to wonder by way of the extremely

important concept of *aporia* (perplexity). Understanding the wonder claim means understanding how the philosophical method at play relates to *aporia*, and how the latter results in wonder.¹²

The maieutic method is a form of cross-examination. It is a philosophical method which proceeds by way of question and answer in order to ascertain the truth or falsehood of a given claim, definition, or hypothesis. It is a method of cross-examination which is, by all appearances, “other-regarding.” That is, it seeks the perfection of the interlocutor’s soul. It is a dialogical exercise which is primarily for the spiritual benefit of the interlocutor. If we examine the *Theaetetus* closely, we see that the maieutic method requires an attention to the interlocutor; the *μαῖα* (*maia*, or midwife) *sees* the pain that the interlocutor experiences when searching for an answer to the *τί ἐστί* question. This being-at-pains to give a response to the question is diagnosed by the *maia* as *spiritual* pregnancy. In other words, there is something within the examined which must get out. It is then up to the spiritual *maia* to bring the spiritual child, the burgeoning idea, to light.¹³

Spiritual maieutics is a dialectical exercise. It requires (at least) two individuals: an interlocutor and an examiner. The skill and the task of the *maia* is to help the interlocutor bring forth their child. The *τί ἐστί* question is reframed in a different way: though initially posed as “what is x?” it is eventually reframed along the lines of “it seems that *you*, the interlocutor, have

¹² As a preliminary disclaimer, the maieutic method is difficult to explain, not because it is itself particularly difficult to understand, but because its constitutive elements are quite closely related. We have tried to avoid undue repetition to the best of our abilities; however, some repetition remains.

¹³ It is important to note that the notion of spiritual pregnancy is also present within the context of contemplative forms of philosophy, as we will discuss in the second part of the dissertation. In both the *Theaetetus* and *Symposium* (the former a cross-examination dialogue, the latter a contemplative dialogue), we see that the interlocutor and/or lover both give birth to beautiful things (*Tht.* 150d7-8, *Sym.* 208e5 ff.). Other than giving birth in beauty, it is not clear how far the parallel extends.

a definition of x, but need help articulating *your* belief.” In the maieutic method, the beliefs are intrinsically linked to the interlocutor.¹⁴

1.1.1. Situating the Maieutic Passage and Other References in the *Theaetetus*’ Structure

In order to understand the maieutic method, let us first situate the maieutic passage within the overall structure of the *Theaetetus*. Doing so will help create perspective when we later turn our attention to philosophical wonder as an outcome of maieutic cross-examination, by establishing a timeline of the activities in the dialogue.

The *Theaetetus* can be broken down in a number of ways. It is most often divided according to the three definitions of “knowledge” offered and examined by the eponymous interlocutor. For our purposes, however, it is better to divide the dialogue in the following way:

- The two prologues (*Tht.* 142a1-145c6)
- Posing the question of knowledge (*Tht.* 145c7-146c3)
- Definition Zero (*Tht.* 146c4-151d6)
 - Maieutic Method (*Tht.* 148e7-151d6)
- First definition (*Tht.* 151d7-187a6)
 - Wonder passage (*Tht.* 155c8-d7)
- Second definition (*Tht.* 187a7-201c6)
- Third definition (*Tht.* 201c7-210d4)

This division attempts to break down the major points of the dialogue while also showcasing three particular passages which are important for the purposes of this dissertation, namely, the aim of the dialogue, the method of the dialogue, and the aim of this dissertation.

The aim of the dialogue is to define “knowledge.” It is important to note that the question is framed in terms of wisdom and excellence. Indeed, the terms “wisdom” and “knowledge” are equated by Theaetetus (145e3-5). This question of knowledge is what sets the rest of the dialogue in motion.

¹⁴ For a comparison, we could look at Callicles in the *Gorgias*, who tries to slip out of the strictures of the elenctic dialogical process, changing positions, beliefs – doing everything he can to avoid adopting a position.

Theaetetus' initial response to the question of knowledge, his definition zero, is a response by enumeration. We call this "definition zero," because it is dismissed almost immediately and receives no real philosophical treatment.¹⁵ What it does, however, is give Socrates an opening to explain the method he will be using in the dialogue: the maieutic method.

Once Socrates dismisses definition zero, he gives an example of a proper definition of the kind he is interested in. Theaetetus shows that he understands the demand by providing his own proper definition. He does not, however, feel able to provide such a definition of knowledge. This situation offers Socrates the opportunity to explain his method. We will discuss this method in detail throughout the next sections.

Once the maieutic method has been introduced and explained, the first "real" definition is set forth: Knowledge is perception (*Tht.* 151d7-e3). It is during the treatment of the first definition, shortly after the midwife passage, that Socrates makes the claim about wonder – that wonder is the *pathos* of the philosopher, and that there is no other ἀρχή of philosophy than wonder (*Tht.* 155d2-4).

It is important to emphasize that the claim that "wonder is the *pathos* of the philosopher and that there is no other ἀρχή of philosophy" occurs *after* the explanation of the philosophical method at work in the dialogue. This order of the dialogue suggests that there may be a relationship between wonder and philosophy as it is practiced at the (dramatic) time that the claim is made. That is, there may be a connection between wonder and the maieutic method. At

¹⁵ Interestingly, before Socrates introduces the maieutic method, the rigour that he will employ as midwife is utterly lacking. Unlike the examination of the first definition which explores the conditions of its truth, definition zero is disregarded – almost uncritically. In Burnyeat's commentary on the *Theaetetus* (1990, pp. 4-5), the author points out that this definition zero is not even entertained as a *potential* starting point for a discussion. A similar passage with a similar Socratic response can be found in the *Meno* when Meno also provides a list when first tasked with defining virtue (*Meno*, 71e1 ff.).

the very least, one is encouraged to pay attention to the method, its description, and its outcomes, reading the wonder passage through the lens of the maieutic method.

Throughout the remainder of the section on the first definition, Socrates returns to the image of the *maia*. After the first definition, however, this imagery disappears entirely until the very end of the dialogue. Socrates makes no allusion to pregnancy of the soul, or his maieutic art during the treatment of the second and third definitions. For this reason, most of our analysis will focus on the first definition and the text leading up to it.¹⁶

If therefore, the method at play in the *Theaetetus* dialogue is important for our understanding of wonder, then we will need to examine this method in greater detail. It is to this task that we now turn, looking first at the imagery used to expost the method, then breaking down this imagery in concrete terms.

1.1.2. The Metaphor Itself: Comparing Regular and Spiritual Midwifery

As indicated in the previous section, Socrates introduces his method of inquiry as analogous to the work of a midwife. The passage begins at *Tht.* 148e7 and first delineates points of symmetry between “regular” midwifery and “spiritual” midwifery (i.e., the maieutic method). Socrates then looks at the ways that his art is different from regular midwifery. Let us follow this same model of exposition and look at the points of symmetry and difference.

In general, “*maieutike*” and “*maieusis*” both mean “midwifery,” or “the art of the midwife.” As such it is a technical skill (τεχνή, *techne*), and therefore requires some level of

¹⁶ We will not speculate as to why Socrates fails to mention the maieutic method in the latter half of the dialogue. For the purposes of an examination of wonder, it is sufficient to examine the maieutic method where it shows up. An interesting question arises as to whether one should interpret the lack of explicit reference to the maieutic method as indicative of a lack of philosophical wonder present. Certainly, there are fewer references to wonder after the first definition; however, it would be impossible to draw any certain conclusions about the relationship between wonder vocabulary and the maieutic method based on the lack of their presence.

expertise – in the subject matter, in the tools, in the aims, and in the execution of this ministrations.¹⁷

The first point of symmetry between “regular” and “spiritual” midwifery is “barrenness.” No woman who can still produce children practices the art of midwifery. Similarly, no man who has ever produced spiritual children can ever practice the maieutic method. The common thread is that both midwives, regular and spiritual, no longer possess the ability to bring forth offspring of their own. There is however an extremely important difference in the role this barrenness plays.

The key difference is that no woman who has always been barren can ever practice the art of midwifery; she must have some lived experience with pregnancy in order to perform the tasks of the *maia*. As Socrates says, “human nature is too weak to acquire skill where it has no experience” (*Tht.* 149c1-2). By contrast, as spiritual midwife, Socrates is – and, by his own account, has always been – barren. Indeed, as though by a reversal of regular midwifery, he has been forbidden by god to procreate (*Tht.* 150c7-8) and has never brought forth spiritual children of his own. This point on barrenness is brought up at various times throughout the treatment of the first definition.

The converse of the midwife’s barrenness is an unwritten symmetry which applies to the pregnant individual, namely, fertility and, obviously, that they are pregnant – or at least show every appearance that they are.

¹⁷ We might compare the midwife imagery with the image of Socrates as a doctor in *Charmides* (155b1-3) who is interested in healing the eponymous character’s soul rather than his headache. Indeed, there are a number of parallels between the *Theaetetus* and the *Charmides* having to do with aporia experienced as pain, and Socrates’ art as being able to assuage these pains. The outcomes of both dialogues seem similar; however, they are in fact quite different, based on the interlocutors’ individual character, spiritual formation, and readiness to engage in philosophical discourse. Both dialogues seem to end in failure, but *Theaetetus* is improved, whereas *Charmides* is not. Cf. McCoy (2005 pp. 136-137) for an analysis of this doctor-imagery in the *Charmides*.

The second point of symmetry is the ability of the midwife (both spiritual and regular) to identify pregnancy in others. For both kinds of midwife, this task is one of recognizing the signs of pregnancy. For a regular midwife, this may be as simple as observing the physiological transformation of the pregnant woman.

Contrary to the regular midwife who should be able to detect pregnancy in an individual much sooner, the spiritual *maia* identifies when someone is pregnant only at the end, when the pregnant soul is already experiencing labour pains.¹⁸ Indeed, the “gestation period” or “foetal development” of the spiritual offspring is rather odd. The pregnant interlocutor is seen to be experiencing labour pains. These pains are the result of being faced with a dilemma and should not be taken lightly given that they are being compared with labour pains. As Socrates says, “Those who associate with me are subject to another similarity to women giving birth, they are in pain and filled with perplexities night and day, and much more than those women in childbirth” (*Tht.* 151a5-8).¹⁹ Unpleasantness, pain, difficulty: these are the notions which accompany the work of the spiritual midwife. In the case of the *Theaetetus*, the dilemma at hand is Theaetetus’ inability to provide a definition of knowledge of the sort Socrates requires.

There is an additional, subtle difference between regular and spiritual midwifery with the identification of the pregnancy: the spiritual midwife can also discern between true offspring and false offspring. For “true” and “false” offspring there is no homologue found in regular midwifery; in the latter there are only successful and unsuccessful pregnancies. Both successful and unsuccessful pregnancies are, however, “true,” in that both involve real children – offspring

¹⁸ Compare with *Charm.* 170e1-171c2. In this passage, Socrates claims that only a doctor will be able to distinguish a true doctor from a quack.

¹⁹ The Greek here is as follows: “πάσχουσι δὲ δὴ οἱ ἐμοὶ συγγιγνόμενοι καὶ τοῦτο ταῦτόν ταῖς τικτούσαις: ὠδίνουσι γὰρ καὶ ἀπορίας ἐμπίμπλονται νύκτας τε καὶ ἡμέρας πολὺ μᾶλλον ἢ 'κεῖναι.” There are a number of important words in this passage, first of all the verb “*paschein*” (suffer, undergo, emote), “*odinein*” (to experience the pain of childbirth), and, naturally, “*aporia*” (perplexity, difficulty).

that exist. In spiritual midwifery, a false spiritual offspring is one which gives every appearance of being real, yet under examination proves to be untenable. In the end, a false offspring could never be real, because, by definition, its existence is contradictory or implies a contradiction – hence the term employed: “wind-egg.” We will return to this in the next section.

The third point of symmetry has to do with the pains associated with childbirth. Both regular and spiritual midwives have the ability to bring about and alleviate the pains associated with their respective forms of pregnancy (*Tht.* 149c9-d2 and 151a8-b1 respectively). In order to manage these labour pains, both types of midwife make use of “drugs and incantations.” Both, as masters of their craft, are able to bring the offspring to term or promote a miscarriage. Strictly speaking, however, Socrates the midwife would very likely qualify this last point in something like the following way: the spiritual *maia* does not have as his aim the miscarriage of *true* offspring (per the above distinction); rather, he seeks to bring forth *all* spiritual offspring, in order to examine their truth or falsity. Only the false offspring are terminated.²⁰

This is perhaps the greatest difference between the spiritual and the regular midwife, precisely because, as we have seen, there is no homologue for true and false offspring. For this reason, Socrates counts these “drugs and incantations” as tools to fulfil the spiritual midwife’s greatest skill: the ability to test by any means the truth or falsehood of a spiritual offspring (*Tht.* 150b9-c3).

The fourth point of symmetry between the two midwives is that of matchmaking. The regular midwife sets up couples that will produce the best offspring; whereas, the spiritual midwife will pair individuals with mentors best suited to their capabilities and aptitudes. With

²⁰ It is more accurate to say that the false offspring are “self-terminating” in that they are self-refuting and that the spiritual midwife simply ensures that the interlocutor does not attempt to cling to the false child as though it were true (*Tht.* 151c4-5).

the latter case, the presupposition is that they do not have or are not capable of giving birth to *philosophical* offspring (*Tht.* 151b1-5). In the case where philosophical offspring are deemed impossible, or the ministrations of the spiritual midwife are deemed unneeded, the midwife will set about a coupling to give birth to a different kind of spiritual offspring.²¹

The final point of symmetry is the divine origin of both forms of midwifery. Regular midwives are servants of Artemis. Socrates, the spiritual midwife receives his vocation from “the god” (*Tht.* 150c7 ff.). What god referred to here is not explicit in the actual dialogue; however, if we look at other dialogues, we might infer that it is Apollo, which would further the symmetry, as Apollo is Artemis’ twin brother.

Additional points of difference between the two types of midwife have to do with the objects of examination: the regular midwife is concerned with women, specifically the *bodies* of women; the spiritual midwife, by contrast, is concerned with men, specifically the souls (*ψυχὰς*, *psychas*) of men (*Tht.* 150b7).

1.1.3. Explaining the Metaphor: What Do the Elements Represent?

There are multiple elements that need to be addressed in this metaphor: the midwife, the pregnant individual, labour pains, drugs and incantations, barrenness, and the offspring. Each of these highlights an important part of the kind of cross-examination at play in the *Theaetetus*, which, again, will lend itself to a greater understanding of philosophical wonder. If the structure of the *Theaetetus* is: exposition of the philosophical method, followed by a claim about the role of

²¹ Socrates speaks of sending his interlocutors off to others who are better positioned to guide them. Specific mention is made of the sophist Prodicus as a mentor (*Tht.* 151b5-6).

wonder in philosophy, we are already in a philosophical context to interpret the wonder claim. The method is explicated in a metaphorical way, however, and will need to be broken down.²²

By way of a provisional overview, the metaphor can be broken down in the following way: the midwife is Socrates, the examiner; the pregnant person is Theaetetus, the interlocutor; the labour pains are aporia, or conceptual difficulties; the offspring is the hypothesis or theory tendered in response to the *ti esti* question; the drugs and incantations are the examiner's questions, counter-examples, applications of logic, etc.; finally, barrenness is ignorance.

As an instance of cross-examination, it comes as no surprise that there would be two individuals taking part in the maieutic method: an examiner and an examined. The midwife/examiner tries to elicit some response from the pregnant interlocutor; however, in this iteration of cross-examination, it is not just the initial response that is of interest. The role of the spiritual midwife is to get the whole theory. The theory or hypothesis (the offspring of the interlocutor, per the metaphor) is not critically examined until the whole thesis has been explicated, and its internal logic has been established in a way that Theaetetus himself is satisfied with and agrees to. The formal structure of how the maieutic method brings forth a theory and examines it will be the subject of a later section.

Once the child has been brought forth, it is examined to see if it is a true child or a false imitation. This would be the examination of the logical relationship between the various premises or supporting theories which compose the offspring. Here we have hit a barrier in the metaphor as there are no corresponding realities in both regular maieutics and regular foetal

²² There is a comprehensive breakdown of various characteristics of the maieutic method listed in Sedley (2004, pp. 33-35). Sedley's list includes among the spiritual midwife's competences or character traits: religion, cognitive psychology, universality, definition, aporia, refutation, dialectic, expertise, virtue, and the soul. Though this list of qualities is not necessarily wrong, we will be limiting our list to the elements explicitly referenced in the text of the *Theaetetus* for reasons of scope.

development. As Socrates says, “it isn’t the habit of women to give birth sometimes to imitations and sometimes to genuine children, with the difference not easy to detect” (*Tht.* 150a9-b2).²³

One might ask why it would be difficult to detect the false nature of the offspring. In the maieutic method as it is performed in the *Theaetetus*, the truth or falsehood of the initial claim “knowledge is perception” is not immediately scrutinized; rather, Socrates looks at the conditions under which the claim could be considered true. For this reason, he brings up the Protagorean and Heraclitean theories to support the initial thesis. He argues for the plausibility of these two theories in order to fill in the gaps and support the theory – and indeed, they are plausible in the specified context. If any of the three components (taken individually) were obviously false, then there is little reason to believe anyone would espouse them in the first place, and there would hardly be any reason to entertain a dialogue. This “filling in” of the theory we might call the “foetal development” of the offspring.

Throughout this foetal development it is understood or perhaps presupposed that the one who is pregnant in the soul is not barren, but fertile. This means that if there is a pregnancy – or at the very least the appearance of one – then it is implied that some sowing has occurred, that the soul has been impregnated.²⁴ It isn’t entirely clear how to interpret this copulation or insemination, which is further complicated by the fact that the pregnant person is not, by all appearances, even aware of their pregnancy until confronted by the spiritual *maia*. Given the way the dialogue progresses, a plausible way to understand this is to look at the inseminators as that set of persons and cultural conditions responsible for the education – and more fundamentally,

²³ We really need to distinguish between a stillborn and a wind-egg here. Indeed, they are opposites, since a stillborn is substantive (it is real), but has no dynamism or life; whereas the wind-egg has every appearance of both dynamism and life, but in fact has no substance.

²⁴ Although it is heavily implied that a spiritual *maia* must be barren to be truly effective, it does not seem as though there is room for parthenogenesis on the part of the interlocutor.

the prejudices/presuppositions – of the interlocutor (the *endoxai*). This is especially likely the more rudimentary the concept, such as knowledge, which is in some sense presupposed in every cognitive act. This is corroborated further by one of the additional skills of the *maia*: that they are matchmakers (*Tht.* 149d5-8). They know which couplings will produce the best offspring and will be most beneficial for the interlocutor. If this is true, then it is not surprising that Theaetetus produces an offspring which looks very similar to the popular and readily available (at the time) teachings of Protagoras, Heraclitus, (and of his teacher Theodorus, as we shall see later). A child must share some commonality with, and some resemblance to its parents.²⁵

It is important to note here that it is the *interlocutor's* offspring that is being brought forth. Just as in a regular pregnancy, the mother cannot escape motherhood insofar as the child is issuing forth from her, so too the spiritually pregnant interlocutor cannot escape their parenthood. Theaetetus, as the parent from which the offspring is born, will have to bear the responsibility for his spiritual offspring – defending it or abandoning it – because it is his.²⁶

This brings us to the importance of the imagery of the midwife's barrenness. Throughout the exposition of the theory, the importance of the midwife's own barrenness becomes clear. The offspring belongs to the interlocutor. If the midwife ever gave birth to their own offspring, there would be a danger in him contributing to the paternity of his interlocutor's offspring. This is implied when Socrates refers to the emotional attachment that parents have for their children (*Tht.* 151c4-5). Someone attached to their own theories might wish to see those theories reflected

²⁵ Historically, Theaetetus became a very important and influential figure in mathematics. It is perhaps no accident that he was chosen for this dialogue, as he is disabused of those beliefs not related to (and which seemingly preclude the possibility of) arithmetic and geometry. Indeed, his coupling with Theodorus and his mathematical skill play an integral role in the undoing of the first definition.

²⁶ Although we have implied that paternity plays no small role in the development of a theory, it is nevertheless the mother alone who must bear responsibility. It bears mentioning, that Socrates does channel the spectre of Protagoras in aid of his portion of the offspring's paternity.

in the thoughts of their interlocutor. They would thereby lose their objectivity to assess the value, merits, and shortcomings of their interlocutor's theory. This further implies that the maieutic method is a personalized method. Because the *maia* does not contribute to the offspring, he must tailor his approach based on the responses of the interlocutor and must adjust his questions accordingly.

Perhaps the most intriguing thing about this metaphor is the way in which the midwife identifies the spiritual pregnancy of their interlocutor. As Socrates himself says,

But with those who associate with me it is different. At first some of them may give the impression of being ignorant and stupid; but, as time goes on and our association continues, all whom God permits are seen to make progress – a progress which is amazing (θαυμαστόν) both to other people and to themselves. And yet it is clear that this is not due to anything they have learned; it is that they discover within themselves a multitude of beautiful things, which they bring forth into the light (*Tht.* 150d2-8).

Remembering that ignorance and barrenness are equivalent terms within the metaphor, Socrates is saying here that many of his interlocutors at first glance appear to be barren – and therefore perhaps not worth engaging with philosophically. Nevertheless, some of these apparently barren interlocutors end up making wonderful progress (θαυμαστόν), finding “many and beautiful things” and giving birth to them.²⁷ Spiritual pregnancy is identified by the labour pains of the interlocutor, which means that the pregnancy is identified and the offspring is delivered at the same time. A similar situation would be difficult to imagine if not absurd for a regular pregnancy, given all of the physiological changes.

The less an interlocutor pretends to know about a given thing, the less likely they are to have prejudices which blind or distract them from whatever progress the spiritual *maia* and the

²⁷ This is our own translation of the last line of the quoted passage, which is slightly closer to the Greek: ἀλλ' αὐτοὶ παρ' αὐτῶν πολλὰ καὶ καλὰ εὐρόντες τε καὶ τεκόντες (*Tht.* 150d7-8)

god might be able to bring about in them. Indeed, Socrates seems to imply that those of a humbler disposition are better equipped to bear spiritual children.

Intriguingly, contemporary Greek medicine states the following about pregnancy in women:

You should not distrust women about their giving birth, for they always say the same thing and they say what they know; they are not to be persuaded by either fact or argument to believe anything contrary to what they know is going on inside their own bodies.²⁸

Here we have a curious reversal in spiritual pregnancy. Whereas the woman knows best what is happening in her body, the spiritually pregnant interlocutor has no idea – indeed, they are not even aware that they are pregnant, nor are they aware of the prejudices and theories which have impregnated them. Moreover, the spiritually pregnant must be persuaded by “fact and argument” of what is going on in their soul. To switch around some key vocabulary in the above quotation: they must come to *know* what they *believe* in their soul.

The labour pains in question, as mentioned earlier, correspond to aporia or aporetic situations. In other words, situations where the interlocutor finds himself at a conceptual or dialogical impasse. It is this kind of situation which initiates the section of the dialogue on the maieutic method:

THT: But I assure you, Socrates, I have often tried to think this out, when I have heard reports of the questions you ask. But I can never persuade myself that anything I say will really do; and I never hear anyone else state the matter in the way that you require. And yet, again, you know, I can't even stop worrying about it.

SOC: Yes; those are the pains of labour, dear Theaetetus. It is because you are not barren but pregnant (*Tht.* 148e1-8).²⁹

²⁸ Hippocrates, *Eight Months Child*, 4, 439-443.

²⁹ The Greek of Socrates' statement here is: “ὠδίνεις γάρ, ὦ φίλε Θεαίτητε, διὰ τὸ μὴ κενὸς ἀλλ' ἐγκύμων εἶναι.” This translates literally to, “You are experiencing the pain of labour, dear Theaetetus, not because you are empty, but because you are full.” Given the midwife imagery, translators substitute “barren” and “pregnant” for “empty” and “full” respectively.

Slightly further on in the dialogue, Socrates reiterates, drawing the notions still closer together when he says of his charges: “they suffer the pains of labour, and are filled day and night with distress” (*Tht.* 151a6-8). Here, “distress” is translating “*aporias*.” In this case, Theaetetus’ struggle to produce a definition of “knowledge” – his aporetic state – is likened to the pains and struggles of a woman in childbirth.

These labour pains are soothed or exacerbated at the discretion of the spiritual *maia* in the plying of his trade and tools, the drugs and incantations which we touched on earlier – that is, by bringing forth or offering other theories, considerations, counterexamples, and by employing logic, necessity, and consistency to determine the truth or falsehood of a given theory. It is by means of these tools that the spiritual *maia* first brings forth the theory or hypothesis and then tests its truth or falsehood.

Socrates identifies the maieutic method as the proper tool for bringing about and also assuaging the labour pains associated with aporetic situations. In the present dialogue, pain ($\acute{\omega}\delta\tilde{\iota}\nu\alpha$) is associated with *aporia*. Socrates’ admission, then, is that he is capable of bringing about *aporia* in his interlocutor – and capable of soothing the interlocutor’s aporetic pain.³⁰ It is important to dwell on this momentarily, as it ties the maieutic method to the kind of philosophical wonder associated with cross-examination. The maieutic method has as its aim the resolution of *aporia*, and the dissipation of the pain ($\acute{\omega}\delta\tilde{\iota}\nu\epsilon\tilde{\iota}\nu$) associated with them. The situation at work in the maieutics passage is not an *aporia* in the strong sense of a philosophical contradiction, but a “softer” version: difficulty, or being at a loss to express oneself. At this

³⁰ We will eventually see that wonder arises as an affective outcome of *aporia*. If the competencies of the *maia* include bringing about and dispelling the pain of *aporia*, then they also include the possibility of bringing about and dispelling wonder as well. An avid reader of the dialogues will no doubt question whether there is ever a satisfactory end to *aporia* within the dialogues which employ methods of cross-examination. As a general rule, one failed theory leads – in fact must lead – to a new theory. Renewed examination brings renewed *aporia*, and hence renewed opportunity for wonder.

point, we are not speaking of a mind-shattering paradox which shakes the foundations of one's fundamental beliefs about reality.³¹ Nevertheless, within the *Theaetetus*, aporia and the concomitant pain return multiple times as Theaetetus confronts the difficulties as they arise throughout the development and examination of his first definition. The maieutic method, then, serves as the way to bring oneself out of the labour pains, delivering oneself of the difficulty by means of the *τεχνη* (*technē*, skill) or *μητις* (*metis*, cunning devices) of the *maia*.

It is important to note that generating this pain is not the primary aim of the midwife; rather, it is to stir the interlocutor into (philosophical) action. Socrates' goal is not to bring about perplexity so as to intellectually paralyse his interlocutor (as is Meno's indictment, who likens Socrates to a stingray³²). We should rather think of this in a similar way to how Socrates describes himself in the *Apology*, as a gadfly (*Apol.* 30e5) which stings the city of Athens to pursue truth rather than its appearance.³³ This pain is not a pain which simply paralyses. It is meant to elicit a response of action – specifically *philosophical* action – on the part of the interlocutor. That is, in much the same way that the labour pains of regular pregnancy are productive of new life – indeed, the contractions essentially force or *coerce* the delivery of the offspring within – the spiritually pregnant individual must also work through their aporetic labour pains to deliver their offspring. Once the spiritually pregnant individual begins with his

³¹ Though the seed of such an experience is perhaps contained therein. Living one's life as though one knew what knowledge is until asked to define it and finding one is unable to do so certainly sets oneself up for an exciting dialogue at the very least, if not psychological devastation.

³² Cf. *Meno* 80a4-b2: "I consider that both in your appearance and in other respects you are extremely like the flat torpedo sea-fish (*βάρκη*); for it benumbs anyone who approaches and touches it, and something of the sort is what I find you have done to me now."

³³ Compare with *Sym.* 218a2-7, Socrates' venomous biting of the soul. In a way, we are working at cross purposes by conflating the metaphors of the *μαῖα*, *βάρκη*, and *μύωψ*. As we shall see in the next chapter, although all of these metaphors capture important aspects of the experience of aporia and the exercise of cross-examination writ large, they also correlate to different potential outcomes of aporia, and are therefore *not coextensive*.

labour pains, we ought to believe that paralysis is not an option – true or false, the child must come out!³⁴

It is important to reiterate that the maieutic practice is for the good of the interlocutor in both eventualities – both in the case of true children and in false children. Even on face value, the idea is to soothe the pains of the interlocutor, the pain of being unable to express their belief regarding a given question or request for information. If the interlocutor gives birth to a true theory, then the pain is assuaged in expressing it;³⁵ if, on the contrary, they give birth to a false theory, then the pain is relieved by unburdening themselves of the false belief. In the latter case, one is then liberated to explore other hypotheses to be examined in turn.

Importantly, the spiritual maia is interested in the soul (τὰς ψυχὰς ... ἐπισκοπεῖν), rather than the body (μὴ τὰ σώματα, *Tht.* 150b8-9). And not only this, but the *perfection* of the soul, instilling within the soul of the interlocutor the desire for virtue. Here we call virtue the respect for and pursuit of the truth as well as the Socratic “intellectual humility” (*cf. Tht.* 210c2-4) which makes one more amenable to dialogue and critical analysis, and less likely to take up strong (prejudiced) positions with respect to their knowledge of a given subject.

Socrates’ art is more noble and subtler than that of the regular midwife. He is able to distinguish vain appearances from true fruit. We see the effects of this clearly when Socrates

³⁴ Another way of looking at this is that the pains of *aporia*, like the pains of childbirth, do not go away by ignoring them or fleeing from them – only from addressing them. Being careful not to stretch the metaphor too far, if the contractions are ignored or otherwise fail to bring forth the child within; it will die *in utero*.

³⁵ It bears remarking that there are essentially no instances in Plato’s dialogues where Socrates’ interlocutor can be said to have produced the equivalent of a “true offspring,” though Socrates does state that there have been instances of successful births (*Tht.* 150d4-e1). This is predominantly because the *Theaetetus* is the only explicit reference to the maieutic method, and it is unclear the extent to which other methods of examination (such as *anamnesis*, *diairesis* and *sunagoge*) are compatible with this method. We will argue in the next chapter that the maieutic method is at the very least distinct from *elenchic* cross-examination – though the aims are identical, and the argumentative structure is similar.

does not allow the interlocutor to keep any of their false offspring (*Tht.* 151c4-5). By allowing the interlocutor to keep their false child, he would be contributing to the detriment of their spiritual perfection and growth. These false children, the inconsistent beliefs, occupy the mental space within the interlocutor, keeping him from pursuing the truth about the definition in question: they take up space that could nourish or produce a true offspring. This spiritual abortion of falsehoods is not easy, and Socrates admits that many are not able to see it through, but are seduced or enticed away from his care (*Tht.* 150e1-151a5).

Finally, we will turn our attention to the religious aspect of spiritual maieutics. Although it would appear to be simply one more metaphorical link between regular and spiritual midwifery, that spiritual maieutics is a god(s)-given practice (*Tht.* 149b9-10) seems to be more of a literal statement. Socrates receives the mandate to cross-examine others, to see who is pregnant in their soul and who is not (*Tht.* 150c7-d6). We can draw further evidence of a literal god-given mandate from the *Apology*. Socrates' difficulty to accept the Delphic Oracle's prophesy that he is the wisest man urges him to seek out so-called "wise" people and examine them – by all appearances to learn from them. However, many of these interventions end in refutation (e.g., *Apol.* 21b1 ff.).³⁶ Even though these examinations end in refutation, it is not clear that they are successful. In fact, one has the impression that they are not, as the interlocutors are described as being angry – which suggests resistance to letting go of their false beliefs. This affective response will be examined further in the next chapter.

The maieutic art is that of Artemis: though herself barren, she is able to bring forth fruit in others. Socrates likens himself to Artemis, since he too is barren of intellectual children, but is

³⁶ This reference is of great interest, as the language that Socrates employs mirrors that of the Delphic saying "*gnothi seauton*" (know thyself). Socrates in this passage states emphatically, "ἐγὼ γὰρ δὴ οὐτε μέγα οὐτε μικρὸν σύνοιδα ἑμαυτῷ σοφὸς ὄν" (I myself know about myself (*sunoida emauto*) that I am in no way wise in things either great or small, *Apol.* 21b4-6).

nevertheless able to bring children forth from others (*Tht.* 150c3-d6). Of course, this is different from regular midwives, who should have experienced childbirth. The experience allows them to anticipate and prevent any problems which may arise.³⁷ The opposite is the case for the spiritual *maia*, who must be both equipped with, and proficient in the employment of, the skills necessary to bring forth the spiritual offspring, without forasmuch having produced their own children. As we saw earlier, if they were to have their own children it would run the risk of biasing their judgement of the offspring they are bringing to light. In keeping with the metaphor, it would contribute to the paternity of the offspring if the *maia* contributed to the ideological or doxological makeup of the offspring. The barrenness of the spiritual *maia* ensures both that the offspring is purely that of the interlocutor, and that the examination of the offspring will be impartial. They are *a priori* incapable of interfering or unduly affecting the development of the foetus, because, outside of the “drugs and incantations” they use to help the interlocutor bring forth their own children, they have no ideological substance to distort the child in any way.³⁸

³⁷ There are a few things to note here: first, we can possibly interpret this association with Artemis as a callback to Socrates’ divine mandate from Apollo – who is both the god worshiped at Delphi and the brother of Artemis. In other words, not only does he have the mandate to examine others, he also possesses the ability to bring about the necessary feeling of perplexity, which facilitates this very examination. See Vlastos (1985, p. 29), “He [Socrates] can hardly bring himself to believe that his own understanding of the good life, chancy, patchy, provisional, perpetually self-questioning, endlessly perplexed as it is, should have any value at all in the eyes of the god who enjoys the unshaken heart of well-rounded truth – the perfect security, the serene completeness of Knowledge_C.” Within this article, “Knowledge_C” means “certain knowledge,” and is contrasted by “Knowledge_E” meaning “elenchically justifiable knowledge.” The two knowledges are not coextensive.

The second thing of note is that *if* a midwife’s success depends upon their experience, then we can look at the *Parmenides* dialogue, wherein Socrates, apparently himself spiritually pregnant, is also disabused of false children. Conversely, one might be led to believe that he is only capable of bringing forth stillborn ideas, as he has no experience in engendering his own ideas. This, however, would be ignoring Socrates’ admission that he has successfully brought about many “beautiful things” from some of his patients (*Tht.* 150d7-8). This, it would appear, is yet another difference between spiritual and regular midwives – that rather than an obstacle, barrenness is integral to the success of the deliveries.

³⁸ See *Tht.* 150c4-7, *Meno* 80c6-d1, *Apol.* 21b4-6.

The claim “not to have knowledge” is somewhat paradoxical as Socrates clearly knows how to practice the art. In Austin (1987, p. 23), the author uses the example of a cobbler who speaks with Socrates at length about excellence in cobblery, and then moving to excellence in general, only to find out

This god(s)-given nature is of particular importance, as, for Socrates, it is through him that *the god* is able to bring forth the offspring. In other words, since he is merely a conduit, Socrates is able to maintain his characteristic ignorance, and therefore objectivity. He does not directly influence the course of the discussion by means of any positive doctrines of his own.

This concludes the metaphorical considerations of the maieutic method. We will now look at how this method plays out as practiced in the *Theaetetus*. This is an important exercise in order to frame where and how wonder arises within the overall structure of the dialogue and within the performance of the maieutic method.

1.2. The Maieutic Method as Practiced in the Theaetetus

Much of what we will be addressing in this section has been alluded to in the previous sections. We will delve into greater detail here on the structure of the maieutic method, starting with the logical structure of the method as it is employed in the first definition. Rather than peeling away layers, we will be building up our picture of the maieutic method on this logical structure, attempting to consciously apply the lenses of wonder and aporia as the guiding thread throughout.

1.2.1. The Logical Structure of the Maieutic Method

The maieutic method looks at the conditions for the possibility of truth of a given hypothesis. In other words, what needs to be the case for a given definition to obtain. What are the supporting theories which must be true for a given definition to be true. This is somewhat different from the characteristic structure of elenctic cross-examination, which focuses more on

that neither of them can give an account of “excellence.” The moral of the story seems to be that being able to perform a technical art to a high degree of excellence does not presuppose knowledge of excellence. In Socrates’ case, this would apply to his maieutic art: being able to employ the art with excellence, being able to recognize truth or falsehood without necessarily possessing truth.

the primary definition and less on the peripheral beliefs. We will examine this difference in the next chapter, but for the moment, we will examine the generalized structure of the maieutic method as it plays out in the first definition of the *Theaetetus*.

There are four stages in the maieutic method. The first stage is the identification of the pregnancy, which corresponds to the statement of the theory, the response to the *ti esti* question. Second, there is the birthing: the spiritual offspring is brought forth into the light. This corresponds to the delineation of the conditions for the possibility of the truth of the theory. Third, there is the cross-examination of the offspring, where it is determined whether the truth conditions obtain, whether the premises are sound. The fourth, concluding stage is the decision whether or not the offspring can survive on its own. That is, whether the theory is true or false overall. Put in its most basic form, we see the following breakdown of the maieutic method as it unfolds in the first definition of the *Theaetetus*:

1.	P	Knowledge is perception (<i>Tht.</i> 151e1-3)
2.	$P \leftrightarrow (Q \wedge R)$	Knowledge is perception if and only if the theories of Protagoras and Heraclitus are true (<i>Tht.</i> 160d5-e2)
3.	$\sim Q \wedge \sim R$	The theories of Heraclitus and Protagoras are false ³⁹ (<i>Tht.</i> 181a4-183c3 and 184b3 ff. ⁴⁰)
4.	$\sim P$	Knowledge is not perception (<i>Tht.</i> 186e11-12)

³⁹ Logically, this formal structure does not preclude the possibility that Q and R could be proven true, which would be indicative of a true offspring. There is only hearsay evidence of this happening in the dialogues (e.g., *Tht.* 150d7-8)

⁴⁰ The main refutation of the theories of Heraclitus and Protagoras occurs during a discussion between Socrates and Theodorus at *Tht.* 181a4-183c3, hence Socrates seems to ignore his maieutic duty to Theaetetus. It is perhaps for this reason that he reiterates the need to “make use of [his] maieutic art to deliver Theaetetus of his thoughts ...” (*Tht.* 184b3 ff.). Knowing that the supporting or conditional theories are false, he must now help Theaetetus relieve himself of the offspring he is carrying. The discussion from *Tht.* 184b3-186e12 returns the role of the interlocutor to Theaetetus. It is once again an argument against knowledge as perception, but it does not explicitly reference Heraclitus or Protagoras. It builds upon the refutation of these theories and offers a positive account of the senses (and their relation to thought and the soul) which is incommensurable with the definition of knowledge as perception. As Socrates states, “Then knowledge is to be found not in the experiences but in the process of reasoning about them; it is here, seemingly, not in the experiences, that it is possible to grasp being and truth” (*Tht.* 186d2-5).

Such a description might lead one to believe that the maieutic method is more indifferent than previously estimated. The maieutic method, however, goes beyond simple exposition: part of the performance of the maieutic method is providing the spiritual offspring with the best possible chance of surviving the upcoming examination – fleshing it out to maturity. There are 35 Stephanus pages which elapse between the statement P and the conclusion \sim P. An exhaustive amount of effort is expended to make a case for both Q and R.⁴¹ There are multiple rounds of aporia and the resolution of these aporia for each truth condition. The theory is not abandoned at the first sign of difficulty.

As we saw earlier, one of the outcomes of successful maieutic examination is spiritual perfection and purification of the interlocutor through the abandonment of false beliefs or theories. In all forms of cross-examination, the principal activity through which this is achieved is the request for information by the examiner – more often than not, this is a request for a definition. The maieutic method is no different in this regard. These definitions are the children that are brought forth by means of the maieutic method. For these definitions to be considered good or valid, they must apply to all instances of the object defined. They must be universal, not subject to change over time. In the *Theaetetus*, Socrates is looking for a “single form” (ἐνὶ εἴδει) which subsumes all the different kinds of knowledge (*Tht.* 148d6). We see this again in the digression of the *Theaetetus*: the philosopher, the one engaged in this kind of dialogical exercise, seeks only the universal, not the particular: what is (τοῦ ὄντος, *Tht.* 172d9) and not that which is

⁴¹ Though many scholars accuse Socrates of an ironic approach to the truth of an interlocutor’s response – which may be a legitimate accusation depending on the dialogue – the tone of the *Theaetetus* does not suggest the presence of irony, at least not in the section on the first definition.

subject to change. When the definition is produced, the maieutic method puts it to the test, and anything which is found to be false is (indeed, must be) abandoned.

As we can see from the above structure in the *Theaetetus*, the truth of the initial definition stands or falls with the supporting theories. It is the latter theories that are examined in detail, and not the primary definition itself. Proving or refuting these “truth conditions” (and having the interlocutor accept the proof or refutation) is sufficient to prove or refute the primary definition.⁴²

Refutation, then, is another key outcome of the *maia*’s art, since the universality and truth of a given theory can only be decided after much cross-examination. As we have seen, it is the *greatest* (μέγιστον) skill of the midwife, to be “able to test in every way whether the mind of the young man is bringing forth a mere image, or a real and genuine offspring” (*Tht.* 150b9-c3). This means that the *maia* must be able to employ logic and counterexamples objectively and effectively, bringing forth anything which will test the mettle of a given theory or definition. These are the “drugs and incantations” that Socrates speaks of in the maieutics passage. By employing these tools effectively, the *maia* will be able to see what is consonant or dissonant with the interlocutor’s offspring. Should the offspring be unable to stand up against the logic and examples tendered, it should be considered refuted and therefore false. Disabusing the interlocutor of false children is the result of refuting them, for that which is contradictory cannot possibly be universal, and certainly not true.⁴³ Indeed, to get to the point where one can say “I

⁴² Again, the theories of Protagoras and Heraclitus are dealt with by *Tht.* 183c3, but this exchange was between Socrates and Theodorus. Theaetetus is still technically in labour and must be delivered of his offspring.

⁴³ We should note that the word/concept “universality” does not come up in the actual maieutic passage, but if we are to understand *maieusis* as an immanently philosophical practice (which it in fact must be as it is the method at work in the present *philosophical* dialogue), then we can and indeed ought to connect it to the digression passage on the interests of the philosopher (*Tht.* 172c3-177c5). In this passage it is quite

know that belief X is false” presupposes – at least in the *Theaetetus* – the rigorous logical exercise of cross-examination which in turn presupposes some facility with the tools of logic.

It is important to note that this “abortive” practice is not done in ill will. As Socrates says, “I myself do nothing of this sort out of malevolence, but the law in no way allows that I bring forth the false and hide away the true” (Tht. 151d1-3). In fact, one could argue that it is not really an “abortion” of the idea at all, as it is only a “wind-egg” and no real offspring. It never truly existed with any substance.⁴⁴ Within the context of the analogy and the dialogue, true infanticide would be to turn one’s back on a true belief, or at least one which is justifiable.

This brings us to the notion of persuasion. The success of the exercise of cross-examination depends in no small part on persuasion: not just the persuasiveness of the argument, but also the persuasion that it is one’s own beliefs that are undone by the argument. The maieutic method builds the necessary persuasion into the calculus from the very beginning, as the narrative is one of birth. The outcome – positive or negative – is directly and immediately related to the interlocutor as a child is to its mother. We will examine the notion of persuasion in greater detail in the next chapter.

We have, then, the following key elements of the maieutic method: the primary theory; the conditions for the truth of this theory (secondary theories); the confirmation or refutation of

clear that the philosopher’s focus is on unchanging, necessary, and universal things, not on changeable, contingent things.

⁴⁴ The demonstration of good will on the part of the examiner is perhaps best seen in the section leading to Theaetetus’ definitive rejection of the first definition as false (Tht. 184b3-186e10). The conditional theories of Protagoras and Heraclitus having already been shown to be problematic, Socrates seeks to further assuage Theaetetus’ labour pains by changing the argument from the chaos left behind from these conditional theories – that everything is always changing in every way, such that any given “thing” both is and is not some quality simultaneously – to a positive discussion on the stability of being and the unity of experience. This discussion equally applies as a refutation of both conditional theories: stability of being goes against Heracliteanism, and that truth and knowledge are at the level of being, not at the level of perception goes against Protagoreanism. This shows that the maieutic method is not just a negative approach to cross-examination but seeks to bring out some positive as well. Once pointed in this direction by Socrates, Theaetetus arrives at the positive outcomes of this discussion on his own.

these secondary theories, and by extension the primary theory; finally, we have the importance of persuasion to convince or aid the interlocutor in accepting or rejecting their primary theory.

We now look at how this method plays out between the interlocutors of the *Theaetetus*.

1.2.2. From “What is Knowledge” to the Wonder Claim

One of the reasons that we are showcasing the maieutic method is that, in addition to the fact that it is the method at play when Socrates makes the claim that wonder is the pathos of the philosopher and the sole origin of philosophy, it is also an excellent example of the practice of cross-examination. Whereas in other dialogues, there are often multiple interlocutors, admitting a range in affective responses, dialogical skill, etc.,⁴⁵ in the *Theaetetus*, there are only two interlocutors for the main dialogical exchange. Moreover, Theaetetus is an ideal interlocutor, capable, ready to participate, neither daunted by the task nor discouraged by the difficulty, and ready to give up previously held beliefs for new ones when required to do so by the argument. As Theodorus has stated, Theaetetus is “amazingly gifted” (θαυμαστῶς εὖ πεφυκότα, *Tht.* 144a3).

The maieutic passage begins when Theaetetus demonstrates that he is capable of providing a reasonable definition when it comes to mathematical or geometrical ideas (roots and surds), but is at a loss (at pains) to give the same kind of definition of knowledge – the kind of definition which applies to all of its instantiations. This leads Socrates to comment that Theaetetus is not empty (κενός) but full (ἐγκυμόν). What he means is that Theaetetus is not unable to give a definition due to a lack of possible answers, but because he does not know how

⁴⁵ Those that come to mind immediately are *Gorgias*, *Protagoras*, *Phaedo*, *Meno*, and *Euthyphro*. The former four dialogues cycle through multiple interlocutors. Though the last of these dialogues only has one interlocutor, the argument is not finished and so the outcome is unclear – due mostly to the primary interlocutor’s temperament intervening in the effectiveness of the cross-examination (in these cases, elenctic cross-examination).

to bring these answers out of himself; Theaetetus is ready to give birth to that which is within him.⁴⁶ Socrates invites Theaetetus to give himself over eagerly (with *prothumia*, 148d1) to his maieutic art, to be delivered of his offspring, and of the labour pain (*Tht.* 151b8-c2). The invitation is extended, and Socrates offers the choice to engage or not. We might note that the same choice is not afforded when Socrates tries to engage Theodorus in philosophical dialogue, as a stand-in for Protagoras later in the dialogue.⁴⁷

By the time Theaetetus is asked to provide a definition of knowledge, he has already proven that he is not only fertile, but that he is also capable of bringing forth spiritual children that are able to stand on their own – though of a mathematical and not philosophical kind.⁴⁸ He recounts his story of going through the initial stages of labour pains, and how he and his fellow students worked together to bring forth an account of roots and surds (or “lengths” and “powers,” *Tht.* 147c7-148b3) which Socrates finds satisfactory. It remains to be seen, however, whether or

⁴⁶ This sets up a symmetry (or a comparison) with the end of the dialogue, whereat Socrates asks if there is anything left in Theaetetus, to which the latter replies “no” – meaning that he is now empty and had only wind-eggs within him to begin with (*Tht.* 210b4-9). As mentioned earlier, this may play in Theaetetus’ favour, as he is also free of the falsehoods which kept him from pursuing the truth about what knowledge *is*. He is better off knowing that he doesn’t know what knowledge is, even though he thought that he did.

⁴⁷ Cf. *Tht.* 169a6-b4, Theodorus accuses Socrates of forcing him to engage in dialogue, like Antaeus, “you don’t let go of anyone who comes up to you until you’ve *forced* him to take his clothes off and wrestle with you in an argument” (emphasis added). It is noteworthy that Socrates agrees to this comparison; though he is gentle and gives Theaetetus the choice, he is much more aggressive in his discourse with Theodorus. He thereby shows a disparity in his approach – or, alternatively, he reinforces the notion the highly personalized nature of cross-examination and shows that some interlocutors require a rather firmer hand.

We can compare Socrates’ treatment of Theodorus with the *Gorgias* wherein Socrates is accused by Callicles of eristic discourse, coercing his dialogue partners into agreeing with him against their own interests. Cf. Irwin (1986, p. 49), where the author references *Gorg.* 505d4-5: “Cal.: How unrelenting you are, Socrates! If you’ll listen to me, you’ll drop this discussion or carry it through with someone else.” This passage harkens back to earlier passages, such as Socrates’ description of eristic at *Gorg.* 457c4-458b3, and Callicles indictment of Socrates as a crowd pleaser (δημηγόρος) who takes advantage of the shame of his opponents at *Gorg.* 482c4-5.

⁴⁸ We can take this as part of the reason that Theaetetus is considered a promising interlocutor. In the *Republic*, geometry is considered a propaedeutic to philosophy (*Rep.* 510c2-d3).

not Theaetetus is capable of producing *philosophical* offspring; whether he can take the next step in abstraction. In the end, he is not able to do so, but he nevertheless learns something valuable about his own knowledge, and his own knowledge of himself: namely, he knows that he does not know what knowledge is. He does, however, have a better sense of what knowledge is *not*. Moreover, in the process, he has become meeker and less likely to pretend to know that which he does not know.

And so, Theaetetus, if ever in the future you should attempt to conceive or should succeed in conceiving other theories, they will be better ones as the result of this inquiry. And if you remain barren, your companions will find you gentler and less tiresome; you will be modest and not think you know what you do not know (*Tht.* 210b11-c4).

From this passage, we can gather that Theaetetus' maieutic journey has been successful insofar as he has been purified of his false beliefs and is now better suited for future inquiry. He has also made the stereotypically Socratic move from so-called double ignorance to simple ignorance. That is, he has passed from not knowing that he did not know to the realization that he does not know. Faced with the same question again, he is likely to respond "I do not know what knowledge is."⁴⁹

When Socrates initially asks Theaetetus about the task of defining knowledge, and whether or not it is an easy task or an arduous one, Theaetetus replies that he "wouldn't be able to answer [Socrates'] question about knowledge in the same way [he] managed with lengths and powers" (*Tht.* 148b6-9).⁵⁰ Theaetetus' admits that defining knowledge is one of the most arduous (ἀκροτάτων, one of the highest) of tasks (*Tht.* 148c9). Although "knowledge" is such a

⁴⁹ Admittedly still a problematic statement as it uses the verb "to know" which presupposes some functional understanding of knowledge.

⁵⁰ The Greek here is: "καὶ μήν, ὃ Σώκρατες, ὃ γε ἐρωτᾷς περὶ ἐπιστήμης οὐκ ἂν δυναίμην ἀποκρίνασθαι ὥσπερ περὶ τοῦ μήκους τε καὶ τῆς δυνάμεως." μήκους (length) δυνάμεως (power) in this context are to be taken in their mathematical context as meaning proportionate or disproportionate sides (respectively) of a square or quadrilateral.

fundamental part of day-to-day human experience, presupposed in all our activities, it nevertheless goes unexamined. Like most people, Theaetetus has likely never even thought about this question before. Faced with the task of defining “knowledge,” he finds he is unable to do so.⁵¹

As far as the actual birthing process is concerned, once Socrates, as spiritual *maia*, has identified the pregnancy – *after* the pregnant soul has gone into labour – he then helps the pregnant Theaetetus give definition to the child (both figuratively, and literally in the sense that they produce a definition). In other words, the delivery and the development occur simultaneously. We now turn to Theaetetus’ first definition as an example of how the maieutic method plays out.

In the section of the dialogue which deals with the first non-trivial definition (*Tht.* 151d7-187a6),⁵² Theaetetus gives his first real definition: “It seems to me that the one who knows something perceives that which he knows, and it appears to me now that knowledge is nothing other than perception” (*Tht.* 151e1-3).⁵³ In keeping with our previous vocabulary, this answer is the first phase in the structure of the maieutic method: identifying the pregnancy and stating the general theory (P).

⁵¹ Compare with Socrates’ statement in *Charm.* 159a1-3: “It is clear that if temperance [σωφροσύνη] is present in you, you can have some opinion [δοξάζειν] about it.” Extrapolating from the specifics, we might infer that if knowledge is present in Theaetetus (which it clearly is to some extent, as he is able to give an account of roots and surds), then he too must be able to provide some opinion (some *doxa*) about it which can be examined.

⁵² We say “non-trivial” because this is technically the second definition that Theaetetus gives of knowledge, but the first is merely a list of kinds of technical knowledge, which Socrates almost immediately disregards. We referred to this earlier as definition zero.

⁵³ The Greek is as follows, “δοκεῖ οὖν μοι ὁ ἐπιστάμενός τι αἰσθάνεσθαι τοῦτο ὃ ἐπίσταται, καὶ ὡς γε νυνὶ φαίνεται, οὐκ ἄλλο τί ἐστὶν ἐπιστήμη ἢ αἴσθησις.” It is noteworthy that the definition itself is framed in terms of appearance: “it seems to me (δοκεῖ οὖν μοι).”

This definition is almost immediately identified as not just composed of, but reliant upon Protagorean and Heraclitean doctrines (man-measure and flux doctrine respectively). Socrates goes to great lengths to show how plausible these positions are before raising the difficulties associated with them.⁵⁴ There is a preliminary exposition (*Tht.* 151d7-160e5) of the two doctrines which seeks to give them “legs to stand on” – a fighting chance, as it were. Socrates attempts to make the logic of the position seem reasonable. It is only after he has built up the case for the first definition that he proceeds to raise the difficulties with this position. There is no judgement or cross-examination while the offspring is being brought forth, only questions which help to clarify Theaetetus’ position and belief. This corresponds to phase two of the maieutic method’s structure ($P \leftrightarrow (Q \wedge R)$), identifying the truth conditions of the theory – effectively serving the purpose of identifying the father(s) of the spiritual offspring. This phase culminates at *Tht.* 160e5 where we can say that the theory or offspring has been fully expressed.

Soc.: Then that was a grand idea of yours when you told us that knowledge is nothing more or less than perception. So we find the various theories have converged to the same thing: that of Homer and Heraclitus and all their tribe, that all things flow like streams; of Protagoras, wisest of men, that man is the measure of all things; and of Theaetetus that, *these things being so*, knowledge proves to be perception. What about it, Theaetetus? Shall we say we have here your first-born child, the result of my midwifery? Or what would you say? Tht: Oh, there’s no denying it, Socrates (*Tht.* 160d5-e5, emphasis added).

Initially, the definition is found wanting and Socrates proceeds with the first round of critique at *Tht.* 160e6 ff., which focuses on a few central problems, namely, the problem of expertise (a phenomenon that everyone both recognizes and respects, but which is undermined by the notion that the knowledge and truth of a given “x” are to the individual however they

⁵⁴ We ought rather to say, “the elements of these positions which are consonant with the definition set forth by Theaetetus are shown to be plausible...”

appear to them)⁵⁵ and the problem that such a definition would mean that the duration of knowledge coincides with the duration of perception. This critique follows shortly after the wonder passage (*Tht.* 155c8-d7). Theaetetus is beginning to see the shortcomings entailed by his definition and the supporting theories, and has started to feel the dizzying effects of aporia due to these shortcomings.

Socrates, however, does not merely toss out the first definition after the first bout of criticism or at the first sign of difficulty.⁵⁶ Even as Theaetetus himself is poised to reject his theory (*Tht.* 162c7-d2), Socrates steps in, advises caution, and gives a detailed and ardent apology of the Protagorean man-measure doctrine (*Tht.* 165e8 ff.), one which addresses some of the criticisms levelled against it. Once he has built up the case a second time, then he goes on to critique it again. Eventually the supporting theories of Heraclitus and Protagoras are found to be false (phase 3, *Tht.* 181a4 ff.). Because the truth of Theaetetus' definition depended upon the truth of these two theories as conditions of its own truth, the definition that knowledge is perception is itself abandoned as false (phase 4). After this a new definition is offered and subsequently examined: knowledge is (probably) true judgement.⁵⁷

In other words, the success or failure of the response or definition (the *doxa*) can only be measured at the end of a long process of development, scrutiny, rebuilding, and further

⁵⁵ It is noteworthy that the question of knowledge is initially posed as a way of understanding how there can be expertise and whether or not Theodorus is a competent judge of character (*Tht.* 144d8 ff.).

⁵⁶ Nor is the theory rejected at *Tht.* 155c8-d7 when Theaetetus expresses his wonder at the aporia brought about by momentarily accepting intangible mathematical concepts in his otherwise sense-based theory. We will examine this complication further in a later section. One might attribute this particular instance of aporia being ignored to the fact that the theory has not yet been fully expressed or otherwise finalized and is therefore not ready for close examination.

⁵⁷ The Greek here is “κινδυνεύει δὲ ἡ ἀληθῆς δόξα ἐπιστήμη εἶναι” (*Tht.* 187b5-6). Literally, “knowledge risks being true belief.”

examination. If the response is indeed found wanting, it must be abandoned – but, it cannot just be abandoned, it must also be *replaced* – i.e., it requires further philosophical engagement.⁵⁸

In this way, we see in the *Theaetetus* perhaps the most important characteristic of the maieutic method (and cross-examination more generally) played out: the goal is not to be purely destructive. The false belief that “knowledge is perception” – once it is found to be false – is replaced by the interlocutor. There are three definitions of knowledge in the *Theaetetus*, not just one. Socrates is not playing some malevolent role; he wants to deliver Theaetetus of *all* of his children (whether real and true or mere wind-eggs and falsehoods), and, more fundamentally, he wishes to get a satisfactory answer to the question τὸ ἐστὶ ἡ ἐπιστήμη (what is knowledge)?

A great deal of effort is spent in the first definition to show how the definition that Theaetetus provides requires the support of the Protagorean man-measure and Heraclitean flux doctrines. They mutually entail one another. Theaetetus, by positing that knowledge is perception, must accept the two supporting theories. The successful outcome of the maieutic method requires that Theaetetus be convinced that whatever obtains of the supporting theories also obtains of his definition. In order for Theaetetus to be improved by the exchange, he must be convinced or persuaded that the falsehood and irresolvable aporia of the two supporting theories directly entail the falsehood of his own definition – it needs to be an *internal realization* on the part of the interlocutor. This leads not only to the rejection of a false belief, but also to a need to renew the investigation, to posit a new definition – in short, the need for continued philosophical activity.

⁵⁸ Napolitano Valditara (2014, p. 158), “Dunque la ricerca, il *diaporesai*, può terminare ogni volta in un *euporein* e, se l'*aporein* si ripropone, non è perché esso costituisca, di per sé, un ostacolo strutturale al conoscere, ma perché gli oggetti rispetto ai quali si può *aporein* sono per noi *myria epi muriois*, ‘infiniti’, come precisava Platone nel *Teeteto*.”

It bears repeating that the mental space heretofore occupied by false *doxa* must be filled by something – especially when that false *doxa* is regarding something as fundamental as one’s definition/understanding of “knowledge.” One has to supplement *something*.

1.3. Maieutic method and aporia

The word “*aporia*”, in its general use, means something like “difficulty,” “perplexity,” or “impasse.” Literally it means “no passage” or “no way forward/through/out”. It is natural, then, that such a thing should be associated with cross-examination. As we saw in the previous sections, *aporia* are the natural product of the philosophical practice of the maieutic method, characterised as pain within the metaphor. Within the broader context of cross-examination, *aporia* generally arise as the result of a contradiction, the confrontation between the interlocutor and the full entailment of their response to whatever question they are posed (summarised symbolically as $(P \wedge \sim P)$). For which reason, Linda Napolitano Valditara asks, “what better description of a state of *aporia*, than a form – precisely – of interior conflict between opposing theses?”⁵⁹ As such, the aporetic moment signifies a possible turning point for the one examined: the opportunity either to unburden themselves of falsehoods on well-reasoned grounds, or to persist in the lie.

1.3.1. The Aporetic Nature of the Maieutic Method, both as Metaphor and as Practice

In the above sections we discussed the various elements of the metaphor of the midwife. Here we will return to one of these elements and discuss its important role in the maieutic method. The element in question is “*aporia*,” which, as we saw, is represented by the notion of pain (labour pains) and difficulty.

⁵⁹ Our translation of Napolitano Valditara (2014, p. 140, “Quale descrizione migliore di uno stato di *aporia*, come forma – precisamente – di *conflitto interiore fra tesi opposte*?” (Emphasis suppressed in English translation.)

This notion of *aporia* is built into the very fabric of the maieutic method. The labour pains of not being able to respond to a question are what signal the pregnancy to the spiritual midwife: ὠδίνεις γάρ, ὃ φίλε Θεαίτητε, διὰ τὸ μὴ κενὸς ἀλλ' ἐγκύμων εἶναι. “You are in pain, dear Theaetetus, not because you are empty, but because you are full” (*Tht.* 148e7-8). The pain experienced by Theaetetus and identified by Socrates is from Theaetetus believing himself incapable of providing an adequate response to the question of knowledge. Indeed, not only does he believe himself incapable of providing a response, he has also never heard anyone else give an adequate account (*Tht.* 148e3-5). Theaetetus is at an impasse in the dialogue; he is experiencing an aporetic situation.

One might wonder how or why this constitutes an aporetic moment. As readers, we know that Theaetetus himself knows things. As discussed earlier, he provides a definition of roots and surds; he also knows about applied knowledge as his definition zero is an enumeration of kinds of specialized knowledge. It is implied that he must therefore have some familiarity with the abstract concept if he can apply it concretely. Nevertheless, he finds that he is unable to express this understanding as a definition – this is the *aporia*.⁶⁰

At this point, we can only infer the pain-*aporia* link, since the term “*aporia*” is not used. The link is made explicit throughout the midwife passage. Shortly after telling Theaetetus that he is experiencing the pains of childbirth, he admits to the accusations of reducing men to an aporetic state (*Tht.* 149a7-9)⁶¹ and uses the maieutic method to explain why this is the case. A

⁶⁰ See Matthews (1999, p. 126), “one reason philosophy often begins in perplexity is that philosophy deals with inherently problematic concepts, concepts like time and justice, mind, and causality – concepts we all seem to be able to use, and so to understand, but concepts of which we also find it difficult, if not impossible, to give a satisfactory analysis.”

⁶¹ The Greek here is, “ὅτι δὲ ἀτοπώτατός εἰμι καὶ ποιῶ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἀπορεῖν.” This translates literally as, “that I am the strangest kind of person and that *I make men* perplexed” (emphasis added). This suggests that Socrates’ reputation is as a person who actively pursues the perplexity of his interlocutors.

large part of the reason for this is Socrates' own ignorance (or "barrenness," *Tht.* 150c7-d2). Socrates attends to the travail of others but is himself forbidden from giving birth. Those whom he attends experience pain and are filled with aporia day and night (*Tht.* 151a6-8).

Furthermore, the art of the midwife can bring about this pain – that is, it can generate aporia – and it can alleviate it (*Tht.* 151a8-b1). In other words, not only is the labour pain of aporia the way that the spiritual midwife identifies the pregnancy, it is also part of his core competencies to be able to deal with these pains. Take for example the passages at *Tht.* 161c2-162d2, where we have the first, almost trivial refutation of the theory as it is expressed at *Tht.* 160d5-e5. This is a refutation by taking the claim that "knowledge is perception" at face value. The outcome leads to the devaluation of knowledge: any sense perception across species ought to be considered equally true. This would undermine the notion of wisdom and expertise, which were the initial sparks for the conversation of the dialogue (*Tht.* 145e6). It also implies that man is not special in his ability to know; a pig and a man are equally competent to know the truth about reality.

Socrates dismisses this refutation as unfounded, even as Theaetetus is priming himself to reject his first definition (*Tht.* 162c7-d2): "And, to answer your question, yes, I am very much astonished (πάνυ θαυμάζω). When we were working out the meaning of the principle that a thing is for each man what it seems to him to be, it appeared to me a very sound one. But now, all in a minute, it is quite the other way around."

Here we have an example of the midwife bringing on the pains of aporia and relieving these same pains. It bears emphasizing that here, in this moment of aporia, Theaetetus once again

This is not necessarily true. Socrates questions his interlocutors and *they* eventually find *themselves* in aporia based on their own beliefs.

finds himself in a state of wonder. The dialogue continues with Socrates bringing forth additional challenges to the relationship between sense perception and knowledge.

Something intriguing happens at *Tht.* 164e2 ff.: the theory takes on a voice of its own, precisely in answer to these challenges posed by Socrates. The voice in question is that of Protagoras, one of the central pillars upon which rests the possibility of the truth of Theaetetus' theory. Additionally, Theodorus becomes the interlocutor for a short time. We can think of the theory, then, as being expressed in a two-fold way: first, it was expressed verbally:

So we find the various theories have converged to the same thing: that of Homer and Heraclitus and all their tribe, that all things flow like streams; of Protagoras, wisest of men, that man is the measure of all things; and of Theaetetus that, *these things being so*, knowledge proves to be perception. What about it Theaetetus? Shall we say we have here your first-born child, the result of my midwifery? (*Tht.* 160d5-e3)

Secondly, the theory was expressed metaphorically, in that it was brought out of Theaetetus, like an infant from its mother, to stand trial independent from its mother – as was alluded to earlier by Socrates at *Tht.* 150b9-c3: “And the most important thing about my art is the ability to apply all possible tests to the offspring, to determine whether the young mind is being delivered of a phantom, that is, an error, or a fertile truth.” And again, “And when I examine what you say, I may perhaps think it is a phantom and not truth, and proceed to take it quietly from you and abandon it” (*Tht.* 151c2-5). In this regard, we have reached a potentially painful turning point in the dialogue.

In this new dialectical situation, the part of the theory composed of the relativism of Protagoras and the flux doctrine of Heraclitus, Homer, and Empedocles resists the arguments brought forth at *Tht.* 161c2 ff. It accomplishes this by turning away from the language of “being” and “substance” preferring instead “change” and “becoming.” Using the metaphorical language of the midwife, we can take this second wave of discussion as Socrates providing drugs and

incantations to assuage these additional pains of aporia. Take, for example, the language at *Tht.* 163e4 ff., the argument from memory: “Soc.: But you do say – don’t you? – that there is such a thing as memory? Tht.: Yes. Soc.: Memory of nothing? Or of something? Tht.: Of something, surely.” By talking about “something” we have already been led astray from the Heraclitean tenet agreed to earlier, namely, “that there is nothing which in itself is just one thing: nothing which you could rightly call anything or any kind of thing” (*Tht.* 152d2-4).

By refocusing the language employed in the dialogue to better represent the relativism and flux tenets upon which the theory relies, these initial difficulties are overcome – at least for the time being. Notice that the aporia and wonder here do not discourage Theaetetus from reengaging with the philosophical activity of cross-examination. Rather, Socrates is able to direct Theaetetus’ attention to the causes of the aporia, applying his drugs and incantations. Theaetetus’ attention turns back *towards* the aporia, not away from it. From a “timeline” perspective, we have: aporia, wonder, turn (or return) to philosophy by examining the aporia and how to resolve it.

This highlights an interesting level of rigour present in the maieutic method. The aim is to address the actual positions at play and not necessarily allow the interlocutors to fall too easily due to a lack of experience rather than the correctness of the theory. To paraphrase Protagoras at *Tht.* 166a2-c9, Socrates should not aim to win by seeking to frighten his interlocutor (as the Sophists do, *cf.* *Tht.* 165d5-e6), but rather when treating a doctrine, he should only accept responses which correspond to the responses that would be given by the original proponent of the theory. In this case, questions should be posed and responded to as Protagoras would pose and respond to them.

Curiously, Plato gives Protagoras the role of providing the reader with the measure of success of the maieutic method. At *Tht.* 168a2 ff., he states that one must not be unjust in questioning, but rather show the shortcomings of the interlocutor, making it clear that they are truly the interlocutor's shortcomings and belong to no one else. In other words, in the moment of aporia, the interlocutor must know that the aporia comes from within themselves and is not externally imposed.⁶² In this way, they will turn away from their own hubris and towards philosophy in an attempt to escape from the aporia. This reemphasizes the key role of the imagery of pregnancy and midwifery: the true or false outcome is tied to the interlocutor. The barrenness of the midwife is established; they cannot contribute positively to the paternity of the theory. This means that whatever the outcome, it is solely the product of the interlocutor: any aporetic labour pains which arise as the result of the birthing or examination of the offspring is therefore also tied to the interlocutor.

We can see, then, that aporia really is built into the very fabric of the maieutic method. The notion of labour pain as representative of aporia appears at the beginning of the method as a way of identifying the pregnancy and therefore launching the examination and is repeated throughout the examination process both as brought on and as assuaged by the midwife.

One might argue that aporia is only integral to the maieutic method in cases where the theory is refuted. In the *Theaetetus*, we only have examples of unsuccessful theories.⁶³ We therefore have no account of a successful spiritual offspring with which to compare. This however would ignore the initial labour pains (again, aporia) which allows the midwife to diagnose the interlocutor as pregnant in the first place. Moreover, it presupposes that every part

⁶² We are speaking here of an internalised experience of a subject. One recognises that one's situation is one's own and that this situation arises from one's own beliefs.

⁶³ We say, "unsuccessful theories," not "unsuccessful maieusis." Ridding oneself of a false theory is just as successful as delivering a true theory, as the soul of the interlocutor is perfected in both cases.

of the maieutic examination is without issue if it is successful; however, just as there are multiple false negatives in the treatment of the first definition which are rejected as inconclusive of the falsehood of the theory, it is equally plausible that similar false negatives could arise during the examination of a true theory. That is, logically, one might encounter a seemingly infeasible aporetic situation – one which is truly painful – in the course of developing and examining a true theory. We must remember that the dialectical skill of the interlocutor plays some role in the examination: Theaetetus was ready to give up on his first definition at *Tht.* 162c7-d2, and the theory is not definitively rejected until *Tht.* 186e12 – twenty-four Stephanus pages later, which is almost the same amount of writing dedicated to the remaining two definitions.

In both cases, true and false theories we have the alleviation of the pains of aporia, either by expressing it (true theory) or by ridding oneself of it (false theory). Because of this centrality of aporia, we can say that the maieutic method is in some sense defined by these aporetic labour pains. We must now turn our attention to whether and how this aporia translates to wonder.

1.4. The Link Between Aporia and Wonder

We have looked at the role that aporia plays in the maieutic method and have seen that this role is in some sense definitive of the maieutic method. That is, aporia plays a non-negligible role in the method. Because of this, one might be tempted to say that it is aporia (and not necessarily θαυμάζειν) which is the ἀρχή of philosophy, at least in the case of the maieutic method. As Matthews says:

Still, perplexity is so central to philosophy, to what interests us in philosophical questions in the first place, and to what keeps us awake at night thinking about them, that it is hard to imagine a good philosopher who is not thoroughly familiar with the bewilderingly unsettling experience of being philosophically perplexed.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Matthews (2003, p. 1). Throughout Matthews' book, the author notes the importance of perplexity (aporia) and its centrality to the practice of philosophy, as if to supplant or replace wonder. As with other

Indeed, many authors fail to make a sharp distinction between aporia and wonder. This is often based on textual exegesis which shows the frequent proximity of wonder-language and aporia-language.⁶⁵ Equating the two terms would only be possible if wonder were the exclusive outcome of aporia. In the next chapter we will see that this is not the case. Rather than seeing this textual element as a reason to equate the two terms, we ought to look at it as accentuating a clear relationship between the two concepts while maintaining their difference.

This relationship is manifested in a multitude of ways which we will presently explore. First, we will look at the aporetic situations in the *Theaetetus* which result in wonder. Second, we will look at the mythological links referred to immediately following the wonder passage. Finally, we will examine the broader, literary context which links the two concepts of aporia and wonder and which places the relationship within a broader cultural and historical narrative. Again, we must reiterate that, although aporia and wonder are related, they are not coextensive.

1.4.1. Situating the Wonder Claim within a Context of Aporia

Though not identical with wonder (as we will explore in greater detail later), the aporetic situation is important, because, in the practice of the maieutic method, it is readily associated with wonder. This is fortuitously apparent in the *Theaetetus* in the text leading up to the wonder passage, and of course the response of the wonder passage. Within this passage (which, for the sake of exposition, we will start at the beginning of the first definition at *Thi.* 151d7), we see the development of Theaetetus' first definition. This section culminates in the contradiction between three paradigms, or theories. On the one hand we have the compatible theories of Protagoras

authors, it is not, in fact, terribly clear that Matthews makes a distinction between aporia and wonder at all.

⁶⁵ Napolitano Valditara (2014) also falls into this category and treats the two notions as essentially coextensive, which is unfortunate, given that she is one of the few scholars to contribute substantially to the scholarship on philosophical wonder.

(*Tht.* 151e8) and Heraclitus (*Tht.* 152e1) which are necessary to support Theaetetus' definition of knowledge as perception, and on the other hand we have the three mathematical axioms (*Tht.* 155a2-b3) which we could attribute to the teaching of Theodorus.

Returning to the metaphor of the midwife, we note that part of the process of bringing forth intellectual offspring is to use various "potions" and "incantations" to alleviate the birthing process, and which will help to bring forth the actual (i.e., personal) theories, ideas, or beliefs of the interlocutor for examination. It is not surprising, then that Theaetetus should put forth a definition that is readily identifiable with Protagoras, as he admits that he has read and is familiar with Protagoras' *Truth* (*Tht.* 152a5). And when Socrates states that Theaetetus' definition is similar to that of Protagoras, he is offering one of his potions, sampling from here and there to help reduce the pain and pressures of the pregnant Theaetetus' labour. Nor is it surprising that he should agree to geometrical axioms, since he *is* a geometer, and studies under Theodorus – also a geometer.⁶⁶ Indeed, in keeping with the analogy of childbirth, the child should resemble its parents and this series of questions in some sense serves the purpose of a "paternity test." Let us examine exactly how this child is brought forth, and how its existence brings forth an aporia even before it is fully expressed, which leads Socrates to make his claim about wonder.

There is a high degree of care which goes into making the first definition plausible. This is done by expanding the two theories of which it is (or seems to be) composed. As was mentioned, these are the Protagorean "man-measure" doctrine and the Heraclitean "flux" doctrine, both of which are proposed by Socrates, and agreed to by Theaetetus. One could consider this an indictment of Socrates' approach, that he subverts Theaetetus' definition,

⁶⁶ Cf. *Tht.* 157cd: "[I] am merely acting as a midwife to you, and for that reason am uttering incantations and *giving you a taste of each of the philosophical theories*, until I may help to bring your own opinion to light" (emphasis added). One might also attribute this mathematical interjection to the later Plato's increased interest in geometry. On this topic, Cf., e.g., Vlastos (1988).

leading the discussion away from this definition to a subject which is both more familiar and amenable to critique. Although this seems to be what is happening, one must only look at the two theories to see that this is not what is happening.

The first theory, Protagoras' doctrine "man is the measure of all things, of the things that are that they are, of the things that are not, that they are not," is much broader than its application to Theaetetus' definition. Indeed, when Socrates brings up Protagoras, his intention is not to state that universal relativism obtains; rather, he relates it to the particular, circumscribed context of perception. It is within this context of perception that the man-measure doctrine is most readily believable: the same wind to one both feels and *is* cold, and to another both feels and *is* warm. The truth values associated with both claims about the wind can be held simultaneously without any necessary contradiction, since there is no violation of the principle of non-contradiction. There would, however, be a problem if one were to assert that the same wind felt both warm and cold at the same time with respect to the same person. How things appear to us (φαίνεσθαι) and our perception of them (αἰσθάνεσθαι) are equated (*Tht.* 152b12). This equation of φαίνεσθαι and αἰσθάνεσθαι will eventually contribute to the undoing of the first definition of knowledge.

The second theory that Socrates brings forward is "universal mobilism," most readily associated with Heraclitus. Socrates implies that this is the esoteric root of Protagoras' philosophy. To expand the simple πάντα ῥεῖ ("all is flux") commonly attributed to Heraclitus, universal mobilism states that nothing is one in and of itself (ὡς ἄρα ἐν μὲν αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτὸ οὐδέν ἐστιν), rather, everything is in a perpetual state of translation, motion, or becoming (*Tht.* 152d2-6). In other words, "being is becoming." As one might expect, this poses substantial difficulties for the overarching goal of the dialogue – defining "knowledge" – since static (i.e.,

definable or circumscribable) states are now impossible. Therefore, the question “what *is* knowledge?” not only becomes unanswerable, but also loses any sense it may have had.

According to Socrates, virtually every Presocratic subscribed to some form of mobilism, with the notable exception of Parmenides. Interestingly, as we shall soon see, the passage wherein he grounds Homer’s mobilism is “Oceanus the origin of the gods, and Tethys their mother” (*Il.*, 14, 201). Again, here we are faced with the notion of flux: the churning waters of the Ocean giving rise to all things.⁶⁷ After the preliminary introduction of the doctrine of universal mobilism, Socrates tries to make it even more believable using the analogy of bodies of water, and of the bodies and minds of men. When a body of water ceases to flow, it becomes stagnant, but if it keeps flowing, it will remain pure. It is the same with the human body and mind, when one ceases to exercise (or study in the case of the mind) the body begins to fail – laziness destroys the body.⁶⁸ The passages which follow (*Tht.* 153e4-155b5) go into detail about the consequences of applying this universal mobilism to perception.

At *Tht.* 153e4 ff. we begin to see the interplay between these two theories: (knowledge as appearance and perception) + (Heraclitean flux doctrine); (Q ^ R). It is here that we begin to see the onset of the aporetic situation. Although the two theories seem, upon first inspection to be not only reasonable, but consonant with one another and with Theaetetus’ definition, they end up leading to a contradiction when Socrates introduces a third consideration relating to mathematics.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ The Greek here is, “Ὅμηρος, ὃς εἰπὼν – “Ὠκεανὸν τε θεῶν γένεσιν καὶ μητέρα Τιθύον” πάντα εἴρηκεν ἔκγονα ῥοῆς τε καὶ κινήσεως (*Tht.* 152e7). This water imagery will be important for the next section, as will appeals to Homeric literature in the second part of the dissertation.

⁶⁸ Compare to *Phaedrus* 245c5-7: “Every soul is immortal. That is because whatever is always in motion is immortal, while what moves, and is moved by, something else stops living when it stops moving.”

⁶⁹ We say “consideration” rather than “theory” because what Socrates brings forward are norms of mathematical thought which inform but do not really constitute any theories.

If nothing is one thing itself by itself, then the object of perception is not some one thing, but rather some kind of ever-changing conglomerate of “stuff.” Indeed, neither the object perceived, nor the subject perceiving admit of enough ontological stability to have permanent predicates. The “truth” or “knowledge” of an aesthetic judgement (“aesthetic” here referring to αἴσθησις, i.e., sense perception) is in the temporally confined interaction (μεταξύ) between the perceiver and the perceived (*Tht.* 153e5-154a3).

In other words, each perception is unique and non-reproducible, not just between distinct individuals, but also for the same individual over time. For example, at time 1 (T_1), X perceives Y to be Z. This does not imply that any other perceiver (say P) will also perceive Y to be Z, nor does it imply that even X will perceive Y to be Z at T_2 .⁷⁰ The truth of any such claim would be contingent upon some temporal index and would not obtain across persons. If the perceived quality inhered in either of the extremes (perceiver X or perceived object Y), it would be impossible for the quality to change (*Tht.* 154b1-6): either it is (1) an objective quality of the thing, in which case everyone would experience it in the same way – that is, the same perception obtains across persons⁷¹ – or it is (2) some quality in the perceiver, in which case the perceiver would always perceive it in the same way over time. In other words, in either case where the quality subsists in one of the extremes (perceiver or perceived), Protagorean relativism cannot obtain. It would mean that something is some one thing, or necessarily possesses some one

⁷⁰ In theory, there would be no X at T_2 , but rather an X', since nothing is one thing with any kind of unity over time. The use of variables in the example is there merely as an attempt to capture both the universality of the claim (that any interaction between two “objects” where at least one is a sensible entity can be accounted for in this way), and that the entities are subject to change (in the same way that a mathematical variable is a placeholder for any possible number).

⁷¹ The passage at *Tht.* 154b1-6 is quite strong, stating that if the thing itself does not undergo any change, then it cannot undergo any change by mere proximity to some other thing (whether sensible or not is not specified). We are talking about strong, ontologically quantified identity claims $[(\exists x)(Fx)]$.

quality that is, itself by itself.⁷² However, this is not the general experience of perception across persons and over time – hence the examples of the “same wind” and of “Socrates healthy and Socrates ill” (152b1-4 and 159b2-5 respectively).⁷³ We are clearly meant to infer that it is not the case that qualities subsist in perceivers or perceived objects.

A question which might arise from this – one which leads Socrates to say that this Protagorean approach *forces* one to admit with ease wonderful/astonishing and laughable conclusions (θαυμαστά τε καὶ γελοῖα εὐχερῶς πως ἀναγκαζόμεθα λέγειν, *Tht.* 154b7-8) – is how it could be possible to state anything meaningful about the quality or state of a given thing if neither said thing, nor the perceiver have any qualities. In other words, where do these qualities come from? Of course, this could simply be a reaffirmation of the relativism ascribed to Protagoras.

This discussion about persistent qualities becomes quite important for our purposes, as it contributes directly to the aporetic situations which give rise to Theaetetus’ wonder. The first of these two aporetic situations is the aporia of the dice (*Tht.* 154c1-155b3). We start with six dice, and place four more beside them: this results in a qualitative relationship between the two groups of dice, namely that the six are more by 50 percent. Next, we place twelve dice beside the other two groups of dice: this newest addition is two times more than the original six (the six are 50

⁷² See McDowell’s commentary (1973, pp. 131-137) for a very rigorous breakdown of this argument. Rather than explaining the premises, as we have done here, he begins from the premises and applies Protagorean tenets to show how these premises become absurd (more as an apology of Protagoras). Again, what is really at issue in the argument is the use of the verb “to be.” We know per Heraclitus that nothing “is” some one thing in itself. This precludes *a priori* the possibility of either a stable, subsistent subject or object to perceive or to be perceived. Either things are, and have objective qualities, or things *are not* and “are” in a constant state of becoming. Knowledge as αἴσθησις is only possible in the latter case.

⁷³ There is an earlier example of Socrates saying that the self does not persist overtime at *Tht.* 154a6-8, “wouldn’t you be much more disposed to hold that it doesn’t appear the same even to yourself because you never remain like yourself?”

percent less). In this new situation, the six dice are both greater and smaller at the same time and by the same proportion (fifty percent greater and less at the same time).⁷⁴

The second, rather simpler, aporia has to do with the heights of Socrates and Theaetetus (*Tht.* 155b7-c7), that in the space of a year, though currently shorter than Socrates, Theaetetus will be taller than him. Socrates has, therefore, become something new without having undergone any change himself, without any loss or growth.⁷⁵ It is this sort of aporia which gives rise to Theaetetus' wonder.

One might – and perhaps ought – wonder why it is that these situations are considered aporetic. Indeed, most readers will likely find them to be thoroughly unaporetic. Protagorean relativism would have no problem dealing with these aporia. For the dice, one need only introduce relative terminology: relative to the four dice, the six dice are greater; relative to the twelve dice, the six dice are less. For the second aporia, one need only change the perspective to Theaetetus and say that it is he who has undergone change.⁷⁶

It is important to mention that these aporia do not just spring from nowhere. There is nothing particularly jarring about them, and on their own, they do not seem particularly

⁷⁴ For another strange aporia relating to how numbers “become” anything other than what they are, see *Phd.* 96e7-97b1, “I will not even allow myself to say that where one is added to one either the one to which it is added or the one that is added becomes two because of the addition of the one to the other. I wonder (θαυμάζω) that, when each of them is separate from the other, each of them is one, nor are they then two, but that, when they come near to one another, this is the cause of their becoming two...”

⁷⁵ Notice that this is almost identical to the situation in the *Phaedo* 100e5-101d3. In this dialogue, Socrates overcomes this difficulty by introducing the forms. However, in the *Theaetetus*, rather famously, Socrates does not allude to or introduce the forms as a means of explicating or justifying a theory. We can, and perhaps ought to explain this decision by pointing back to one of the principles of the maieutic method: the barrenness of Socrates. Socrates wants Theaetetus to produce his own offspring without diluting or unduly affecting the spiritual offspring.

⁷⁶ The lack of relational terminology is what seems to make this passage perplexing. This is how the passage is interpreted in McDowell's commentary on the *Theaetetus* (1973, p. 135), “According to this view, the puzzles are meant to illustrate the difficulties which one gets into if one uses apparently non-relational forms of speech where one ought to use relational forms. Thus Plato, on this view, intends us to blame the apparent contradictions on tolerance of forms like ‘Socrates has come to be smaller’, unsupplemented by the necessary ‘than’ phrases.”

indefeasible. In order for them to become truly puzzling, we must accept the same set of axioms for analyzing the situations as Theaetetus does.⁷⁷ This is yet another paternal component which makes up Theaetetus' offspring and which will contribute to the contradiction resulting in the aporetic moment. There are three such axioms. The first states, "nothing can possibly have become either greater or less, in bulk or in number, so long as it is equal to itself" (*Tht.* 155a2-5). The second states, "a thing to which nothing is taken away neither increases nor diminishes but remains equal" (*Tht.* 155a7-9). Finally, the third states, "it is impossible that a thing should ever be what it was not before without having become and without any process of becoming" (*Tht.* 155b1-3).⁷⁸ Why would such things pose such a danger to the Protagorean definition of knowledge as sense perception? The answer is that these axioms are not directly experienced by the senses. Moreover, although they are framed in terms of change and becoming, they also seem to posit or imply something like a substance which underlies this change, which goes against the Heraclitean principle of flux.⁷⁹ They are nevertheless common notions in mathematics, which is perhaps why Theaetetus accepts them so readily.⁸⁰ Theaetetus seems to have forgotten what he agreed to at 154a6-8, namely that the "same" thing appears differently even to the same person over time. In other words, the objects of perception are not only synchronically susceptible to competing *doxai* (i.e., different individuals at the same time), but also diachronically susceptible

⁷⁷ It is also important to note that it is unlikely that Protagoras himself would accept these axioms, despite how commonsensical they seem, for precisely the reasons that we will mention – but, we reiterate, we are witnessing the birth of Theaetetus' spiritual offspring, not Protagoras'.

⁷⁸ The axioms are subtly misleading; because they are worded in terms of becoming, it seems as though they agree with the tenet of universal mobilism.

⁷⁹ Within the context of the mathematical paradigm, the Socrates at T₁ and the Socrates at T₂ are the same Socrates.

⁸⁰ The axioms are, if not paraphrases, then at least corollaries of the κοινὰ ἔννοιαι ("Common Notions") in book I of Euclid's *Elements*.

to competing *doxai* (i.e., same person over time).⁸¹ The introduction of rigid, logical, and mathematical norms of evaluation into the discussion on sense perception is what inevitably leads to an aporetic situation.

It is no wonder that Theaetetus would agree to these mathematical axioms, given his background and current instruction at the hand of the geometer Theodorus. Nor is it surprising that accepting these axioms results in an aporia, given that the Protagorean and Heraclitean theories expounded by Socrates and accepted by Theaetetus resist the stability of rigid categories. Indeed, the most aporetic thing about the situation as a whole is why Theaetetus would espouse a definition of knowledge which effectively excludes the possibility of his own discipline of mathematics.⁸²

These aporetic situations are what generate the overwhelming feeling of wonder in Theaetetus (ὑπερφυῶς ὡς θαυμάζω τί ποτ' ἐστὶ ταῦτα, καὶ ἐνίοτε ὡς ἀληθῶς βλέπων εἰς αὐτὰ σκοτοδινίῳ, *Tht.* 155c8-10). They are instances of the myriad aporia which are at war with one another in our soul (μάχεται αὐτὰ αὐτοῖς ἐν τῇ ἡμετέρῃ ψυχῇ, *Tht.* 155b5-6). They are what lead

⁸¹ Cf. Napolitano Valditara (2014, p. 158): the vocabulary we are using here (sincronicamente e diacronicamente) is taken out of context. The proper context is speaking about one of the limits of cross-examination (especially in the maieutic method), and the process of coming up with *euporic* solutions to a given aporia, namely, that the solution may not resolve the whole of the problem (that is, that one might still wonder about part of the problem “*sincronicamente*” even as part has been resolved), or that the solution may not stand the test of time (that is, that it may not remain valid “*diacronicamente*”). Plato himself attests to as much in the *Phaedo* (85c9-d1), wherein Simmias suggests that if the facts cannot be ascertained in a given difficulty, then one must take the best and hardest to disprove of human arguments/doctrines (βέλτιστον τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων λόγων λαβόντα καὶ δυσεξελεγκτότατον), and cling to it as a safety raft to sail through life until one finds a better vessel. We will touch upon this more later in this chapter.

⁸² To state, per the Heraclitean tenet at *Tht.* 152d2-3, that “nothing is one thing itself by itself,” poses substantial difficulties for the idea that there is a unit upon which to base arithmetic and geometry. Given the importance of arithmetic and geometry in Greek cosmology (and certainly in Plato’s philosophy), implying the impossibility of these disciplines would be problematic to say the least. For more on the importance of mathematics in Greek culture, see the Introduction in Cornford (1939, pp. 1-27).

A better answer to the greater/lesser debate would be that, since nothing is itself in itself, Socrates at T1 is no longer the same Socrates at T2; he has been in a constant state of change.

Socrates to state that philosophy has wonder as its ἀρχή (μάλα γὰρ φιλοσόφου τοῦτο τὸ πάθος, τὸ θαυμάζειν: οὐ γὰρ ἄλλη ἀρχὴ φιλοσοφίας ἢ αὕτη, *Tht.* 155d2-4).

There is a further example of aporia resulting in wonder during the examination of the first definition at *Tht.* 162c7-d2. This occurs after the theory has been fully exposed and the preliminary examination has begun. Socrates presents what he later calls “persuasive or plausible” arguments (i.e., arguments that would be acceptable to a crowd, but not to the proponent of the theory, *Tht.* 162e8-163a1), which show some shortcomings of the theory on face value, one of which equates human knowledge with divine knowledge. Theaetetus’ response to this aporetic situation is one of wonder:

To answer your question, yes, I am very much astonished (πάνυ θαυμάζω). When we were working out the meaning of the principle that a thing is for each man what it seems to him to be, it appeared to me a very sound one. But now, all in a minute, it is quite the other way round (*Tht.* 162c7-d2).

This first definition is the locus of the wonder passage, and the latter arises as the direct result of the aporia we have just reviewed. Although “wonder” vocabulary is absent from the final refutation of the first definition, it is likely that Theaetetus would have felt some wonder in the face of the aporia which ends in refutation. If he was so affected by these “lesser” aporia,⁸³ it makes sense that the more definitive aporia would have a similar, if not stronger, affective response.

We must now attempt to strengthen this link between aporia and wonder through an examination of the broader linguistic and cultural picture.

⁸³ Both of these sets of aporia are explained away by Socrates the midwife. In the first instance, this is accomplished by returning to the principles of Heraclitean flux (*Tht.* 156a2 ff.). In the second instance, it is accomplished by channelling the person of Protagoras as a proxy for the examiner.

1.4.2. Linguistic and “Genealogical” Connection⁸⁴

We can approach the aporia-wonder dynamic on a more basic, linguistic level. This linguistic examination helps to understand the reference to Greek mythology which immediately follows the claim about wonder. It relies on an etymological understanding of “aporia” which ties in to the mythology evoked.

The word “aporia” is the α -privative form of “*poros*,” and the word “*poros*” means “way” or “way through”. However, it must be distinguished from the word “*hodos*” which also means “way,” “path,” etc. *Poros*, unlike *hodos*, has a fluvial or marine connotation which is lacking from the latter. Moreover, the way out of *poros* is not firmly traced. It is therefore not a way that is easily retraceable, as is the way of *hodos*; the way out in water is fluid and therefore ever changing, ever collapsing back in on itself.⁸⁵ This fluvial connotation is extremely important for understanding both aporia and its relationship to *thauma*. If *poros* is the ability to find a way through/out in a vast, ever-changing marine context, then its α -privative form is the inability to find a way through/out in this same marine context. There is an English word for this experience of being surrounded by water and not being able to go forward, backward, or simply “out.” That word is “drowning.”⁸⁶

⁸⁴ A large part of this section is based on Sarah Kofman’s book (1983), which is itself based in large part on the collaborative work of Detienne and Vernant (1974).

⁸⁵ See Kofman (1983, p. 18), “*Poros*, c’est seulement une voie maritime ou fluviale, l’ouverture d’un passage à travers une étendue chaotique qu’il transforme en un espace qualifié et ordonné, introduisant des voies différenciées, rendant visible les directions diverses de l’espace, orientant une étendue d’abord dépourvue de tout tracé de tout point de repère.”

⁸⁶ There are numerous examples of Plato drawing on this same aquatic imagery to describe the notion of aporia, to name a few: *Parm.* 137a6, fear of “the ocean of words”; *Phil.* 29b1-2, “storm-tossed by the perplexity of the discussion”; *Tim.* 25a3-5, the “impassible ocean” where Atlantis once stood; *Rep.* 453d9-11, the invitation to save oneself by swimming out of the problem, whether it be a diving pool or the sea; and *Laws* 892d6-e7 comparing an argument to a swift-flowing river. See Kofman (1983, pp. 23-28).

What does this have to do with *thauma*? We get a clue from Socrates in the lines that immediately follow the wonder passage: “The man that made Iris the daughter of Thaumas was no bad genealogist.” In some sense, this passage encourages the reader to examine the wonder claim through the lens of the mythology referenced.

Socrates links the substantive “θαῦμα” to the titan Θαῦμας – the etymological link is quite unambiguous here, but what does it entail? According to Hesiod,⁸⁷ Thaumas is one of the many titans of the sea/ocean.⁸⁸ Wonder then, is seen to have a special notional relationship to the ocean. That wonder is aroused in the *Theaetetus* as a result of the two “greater-smaller” aporetic situations suggests that this wonder is linked with aporia. Indeed, the sequence of events is as follows: the two aporia, Theaetetus’ exclamation “how praeternaturally I wonder,” Socrates’ statement about the role and importance of wonder in philosophy (the wonder claim) and the subsequent linking of the wonder claim to mythology (Thaumas and Iris).

This feeling of being “at sea” is one of being “lost at sea,” tossed about on the waves with no μήτις (*metis*: trick), no μηχανή (*mechane*: device) for getting out of the situation.⁸⁹ In this context, to be ἀπορῶν is to be plunged into θαυμάζειν. The one leads to the other. This is why there is need of the spiritual *maia*, someone to help bring the individual out of the situation, to help them find a *euporia*, a way out. The *maia* helps the interlocutor by employing their own

⁸⁷ Hesiod, *Theogony*, 237, 265 ff. Thaumas is one of the Nereids, the god of the wonders of the sea. See also Berens (1894, p. 111), “Thaumas (whose name signifies Wonder) typifies that peculiar, translucent condition of the surface of the sea when it reflects, mirror-like, various images, and appears to hold in its transparent embrace the flaming stars and illuminated cities, which are so frequently reflected on its glassy bosom.”

⁸⁸ Thaumas is also a close relative of Okeanos and Tethys, the two deities that we saw to be linked with knowledge-as-perception and universal mobilism. Though certainly coincidental, it is nevertheless interesting that aporetic wonder also seems to be linked with the realm of appearance, *doxa*, flux, etc.

⁸⁹ Remember that Theaetetus wonders in a state of painful disorientation (*skotodinio*), much like being lost at sea with no heading or bearing.

metis, their technical knowledge to create order around the drowning individual. As Simmias states in the *Phaedo* when speaking about the cross-examination of beliefs:

[O]ne should achieve one of these things: learn the truth about these things or find it for oneself, or, if that is impossible, adopt the best and most irrefutable of men's theories, and, borne upon this, *sail through the dangers of life as upon a raft*, unless someone should make that journey safer and less risky upon a firmer vessel of some divine doctrine (85c7-d4, emphasis added).

We will speak more about the phenomenological experience of wonder in the section on wonder as *pathos*.⁹⁰

The genealogy that Socrates gives does not end with Thaumias; there is more to the story. Thaumias gives rise to Iris: why Iris? The mother of Iris is Elektra, the goddess of the clouds. Iris herself is the goddess of the rainbow, that which connects the earth with the heavens – or, in keeping with the mythology, the sea and the heavens. In keeping with the imagery and description of the philosopher in the digression (*Tht.* 172c3-177c5), this is representative of the escape from the earthly to the celestial, from the ever-changing to the stable, from appearance to the real, from the mortal to the divine – the *homoiosis theo* (becoming like god) of the philosopher.⁹¹

Iris, in other words, does not just offer a *poros*, but is a *poros*, a way out: not only a way out in the sense of getting on a boat (or finding some stable safe haven with which to navigate

⁹⁰ In Napolitano Valditara' article (2014), the author makes a similar argument, and the notions of *thaumazein* and *aporein* are essentially made coextensive. That is, the relationship or bond between the two notions is so strong that they are simultaneous phenomena. Though it would be problematic to accept this coextension, we might still salvage the simultaneity of the phenomena by saying that *θαυμάζειν* is a "thumoeidetic" (that part of the soul having to do with emotion or affect) expression of the cognitive or rational *ἀπορεῖν*. We will look at this more closely in the next chapter. Taking a moderate approach, we can say that under optimal conditions, *aporia* leads to wonder.

⁹¹ Cf. Napolitano Valditara (2014, p.128, note 4), "Il riferimento mitico associa Iride, messaggera degli dèi e icona dell'arcobaleno, alla meraviglia, che, anch'essa, funge da *trait d'union* fra mondo umano e divino."

the seas), but also in the sense of getting pulled out of the ocean entirely.⁹² In this imagery, she is philosophy, the dialectical existence oscillating between Truth and perplexity.⁹³ It is philosophy that offers the way out of the given aporetic situation through wonder. Again, it is Θαῦμας who begets Ἴρις.⁹⁴ Within the context of the *Theaetetus*, this means engaging in the exercise of maieutic cross-examination, by allowing oneself to be rid of the weight of false *doxa* which contributes to the drowning.⁹⁵

However, importantly, and to fill out the mythology invoked by Socrates, Thaumias is not only the father of Iris. He is also the father of Ocypete and Aëlle, the harpies (Hesiod, *Theog.* 265 ff.). These latter are described as half-women, half-bird creatures that snatch up (*harpazein*) sailors and those lost at sea. What this suggests is that wonder does not simply open one up to the possibility of philosophy, but also to the possibility of being led astray to one's own perdition – a sentiment which is corroborated by the *Theaetetus* itself, which speaks of the Sophists and the wonder-fashioners (θαυματοποιετής).

⁹² In the digression (*Tht.* 172c3-177c5), the philosopher is depicted as the individual who seeks to escape from the ever-changing (unlike those who are driven by the clepsydra – again, “water-related” imagery, and a possible subtle indictment of Heraclitean flux doctrine), living in the clouds, striving after what is stable and unchanging. This does not keep them from experiencing aporetic moments, such as when they engage with the lawyer-types, or, as when Thales fell into the well, they fall into literal aporia. This version of the philosopher belongs more readily to the contemplative act of philosophy and will be examined further in the second part of the dissertation. In the second part, we will discuss how contemplation is not “panoptic,” that is, one cannot adequately focus on both the changing world of experience and the unchanging world of the forms at the same time to any meaningful degree.

⁹³ We can compare Iris' role here to the role played by Socrates' account of Eros in the *Symposium*. He is neither of the extremes of his parents; neither Poros (resourcefulness), nor Penia (poverty), he exists as an intermediate state between the two extremes.

⁹⁴ It is also Elektra that begets Iris. Though not mentioned by name, we can take Elektra to be representative of celestial realities. It is not clear whether or not we can equate this with a tendency towards the forms, since neither Elektra nor the forms are explicitly mentioned here – though this would be a reasonable interpretation for a Platonist.

⁹⁵ Alternatively, as indicated above in the *Phaedo* passage, one might think of one's *doxa*, *endoxa*, etc. as a boat upon which one navigates the ocean. As one's beliefs are rendered asunder, or rot, one's boat begins to take on water. It is necessary, then, to replace the rotted boards with new ones. Philosophy as cross-examination serves as the way of identifying and replacing these rotted, broken boards.

Soc. Yes, and you might have been reduced to the same condition by a number of further questions – whether knowing can be keen or dim, whether you can know from close at hand what you cannot know from a distance, or know the same thing with more or less intensity. A mercenary skirmisher in the war of words might lie in wait for you armed with a thousand such questions, once you have identified knowledge and perception. He would make his assault upon hearing and smelling and suchlike senses and *put you to confusion, sustaining his attack until you were amazed* (πρὶν θαυμάσας) by his inestimable wisdom and taken in by his toils, and thereupon, *leading you captive and bound* he would hold you to ransom for such a sum as you and he might agree upon (*Tht.* 165d5-e6, emphasis added).⁹⁶

The wondering interlocutor is therefore in a potentially quite vulnerable state.

It is important to note that Iris is not one extreme or the other, neither the ocean nor the heavens; her existence is a dialectical one, forever playing the intermediary between the two extremes. The same can be said for the ever-recurring aporia-wonder-philosophy (cross-examination) cycle. The “euporetic” solution must itself be examined, which will lead to a new set of difficulties (read: aporia) which renews the wonder – plunges one back into the wonderful ocean of aporia – and pushes the philosophical dialectic forward. Indeed, in the *Theaetetus*, the first definition is defeated and replaced not once, but twice. Given more time, there may have been even more definitions, as the second and third definitions are also brought low; unfortunately for Theaetetus and the reader, given his upcoming trial, Socrates is forced to leave for the day.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ See also, *Sym.* 198b1-4, wherein Socrates notes the wonder-inducing power that is Agathon’s spectacular speechifying, “How am I not going to be tongue-tied, I or anyone else, after a speech delivered with such beauty and variety? The other parts may not have been so wonderful (οὐχ ὁμοίως μὲν θαυμαστά), but that at the end!” (The form of the discourse was beautiful, but the content was not.)

We might compare this to the account given by Hippocrates of the spectacles performed by physicians to draw more patients to their clinics. See *On the Joints*, chapter 42, “the practitioners who use this method are chiefly those who want to make the vulgar herd gape, for to such it seems marvellous (οἱ ἐπιθυμέοντες ἐκχανοῦν τὸν πολλὸν ὄχλον: τοῖσι γὰρ τοιοῦσι ταῦτα θαυμάσιά ἐστιν).” This rather unflatteringly associates wonder with ignorance and therefore with those that are easily swayed.

We will further examine this wonder-inducing sophistry, and whether it constitutes philosophical wonder, in the next chapter.

⁹⁷ In the dramatic timeline of the dialogues, we see Socrates run into Euthyphro, and engage in a new discussion. In this dialogue (*Euth.*), we see cross-examination play out in a totally different way, as we

This is an important point which must be kept in mind going forward: the wonder we are addressing now, the wonder associated with cross-examination, is the result of dialectic. For this reason, we refer to it as “aporetic” wonder, wonder accompanying aporia which result from dialectical or dialogical engagement, such as cross-examination. It is the wonder which arises as the interlocuter becomes aware of the problems associated with their own theories or beliefs. This might lead one to believe that this aporetic wonder is not dialectical. It is *one’s own* belief, and *one’s own* consciousness of said belief, therefore no need for a *maia*. There are two problems with this view: first, the examined individual would not be aware of the problematic belief were they not made aware by the *maia* (thereby underscoring the importance of the questions of the *maia* which generate these aporia, per Socrates’ own words in the maieutic passage where he states that many of his interlocutors are unaware of their own pregnancy); second, even without a *maia*, the examined, by scrutinizing the belief, sets up a dipole for dialectic: the belief or theory and the interlocutor (who is now the examiner).⁹⁸

We will now broaden this cultural picture further to deepen our understanding of the relationship between wonder and aporia.

1.4.3. Cultural and Literary Connection

In order to understand the aporetic wonder in a contemporary literary context in continuity with the mythological context we have just examined, it is helpful to turn to the Tragic Poets (Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides). These poets were, many of them, contemporaries of Plato, and their works would have been readily available and known to Plato and his

have a different question, with a different approach to questioning, and, more fundamentally, a different interlocutor – one with seemingly no real interest in changing his *doxa*.

⁹⁸ In some sense, this is what Socrates is doing when he channels the person of Protagoras. It is not Socrates who is apologising for the Man-Measure theory, but Protagoras – or a reasonable facsimile thereof. Effectively, Theaetetus is dialoguing with a disembodied idea.

readership. Indeed, Plato makes constant reference to the plays of his time (both Tragic and Comic) in his dialogues.⁹⁹

When we look at the most common uses of “θαῦμα” and its derivatives in the tragic poets we see a decidedly epistemological character emerge, one having to do with expectation. In other words, we are talking about the status of the knowledge of an individual – one based on beliefs and their impact on expectations. We can already see how this might tie into the themes we have been examining: aporia resulting from contrariety or contradiction of one’s beliefs or theories.

What do we mean when we say “expectative wonder?” Simply put, we mean the following: when a certain hypothesis, expectation, or belief is formed, there are two possible outcomes: either (1) the expectation is met, or (2) it is not. Wonder arises as a result of the latter. These expectations are generally based on some experience or cultural norm – some δόξα (opinion, judgement, or belief), either widely held or individual, hence the epistemic, rather than ontological character (it isn’t about what things are, but about what people believe, know, or think they know about things).

There are many examples of expectation being met in the tragic poets, most of which are framed in something like the following way: “οὔτοι τι θαῦμα δυσφορεῖν φόβῳ φρενός”¹⁰⁰ “truly it is no wonder to be vexed by way of fear of the mind.”¹⁰¹ This formulation, and others such as “μὴ θαύμαζε” (don’t wonder/be surprised) or “οὐ θαυμάζοιμι” (I shouldn’t be surprised/amazed) all imply that one has created an expectation (P) and when that expectation is met, there is no

⁹⁹ For example, the reference to Aristophanes’ *Clouds* in the *Apology* (18c9-d2, 19c2-6), or the Pindar Fragment at *Meno* 81b8-c4.

¹⁰⁰ Our translation of Aeschylus, *Suppliant Women*, 513. The context is that the suppliant women are waiting at the shrine, and they are afraid that their persecutors are going to come and kill them before they are granted sanctuary.

¹⁰¹ “φρήν” is a difficult word to translate, as it is used somewhat interchangeably between “heart” as the seat of the passions and “mind” as the seat of intellectual activity.

wonder ($\sim W$).¹⁰² The converse of this statement is equally true: when the expectation is not met ($\sim P$) then there is wonder (W). It bears noting that ($\sim P$) is considered implausible (otherwise it is unlikely that (P) would be held as an expectation).¹⁰³

Indeed, it is the nature of expectation to be grounded in not only possibility, but in probability. Once an expectation has been created, it is hard to imagine anything else being the case – hence “habits of thought” or “second nature.” Nevertheless, it is possible for the expectation to fall short, and when this happens one is filled with wonder – which explains why we often see expectation couched in terms of the *absence* of wonder, as stated above. This can be seen in the following examples, both of which highlight an important phenomenological or pathological feature of this kind of wonder, namely, displeasure.

ὄπως δ' ὁ πρῶτος ἡμῖν ἡμεροσκόπος
δείκνυσι, πᾶσι θαῦμα δυσχερὲς παρῆν.

For when the first day-watchman showed [it] to us,
a disagreeable wonder filled [us] all (Sophocles, *Antigone*, 254-255).

ζῶσαν λέλακας, τὸν θανόντα δ' οὐ στένεις
τόνδ': ἀλλ' ἄθρησον σῶμα γυμνωθὲν νεκροῦ,
εἴ σοι φανεῖται θαῦμα καὶ παρ' ἐλπίδας.

You have cried out for the living, but you do not lament the dead
here before you; but look upon the naked body of the dead,

¹⁰² For an example of this in Plato, see *Meno* 81c5-9, “As the soul is immortal, has been born often, and has seen all things here and in the underworld, there is nothing which it has not learned; so, it is in no way surprising (ὥστε οὐδὲν θαυμαστὸν) that it can recollect things it knew before, both about virtue and other things.” This passage comes as a response to Meno’s paradox of inquiry (how does one search for that of which one is ignorant?). Socrates further states that this paradox makes men idle in their inquiry, whereas his questioning (cross-examination – in this case, more elenctic than maieutic) makes them energetic. This will be important later when we speak of the image of the stingray in the next chapter.

¹⁰³ A trivial example would be if one made the expectation: “Given my experience, I would not be surprised (οὐ θαυμάζοιμι) if I have to wait 15 minutes for the elevator today.” If I do end up waiting more than 15 minutes, then I may be frustrated, but it is no cause for wonder. If, on the other hand, I do not wait 15 minutes, then it would, in fact, be a cause for wonder. In this example, it is difficult to imagine that the wonder in question would be a mind-blowing event, such as coming to realize that one does not know what knowledge is, despite presupposing such knowledge and understanding in virtually every cognitive act.

if it appears to you a wonder and beyond your expectation (Euripides, *Hecuba*, 677-680).¹⁰⁴

The first of these examples refers to the guards discovering that the body of Polynices had been buried, which goes against the edict of Creon that no traitors to the State are to receive an honourable burial. The body in the second example is that of the son of Hecuba, Polydorus, whom she understood to be under the safe care of a Thracian knight. Hecuba later goes on to say that the death of Polydorus is “beyond wonder.”¹⁰⁵ In both of these cases, we see that the characters undergoing the *pathos* of wonder had created reasonable expectations: the one expecting that the law would be followed, the other that her son would continue to live safely under the care of someone she presumably trusted – both very reasonable expectations to form, given ordinary circumstances. Unfortunately, in both cases, the far less probable outcome proved true, and both characters undergo a “crisis” moment, both characters are placed before an unexpected and “extra-ordinary” reality which contradicts their previous estimation – an *aporia*. The belief about reality and reality itself are in conflict. In short, *they were wrong*. This confrontation with their own error is at the root of this feeling or *pathos* of wonder.

Another clear example is the reaction of Chrysothemis in Sophocles’ *Elektra*, when she comes back from offering libations at Agamemnon’s tomb. Her day is rather replete with wonders. First, she wonders at the libations poured out at Agamemnon’s tomb (*Elektra*, 893 ff.). As there is no one else in the estate to have paid this honour, her expectation would have been that the tomb was untended. She is then faced with a further contradiction: having just seen the recently-poured libations and a freshly-cut lock of Orestes’ hair on the tomb, she believes that he

¹⁰⁴ Our own translations of Sophocles’ *Antigone* and Euripides’ *Hecuba*.

¹⁰⁵ See Euripides, *Hecuba*, 714-715: “ἄρρητ’ ἀνωνόμαστα, θαυμάτων πέρα, // οὐχ ὅσι’ ἀνεκτά...” “A crime no word or name can describe, more than amazement can take in, impious and unindurable.”

is alive; yet, when she speaks with Elektra shortly thereafter, she is told that he is in fact dead – mangled in a chariot accident, per the account of the Old Slave (or “Παιδαγωγός,” *Elektra*, 928).

There are a number of things to pull from these examples. Notably, there is a clear indication that wonder which comes from the negation of our expectations is neither a comfortable, nor a pleasant experience, hence the “θαῦμα δυσχερὲς” or “gut-churning wonder” of the guards in *Antigone*. This unpleasantness should come as no surprise, as it is a betrayal of the mind by reality. Moreover, it accompanies aporetic situations: conceptual difficulties, contradictions, situations wherein a previous opinion or judgement no longer obtains. In fact, it is this crisis moment which shakes one free of the problematic intellectual habits (shackles, really), allowing for a shift in paradigms.

1.5. Wonder as Pathos, Wonder as ἀρχή

In this section we will break down the vocabulary of the wonder passage, specifically the two notions of *pathos* and ἀρχή.

What does it mean to say that wonder is the *pathos* proper to a philosopher? What do we mean by the word “*pathos*” itself? How is this *pathos* experienced – that is, what is the description that is given of the one experiencing this *pathos* of wonder which is so conducive to philosophy? What does it mean to say that there is no other ἀρχή of philosophy than wonder? Again, how are we to understand the term “ἀρχή”? In what way is wonder the ἀρχή of philosophy?

For reasons of scope, we will not address the notion of “the philosopher” in a detailed way in this dissertation, primarily because that would be an overwhelming undertaking.¹⁰⁶ As set forth in the general introduction, we will be situating wonder as *pathos* and ἀρχή within the two types of philosophy under discussion (cross-examination and contemplation), under the assumption that if they are practiced *as* philosophy, then they must to some degree bear some relation to this affirmation about wonder and philosophy. In other words, both types of philosophical practice must have some significant relationship with wonder, and wonder is experienced as *pathos* in both.

This position is further supported by the unspecified nature of the claim in the passage itself; Plato does not say “wonder is the ἀρχή of the types of philosophy readily identifiable as cross-examination,” or “this specific *pathos* noted here in this particular context is proper to the philosopher.” Rather, he says “to wonder is the *pathos* of the philosopher, there is no other ἀρχή of philosophy than this.” The vocabulary is generalized and applies more broadly than the current context. Hypothetically, this means that we can understand it within both of the philosophical contexts that we have set forth for ourselves.

It remains to be seen how wonder differs from aporia. As it stands, although we have been careful to try to avoid equivocating the two terms, one might wonder if they are not the same thing, using different words to describe the same phenomenon. The difference is best explained through an examination of the other vocabulary found within the wonder passage, an examination of what it means for wonder to be the *pathos* of philosophy, and how this *pathos* is the ἀρχή or principle of philosophy.

¹⁰⁶ For a recent account of “the philosopher,” one can read Gill (2012). The book offers an account of the person of the philosopher by summarizing the accounts in the dialogues (mostly the late or “Eleatic” dialogues).

1.5.1. Τὸ πάθος τοῦ θαύματος ἐν τῇ μαιευτικῇ τεχνῇ

“Wonder is the pathos of the philosopher; there is no other origin of philosophy than this.” Socrates’ claim, and many like it since, is philosophically interesting because it is *never explained*. The meaning is either obvious to Socrates and his audience (which does not mean that it would be obvious to audiences now), or it is up to the reader to discover how and why wonder is identified as the pathos of the philosopher. If the former, we, as non-contemporaries, are still forced to pursue the latter option. Historically, philosophy has done a rather poor job of both exploring and explaining this claim.

The *Theaetetus* seems to be the first extant instance of this claim in Western philosophy; however, most, if not all, philosophers have espoused some version of the claim about wonder’s importance in philosophy. Almost none give a rigorous account of what they mean by this claim (or whether they mean the same thing as everyone else).¹⁰⁷ Moreover, despite its historical importance, one does not even find a treatment of wonder where one would most expect to find one, namely, in philosophical treatises or accounts of the emotions. Though Aristotle makes a similar claim about wonder in the *Metaphysics*, he makes no mention of it in the *Rhetoric*, book II, which is one of – if not – the first such treatises on the emotions. On the opposite end of history, the same is true: when and where it is mentioned, it is normally just a subspecies of “surprise.”¹⁰⁸ Even grouped with surprise, it does not get a thorough explanation.

¹⁰⁷ Indeed, this is one of the most challenging aspects of the scholarship on the topic of philosophical wonder. Many scholars appear to equate the wonder claims and notional content over the centuries, even as it is clear that one is not talking about the same thing. Cf. e.g., Vasalou (2015). From what we have seen, it is not difficult to surmise that the way that a 5th century BCE Greek individual would have understood the notion of *thauma* is different from how a 21st century AD philosopher might understand the concept of wonder. See Heidegger (1994, p. 138), “We are now seeking what these same words [θαυμάζειν, wonder] name at the beginning of Western thought, and that is always incompatible with our everyday understanding.”

¹⁰⁸ Cf. e.g., Frijda (1987). In this specific text, wonder is only referenced once (p. 18) where it is equated with amazement and surprise as a category of emotional response bearing certain physiological traits.

There are several ways that we could try to understand or translate the word “pathos.” The most tempting is of course to translate it as “emotion” or “emotional state.” However, this proves to be too passive a translation – at least when seeking to understand aporetic wonder. Though there is certainly a passive stage to wonder, a better way of understanding the term “pathos” here would be as “affect” or “affective state,” which carries with it both passive and active “aspects.” Theaetetus first experiences a painful dizziness (*skotodino*) because of the aporia; the wonder is felt (and not just mentally, but also physically). There is, then, a passive stage to aporetic wonder. It does not, however, remain at the passive level. It must move beyond it. Socrates states that wonder is the beginning of philosophy, but philosophy is an action; it is done, performed. Therefore, to say that wonder is the ἀρχή of philosophy is to say that it translates into action. In order for it to be truly philosophical, it must move beyond the dizziness. It requires some activity, some response.¹⁰⁹ John Onians provides a simplified account of the affective “process” as follows:

There are thus three stages of astonishment: (1) a striking experience, usually visual, but sometimes aural; (2) a consequent physical paralysis; and (3) a mental reaction which results in something being learned which may be followed by (4) a new action.¹¹⁰

For our purposes, (1) becomes an aporetic situation or one where we are confronted with our own simple ignorance, hence conceptually striking rather than visually or aurally striking.

¹⁰⁹ Napolitano Valditara (2014, p. 129, note 7), “Da chiarire è anche che essa [la meraviglia] sia, ad un tempo ‘*consapevolezza* della propria ignoranza’, quindi stato cognitivo, ma anche ‘*desiderio* di sapere’, quindi stato affettivo. Anche Platone parlava della meraviglia come di ‘questo stato che tu [,Teeteto,] provi’, uno stato che, per come è nominato (*touto to pathos*), parrebbe non solo cognitivo.”

Cf. also Nightingale (2004, p. 256).

¹¹⁰ Onians (1994, p. 12). One might reasonably object to such a simplified account of the affective “process.” A more rigorous “*characteristic history* of an emotion” can be found in Wollheim (1999, pp. 15-16), wherein the account is comprised of nine steps. Onians’ account nevertheless captures the more important aspects in a succinct way.

This differs from Konstan (2006 (2), pp. 144-145), who does not believe that we should consider wonder to be more than a feeling in Plato.

This situation results in wonder. (2) is the physiological reaction concomitant with the wonder. (3) the realisation that one's previous beliefs are untenable or something very much like this. And (4), the continuation of philosophising. Note that this may happen several times throughout the process of philosophising, cyclically as it were.¹¹¹

If we begin to examine wonder phenomenologically, based on the description of this pathos in the surrounding text, we note a few things: first, we see that “wonder,” as it is used here in the *Theaetetus*, is very different from what one might naturally associate with the term: namely, a sort of awe or ecstasy – rather the contrary. Second, we receive an affirmation of the relationship between aporia and wonder; that they complement one another perfectly. Indeed, towards the end of the aporia passage (dice and greater-smaller dilemmas) and directly preceding the wonder passage, Socrates states that “these three statements [the mathematical axioms] that we have admitted *are fighting one another* in our souls” (*Tht.* 155b5-6, emphasis added). The soul is in turmoil, and this turmoil elicits the wondering response in Theaetetus. Let us look now at the phenomenological description of wonder.

“How praeternaturally I wonder (Ὑπερφυῶς ὡς θαυμάζω) about what they [i.e., the myriad upon myriad (μυρία ἐπὶ μυρίοις) contradictions] are and how truly I sometimes feel dizzy (σκοτοδινωῶ) looking at them” (*Tht.* 155c8-10). These are the words that Theaetetus uses to express his “mental state” when confronted with the kind of aporetic situation that precedes (and which we dealt with earlier).

Before moving on, let us take a second to reflect on this statement. It discloses information that we have danced around but must make explicit as it will be important for the

¹¹¹ The history of western philosophy is replete with literature on the affects. For the most part it tends to agree on the fact that affects have both passive and active states or roles – not just that they result in action, but that they influence what kinds of action result from a given affect or mental state. Cf. Altieri (2003, p. 8); Konstan (2006 (1), pp. 21, 24); and Nussbaum (2001, pp. 22-23).

second part of the dissertation. Theaetetus' statement discloses an important aspect of aporetic wonder – subjectivity. His statement is really the following: *I* have thought about these things and *I* wonder. This wonder is characterised by this element of subjectivity. It is born from an internal consideration of one's own beliefs or theories and this consideration, in turn, elicits a response of wonder from within the subject. The experience is, in some sense, *contained* within the examined subject or interlocutor – an experience which, as we can see from Theaetetus' statement, is not altogether pleasant.¹¹²

“Dizziness” doesn't quite capture the full meaning of *skotodinio*: it means something closer to “painful disorientation.”¹¹³ In other words, the feeling of wonder is highly unpleasant. In fact, it would be surprising if it were anything other than painful, given that one's beliefs are fighting one another, as we saw above. We find further proof of this unpleasantness in other dialogues as well (although the word wonder is not necessarily present in each of the following examples, the circumstances and vocabulary are virtually identical).¹¹⁴

One example comes from the *Lysis* (216c5-6). Socrates states that he is “dizzy/spun around (εἰλιγγιῶ)¹¹⁵ by the difficulty (ἀπορία) of the argument.” There can be no mistaking the similarities between this text and the text of the *Theaetetus*. Here again we are faced with the

¹¹² One might ask “what about the examiner?” We have seen in the case of the maieutic method that the examiner is, by his own account, ignorant and brings nothing to the conversation that is his own. In the next chapter we will see that this is similarly the case for the elenchus. All of the content of the examination, therefore, comes from within the interlocutor – including the aporetic outcome and its concomitant wonder.

¹¹³ Compare σκοτοδινιῶ here with the word used earlier in the dialogue (*Tht.* 148e7, 151b8) when describing the spiritual labour pains: ὠδίνειν. The two words share a common etymological root.

¹¹⁴ See Napolitano Valditara (2014, pp. 171-172), “La prima reazione emozionale che l'*aporein*, la meraviglia interrogante induce, è dunque *di radicale e perturbante instabilità, di sconcerto, di confusione*, ma anche *di blocco mentale*...[T]utti concorrono a provare che quel *pathos* sia *soggettivamente e in gran parte* (anche se, come vedremo, non soltanto) *negativo*, poiché modulato non solo su sconcerto e confusione ma su una vera e propria *sofferenza*.”

¹¹⁵ This is the verbal form of εἰλιγγός, which means “whirlwind,” in which case a better notional translation would be “violently whipped around.”

thoroughly disorienting effect of wonder when faced with the difficulties – indeed the contradictions – arising from their initial belief.

Another example comes to us in the *Philebus* (14c4 ff.). It bears noting that the *Philebus* does not deal with cross-examination per se, but with the equally Socratic practice of “*diarexis* and *sunagoge*,” i.e., collection and division.¹¹⁶ Despite this potential drawback, we see a generalized claim about aporia and wonder: “it is this principle that has an amazing nature (φύσει πως πεφυκότα θαυμαστόν). For, that the many are one and the one many are amazing statements (θαυμαστόν λεχθέν)” (*Phil.* 14c9). Here Socrates is not speaking about trivial claims (part-whole relations, etc.), but rather about the unity of the forms and how these forms relate to one another. By resolving these kinds of aporia, one makes true progress in the soul (*Phil.* 15c1-3). A further parallel in the *Philebus* can be found at 16b4-7, where Socrates admits that his dialectical method, though the best and most admirable, has left him alone and helpless on many occasions. This harkens back to our earlier discussion on being lost at sea: an aporia which both inspires wonder and is accompanied by a helpless, drowning sensation – the security and familiarity of a previously held belief being wrenched away and gone.¹¹⁷

This experience of aporetic wonder, though painful and difficult, is nevertheless cathartic. It not only allows the interlocutor to engage in the pursuit of truth, but *necessitates* this engagement. The rejection of a false belief creates a conceptual vacuum which must be filled. This is satisfied through continued philosophical engagement and a willingness to pursue truth.

¹¹⁶ Not to be daunted by this, in the *Sophist* 230b6-8, cross-examination is described in terms of collection and division as the practice of the noble sophist.

¹¹⁷ We will see in Part II that the *Philebus* passage also has some bearing on contemplative wonder – especially if read in the light of the *Parmenides*, which deals with similar themes. For now, we can draw the distinction in outline that we will clarify later, namely, that the wonder at the (noetically) perceived relation between the forms and the wonder at the logical difficulties which accompany the account of these relations are different kinds of wonder – though they are often related, with the degree of separability not always clearly drawn.

This willingness to learn effectively replaces their previous prejudice – indeed it makes them “less burdensome” and “meeker, because [they] will not think that they know what [they] do not” (*Tht.* 210c2-4).¹¹⁸

Returning to the *Theaetetus*, it should not come as a surprise that wonder is an unpleasant *pathos*. If we return to our earlier example of the confrontation between the man-measure doctrine and the three mathematical axioms, we cannot be surprised (we cannot wonder) that it has this negative passive aspect. Rearranging where we place the emphasis when reading the wonder passage, we get the following: “*This* is the pathos of philosophy...”

The “this” is an index which refers to what has just gone before: not just the dizzy, painfully disorienting wonder, but the *cause* of the dizzy wonder as well – the whole of the preceding argument resulting in an *aporia*, the realization that one does not understand a basic concept heretofore taken for granted. Since the wonder passage is relatively early in the *Theaetetus*, we can say that Theaetetus’ belief about knowledge is fragile at best, shaken to an alarming degree when reminded of the mathematical principles that he would not be able to reject, and which pose substantial problems for the feasibility of his definition of “knowledge.” Moreover, this realization comes from *within* (if the examination is successful). The contradiction which leads to the wonder comes from one’s own spiritual offspring, one’s own

¹¹⁸ See Blank (1993, p. 436), “Their [the interlocutors’] desire to show off... their pride, their shame, their shyness, loves and lusts are all manipulated by Socratic dialectic to heighten the emotions of the interlocutors and listeners. These heightened emotions eventually lead them to the cathartic experience of *aporia*, to the pleasure which results from this *aporia*, and to the new-found willingness to learn which now takes the place of their prejudice and braggadocio.” Although Blank speaks of “pleasure” here, he nevertheless exclusively references passages expressing extreme dizziness and general unpleasantness. The pleasure he is referring to is unambiguously descriptive of the sensation of being freed from falsehood and a desire to pursue learning – replacing their false *doxa* with something new.

belief laid bare – in some way, one’s own self is laid bare.¹¹⁹ It is brought forth from the *interlocutor*, (*ex hypothesi*) unsullied by the *maia*. In this “γνωθὶ σεαυτόν” (know thyself) moment, one must abandon the false belief in the end.¹²⁰ One is left not only empty, but devastated, one’s world and understanding thereof in shambles.¹²¹ In order to overcome this devastation, one must turn to philosophy. The pain is meant to be transitory and liberating, cathartic, and perfective of the soul.¹²²

This however only accounts for the passive aspect of wonder. In order to make sense of the passage, we need to understand how this translates into action. Indeed, remaining in this devastated state is not an option.

That one must find a euphoric solution to the *aporia* generating this feeling of wonder is why we can say that wonder is the ἀρχή of philosophy. The renewed effort to substitute a new

¹¹⁹ Compare with *Laches* 187e6 ff. wherein Nicias states of dialogues with Socrates that his interlocutor, “even if he first begins to discuss something else, will of necessity not cease to be led around by the argument *until he falls into giving an account of himself*” (emphasis added).

¹²⁰ See *Sophist* 230b4-c1: They [the noble sophists] cross-examine someone when he thinks he’s saying something though he’s saying nothing. Then, since his opinions will vary inconsistently, these people will easily scrutinize 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. The people who are being examined see this, get angry at themselves, and become calmer toward others.”

¹²¹ For a different take on this feeling of perplexity, see Napolitano Valditara (2014, p. 143), “Dire che il perplesso manca di conoscenza non basta, poiché – a dire della pensatrice spagnola (Zambrano) ‘non solo egli conosce, ma conosce addirittura ‘perfettamente’ le alternative dinnanzi a cui non può che tacere: anzi, come appena letto ‘la perplessità indica un’abbondanza di conoscenza’.” According to this reading, in the state of *aporia*, one is confronted with many conflicting *doxai* which are all present to the individual at the same time.

¹²² See Blank (1993, p. 434), “Self-deception is considered by Plato’s Socrates to be most painful, since one’s deceiver never leaves one alone (*Crat.* 426d), but also one who leaves behind a false impression in someone else is like a bee leaving its stinger behind (*Phd.* 91c [5-6]), and this false belief is bound to have a deleterious effect on the listener’s soul.” In other words, allowing oneself to remain deceived is as bad for the soul as allowing someone else to maintain a false belief. The reference to *Crat.* 426d is likely a typo, as there is no mention of deception at that location. Blank perhaps intended to refer to *Crat.* 429d7 ff. which discusses the possibility of falsehood. He may also have intended to refer to *Crat.* 436d2 ff. which speaks of otherwise consistent proofs based on false premises.

definition, one which will itself be subjected to examination, is philosophy. We will continue to look at the notion of wonder as ἀρχή as opposed to other possible *pathe* in the next chapter.

1.6. Concluding Chapter 1

The goal of this chapter has been to examine Socrates' claim that wonder is the *pathos* of philosophy within its immediate context – that is, to understand it within the context of the maieutic method practiced in the *Theaetetus*.

To accomplish this, we looked at the structure and performance of the maieutic method as it appears in the *Theaetetus*. This examination of the maieutic method demonstrated the centrality of aporia in this method, as well as the natural affective reaction of wonder arising from this aporia. To better understand the relationship between aporia and wonder, we looked at the textual links in the *Theaetetus*, as well as various historical, mythological, cultural, and literary links between the two concepts. We finished by looking at how this affect is lived (phenomenologically) in order to better understand how it can translate into action later.

Indeed, we are left wondering at the end of this chapter why it is that wonder is the ἀρχή of philosophy if it itself arises from the aporetic situations that we have been discussing. This leaves us with a potential problem of circularity which we will be better positioned to examine and resolve to some degree after we have developed a greater understanding of the relationship between aporia and wonder.

In the next chapter, we will continue to examine this relationship between wonder and aporia, and to draw an important distinction between these two concepts. The maieutic method is not the only type of cross-examination used by Socrates in the dialogues. The more common method is the elenchic method of examination. This method is also known to produce aporia;

however, it remains to be seen whether this elenchic method produces the same affective outcome of wonder when faced with aporia.

Chapter 2: Aporia in Other Contexts with Other Results

2.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter we explored the immediate context of the wonder passage to examine the conditions which lead to the *pathos* of wonder. We saw that the moment of aporia or perplexity within the examination is integral to the experience of this *pathos*. In the *Theaetetus*, the experience of aporia results in wonder.

In this chapter we will examine otheraporetic dialogues to see whether or not aporia itself (by itself) is sufficient to bring about this affective response of philosophical wonder. We will see throughout this chapter that it is not enough to elicit a wondering response in the interlocutor, which will become clear through an examination of the method of elenchus – a thoroughly Socratic method of cross-examination especially present in the early dialogues.¹²³ In examining the elenchus we will see that there are multiple possible affective outcomes of anaporetic situation, and we will try to understand what is at the root of the adverse, non-philosophical affects. To this end we will compare the formal and performative structures of the maieutic and elenchic methods to see whether there are differences which play a role in deciding affective outcomes.

We will finish the chapter by revisiting the notion of wonder as ἀρχή to better understand the claim about wonder's relationship to philosophy and the philosopher.

2.2. Brief Overview of the Elenchus

Cross-examination, as we have outlined it in the introduction to this first part of the dissertation, can reasonably be expected to play out in a number of ways. The broad

¹²³ Sometimes also referred to as “elenchic dialogues.”

characterization of “method of question and answer” lends itself to multiple possible practices. Though the maieutic method certainly falls into this category, in the dialogues, as well as in the literature commenting on cross-examination, the two principal sub-genres of cross-examination are identified as elenchus and eristic. The former means “examination” or “test”; the latter means “dispute.” Traditionally, one is expected to associate elenchus with so-called “Socratic” method, and to associate eristic with the Sophists.

What, then, is the specific difference between these two kinds of cross-examination? The difference lies predominantly in the aim of the questioner. In elenchus, the aim is to test the consistency of the interlocutor’s responses, to find the truth, if any, possessed by the interlocutor, and to dispossess this individual of any false beliefs that they might hold. The aim is – at its heart – *truth*, and, as a corollary, the improvement of the interlocutor’s soul. By contrast, the aim of eristic is winning the argument. The truth or falsehood of the interlocutor’s beliefs or of the arguments brought against them is unimportant by comparison.¹²⁴ In sum, we see that elenchus focuses on truth and the interlocutor, and eristic focuses on winning and the examiner (specifically the self-aggrandizement thereof).

Because elenchus and eristic differ in their aims rather than in their method, it is appropriate to think of the latter as being an abuse or deformation of the aims of cross-examination.¹²⁵

¹²⁴ For an apt description of sophistic eristic, one may look to the description of Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, *Eud.* 272a4-b1: “Previously these [fighting with their bodies] were their only skills, but now they have put the finishing touch to pancrastic art. They have now mastered the one form of fighting they had previously left untried; as a result, not a single man can stand up to them, they have become so skilled in fighting in arguments and in refuting whatever may be said, no matter whether it is true or false.”

¹²⁵ Nehamas (1990, p. 8), “I think that [George] Kerford is still quite correct in holding that Plato uses the term ‘eristic’ as a term of abuse, not in order to refer to a method of argument but, instead, to various *misuses* of dialectic.”

This first difference implies a further difference, namely that elenchus is for the benefit of the interlocutor; whereas, eristic is for the benefit of the questioner. If the interlocuter were to benefit from an eristic exchange, it would be by accident and not of necessity.

The remaining subsections will examine the general characteristics of elenchus, its formal structure, and its relationship to aporia. Many of the points raised in describing the elenchus are idealized for the sake of exposition. We will see in future sections that the formal understanding of the elenchus and its aims differ from the performance of the method in the dialogues.

2.2.1. General Characteristics of the Elenchus

As mentioned in the previous section, the elenchus is a method of question and answer. There are, however, different kinds of questions: *primary* questions and *secondary* questions.¹²⁶ In the dialogues which make use of the elenchus, the primary question is the underlying question for the whole of the dialogue. It is a request for information which seeks to establish some working hypothesis (some belief or *doxa*) that will be the principal subject of examination. As with the maieutic method, this is normally a *ti esti* question (“what is x?”). Upon first glance, this kind of question requires a definition, but more fundamentally, it requires the interlocutor to put forth their own belief on the matter. Importantly, “[e]very thesis, no matter how offbeat, is a fit subject for ‘examination’ if put forward seriously as the speaker’s personal belief.”¹²⁷ Secondary questions are the follow-up questions which are posed to clarify the position of the interlocutor, to understand what is meant by the answer to the primary question, and to tease out the set of peripheral beliefs held by the interlocutor regarding the subject of the primary question. Importantly, as many scholars are wont to point out, the truth value of the secondary belief set is

¹²⁶ The terms “primary” and “secondary” questions are adopted from Robinson (1971 (1), pp. 78-93).

¹²⁷ Vlastos (1988, pp. 368).

not examined – at least not to any great depth.¹²⁸ For the purposes of the examination, it is sufficient that the interlocutors agree to the truth of these secondary beliefs.¹²⁹ In general, the secondary beliefs are *endoxa*, widely held beliefs with which it would be strange for the interlocutor to disagree.¹³⁰ The reason that Socrates brings them forth is not to defend them, but to know if the interlocutor also believes them. If the interlocutor agrees to them, then they are taken as true for the purposes of argument.¹³¹ For the sake of testing the truth value of the belief set, agreement is sufficient.

By examining the answers to the primary and secondary questions, the consistency of the set of beliefs is established, resulting in a judgement about the truth or falsehood of the answer to the primary question.¹³² Once the truth or falsehood of a given claim or belief has been established, the interlocutor is meant to reject any previously-held falsehood. This is the expected and desirable outcome of refutation through elenchus. Falsehood is identified by inconsistencies or contradictions implied by the logical interaction between primary and

¹²⁸ Cf. Irwin (1986, p. 58).

¹²⁹ Nehamas (1990, p. 10), “Socrates’ insistence that his interlocutors always answer him with views they truly believe... Socrates always makes sure that the answers he receives are views his interlocutors accept.” Note that the first statement and the second are not necessarily coextensive.

¹³⁰ It is not, however, necessary that the secondary questions be *endoxa*. More important than how broadly they are accepted is whether the interlocutor himself holds or accepts them. Cf. Vlastos (1988, p. 367).

Cf. also Irwin (1977, p. 69), which speaks about social norms and *endoxai* being accepted, but not necessarily understood or justified.

¹³¹ Irwin (1986, p. 68), “He [Socrates] allows Callicles to change and clarify his position as much as he likes, until he is satisfied with the accuracy of Socrates’ statement of it. We should not suspect that Callicles is being misrepresented to make the refutation easier.” Here we see that although an interlocutor might agree to a given *endoxa* in principle, he is nevertheless able to change his mind. However, once the interlocutor has agreed to the statement of his belief, he is bound to that statement of belief and all that it entails regarding his primary response to the *ti esti* question.

See also Vlastos (1982, p. 713), “I accept the burden of proof in holding that Socrates really makes this claim, so unjustified in point of logic, since from the fact that *not-p* is entailed by the conjunction of *q* and *r* (for neither of which has any argument), all that follows is that *p* is inconsistent with those premises, so that *if* the interlocutor chooses to stick by the premises *he* must consider *p* false.”

¹³² *Gorgias* 505e3-6: “I [Socrates] think we ought all to vie with each other in attempting a knowledge of what is true and what is false in the matter of our argument [πρὸς τὸ εἰδέναι τὸ ἀληθὲς τί ἐστὶν περὶ ὧν λέγομεν καὶ τί ψεῦδος]; for it is a benefit to all alike that it be revealed.”

secondary beliefs within the set.¹³³ In other words, falsehood is identified by way of an aporetic situation. In this way, the elenchus represents a method of spiritual purification. The false beliefs which are held, deterring the interlocutor from examining themselves, are shaken loose and discarded, freeing up the “mental space” of the interlocutor so that they may explore new responses to the *ti esti* question. This new response to the primary question must also be examined in the same way as the previous response.¹³⁴

Perhaps the most important imposition of this method is that the interlocutor must answer the questions (both primary and secondary) with what they actually believe.¹³⁵ This is the only way that the method can be fruitful. If the responses are borrowed, hearsay, or the interlocutor otherwise has no personal attachment to their answers, then it will only be the position that is examined, not the interlocutor. The interlocutor will not be persuaded that the shortcoming of the argument is their own shortcoming. Socrates’ aim in employing the elenchus is precisely to examine the interlocutor. This is the only thing that interests him. As Vlastos says, elaborating on Socrates’ words: “the unexamined life is not worth living and the elenchus is its examination.”¹³⁶ Note that here it is the life of the interlocutor and not just their position that is examined. The interlocutor cannot be cured or rid of the falsehood which keeps them from pursuing the truth unless they put forth their actual beliefs and abide by the agreements reached between examiner

¹³³ *Prot.* 332d1-2: “Let us count up our points of agreement.” The answers to the primary and secondary questions are placed together “in plain view.”

¹³⁴ Vlastos (1988, p. 365), “The central theme of this ‘philosophizing’ [reference to *Apol.* 28d5 ff.] is that for each and every one of us, citizen or alien, man or woman, the perfection of our own soul must take precedence over every other concern...” *Apol.* 28d5 ff. compares abandoning philosophy (understood in the *Apology* as the examination of oneself and others) to abandoning one’s post in a military engagement.

¹³⁵ Vlastos (1982, p. 712), “Observance of the ‘say what you believe’ rule is vital, for this is what marks off decisively the practice of elenchus from that of eristic. In the latter, where the prime objective is to win the argument, one can say anything that will yield a debating advantage. In the former, where the prime object is to discover truth, one does not have that option... One must prefer to be refuted – to lose the argument – if what one believes is not true.”

¹³⁶ Vlastos (1985, p. 28).

and interlocutor.¹³⁷ In this way, the interlocutor is, as it were, *internally* persuaded by the elenchus. Only in this way can we really talk about a “successful” elenchus. As Socrates says:

Furthermore, the young men who follow me around of their own free will, those who have most leisure, the sons of the very rich, take pleasure in hearing people questioned; they themselves often imitate me and try to question others. I think they find an abundance of men who believe they have some knowledge but know little or nothing. *The result is that those whom they question are angry, not with themselves but with me (Apol. 23c2-d1, emphasis added).*

And again,

Or if you prefer the method of questions [i.e., cross-examination], ask questions; for an intelligent person ought not to reject this method, on the contrary, he should choose it before all others. However, let me make a suggestion: *do not be unfair in your questioning*; it is very inconsistent for a man who asserts that he cares for virtue to be constantly unfair in discussion; and it is unfair in discussion when a man makes no distinction between merely trying to make points and carrying on a real argument. In the former he may jest and try to trip up his opponent as much as he can, but in real argument he must be in earnest and must set his interlocutor on his feet, *pointing out to him those slips only which are due to himself and his previous associations*. For if you act in this way, those who debate with you will cast the *blame for their confusion and perplexity upon themselves, not upon you*; they will run after you and love you, and they will hate themselves and run away from themselves, *taking refuge in philosophy*, that they may escape from their former selves by becoming different. But if you act in the opposite way, as most teachers do, you will produce the opposite result, and instead of making your young associates philosophers, you will make them hate philosophy when they grow older (*Tht. 167d5-168b2, emphasis added*).¹³⁸

In other words, in order for the examination to be successful (that is, for the interlocutor to be perfected by the examination), it is not sufficient to be simply refuted or shown to be wrong. One must be convinced that the position being refuted is one’s own position. Unless this is the case,

¹³⁷ Again, see Irwin (1986, pp. 57, 68) on abiding by agreements reached through examination. Even if an interlocutor changes his mind about something that he has previously agreed to, he is nevertheless expected to abide by and defend any new agreement that is reached regarding an account of his beliefs.

¹³⁸ As we have seen, the method at play in this dialogue is the maieutic method; however, the way that the passage is worded seems to apply more broadly to any practice which proceeds by way of asking questions. This, we have already stated, is the hallmark of all cross-examination.

the interlocutor will not make progress in their soul, but instead will risk becoming angry at the cross-examiner and turning their back on philosophy.¹³⁹

Just as with the maieutic method, in the elenctic dialogues it is also very often the case that Socrates professes to not contribute to the responses to the questions (either primary or secondary). This is due to his self-professed ignorance. Because of this ignorance, Socrates is not in a position to contribute to the resolution of the problem or question at hand. As a result, both the reader of the dialogue and the interlocutor within the dialogue are meant to understand that it is logic and the interrelationship of the ideas and beliefs themselves which are responsible for whatever results from the elenctic cross-examination. In this way, it is the interlocutor who refutes himself by virtue of his own responses and beliefs.¹⁴⁰

Given the above characteristics, the dialogical nature of elenchus, the fact that the dialogue evolves based on the interlocutor's responses to the primary and secondary questions, and that these responses must be the actual beliefs of the interlocutor, we can infer that the elenchus is a personalized method.¹⁴¹ That is, it is not a standardized practice with a set of predetermined secondary questions. Indeed, because each of the interlocutors in the dialogues is at a different stage in their intellectual formation (or deformation as the case may be), a standardized model would not be effective in achieving the goal of aiding the interlocutors in

¹³⁹ This will be important when we look at other affective responses resulting from aporetic situations.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. *Gor.* 471e2-472c2. In this passage, Socrates states that his elenctic method of refutation does not seek the power of multiple popular witnesses, but only the witness of the interlocutor against himself.

See also, Irwin (1986, p. 51), "You tell me the facts; and the compulsion [of logic] emerges from them plus my beliefs and desires." Here the compulsion of logic is an internal affair.

¹⁴¹ See McCoy (2005, p. 140), "The Socratic elenchus is not abstracted from the character of those whom it questions," because (*ibid.*) "opinions are rooted in [their] character and not only in [their] intellect." For this reason, we can think of them as "habits" of thought.

disabusing themselves of their false beliefs.¹⁴² As we have said, elenchus can only be effective and successful if the interlocutor agrees to the conclusion, which means that they must agree to all of the steps which lead to the conclusion. Depending on where an interlocutor finds himself on the road of spiritual perfection, one interlocutor might accept premises that another might not. As Vlastos says, “Elenchus ... is a human process ... whose outcome is drastically affected by the skill and drive of the contestants.”¹⁴³

Moreover, because the process of elenchus is for the betterment of the interlocutor, we cannot admit – as some scholars do¹⁴⁴ – that the elenchus is a purely negative or destructive method of inquiry. Indeed, it would be far more negative for the interlocutor to remain in a state of unexamined “double-ignorance.”¹⁴⁵

The indictment of the Socratic elenchus as a negative practice is based primarily on two things. The first is Socratic irony, which is perceived as disingenuous or insincere and adversarial.¹⁴⁶ The second reason for this indictment is that this questioning results in an aporetic state, a state of bewilderment or perplexity in the interlocutor. Just as with the maieutic method, an aporia within the context of the elenchic dialogues is an impasse or contradiction arising from the logical implications of the set of beliefs set forth throughout the dialogue by the interlocutor as responses to the primary and secondary questions. It is this aporia which creates enmity in

¹⁴² Per Austin (1987, p. 26), one might also add that elenchic knowledge is tied to particular times, situations, and claims, such that a generalized approach and generalized claims about knowledge become quite difficult.

¹⁴³ Vlastos (1985, p. 19).

¹⁴⁴ Of the scholarship used in this dissertation, Robinson factors chiefly among the critics of the elenchus regarding its disingenuity. Nevertheless, many authors do employ aggressive and negative language when speaking about Socrates' dealings with his interlocutors.

¹⁴⁵ As touched upon briefly in the previous chapter, “double ignorance” would be the interlocutor not knowing that they do not know (what a given X is). It is contrasted by “simple ignorance” which is when the interlocutor recognizes (knows) that they do not know.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Robinson (1971 (1), p. 80).

some interlocutors and allows readers of the dialogues to interpret the elenchus as a negative and destructive method, as insincere in its undertaking as eristic.

This position, however, confuses means and end. The irony and aporia which arise in elenchic dialectic are merely instrumental – though in different ways. Irony is used as a way to incite interest and elicit responses from the interlocutor. Aporia is instrumental in that it is meant to drive the interlocutor to abandon the false belief which gave rise to the aporia and supplant it with something new. Moreover, without the aporia, it is highly unlikely that the interlocutor would ever question their beliefs. It is through the deeply personal approach of the elenchus that the interlocutor is purified of their false beliefs.¹⁴⁷

Finally, we will dwell on what we just stated above for a moment. We stated that aporia is meant to drive the interlocutor to abandon a false belief in order to supplant it with something *new*. It is important to note that the false is not replaced by the *true* – at least not in elenchus. In his article “Socrates’ Disavowal of Knowledge,” Vlastos speaks about a difference between certain knowledge (Knowledge_C) and elenchically justifiable knowledge (Knowledge_E). Vlastos argues that Knowledge_C is not a possible outcome of the elenchus, because the outcomes of elenchus are not known through themselves, but rather through other things.¹⁴⁸ Nor does it necessarily result in Knowledge_E, which can be shown by the fact that most beliefs held by Socrates’ interlocutors are proven false or inconsistent. Elenchus tests the consistency or

¹⁴⁷ Cf. *Sophist*, 230b4-d4. This passage speaks about elenchus as the greatest and most sovereign of the purifications (καὶ τὸν ἔλεγχον λεκτέον ὡς ἄρα μεγίστη καὶ κυριωτάτη τῶν καθάρσεων ἐστὶ).

¹⁴⁸ Vlastos, (1985, p. 18 in particular). Here Vlastos seems to be calling us to the passage of the Divided Line (*Rep.* 509d6-511e5), where Knowledge_C would be reserved for noetic, intuitive knowledge of the forms or “per se nota” truths, whereas Knowledge_E would seem to be more akin to dianoetic, hypothetical activities. We will discuss the Divided Line and the difference between these two kinds of knowledge act further in Chapter 3.

inconsistency of beliefs. A belief that is elenchically justifiable is one that is internally consistent, and may constitute true judgement.¹⁴⁹

In the *Meno*, however, Socrates joins the elenchus with the theory of recollection (ἀνάμνησις), which may result in Knowledge_E. The theory of recollection states that there is true opinion within everyone, one needs simply to remember it. This can be (and is in the examination of the Slave Boy) brought about through elenctic cross-examination. True opinion (Knowledge_E) is, then, a *possible* outcome of elenchus, though not a necessary one.

There is a potentially very long explanation to this problem, one which is echoed precisely in the *Meno* (97c9 ff.) and the *Euthyphro* (11b9-d2), which likens this instance of “orthodoxy” to the statues of Daedalus. These statues have every appearance of being static and dependable, just as one lighting on the truth of the matter; however, if one does not have the actual knowledge (Knowledge_C), then when one goes to find the answer to the problem later should it arise again, one may find that the statues have fled.¹⁵⁰ Take, for example, getting lost in the forest: one might conceivably find one’s way out of the forest. In this sense, one has made a true judgement *per accidens*. However, given the same set of circumstances, one may not be able to find one’s way out again. This is because when one finds one’s way out of the forest by “true judgement,” one does so without having a precise understanding of how and why it is the way out – without an account. This touches upon the problem with Theaetetus’ third definition

¹⁴⁹ Vlastos also points out (1985, p. 19) the importance of temporal considerations for elenchically justifiable knowledge, namely that something may be proven false over time, given different premises or new evidence. It is not clear in this article, however, to what extent Knowledge_E and true judgement are co-extensive.

¹⁵⁰ See also *Timaeus* 51e2-6, “Understanding always involves a true account while true belief lacks any account. And while understanding remains unmoved by persuasion, true belief gives in to persuasion. And of true belief, it must be said, all men have a share, but of understanding, only the gods and a small group of people do.”

“Knowledge is true judgement with an account” (*Tht.* 201c8-d2) which is problematic as it essentially means that “knowledge is true judgement with... knowledge.”¹⁵¹

Knowledge_E, then, is a possible, but not a necessary outcome of elenchus. In the case of a false or inconsistent belief, this must be rejected and replaced. Nevertheless, just as the truth of the first response (P₁, say) was not guaranteed, neither is the truth of P₂, its replacement. This means that the elenchic examination must continue with the examination of P₂. This is part of the reason behind our earlier comment that P₂ is not “truer” than P₁, only “newer” – except insofar as the shortcomings of P₁ are avoided.¹⁵²

In other words, elenchus does not guarantee true outcomes; rather, it examines the consistency of the belief set extracted by primary and secondary questioning, which are set as premises. Contradictions arising from the examination of premises are meant to result in the falsification of the response to the primary, *ti esti* question. Rather than considering a falsified belief a total failure or loss, it ought to be considered a successful outcome of the elenchus – or at least a partially successful outcome.¹⁵³ As Socrates says, “I count being refuted a greater good, insofar as it is a greater good for oneself to be delivered from the worst thing there is [i.e., saying something untrue]” (*Gorg.* 458a5-7).

¹⁵¹ It is not possible to go into great detail on the difference between the elenchus and recollection here. For more on the distinction, see the commentaries of the *Theaetetus* of Burnyeat (1977, pp. 7-16) and McDowell (1973, especially the notes on the midwife passage, pp.116-117).

¹⁵² It is not hard to see that, in the case of Theaetetus, his definitions are progressively better to the extent that they seek to address the deficiencies of the old definitions. We should nevertheless maintain that this is not a necessary outcome. A different interlocutor faced with similar rejection of P₁ (even one on par with Theaetetus in terms of suitability for philosophy) might have given “knowledge is a gift from the gods” as their P₂. There is nothing that would bind an interlocutor to state “knowledge is right judgement.” A possible theoretical scenario where “newer” equaled “truer” could be if it were an infinite series of definitions, such that as P(n) converged on infinity, only true definitions would remain.

¹⁵³ See Vlastos (1985, p. 20), “If an inquiry should run into *aporia*, he (Socrates) can reckon the exercise not total failure but incomplete success.”

2.2.2. Logical Form

Gregory Vlastos gives us the following simplified version of the elenctic test of consistency:¹⁵⁴

1.	P
2.	$(Q \wedge R)$
3.	$(Q \wedge R) \rightarrow \sim P$

In this simplified outline, P stands for the response to the primary questions and $(Q \wedge R)$ are the responses to the secondary questions, the supplementary beliefs within the set. By examining the relationship and logical entailments of $(Q \wedge R)$, it is deduced that if they are true, then they lead to the negation of P. In the end we are left with $(P \wedge \sim P)$. As Vlastos states, “when his argument has rebutted *p*, Socrates feels entitled to assert that not-*p* has thereby ‘been made manifest’, or, equivalently, that the interlocutor now ‘sees’ that this is the case.”¹⁵⁵ It is this contradiction, asserting the truth and falsity of the same thing at the same time, which results in (or rather *constitutes*) the aporetic situation. This is elenctic refutation: cross-examination which results in the aporia of asserting the truth of both a given claim and its contrary.¹⁵⁶ In this sense, aporia is a natural outcome of the exercise of cross-examination.

We could easily say “natural, but not necessary.” As we saw in the previous section, it is hypothetically possible that the belief set is consistent, in which case there would be no aporia.

This situation never really arises in the dialogues – probably because it is philosophically

¹⁵⁴ This simplified version of the elenctic argumentative structure can be found in Vlastos (1982, p. 712). We have further reduced Vlastos’ account to its symbolic expression, as some of the original text is problematic by our estimation (such as presuming that Socrates believes P to be false from the outset).

¹⁵⁵ Vlastos (1985, p. 8). Compare with Vlastos (1982, p. 712), wherein the author implies that Socrates only initiates dialogue when he believes that the interlocutor answers wrongly.

¹⁵⁶ As the saying goes, a philosopher may choose his premises, but not his conclusion.

uninteresting to speak about the confirmation of a theory.¹⁵⁷ However, it does force one to rethink the above simplification of elenchus. One would have to amend premise 3 and add a fourth premise:

3.	$[(Q \wedge R) \rightarrow P] \vee [(Q \wedge R) \rightarrow \sim P]$
4.	$[(Q \wedge R) \rightarrow \sim P] \rightarrow (P \wedge \sim P)$

In other words, either the secondary beliefs will prove consistent with the primary belief or they will contradict it. It is in the latter case that one is plunged into aporia.¹⁵⁸

In the above simplified argument, we see that there is no alternative option brought forward to replace P. It is up to the interlocutor to offer a new response, a response which must itself be examined in its own turn.¹⁵⁹ In eristic, by contrast, there might be a further premise, introduced by the sophistic examiner, their own response to the question: $(\sim P \rightarrow S)$. This would introduce not only a new response to the primary question; it would also introduce external influence into the dialectic, influence that was not present before, as, hypothetically, premises 1-3 in the above simplification by Vlastos were sourced internally within the interlocutor. This is why we can say that the *interlocutor* is perfected by the elenchus – it is his own ideas that are laid bare and tested, not ideas placed in him by another.

We should hasten to mention that, in the cases present in the dialogues, when elenchus results in refutation the interlocutor needs to posit some replacement answer to the primary question. It would be rather difficult for an individual to go through life with no provisional,

¹⁵⁷ Note that a similar possible confirmation of a theory is logically possible in the maieutic method.

¹⁵⁸ Irwin points out (1977, p.68) that Socrates should not believe that the elenchus can never meet the demand for a definition of a given X; nevertheless, as Robinson points out (1971 (1), p. 80), the *expected* truth value outcome of the elenchus is falsehood.

¹⁵⁹ Irwin (1977, p. 134), “Socrates seems to hope that Charmides will (1) see the shortcomings of his own beliefs; (2) embark upon an earnest quest to replace his poorly thought-out beliefs with better ones; and (3) see how a deficiency in his beliefs reflects a personal deficiency in himself.”

working definition of “justice” or “the good,” for example. Such fundamental and moral ideas colour every aspect of one’s life and actions. This does not mean that the replacement belief is necessarily true; however, until proven false by further examination, it can serve as a life preserver in the sea of *aporia*.¹⁶⁰

The principle outcome of this on an epistemic level is the move from so-called “double ignorance” to “simple” or “wise ignorance”: that is, a move from “not knowing that one does not know” to “knowing that one does not know.” This transition is fortified anew with each practice of elenctic cross-examination, as knowledge of a given thing is less and less taken for granted.

In summary, the elenchus admits the following characteristics: it is a dialogue between at least two individuals which plays out as a series of questions and answers; the answers tendered must be the actual beliefs of the interlocutor; the elenchus is a method for testing the consistency of a set of beliefs, often resulting in an *aporia*; the method is purgative of false beliefs (as realized by the *aporia*), and is thereby perfective of the interlocutor’s soul; finally and ideally, the result of the elenchus is the move from double ignorance to simple ignorance, the realization that one does not know that which one thought one knew.¹⁶¹

Much of what we have discussed in this section has been highly idealized. Most if not all of the elenctic dialogues end in *aporia* according to the logical form established above; however, if we apply the criteria “perfective of the soul,” it is not clear that these dialogues are successful.

¹⁶⁰ This underscores the difference between the elenchus and the theory of recollection (*ἀνάμνησις*) on display in the *Meno*. Though both have to do with educating the beliefs of the interlocutor, the outcomes are different. In the *Meno*, the slave boy’s *ἀνάμνησις* comes about through elenctic examination; however, the outcome of *ἀνάμνησις* (i.e., true belief) is not a necessary outcome of the elenchus (as is seen in most other dialogues). Elenchus, fundamentally, only guarantees the consistency or inconsistency of a set of beliefs. As we saw above, the former case results in Knowledge_E, elenctically justifiable knowledge, whereas the latter, more frequent case results in the elimination of a false belief, a belief which is replaced with a *new* belief, not necessarily a *true* belief.

¹⁶¹ In Vlastos (1988), the author gives additional traits of the elenchus.

The aporia in the elenctic dialogues normally do not end in wonder, in the way that the aporia in the maieutic method do. We shall examine some of the aporetic outcomes in the elenctic dialogues presently.

2.2.3. Outcomes of Aporia

As just stated, many of the elenctic dialogues end in aporia, but do not result in wonder. The more common outcome of elenctic cross-examination seems to be anger or frustration. A clear example of this – and one which we will be revisiting frequently – is Callicles in the *Gorgias*.

After spending much time resisting Socrates' examination, changing his mind frequently, and not settling on a position that can be examined, Callicles finally begins to respond (presumably honestly) to the questions put to him. However, when it comes time to draw the final conclusion about the best ruler for the city – either the one who, like a doctor, will make the city better, or the one who will gratify the city – Callicles chooses gratification out of fear of retribution from the people (*Gorg.* 521a2-c2 and surrounding text). This passage also shows that Callicles still very much prefers the discipline of rhetoric to philosophy.¹⁶² He is incapable of following the agreed upon premises to their natural conclusion.

There are other examples that we could point to, such as the disputatious-bordering-on-comedic exchanges between Laches and Nicias in the *Laches*. The definitions of courage provided by both characters are refuted and, rather than becoming humbler in their approach, they begin to squabble – not with Socrates, but with each other.

¹⁶² This passage is reminiscent of the digression in the *Theaetetus* (172c3-177c5). This passage speaks about the difference between the leisured philosopher and the lawyer-type, skilled in flattery but with no freedom (or desire) to pursue truth.

It is also worthwhile to point out that many elenctic dialogues simply end once the aporia has been laid bare and the interlocutor is either simply made aware of their error or flees their ignorance. In this sense, it is hard to analyze the affective response at work. In the *Laches*, the characters bicker, seemingly angrily, with one another, but it is not clear whether the anger is a result of personal tension or a result of the experience of aporia. Nevertheless, aporia resulting from elenchus in many (if not all) dialogues seems to end in failure. Many interlocutors are not improved, and many turn away from philosophy.

There are some textual references to wonder which appear in elenctic dialogues; however, these are more often than not cases of eristic or the result of persuasive oratory.¹⁶³ In these cases, it is not so much that the interlocutor wonders at the realization of their own ignorance produced by an aporia, but rather that they wonder at the skillful employment of oratorical acumen. To be clear, in eristic there may be an aporia presented, but it may not be one which would be definitively problematic for true philosophical inquiry. As we stated earlier, the goal of eristic is winning the argument; persuading an interlocutor of the appearance of a problem is just as effective for winning as presenting them with a real problem. Truth plays a tertiary role to persuasion and profit (*cf. Tht.* 165d2-e6).

We will be revisiting these different outcomes of aporia in greater detail when we continue the examination of *pathos* in the next section. We will look at dialogues with explicit actions which show a clearer picture of how the interlocutors feel and how this affects their actions, remembering that we have espoused the view that affects by definition translate to

¹⁶³ When wonder arises as the result of an aporia in an elenctic dialogue, it is usually Socrates who is wondering at the aporia, not the interlocutor. For example, *Lys.* 216c4-6, “I [Socrates] hardly know myself. I’m getting downright dizzy with the perplexities of our argument.”

action. Wonder is an important outcome, as, per Plato, it translates to philosophical action specifically.

2.3. A Closer Look at Aporia and Pathos

We are beginning to see that aporia by itself is not sufficient to bring about the pathos of wonder, and hence is not sufficient to bring about philosophical activity. This section will explore some considerations which might explain why this is the case. There are three aspects which will be examined.

The first has to do with the examiner and how they are perceived by the interlocutor. This is exemplified by three metaphors encountered in cross-examination dialogues, one of which we are already familiar with – the midwife. These metaphors represent different affective outcomes of a given aporetic situation.

The second has to do with the interlocutor and the structure and order of their soul. This is a more complex issue and cannot be explored exhaustively here. We will satisfy ourselves with a brief overview of the tripartition of the soul and a quick discussion of how the level of “education” of the soul plays a part in the interlocutor’s amenability to philosophical inquiry.¹⁶⁴

The third point is the importance of persuasion – a twofold persuasion. There is persuasion that the theory or belief expressed is an accurate portrayal of one’s own belief, and there is persuasion by the logic of the argument or examination that the belief is true or false (more often the latter in the dialogues). This third aspect, persuasion, in some sense requires that the first two aspects (disposition of the soul and disposition toward the examiner) are in a favourable state to be effective.

¹⁶⁴ Of particular interest on the subject of the tripartition of the soul, specifically the role of the *thumos* within this structure, we will closely follow the interpretation of Olivier Renaut (2014).

Examining these three aspects will better position us to see if the differences between the elenchus and the maieutic method (whether formal or performative) play a role in the affective outcomes of cross-examination.

2.3.1. Mixing Metaphors: The Midwife, the Gadfly, and the Stingray: The Perception of the Cross-Examiner and the Impact on Aporetic Outcomes

There are three metaphors that are appealed to in Plato's dialogues to exemplify the Socratic cross-examination (or more specifically, the *examiner* in these dialogues – Socrates himself): the midwife (μαῖα), the stingray (ναρκός), and the gadfly (μύωψ). The first of these, the midwife, we have already explained at great length, so we will not address it further here, except as a counterexample to the remaining two.¹⁶⁵ We will explore these metaphors now, as they demonstrate the different affective outcomes of cross-examination.

At its most basic, cross-examination (when it results in a contradiction) can be broken down into three parts: pre-aporetic, aporia, and post-aporetic. We know, per our discussion in the preceding chapter, that wonder can and does result from aporia elicited by the *maia*. In the elenchus, the pre-aporetic part corresponds to the primary and secondary questioning, the aporia is the intellectual/rational perception of the contradiction, and the post-aporetic part is what the interlocutor does with the aporia, the reaction and pursuant actions. This post-aporetic part is extremely important, and it seems to be affected by the way that the elenchus is introduced to the interlocutor. In other words, the post-aporia is heavily influenced by the pre-aporetic conditions. (The aporia itself is neutral and objective; however, the narrative leading to it affects the outcome which follows from it.) Regarding the pre-aporetic part, we have already discussed the need for honesty and commitment to one's answers to primary and secondary questions. One

¹⁶⁵ This is not an exhaustive list. As we have seen, there is also the image of the physician in *Charmides*. In some sense, this image can be linked to *maia*, and so we will not address it here.

must respond according to one's actual beliefs and must be committed to defending those beliefs to the best of one's ability. The degree to which this is adhered to seems to drastically affect the outcome of the post-aporetic moment and any action following therefrom. If the interlocutor does not follow the minimum requirement of commitment to their beliefs, there is a greater probability of an undesirable aporetic and post-aporetic situation – a failure of the examination.

Another way of understanding the post-aporetic moment is by positing that an aporetic situation *requires* a response on the part of the interlocutor. One can either accept or deny the falsehood of one's beliefs. The obvious response of the philosopher, the response of the wonderer, is one of accepting that one has held a false belief and severing oneself from that belief. One understands that what one once held to be true (or believed to be true) is not in fact true. The action which follows from this response is one of abandonment: one cuts oneself free of the falsehood. This in turn frees one to pursue other options which may prove more fruitful if not truer.¹⁶⁶

This leads us to our three metaphors, each of which demonstrates a different possible outcome in the post-aporetic moment – a different affective response to the aporia.

Though the above-noted metaphors are all in different dialogues, they all arise in dialogues employing some form of cross-examination. More importantly, they are all accepted or brought forth by Socrates as adequate descriptors of himself *qua* examiner. Finally, though they are each seemingly innocuous, they contain a great deal of information. Two of these metaphors come from Socrates describing himself: the midwife and the gadfly. These two metaphors imply a stirring to action: the gadfly stings the horse into walking; the midwife induces the labour of the spiritual offspring and helps bring it forth. The third, the stingray, comes from the *Meno* and

¹⁶⁶ Again, compare with *Phd.* 85c9-d1, wherein one is encouraged to adopt any better explanation to a problem until the real solution is found.

is only accepted by Socrates in a qualified way (*Meno* 79e7-80d4). This metaphor does not stir the interlocutor to action; rather, it benumbs him. Let us look at a few examples of post-aporetic responses corresponding to each metaphor to illustrate.

In the *Apology*, where Socrates describes himself as a gadfly, we are told that Socrates' interactions with the wise people of Athens lead his interlocutors and the bystanders to anger and to turn against him (*Apol.* 30e2-31a1). If we were to look for examples of Socrates the gadfly in other dialogues, we would see figures such as Euthyphro (*Euthyphro*), Callicles (*Gorgias*), and Anytus (*Meno*). In each instance, we see that the interlocutor leaves Socrates in a frustrated or angry state, generally unimproved by the elenchus or exchange.

The gadfly image is appropriate. Socrates is perceived by his interlocutors as a pest, one which is stinging them. Certainly, they react and are stirred to action, but it is in order to resist and turn against Socrates.¹⁶⁷ When faced with the aporia, they resist, double down on their false beliefs, or simply leave. This turn from Socrates is a symbolic turn away from philosophy and self-improvement. By running away from the discomfort of the gadfly bite, they have missed their opportunity to be spiritually improved.

In the three examples of Euthyphro, Callicles, and Anytus, we cannot say that the elenchus was successful, nor can we say that the interlocutors were improved by their discoursing with Socrates. Euthyphro leaves in a rush and likely angry and frustrated at Socrates' implication that his lack of knowledge of piety makes the indictment of his father irresponsible and shameful (*Euth.* 15d4-e2). Callicles, also resists Socrates in every way possible, refusing to

¹⁶⁷ As a modern-day example, we can compare to a hornet buzzing around someone. In this instance, it is a common occurrence that the individual in question experiences an almost frenzied mania and begins swatting at the hornet – not only when it approaches them, but also when it approaches others. Ironically, this defensiveness is more likely to result in getting stung.

commit to any position.¹⁶⁸ In the end, even after conceding to Socrates' argument, he still responds that flattery is better than challenging Athens to be better (*Gorg.* 521a8). Finally, Anytus, after a very short discussion with Socrates, leaves angry, because, as Socrates surmises, he thinks that Socrates is slandering people like him rather than questioning him sincerely (*Meno* 95a2-7). We can assume that he was not improved, as he is one of Socrates' main accusers in the dramatic timeline, condemning him to death in the *Apology*.

This brief analysis of the gadfly imagery as a motif in the pre-aporetic part of the dialogue – the perception of Socrates as a nuisance, stinging only to be a bother for society – shows that the post-aporetic response tends toward anger and a rejection of philosophy. This reaction of anger is no doubt rooted in certain dispositional flaws of the interlocutor; however, as was mentioned, it is also important to point out that in these gadfly-like dialogues, it is also the person of Socrates who is identified (explicitly or implicitly) as a kind of threat, a pest that is only there to induce pain, with no promise of relieving that pain.

Whereas the gadfly image produces a response to the aporia – some action – the stingray metaphor in the *Meno* does not. As the Greek name for stingray/torpedo fish suggests, the *ναρκή*¹⁶⁹ paralyses, and deadens the senses – indeed deadens the ability to react. Socrates only accepts this likeness in a qualified way. His ability to benumb others with doubt like the stingray comes from an abundance of doubt rather than any sureness or knowledge (*Meno* 80c6-d1). This appears to be the only instance in the dialogues where the post-aporetic reaction is one of paralysis: Meno, who once made many speeches about virtue, is no longer able to render an

¹⁶⁸ It bears remarking that by the time Callicles is being examined, Socrates has already examined (and to some extent refuted) Gorgias and Polus. Rather than temper Callicles' approach, this seems to fuel a greater resistance to dialogue with Socrates, whom he accuses of employing eristic rather than dialectic in his examination.

¹⁶⁹ From which we get the English “narcotic,” “narcolepsy.”

account of it when pressed. The realization that he does not know what he thought he knew is overwhelming. Indeed, the dialogue ends without an answer to the question “what is virtue?”¹⁷⁰

If the interlocutor cannot bring himself to reject the false belief or replace it – paralyzed as he is – he cannot be said to have improved either. As Socrates points out in the *Theaetetus* regarding mobilism: if a body does not move, it stagnates (*Tht* 153a5 ff.).

Thus, we see that both the figures of the gadfly and stingray, though clearly useful in understanding the nature of cross-examination, fall short of portraying a successful execution and outcome of the elenchus, one which results in further philosophical activity. This leaves us with the image of the midwife. As we have already examined this topic at length, we will simply add that the animosity of gadfly-like and the paralysis of stingray-like imagery is absent from the midwife metaphor. Though there is still the pain of aporia, the midwife is not seen by the interlocutor as the *source* of that pain. Their role is to deliver the idea already present in the interlocutor. It is immanently productive in a positive way.

There are, then, at least three possible responses to this dizzying disorientation of aporia, the devastation of one’s doxological undoing: paralysis, refusal to accept (i.e., denial), and acceptance. Put in terms of action, we get: no action, negative action, and positive action.¹⁷¹

These outcomes directly relate to the metaphors that we have just examined: the stingray (ναρκή) results in or represents simple, utter paralysis; the gadfly (μύωψ) results in negative action, namely a turn away from philosophy; and the midwife (μαῖα) results in positive action, the

¹⁷⁰ Whereas the ναρκή produces paralysis in Meno, it does not have the same effect on the Slave Boy. What is the principal difference between Meno and the Slave? The most obvious difference is that Meno boasts of having knowledge of virtue, having given many and long speeches about it; by contrast, the Slave Boy does not pretend to know anything about the geometrical proof that he will produce as a result of discoursing with Socrates. Pretension to knowledge stands in the way of spiritual progress and is eradicated as the primary result of elenctic cross-examination.

¹⁷¹ The designations “positive,” “negative,” and “neutral” applied to action refer to their effect on the soul, and the disposition of the interlocutor toward philosophy.

rejection of false beliefs and a turn toward philosophical activity – thereby perfecting one’s soul. In their original context, we see these metaphors used as responses to the aporetic moment of cross-examination, but in each case, the outcome is different. Interestingly, Socrates is able to claim a likeness to all of these things in virtue of his ignorance. These post-aporetic results can be categorized in two ways.

The first categorization of these outcomes relates to action versus inaction, affectivity versus passivity. The gadfly and the midwife both elicit a response, an action on the part of the interlocutor, whereas the stingray only paralyzes. It is the numbness, the paralysis caused by Meno’s aporetic situation (*Meno*, 79e7-80a3) which causes him to accuse Socrates of bewitching him with his “spells and incantations,” reducing him to utter perplexity (μεστὸν ἀπορίας γεγονέναι). He then explains what this perplexity is like: he feels as though he has been stung by a stingray (ναρκή), paralysed and numb by mere proximity to Socrates.¹⁷² Moreover, it is not simply a cognitive paralysis, but a physical paralysis as well (τὴν ψυχὴν καὶ τὸ σῶμα ναρκῶ, *Meno* 80b1). Meno’s tongue, which once gave many speeches on virtue, is now paralysed by the realization of his own ignorance. Socrates’ reply to this is reminiscent of the maieutic passage. He states that his paralysing influence is not in virtue of any specific knowledge that he could be accused of possessing. Rather, the paralysing perplexity and the resultant realization of ignorance that others feel in the presence of Socrates is a mere propagation of his own perplexity and ignorance – which is greater than any other (παντὸς μᾶλλον αὐτὸς ἀπορῶν, *Meno* 80c9).¹⁷³

¹⁷² Compare with the words of Alcibiades, *Sym.* 215d3-6. Whenever someone hears a speech from Socrates, all are struck dumb with adoration (ἐκπεπληγμένοι).

¹⁷³ Compare with *Charm.* 169c2-6, “When Critias heard this and saw that I was in difficulties, then, just as in the case of people who start yawning when they see other people doing it, he seemed to be affected by my troubles and to be seized by difficulties himself.”

This is quite readily associable with his self-professed ignorance by virtue of which he can be called a spiritual midwife (*Thet.* 149a6-10, 150c3-7).

Moreover, a bit later in the dialogue, we are shown a different outcome of this perplexity and paralysis – though, crucially, it does not involve Meno. At *Meno* 84b6-c6, after Socrates has reduced the slave boy to a state of perplexity, he states that rather than harming the individual who is paralysed and perplexed, the paralysis of *aporia* has helped the individual to find the truth of the matter. Being made aware of his ignorance, he will now search for truth, where before he would have merely supposed that he knew the answer and did not need to look.¹⁷⁴ The individual would never have been made aware of this ignorance had he not been “stung” by the stingray, had he not been thrown into this state of perplexity. However, it is important to remember that, of the dialogue’s three interlocutors, it was neither Meno nor Anytus that benefitted from discoursing with Socrates, but the slave boy. The other two have not grown spiritually.

The second categorization of the outcomes of *aporia* applies to the characteristic of the action, that is, whether the action will be positive or negative. The difference between the gadfly and the midwife has to do with the affective response of the interlocutor. Whereas in the dialogues, the interlocutors that are bitten by the *aporia* of the gadfly tend more often than not to become angry and flee from further discourse before they are able to make progress in their soul, those whose pain is soothed by the midwife tend to make progress and turn toward philosophy.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ *Meno* 84c10-11: “Look then how he [the slave boy] will come out of his perplexity while searching along with me.”

There is an interesting passage which suggests that even the sting of the *narke* is supposed to elicit action – or at least Socrates believes it can. “We must, therefore, not believe that debater’s argument [i.e., the paradox of inquiry, how to search for that whereof one is ignorant], for it would make us *idle*, and fainthearted men like to hear it, whereas my argument makes them *energetic and keen on the search*” (*Meno* 81d5-e1, emphasis added). The former applies to Meno, paralyzed by ignorance and afraid to search; the latter applies to the Slave Boy, who allows himself to be led by Socrates.

¹⁷⁵ McCoy (2005, p. 154), “There is no guarantee that the person being questioned will even see the link between an inability to articulate a definition and a lack in his own soul, but this is not the failure of the *elenchus per se* but rather the failure – all too common – of an interlocutor to acknowledge his inadequacy.”

Socrates' self-estimation as a gadfly is interesting, as his intention is clearly to stir his interlocutors into action by way of elenchus; he wishes for them to be philosophical in their approach to life. However, like the gadfly, his questioning is perceived as a nuisance, and his interlocutors become angry and therefore less inclined to pursue philosophy. This shows that even though Socrates' intentions are pure, the degree to which he is perceived as a threat can and does undermine the efficacy of these intentions.

As a final point on these three metaphors, in his book *Socratic Perplexity*, Garreth Matthews spends the ninth chapter examining the differences in these three metaphors under the guise of a thought experiment: what if only the *Apology* or *Meno* were extant?¹⁷⁶ How would this affect a reader's understanding of Platonic elenchus, and more fundamentally, the centrality of aporia in cross-examination?

Though the gadfly passage arises in the *Apology*, he states, "from the *Apology* alone, however, one could hardly get the idea that perplexity is important to philosophy, or even that it is important to Socrates."¹⁷⁷ This is because the *Apology* deals with self-reflection. The gadfly is meant to stir people to know themselves, and, when facing themselves, they become angry (or perhaps frightened) and flee. The stingray conveys a deeper level of perplexity relating to common notions and "when one meets with even temporary failure, one's confidence that one even understands everyday words and expressions may be undermined."¹⁷⁸ This results in "the speechlessness of shame at having one's own incompetence revealed."¹⁷⁹ This leaves us with the

¹⁷⁶ Matthews (1999, pp. 87-95).

¹⁷⁷ *Idem*, p. 89. This claim is not totally accurate, as the dialogue in question certainly does deal with Socrates' own perplexity, which motivates his actions. In the *Apology*, Socrates is motivated to engage philosophically with Athenians because of his own aporetic moment: being called the wisest man while knowing that he knows nothing.

¹⁷⁸ *Idem*, p. 91.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.* "Incompetence" is a rather strong word. One might substitute "ignorance" in its stead. To Plato, "ignorance" would not be pejorative, though to a sophist it would definitely be an undesirable trait.

maieutic method. The midwife is a much more desirable image, as it is immanently more productive and positive. This is because the midwife's role is to bring forth the idea already present in the interlocutor.¹⁸⁰

Of the three images, the one that is overtly associated with wonder is the midwife. In the *Theaetetus*, the conditions of a successful pre-aporetic moment are met, such that, in the moment of aporia, the interlocutor accepts the contradiction of his own beliefs – rather than rejecting them in anger or being overwhelmed by them in stunned shame – and experiences the *pathos* of wonder. Certainly, how the interlocutor views the examiner is itself one of the conditions for a successful pre-aporetic situation, and hence for the post-aporetic outcome. The interlocutor only has access to their appraisal of the situation; they do not have insight into the intentions – however pure – of the examiner. This appraisal has an impact on the post-aporetic outcome.

We now turn our attention to some additional conditions which also seem to impact the post-aporetic outcome.

2.3.2. Brief Excursus on the Tripartition of the Soul

As should be clear from the previous section, aporia and wonder are not co-extensive. If they were, then wonder would be the only possible outcome of aporia. Why this is the case can further be explained by a brief examination of the tripartition of the soul as it is described in several dialogues. Our aim here is not to give a comprehensive account of the tripartition of the soul, but rather to provide enough of an overview for a discussion on how best to understand the

¹⁸⁰ Cf. *Ibid.* “One thing is the aim of midwifery. Midwives exist to aid in childbirth. This is their primary purpose. Presumably philosophical midwives also exist to aid in philosophical childbirth, where philosophical childbirth is presumably the delivery of a viable philosophical theory, doctrine, or analysis. This feature of the midwife image guarantees Socrates a more positive and productive role than we could possibly get from the stingray image.”

This positive role is not tarnished by the philosophical abortion practice, which is also practiced by the philosophical midwife, as this too, as we have seen, is beneficial for the interlocutor's spiritual perfection.

difference between rational, affective, and desirous roles in a given aporetic situation.¹⁸¹ This discussion will further ground our earlier claims about affects being powerful motivators of action. The two dialogues that we will look at are the *Republic* and the *Phaedrus*. In these dialogues, Plato divides the soul into the following “parts”: reason (νοῦς, *nous*), spirited part (θῦμος, *thumos*), and desire (ἐπιθυμία, *epithumia*).

Each of these parts governs (or is governed by) specific ends. Reason governs intellectual acts such as intuition, reasoning, judging, opining; the *thumos* is the part of the soul which experiences and processes emotions and emotional responses (*pathe*); finally, desire is governed by pleasure and pain. The latter two parts relate to bodily functions and needs; whereas reason is an immaterial “part” which is not ordered toward material ends.

With this breakdown of the parts of the soul, it should be clear that when we speak of aporia and wonder, or aporia and anger, we are speaking about two things which relate to separate parts of the soul, two different functions.¹⁸²

Aporia itself belongs most properly to reason (νοῦς), as it is a rational realization. The conclusion ($P \wedge \sim P$) on its own occurs at the rational level; it has to do with the interplay of ideas, rational judgements, and the like (dianoetic activities). Wonder, anger, and all the other emotions and affects belong to the *thumos*, the “spirited” part of the soul. This is suggested by the wonder claim itself: “wonder is the *pathos* of the philosopher.” Insofar as it is a *pathos*, it belongs to the *thumos*. The role of this part of the soul tends to be less clear cut. In the *Republic* its role is distinguished from the other parts by showing the struggle between emotions and desires, as well as desires and rational calculations (*Rep.* 439e6-441c7). For example, disgust which turns one

¹⁸¹ To give a comprehensive account would be impossible. For recent literature of particular interest on the topic, see Renaut (2014).

¹⁸² *Rep.* 436a9-d1, “Do we learn with one part, get angry with another, and with some third part desire the pleasures of food, drink, sex, and the others that are closely akin to them?”

away from the object of desire (*Rep.* 439e9-10) or anger at oneself at the inability to overcome base desires for intellectual pursuits (*Rep.* 440a8-b4).

In this way, depending on whether the *thumos* is more aligned with reason or desire, it can play a strong role in motivating actions.

But what if, instead, he believes that someone has been unjust to him? Isn't the spirit within him boiling and angry, fighting for what he believes to be just? Won't it endure hunger, cold, and the like and keep on till it is victorious, not ceasing from noble actions until it either wins, dies, or calms down, called to heel by reason within him, like a dog by a shepherd?" (*Rep.* 440c7-d3)

For Plato, the *thumos* seems to naturally align itself with reason.¹⁸³ The *Phaedrus* portrays the tripartition of the soul through the metaphor of the chariot. Reason is the charioteer, the *thumos* is the well-bred, obedient horse, which, when itself under the control of reason, helps bring the desires (the bad, undisciplined horse) in line with reason, in order to ascend to the hyperouranian plane of the forms (*Phdr.* 253c7-255e4).¹⁸⁴

It seems natural that for any given rational situation there could be an affective dimension or reaction. Being made aware of a death – coming to know that someone has died – is accompanied by sadness or grief. Being told that one is wrong, as we have seen, is accompanied variously by anger, paralysis, or wonder. These affective responses clearly affect how one acts as a result. The responses also seem to have a reciprocal impact on how one perceives things on the level of reason: objectivity is hampered by intense emotions, especially “negative emotions.” As Renaut says, “le *thumos* se singularise par son « intermédiation », c'est-à-dire sa capacité à relier

¹⁸³ This may be due to influence from epic and lyric poetry. In Homer, Hesiod, and Pindar, the *thumos* is often portrayed as the seat of rational activity in addition to the locus of emotion. It is not until later that it takes on a predominantly emotional role. Cf. Sullivan (1995, pp. 54-70) on the history of “*thumos*” and its uses in classical literature.

¹⁸⁴ Compare with *Rep.* 440e2-6, “The position of the spirited part seems to be the opposite of what we thought before. Then we thought of it as something appetitive, but now we say that it is far from being that, for in the civil war in the soul it aligns itself far more with the rational part.”

les pôles de la raison et du désir, en transformant certains jugements de valeurs en « force », ou inversement certaines tendances sensibles en habitudes réfractaires aux raisonnements et à la persuasion.”¹⁸⁵

This leads us to the next part of our discussion on the tripartition of the soul, namely, the “education” of the soul. By this we mean establishing an order in the soul which is governed by reason, ensuring that the parts of the soul which tend more naturally to the satisfaction of bodily needs follow the mandates of reason, instead of reason being led on by desires and passions.¹⁸⁶ Indeed, in the same way that the charioteer needs the horses in order to move, reason needs both the *thumos* and the desires in order to reach its goals: no horses, no movement, no ascent. Conversely, this means that if a soul is disordered, reason is at the mercy of the other two parts of the soul, either making no progress, or making progress in the wrong direction.

It is clearly suggested in the *Republic* (414b1 ff.)¹⁸⁷ and the *Phaedrus* that some individuals have a naturally better-disposed soul, one which is already fairly well-ordered. However, he also states in the *Phaedrus* that it is possible for a soul to become ordered through contemplation, especially contemplation of the Beautiful (*Phdr.* 249c4-250b1, 250c8-d3).¹⁸⁸

For this reason, we can conceive of each individual admitting a variety of spiritual “dispositions” to the degree that each is more or less ruled by reason, passions, and desires. If

¹⁸⁵ Renaut (2014, p. 16).

¹⁸⁶ *Idem*, p. 20, “Parce que la vertu au sens propre, c’est-à-dire le savoir, est inaccessible pour le non-philosophe, il est nécessaire d’éduquer au moins les dispositions affectives et émotives, afin que ces dernières soutiennent une activité « rationnelle ».”

¹⁸⁷ This passage is the “Myth of the Metals,” and although it is described as a “useful/noble falsehood,” it nevertheless highlights natural dispositions in the soul, which also display themselves as natural aptitudes for governing: “All of you in the city are brothers... but the god who made you mixed some gold into those who are adequately equipped to rule, because they are most valuable...” (*Rep.* 415a2-5).

¹⁸⁸ For reasons of scope, we cannot go into detail here. We will look at the importance of Beauty to some degree in the second part of the dissertation as a consistent object and cause of contemplative wonder.

one is more ruled by base pleasures, then one will resist the orders of reason – especially if these are seen to be less pleasant.

We can relate this brief overview of the tripartition of the soul back to the affects of wonder or anger as results of aporia by applying the notion of education of the soul to the aporetic moment itself. We must seek to understand this aporetic moment as it applies to the parts of the soul. In chapter 1, we saw that perplexity and wonder are not necessarily *pleasant* feelings. The feeling of painful disorientation is not something that the interlocutor enjoys. Yet it is more philosophical, because it leads one to further examine either the theory under examination or to re-examine the question itself – to address flaws in the theory and thereby to strengthen it, or to abandon it as false. In other words, the unpleasantness is weathered by the interlocutor for the sake of a rational pursuit. In this instance, *thumos* is aligned with reason and is able to overcome the initial unpleasantness of the aporia (to which desire would be ill-disposed by nature).

By this account of the soul, on the level of reason, there is a realization of $(P \wedge \sim P)$.¹⁸⁹ This rational realization would, hypothetically, have both a spirited (*thumoeidetic*) and a desirous (*epithumetic*) extension. In a soul that is disordered, desire will be more prevalent (*Phdr.* 254a7-b3) and will likely win the day. As desire concerns itself with pleasure and pain, the discomfort

¹⁸⁹ See Konstan (2006 (1), p. 21). This passage speaks of the importance of evaluation judgements which affect which emotions will arise in a given situation. Slightly later (*idem*, p. 24), the author writes, “Evaluation presupposes values, and insofar as emotions are a function of value judgements, they will vary from one individual to another and according to the collective values of particular communities.” In other words, values affect the judgement and judgements affect the emotional outcome. See also Renault (2014, p. 9).

On this, see also Nussbaum (2001, p. 31), who links emotional states with “eudaimonia.” By this she means that emotions are tied to value judgements associated with personal flourishing (e.g., we grieve when something/-one we perceive as valuable to us is taken away). It bears noting that Nussbaum considers wonder to be “non-eudaimonistic” in that it is not clear how the object of wonder factors into our personal flourishing. We will see in the second part that there are issues with this interpretation of wonder. For now, let it suffice to draw a distinction between the value judgement (which would properly arise at the level of the $\nu\omicron\varsigma$) and the emotion reacting to said judgement (belonging to the $\theta\acute{\upsilon}\mu\omicron\varsigma$).

produced by aporia will more likely than not result in a negative reaction which leads the individual *away* from further philosophical examination – that is, the desirous part of the soul will rebel against reason. It is not unreasonable to expect that, in such a disordered soul, *thumos* would associate more readily with desire and hence the affective extension of the aporetic situation would be one which facilitates fleeing rational examination – insofar as this is less pleasant.

Wonder turns one toward the problem, rather than away. It puts attention on the aporia, but also on the source of the aporia – the self and its false beliefs. The fact that it moves toward rational activity despite the displeasure it causes suggests that the *thumos* in which it arises is more closely linked to the intellect (i.e., it is a better ordered soul).¹⁹⁰ Anger suggests that the interlocutor prefers to pursue pleasure over the pain and discomfort of aporia, which means that the *thumos* in which it arises is more aligned with desire (the pursuit of pleasures) than with reason.

We can take this as a potential reason why we see interlocutors reacting in anger at the moment of aporia – especially in the case of those who, like Callicles, are resistant throughout much of the examination process. We can also take it to be part of the reason why Theaetetus does not seem to have this problem of resistance. At the beginning of the dialogue, Theodorus describes him as “wonderfully well-endowed” for learning (θαυμαστῶς εὖ πεφυκότα, 144a3). This accounts to some degree for how he is able to respond with wonder at the multiple aporia which arise throughout the examination.

¹⁹⁰ As we have seen above, when Theaetetus experiences wonder at an aporetic situation, Socrates is able to help him focus on the aporia by looking at how his theory can respond to the aporia. In the case of the wonder at *Tht.* 155c8, Socrates turns the conversation to a look at Heraclitean flux doctrine; at *Tht.* 162c7, when Theaetetus wonders at the counterexamples brought against Protagoreanism, Socrates introduces Protagorean-esque responses to the aporia. In other words, the wonder is turned toward a philosophical approach to responding to the aporia.

We will continue this examination in the next section which looks at the notion and importance of persuasion.

2.3.3. Persuasion

Persuasion plays a big role in the success of all forms of cross-examination (even eristic), as an interlocutor that is persuaded by the logic of the arguments of the examination is more likely to follow through with accepting the true or false outcomes of their theory. The level of education in the interlocutor's soul, however, certainly plays a role in whether or not there is an openness to being persuaded, an ability to follow the chain of reasoning to conclusions.

What may not be obvious when it comes to a successful outcome of cross-examination – again “success” meaning that the interlocutor is improved in some way – is that there needs to be a “double” persuasion. That is, the interlocutor must be persuaded not only that the logic of the argument or examination is sound and valid, they must additionally be persuaded that the position being examined is their own position. In this sense, it must be “persuasive from within” or “internally persuasive.”

This means that the way that the examination proceeds requires that the interlocutor agree to the formulation of their theory, belief, or definition throughout the process of examination. If the theory is not reflective of the interlocutor's definition or is changed so as to be unrecognizable from the definition tendered to the *ti esti* question, then it is doubtful that the interlocutor will be moved to accept the outcomes. Even if the interlocutor is persuaded by the logic of the argument, if they do not feel that this argument is directed at *their* theory, as they themselves have formulated it (but rather some facsimile), this will not move them to act or

change for the better.¹⁹¹ In other words, there is persuasion of the content of the argument, and persuasion of the form of the argument.

Before moving on, it is important to draw an important distinction between persuasion by reason and persuasion by rhetoric. The former is the case we have just explained: double persuasion of logic and congruency between argument and belief. The latter, by contrast, is persuasion by manipulating emotional states. Intriguingly, wonder is a possible outcome of both of these instances of persuasion; however, the feelings of wonder produced from these two types of persuasive argument, though similar in their source, are not necessarily similar in where the wonder leads the interlocutor.

The wonder arising from the double persuasion of well-executed cross-examination is meant to lead the interlocutor to philosophical inquiry, the pursuit of truth and wisdom within themselves. By contrast, the wonder that arises from rhetorical persuasion is not *philosophical* wonder. It has less (if not nothing at all) to do with *aporia*, and more to do with a sort of uncritical mystification or stupefaction at the skill or personality of the rhetorician or orator – the interlocutor is enrapt by the apparent wisdom of the sophist or rhetorician.¹⁹² Rhetorical persuasion is often the outcome of eristic cross-examination, which we might consider a perversion of the *elenchus*.¹⁹³

¹⁹¹ McCoy (2005, p. 135), “Philosophical discourse requires the self-sufficiency of relying on one’s own beliefs, a moral commitment to holding oneself accountable to rationality itself, and being responsible enough to stand by or abandon one’s beliefs in light of whatever reason dictates.”

¹⁹² Again, we can think of Hippocrates (*On the Joints*, Ch. 42), where he describes the spectacles put on by the medical practitioners of his time in order to win over new clients.

See also Irwin (1986, p. 73), “We ought, then, to agree with those who see in Plato the ambition to replace purely conversational philosophy with compelling philosophy, to replace the mere pursuit of agreement with the pursuit of truth.”

In Plato’s dialogues, Sophists are often referred to as *thaumatopoietes*, “wonder fashioners.” This can translate to a number of different things: “puppeteers,” “magician,” and the like. The idea is that they captivate an audience, often for money.

¹⁹³ Nehamas (1990, p. 8).

In both cases, however, the interlocutor is made aware of flaws (real or apparent) in his beliefs or responses with the added expectation that this falsehood be rejected. With the double persuasion of well-executed cross-examination,¹⁹⁴ this falsehood is to be replaced by a new belief, supplied by the interlocutor – a renewed attempt to answer the initial question, or at the very least the ability to admit to oneself that one does not know or have an answer. With eristic, which employs rhetorical persuasion, the falsehood (real or apparent) is often supplanted with an alternative position, offered by the questioner. As Terence Irwin says, “Rhetoric is taken to produce persuasion and conviction, which may be either true or false.”¹⁹⁵ Conviction is here being compared with (justified) true belief and knowledge, which can only be true – and understood as true. Understanding truth values is not a necessary condition for conviction brought about by rhetoric.¹⁹⁶

As we have said, both of these types of persuasive argument are capable of generating an affective state (pathos) of wonder. This can be seen in the following passages from the *Theaetetus* already cited in the previous chapter.

And there are a million other questions with which one of the mercenary skirmishers of debate might ambush you, once you had proposed that knowledge and perception are the same thing. He would lay into hearing and smelling and other perceptions of that kind; and would keep on refuting you and not let you go *till you had been struck with wonder at his wisdom* – that ‘answer to many prayers’ – and had got yourself thoroughly *tied up by him*. Then, when he had you tamed and bound, he would set you free for a ransom – whatever price seemed appropriate to the two of you (*Tht.* 165d5-e4, emphasis added).

¹⁹⁴ We say “well-executed cross-examination” to distinguish the double persuasion which arises from, say, the maieutic method from the rhetorical persuasion of eristic examination. As we said above, there is a way of seeing eristic as itself a debased form of cross-examination. Therefore, to say “persuasion of cross-examination” would be ambiguous.

¹⁹⁵ Irwin (1986, p. 63).

¹⁹⁶ *Idem*, p. 70, “Rhetoric can persuade and produce conviction, even true conviction, without rational compulsion. Dialectic produces rationally compelling arguments; they will persuade the rational interlocutor, and their claim to be compelling is not impugned if they do not immediately persuade Callicles.” This quotation references *Gorgias* 454d1 ff., on the difference between learning something and being convinced of something. Whereas conviction admits the possibility of being true or false, knowledge does not.

And again,

Soc: Now it seems to me that these three statements that we have admitted *are fighting one another in our souls* when we speak of the example of the dice ... And there are innumerable other examples of the same thing if once we admit these. You follow me, I take it, Theaetetus – I think you must be familiar with this kind of puzzle. Tht: Oh yes, indeed, Socrates, *I often wonder like mad* what these things can mean; sometimes when I'm looking at them I begin to feel quite giddy" (*Tht.* 155b5-c10, emphasis added).

In these examples, we see a difference in the origin of persuasion. The first example is sophistic eristic and shows the sophist effectively coercing the interlocutor into an (*externally motivated*) acceptance of the argument. The persuasion results in wonder, but that persuasion was forced externally onto the interlocutor. The wonder is wonder at the sophist's wisdom, not at an aporia. The latter example is the maieutic approach. The arguments fight one another *within* the interlocutor; the aporia is internal; the interlocutor is persuaded from the inside. The wonder is tied to the soul and its state of unrest, and conviction of the difficulty inherent in the interlocutor's beliefs. The struggle is internal to the subject, hence the resolution also belongs to the subject.

Clearly persuasion plays a role in the successful outcomes of cross-examination in that, if one or both kinds of rational persuasion are lacking, it is hard to imagine that the argument will mean enough to the interlocutor, or that they will have enough "emotional investment" to accept any false outcomes as indicative of a fault in themselves.¹⁹⁷

This goes hand in hand with the discussion on *thumos* and affective states, as, if one is governed more by desires and emotions than by reason, then one is less likely to follow the logic of an argument objectively – especially an argument perceived to be adverse to one's own position.

¹⁹⁷ In the case of true outcomes (of which we have little to no textual account), it is possible that an interlocutor would accept them, if for no other reason than a confirmation of bias.

2.4. Differences of Form: Comparing Elenchus and Maieutic Method

We turn our attention now to the question of why *aporia* results in wonder in some cases and not in others. We have seen some important points which certainly play a role in answering this question. Now, to round out this picture, we will look at the differences between the *elenchus* and the *maieutic method* to see if there are any reasons why wonder should result from the latter and not from the former.

Hypothetically, philosophical wonder should be equally possible as a result of *elenchus*. Both methods we have looked at are forms of cross-examination which seek (at least nominally) the amelioration of the soul of the interlocutor. Both methods employ essentially the same tools of examination, namely, logic, counter examples, and the like. Both seek to test the actual beliefs held by the interlocutor. Finally, in Plato's dialogues, both end in *aporia*, which is key, as *aporia* serves as the catalyst in giving rise to wonder in the interlocutor.

Nevertheless, there seem to be very few cases in the *elenchic dialogues* where the interlocutor experiences wonder. One such case is the Slave Boy in the *Meno*. To this we might add the *Lysis*, *Laches*, and *Charmides*, which seem to have somewhat promising ends for the interlocutors. There is also the *Parmenides*, wherein Socrates is examined by the eponymous philosopher – though this may be closer in kind to the *maieutic method*.¹⁹⁸

What, then, is the deciding factor in producing wonder? The remainder of this section will look at this question in terms of formal and informal differences between the two methods.

¹⁹⁸ We will discuss the *Parmenides* to some degree in chapter 4. We are tempted to consider it a more *maieutic* dialogue due to the level of care shown by *Parmenides* and the provision of a method of approaching the question of the one and the many. Moreover, despite the constant difficulties encountered throughout, the central thesis around the forms is never outright rejected. This puts us in mind of the *Theaetetus*, and specifically the treatment of the first definition.

2.4.1. Formal Differences

A good place to start when examining the differences between the two methods is a re-examination of the formal structures of each. We already touched upon these structures individually; however, we will now do a side-by-side comparative analysis.

Elenchus		Maieutic Method	
1.	P	1.	P
2.	$(Q \wedge R)$	2.	$P \leftrightarrow (Q \wedge R)$
3.	$(Q \wedge R) \rightarrow \sim P$	3.	$\sim Q \wedge \sim R$
4.	$\sim P$	4.	$\sim P$
5.	$(P \wedge \sim P)$	5.	$(P \wedge \sim P)$

In both cases, we have the same aporetic result $(P \wedge \sim P)$, however, the way in which one arrives at this result differs. In the case of elenchus, the elements $(Q \wedge R)$ are introduced as conditions for the *falsehood* of the initial claim P. We have an “if-then” relation between the secondary beliefs and the (falsified) primary belief. With the maieutic method, we have something slightly more complicated. Rather than an “if-then” relationship, we have an “if-and-only-if” bi-conditional. The truth conditions in the case of the maieutic method are, then, contrary to those of the elenchus. The secondary theories stand as conditions for the *truth* of the initial definition P.

We are talking about different forms of reasoning, and therefore different conditions for a sound argument. This will also play a part in how the methods are performed, as well as how this performance is perceived and lived by the interlocutor.

In the case of the maieutic method, when one builds a case for either side of the equation, one concomitantly builds a case for the other side as well. Applying this to the *Theaetetus*, if one builds a case for the Protagorean and Heraclitean doctrines $(Q \wedge R)$, as Socrates does, one also

builds a case for Theaetetus' definition of knowledge as perception. Socrates' line of questioning and exposition thereby directly strengthen Theaetetus' definition of knowledge (at least initially).

This is not the case in the elenchus; rather, if one builds a case for the secondary beliefs, one is concomitantly contributing to the falsehood of the primary belief. Of course the interlocutor does not accept these secondary beliefs knowing that it will result in a future contradiction.

Nevertheless, both methods end in aporia – indeed, formally the same aporia ($P \wedge \sim P$). Given that aporia is the moment which potentially gives rise to wonder as an affective response, it should be possible for wonder to arise in both cases – based on the form of the argument. We turn now to informal or “performative” differences to see whether or not they play a determining or definitive role in deciding the affective outcome.

2.4.2. Informal Differences

Since the outcomes of both the elenchus and the maieutic methods are formally identical, it is hypothetically possible that wonder could arise as the outcome of the elenchus. This however seldom happens in the actual performance of the elenchus in the dialogues. Where it does happen, it seems to be traceable to some instance of “maieutic-like” influence from the examiner, and a responsiveness on the part of the interlocutor which is amenable to spiritual development of the kind brought about by the maieutic method.¹⁹⁹ We turn our attention now to the informal differences between the two methods of cross-examination to see whether there are other intervening factors which affect the affective outcomes. This means revisiting some of the

¹⁹⁹ In the case of the Slave Boy in the *Meno*, as we saw earlier, having no pretensions to knowledge seems to have contributed to a favourable outcome – just as with Theaetetus who prefaces his first definition with the humble statement that he would be unable to give an adequate definition to the question “what is knowledge?”

themes we have already touched upon and relating them to the formal and performative structures of the two methods.

The first point of consideration is the imagery evoked to describe how Socrates the examiner is perceived by the interlocutor. As we saw above, elenctic dialogues favour the imagery of the gadfly and the stingray, whereas the maieutic method uses the eponymous midwife imagery.

The first two of these images are tainted in that, rather than eliciting a desire or motivation for self-reflection and self-improvement through philosophy, they evoke fear in the interlocutor of being metaphorically stung or bitten by the examiner. The *maia*, however, has the role of soothing the pains of *aporia*. This is already a very important difference, given that in all of these metaphors, *aporia* is depicted as pain. This difference, then, demonstrates how the interlocutor views the role of the examiner, the perceived origin of the pain of *aporia* that they are experiencing. In the case of being stung, the *aporia* is brought about by an *external* agent; it is alien to the interlocutor until introduced by Socrates, the pesky, biting gadfly. With the maieutic method, we saw that the interlocutor sees the *aporia* as arising *internally*. There is ownership of the perplexity and the *maia* is there to alleviate this discomfort. Rather than be told that one is wrong, one internally realizes and understands (and wonders) that one has held a false belief. By comparison, then, the midwife is non-threatening to one's belief or theory.²⁰⁰

To help solidify this first point, it is helpful to think of these *aporia* as being thoroughly alarming if not utterly destabilizing.²⁰¹ Not being able to give an account of knowledge, virtue,

²⁰⁰ Konstan (2006 (1), p. 24), "Whether or not a given stimulus induces anger or fear or some other emotion depends on whether one judges it to be threatening or insulting, and such an appraisal will involve a whole range of socially conditioned values and expectations."

²⁰¹ Here we can think of the passage in the *Philebus* 14d4-15a7, where Socrates states that the kind of *aporia* that he is interested in are not the trivial "one-many" pseudo-problems that children use to confuse people, but rather the controversies that arise from trying to posit the monadic existence of things that are

courage, or piety – things of which most people have or seem to have a practical understanding – would put someone in a delicate psychological space. Reducing wherever possible real or perceived animosity in dealing with these issues would, presumably, mitigate certain visceral fight or flight responses of the kind displayed by (e.g.) Anytus and Callicles.

The second performative difference between the two methods is the disposition of the interlocutor, by which we mean the way that the interlocutor acts, responds, etc. In most elenctic dialogues, the interlocutors tend to be confident when they respond to the examiner's questions. They are not only confident that they are able to give adequate responses or definitions to these *ti esti* questions, but also that they are capable of defending these responses.

This mentality is neatly summarized at *Apology* 21b7 ff. In this passage, Socrates seeks out these confident individuals in order to better understand what the Oracle of Delphi could mean in labelling him the wisest man. In questioning said wise men, Socrates is confronted with resistance and anger. In this regard, we can infer something about the experience of these wise men: there seems to be a heightened displeasure when that about which they are confident is first called into question and later refuted – sometimes in front of an audience. Perceiving Socrates as a threatening gadfly, and therefore appraising the overall situation negatively, the *thumos* reacts negatively as well, leading to a response of anger.²⁰²

This confidence is starkly contrasted by Theaetetus' uncertainty and reticence when faced with providing a response to his *ti esti* question. Not only is he reticent of his own abilities (though clearly capable, per his definition of roots and surds), he is also reticent of anyone else's

one in themselves (Man, or Beautiful, or Good). We see an example of these controversies played out in the short but extremely dense *Parmenides* dialogue, which can be read as essentially one continuous, unresolved aporia.

²⁰² Altieri (2003, p. 9), "The very fact that the emotions help us notice some things means that they are likely to blind us to other features of the situation."

ability. He has never heard anyone give an adequate account of “knowledge.” What might play a role in making a difference is Theaetetus’ amenability or enthusiasm (*prothumia*)²⁰³ for inquiry. Again, Theodorus goes on at some length to describe Theaetetus’s ease with learning and instruction. As we saw in Chapter 1, the importance of good-natured, amenable individuals who “seem at first not to be pregnant in their souls” is part of the description of spiritual midwifery; whereas impatience with the method is seen to lead to individuals leaving the care of the midwife before they can be improved (*Tht.* 150d2-6).

In other words, having the right disposition towards the method and a healthy distance or (almost) doubt of one’s abilities is important for the performance of the examination. It signals an openness to being wrong. Strongly held beliefs and conviction of the truth thereof will resist anything which looks like falsificationism. Those who hold such strong beliefs will be like the mother that is unwilling to give up their false child, vainly holding on to it and ready to bite anyone who seeks to remove it (*cf. Tht.* 151c5-8). This point may have some relation to the level of education in one’s soul.

By examining these dispositions towards the method and the examiner, one can get a fair idea of what the affective outcome of cross-examination will be by observing how the interlocutor engages in the pre-aporetic portion of the dialogue. Resistance to logic and reason coupled with unfounded conviction are symptomatic of a disordered soul, as it shows that the interlocutor is more concerned with proving themselves right rather than proving the truth of the matter. This is similar to eristic where the overarching desire is to win the argument by whatever means necessary; the desire is not to pursue the truth. Again, this attitude toward the method may

²⁰³ *Tht.* 151b8-e1, *προθυμία* is used twice in this section, once by Socrates to invite the wonderful Theaetetus (*θαυμάσιε*) to give his answer to the question of knowledge, and once by Theaetetus in stating his intention to answer despite his self-estimated inability.

stem from how the interlocutor perceives the examiner, whether as a dangerous pest or as a friend.

This leads us to the next difference between the methods, namely, the role of secondary beliefs or theories. This is where things get interesting. We saw in the previous section that these secondary beliefs play different roles in the argumentative form of the two methods. This difference plays an important role when examining the performance of these methods.

In elenchus, the secondary beliefs are set up in a conditional relationship, such that if they are true, then the primary belief is false. In other words, there is an inverse relationship between the truth of the secondary beliefs and the truth of the primary belief. We hasten to mention that this fact is not necessarily known to the interlocutor throughout the dialogical exercise itself; it is only at the conclusion ($\sim P$) that it becomes apparent. That is, the interlocutor does not agree to $(Q \wedge R)$ knowing that they will contradict P .

There is a further complication with the elenchus which has to do with where these secondary beliefs come from, and how they are introduced into the examination. As we saw earlier, the secondary beliefs are generally *endoxa*, commonly held beliefs. They are not necessarily linked directly to the primary belief. Nevertheless, as *endoxa*, it would be strange for the interlocutor not to accept them. Moreover, as we saw previously, the truth value of these secondary beliefs is never the object of examination. It is sufficient for the purposes of elenchus that the interlocutor accepts them as both true and as an accurate reflection of the interlocutor's beliefs.²⁰⁴

This can cause problems in a number of ways, as these secondary beliefs are only tangentially related to the primary belief and allow “wobble room” for an interlocutor to change

²⁰⁴ See Irwin (1986, p. 58) and Vlastos (1982, p. 713). Both of these passages speak to how the secondary beliefs are not examined.

their mind and refuse to accept them. In fine, it bears an impact on the persuasiveness of an argument. These *endoxa* belong to the many, and therefore the individual is less likely to see them as their own – even if they hold them as true. They are introduced as external to the interlocutor and to their primary belief. Additionally, because these *endoxa* are held by the many, the interlocutor may – and in some instances *does* – claim that they are coerced to accept these terms, that Socrates the examiner is appealing to their shame, rather than approaching the examination justly.²⁰⁵

As we saw earlier, part of the double persuasion necessary for a successful outcome of cross-examination is being persuaded that the beliefs expressed represent the actual beliefs of the interlocutor. If the interlocutor is not persuaded that the *aporia* relates to their own belief, then they will not experience wonder and the cross-examination will fundamentally have failed. They are more likely to feel anger at being misrepresented or slandered.²⁰⁶

The secondary beliefs – or rather, supporting theories – in the maieutic method have a bi-conditional relationship to the primary theory. That is, there is a direct relationship between the truth of the primary and secondary theories (rather than an inverse relationship): they stand and fall together.

²⁰⁵ See, *Gorg.* 482d8-483a2, “As a result of this admission he [Polus], was bound and gagged by you in the discussion, too ashamed to say what he thought... so if a person is ashamed and doesn’t dare to say what he thinks, he’s forced to contradict himself.”

²⁰⁶ As for Meno’s response of paralysis, it would require further research. Clearly in the case of paralysis there seems to be some amount of fear at play: Meno is paralyzed and seems to fear responding again, thereby putting himself at risk of further paralysis or embarrassment. This is demonstrated to some degree by the shift in the overarching question from “what is virtue?” to “is virtue teachable?” The initial confidence with which he responds to the former question is seemingly sapped from him at the moment of aporetic paralysis. We have provided a preliminary analysis of this paralysis in the section dealing with the three metaphors; however, because of its treatment of anamnesis, the *Meno* as a dialogue does not fall neatly into the category of elenchus. It exceeds the purview of testing consistency, which is definitive of the elenchus. There is certainly a use of elenchus in the *Meno*, but there needs to be greater analysis of the argumentative structure before it can be compared with the maieutic method in a similar way.

In both the elenchus and the maieutic method, the secondary beliefs are critical in refuting any false primary beliefs; however, whereas the truth value of the secondary beliefs are not examined in elenchus, the supporting theories of the maieutic method are profoundly examined, expounded, defended, and tested. This is precisely because of the bi-conditional relationship that they share with the primary belief. The stronger the case for $(Q \wedge R)$, the stronger the case for, and the deeper the understanding of P. Moreover, understanding the theories well makes understanding how they are wrong possible and more convincing.

Moreover, the imagery of the midwife itself firmly places the primary belief *within* the interlocutor – it is their offspring. Accordingly, the theories that exist in a bi-conditional relationship with the primary belief have a greater internally persuasive force. Because there is greater “buy in” from the interlocutor, there is a greater probability that they will reject the theory or belief should the supporting theories be found wanting.²⁰⁷

All of this returns to the importance of persuasion. Being internally persuaded of one’s ignorance means that rather than flee it in anger, one will turn towards it, embrace it, in wonder. Although the aporetic situation in the elenchus can hypothetically result in wonder, it requires a great deal more to line up appropriately for the interlocutor to be internally persuaded – both by the logic of the argument, but more fundamentally by the ideas themselves. There are a number of considerations which can impede the interlocutor from accepting $(Q \wedge R)$ as representations (adequate or otherwise) of their own beliefs. Without this latter kind of persuasion, it is unlikely

²⁰⁷ Compare with *Charmides*. See McCoy (2005, p. 147), “By the end of the elenctic interchange between Charmides and Socrates, Charmides has abandoned any attempt to connect closely his own soul, perception of its virtues, and philosophical examination of such perceptions.” Because there is no commitment to the truth of his beliefs, there is no commitment to the outcomes of the inquiry.

We can also compare with Alcibiades toward the end of the *Symposium*, who, due to weakness, is unable to overcome his baser instincts to commit himself to the rigorous philosophical lifestyle offered by Socrates.

that the resultant aporia will have a wondrous effect on the interlocutor. Fundamentally, the option is left open for the interlocutor to say that “*something* is wrong, but *I am not wrong* by this argument.” Depending on how the interlocutor is disposed towards the method in use and how they perceive Socrates’ questioning, it is more likely in this case that the examination will end in anger and rejection.

In some sense, both kinds of persuasion are built into the very fabric of the maieutic method. The primary theory is unequivocally designated as the interlocutor’s and the secondary theories are the drugs and incantations introduced only as conditions for the truth of the primary theory. This activity builds additional trust in the examiner, as the purity of intention (real and perceived) is thereby reinforced. Because there is an acceptance of P, Q, and R, the conclusions (true or false) are also accepted.

To conclude, the affective outcome arises from similar formal argumentative structures and the plurality of affective outcomes is rooted in differences in these formal structures; however, it is more in examining the performance of these methods that we see the contributing factors as to why one affective outcome occurs over another. We saw that how the interlocutor perceives the method and examiner, the state of the interlocutor’s soul, and the degree to which they are doubly persuaded by the arguments all play a substantial role in which affective outcomes occur. Finally, through comparative analysis of each of these elements, we made a case to show that the maieutic method does a better job of lining up these criteria in a way that produces wonder. This has to do with the important formal difference between the maieutic method and elenchus, namely the bi-conditional nature of the method. It creates greater trust between examiner and interlocutor and builds persuasion into the very fabric of its narrative.

This means that there is only one variable out of its control – the level of education in the interlocutor’s soul.

2.5. Returning to the Notion of Wonder as ἀρχή

From the foregoing we get some clarity on how wonder is the ἀρχή (principle, origin, or beginning) of philosophy – at least in cross-examination. As we saw above, in successful instances of cross-examination, one experiences wonder and not anger or paralysis. These latter two affective outcomes certainly do not result in further philosophical activity. Wonder, on the other hand, does result in philosophy. For this reason, Socrates does not say “*aporia* is the ἀρχή of philosophy.” There are too many adverse outcomes from *aporia simpliciter*, without regard for the circumstances that lead to the *aporia* and affect its outcomes. We might say that wonder necessarily leads to philosophy, because the conditions which lead to the post-aporetic outcome of wonder also result in further philosophical activity – whether a closer examination of the aporetic situation itself or the abandonment of a previously held belief that must be replaced and examined once it has been found to be false. These same conditions are also the mark of a successful cross-examination: self-improvement through philosophical activity.

It must be repeated that the wonder of the wonder passage itself does not result in the immediate abandonment of the theory. It does, however, result in a more careful philosophical examination of the problematic claims. Nevertheless, as we have mentioned multiple times, even though there is no explicit mention of *thauma* or *thaumazein* in the text immediately surrounding the definitive refutation of the first definition, it would be surprising if Theaetetus did not experience some wonder at the aporetic situation which undoes his theory. He has already expressed wonder at far lesser aporetic situations during the course of the birthing and examination of his spiritual offspring. It is reasonable to expect that he also experiences wonder

at the end of the examination, where his first theory is finally refuted.²⁰⁸ This can be further corroborated by the preceding aporia and resulting philosophical activity, namely, the positing of the second definition.

Of the above-noted affective responses, only wonder is a “successful” outcome of aporia from a philosophical standpoint. The other affects seem to produce the opposite of progress in the soul: anger leads to retrogradation and paralysis leads to stagnation in the soul. For this reason, we can assert that “wonder is the pathos of philosophy, there is no other ἀρχή.” There is no other pathos that fits the criteria of a successful outcome: not anger, not fear, not sadness, not paralysis.

[I]n real argument [the examiner] must be in earnest and must set his interlocutor on his feet, *pointing out to him those slips only which are due to himself and his previous associations*. For if you act in this way, those who debate with you will cast the *blame for their confusion and perplexity upon themselves, not upon you*; they will run after you and love you, and they will hate themselves and run away from themselves, *taking refuge in philosophy*, that they may escape from their former selves by becoming different (*Tht.* 167e6-168a6, emphasis added).

When faced with the falsehood of one’s beliefs, the expectation from the wondering philosopher is that they will abandon the falsehood and move on to something which shows greater promise of being true, “taking refuge in philosophy;” however, if the cross-examination is unsuccessful, there is always the possibility that the interlocutor sinks into denial, that they refuse to abandon their belief for whatever reason, as is seen in the elenchus.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁸ We do see that Theaetetus appears to have a brief aporetic moment at *Tht.* 185d6-e2, where he is at a loss to give an account of the instrument by means of which being, not-being, same and different, likeness and unlikeness, etc. are experienced or understood. This passage comes shortly before the final refutation and serves as the “final nail in the coffin” of the first definition.

²⁰⁹ See *Rep.* 515e1-4: “If someone compelled him to look at the light itself, would not his eyes hurt, and would he not turn around and flee towards the things he is able to see, believing that they are really clearer than the ones he is being shown?”

Alternatively, one might simply not react to the aporia, allowing the feeling of urgency to fade, perhaps forgetting the proven falsehood of one’s beliefs altogether. See Elster (2004, p. 155), “At time 1, when the agent is in the grip of emotion, he announces that he will make a great effort or a great sacrifice at time 2. When time 2 arrives and the passion has cooled off, he fails to carry out his plan.”

The turn to philosophy resulting from wonder, replacing old beliefs with new ones, beliefs that will be examined in turn, is why we can speak of wonder as the ἀρχή of philosophy – this examination is itself philosophy. Moreover, in the *Theaetetus*, wonder leads to a closer examination of the concurrent aporia themselves. In two overt instances of *thaumazein* in the dialogue, Socrates responds by examining that which gives rise to the aporia. The first of these instances immediately follows the wonder passage. The result is not an abandonment of the discussion; rather, Socrates turns the discussion to a deeper understanding of Heracliteanism (*Tht.* 156a2 ff.). The second instance is after Socrates and Theaetetus declare the offspring has been expressed, and Socrates begins his examination, which almost immediately falls into aporia. Here Socrates dwells on some aporetic situations before moving to a more just and profound examination of the theory to see if it is capable of withstanding the scrutiny (*Tht.* 162d3 ff.). As we saw above, this both builds up the theory and makes the eventual refutation more definitive.

From the moment that one begins to re-examine the question, to start anew, to posit something else as an answer to the *ti esti* question, one is doing philosophy. This is even more the case in the context of the maieutic method, because the dialectical exercise, the cross-examination of the new theory is placed under the same type of examination as the foregoing theory. The renewal of the labour pains results in the continued attention from the spiritual *maia*. Moreover, the persuasion necessary to produce a fruitful outcome is built into the maieutic method itself. As we have seen, it is made clear to the interlocutor that they are giving birth to *their own* offspring, and no one else's.

As laid out in the general introduction, we have translated “ἀρχή” as “origin”: the point from which something is produced or comes to be. Does wonder fit this description? It seems

that it does. Wonder stands as a point of origin of philosophy both temporally²¹⁰ and epistemologically, in that before the experience of wonder there is no perceived need to change one's beliefs or to examine them with any degree of rigour; moreover, it signals and facilitates the shift in epistemic paradigms, the shift from one theory, *doxa*, or set of beliefs to another. This is certainly not the case with anger, which seems to encourage the interlocutor to double down on their false beliefs. When the result of a given *aporia* is wonder (as opposed to anger, paralysis, fear, etc.), it is then that one begins to look for a way out (a *euporia*) of the very discomfort (both physical and mental) brought about by *aporia* and experienced as dizzying wonder. To consider it "spatially," anger turns one away from the cause of the *aporia*, whereas wonder turns one towards the *aporia*. It captures the attention of the interlocutor.²¹¹

Let us examine the wonder passage again, and really try to strike home what the message is. Wonder is the pathos of the philosopher – not anger, not paralysis, but wonder. There is no other *ἀρχή* of philosophy than this. The pathos is the *ἀρχή*, not the rational perplexity of *aporia*. The pathos motivates the action. Philosophy is, then, the act of the wondering philosopher; the philosopher is one who wonders and philosophizes. To do philosophy, one must be capable of wondering. However, wonder's association with *aporia* makes it a somewhat messy affair as we have seen. It is disorienting in virtue of its perplexing origin, but it also orients the philosopher

²¹⁰ There may be some reticence in accepting wonder as a temporal origin of philosophy, as the wonder passage itself occurs while the maieutic practice (which is a philosophical practice) is underway. When we say, "temporal origin" we mean that, considered within the relative timeline, wonder is experienced and is followed temporally by greater philosophical engagement. It is the temporal origin only in a limited, qualified sense. We will explore this further in the next section.

²¹¹ Consider the passage from Frijda (1987, p.18), which gives an account of the physiological reaction of wonder, surprise, and amazement. "In that expression [of wonder] the eyebrows are raised ... The eyebrow raising ... is a combination of arrest of movement and 'open attention.' Raising the eyebrows facilitates lifting the upper eyelid, and together they are supposed to facilitate eye movements and enlarge the field of peripheral vision ... The sense of the expression is a passive, receptive mode of attention."

toward the *aporia* (the theory in its flawed state) either to seek to address the flaws or to replace the theory and begin again with a new theory.

There are many conditions that must be met in order for there to be a positive, philosophical outcome – at least within the context of cross-examination. We must also bear in mind that, with cross-examination, the realization and acceptance of one’s own ignorance *is* a positive outcome. In fact, wonder facilitates this acceptance of one’s ignorance. The persuasion and education of the soul necessary to produce aporetic wonder show the interlocutor that what one believed to be true is not true. This internally persuasive turn from double ignorance to simple ignorance makes one ask the quintessentially philosophical questions “what,” “why,” “how,” etc. ... “What is x ?” “Why $P \wedge \sim P$?” “How can one resolve this issue?”

In this sense wonder is the $\alpha\rho\chi\eta$ of philosophy in much the same way that a spark is the $\alpha\rho\chi\eta$ of a fire. A spark can be bright and dazzling in its own right; moreover, it has as its end the lighting of fires. However, if it does not light a fire – that is, if it does not achieve its end, if it does not translate to further action – then it quickly fades. It fails. It needs to propagate. In fact, not just any conglomeration of materials is even capable of being lit on fire. One needs the right materials and these materials need to be disposed in the right way under the right conditions. E.g., one is far more likely to succeed at igniting dry tinder or gun cotton than a wet log. In the same way the one being cross-examined must show some ability or inclination to doing philosophy.²¹² Whereas we see Calicles being ill-disposed to philosophy in the *Gorgias*, resisting Socrates’ instruction, Theodorus goes to great lengths to convince Socrates that he has

²¹² There is an additional, rather lengthy conversation that could arise here about the disposition and education of the soul as a way of disposing oneself to the exercise of philosophy. One could base this on the digression in the *Theaetetus* (172c3 ff.), the *Phaedo* on the death of the soul to worldly distractions which bind people to the world of appearances (*Phd.* 82b10 ff.), and the *Phaedrus* passage on regrowing of the wings of the soul (249c8 ff.). The extraordinary task of thoroughly explaining this is beyond the scope of the present dissertation.

found such a well-disposed student in Theaetetus, who does not resist instruction. When he gives his exposition of the problem of roots and surds, Theaetetus proves himself a competent thinker, well-disposed for the dialectical activity which will follow; because he is able to give a proper definition of a difficult mathematical concept/problem, he is in a better position to (attempt to) give a philosophical definition.²¹³

The converse of this metaphor is also true, *viz.* that the best-disposed tinder will not ignite without the spark. A student that is well-formed, highly intelligent, and quick to learn will never grow or mature intellectually if they are not challenged – if they are never sparked into action. This, in turn, implies that someone must help produce this spark. It has to come from somewhere. Within the analogy, this would translate to some kind of firekeeper: someone who not only tends the fire, but also maintains it once it has been lit. Doubtless, in the *Theaetetus*, this role falls to Socrates in his capacity as spiritual *maia*.²¹⁴

²¹³ In this sense, Theaetetus falls comfortably within the educational career path of the philosopher set forth in the *Republic*. Geometry should precede philosophy, because it deals with abstract thinking and prepares the student for the kind of abstraction necessary for more contemplative forms of thought (*Rep.* 510c1 ff.).

In the introduction to his French translation of the *Theaetetus*, Nancy places Theaetetus' philosophical capabilities in doubt, asking the question whether he is able to make the step from geometry to philosophy. This is based in part on Theaetetus' persistent inability to make the leap from "knowledge is perception" to "knowledge is intellection" (*cf. Théétète*, Tr. Nancy, 1994, p. 41). That the dialogue ends in failure should not be indicative of whether or not the content of the dialogue or the disposition of the interlocutors is philosophical in tone or nature. As we have already seen, the attitude of Theaetetus throughout the exercise of the maieutic method is more philosophical than that of many interlocutors from other dialogues, in terms of his willingness to engage with Socrates, his acceptance of the outcomes of his beliefs, and his ability to relinquish his false beliefs.

²¹⁴ We must of course be careful not to push this metaphor too far. Its sole purpose is to help understand the role that wonder plays in cross-examination, illustrating in what way wonder fits the description of *ἀρχή* within the context of cross-examination. Indeed, it does fall short in many ways. For one thing, the metaphor doesn't have a clear homologue for philosophy. It also falls short by implying that the wonder is imposed extrinsically to the wondering/perplexed subject. In reality, the examiner only places the beliefs of the interlocutor before their eyes. The *aporia*, the wonder (the spark) comes from within the examined when they realize that they believe something or a group of things which are contradictory, inconsistent, or otherwise problematic.

This leads us to a continuation of an earlier discussion. We have not yet fully addressed the role and importance of the third part of the soul, desire. We have looked at some of the conditions surrounding and leading to the successful outcomes of cross-examination, and the wonder arising from it: investment in the theory, commitment to and belief in the effectiveness of the method, persuasion of the argument, level of the soul's education. Just as important, though, is the actual desire to do philosophy when faced with the choice. One needs the desire to do philosophy, to pursue philosophy – that is, one must both value the truth or falsehood of one's own belief and have the desire to pursue the truth through philosophy.²¹⁵ More fundamentally, one must see philosophy as a pleasurable pursuit, one which is enticing to the desirous part of the soul.²¹⁶

The notion of “desire” is important for a few reasons. First, desire and love go hand in hand. We pursue what we desire, what we love. Therefore, when we think of philosophy as the “love of wisdom,” we have to think of wisdom as something desirable, something worth pursuing.

The second reason why desire is important is that one does not desire what one possesses, because one already possesses it. There is no need to pursue that which is attained. If someone

²¹⁵ There are, in fact a number of such “necessary conditions;” however, many of these can be considered “trivial.” E.g., cross-examination presumes that both the examiner and the examined speak the same language (linguistic conditions), that they are both capable of understanding one another in a relatively unproblematic way (epistemic conditions). In order to make progress in the argument, we will have to take for granted these trivial or self-evident conditions (if the two characters are engaging in meaningful discourse already, we can assume that many of these conditions have been met). In doing so, we can focus more freely on the non-trivial conditions, such as desire, inclination, etc., which are more dispositional requirements on the part of the interlocutor.

²¹⁶ Cf. Renault (2014, p. 137) on cognitive and conative motivations for action.

wants or needs ten dollars, they will look to attain this money, but once they have it, there is no need to continue to look for it – it is there!²¹⁷

When we put these two reasons together, we get a clearer picture of what role wonder plays in cross-examination. When the examiner, or the spiritual *maia*, brings forth the spiritual offspring and this latter is shown to be inconsistent, having placed side by side the collective beliefs of the interlocutor and found that there are contradictions, the interlocutor feels the sense of wonder before this aporetic situation. This wonder is the affective side of the realization that one does not possess the knowledge they thought they had. The starting point, the pain of ignorance, is an opportunity to realize that one does not know (“simple ignorance”).

The realization of ignorance presents us with the opportunity to desire wisdom. If we possessed it, we could not pursue it; we could not desire it. And wonder is, therefore, the measure of whether or not we have reached the goal of wisdom. If we are still capable of wondering, of being thrown into a state of *aporia*, and therefore a state of recognition of our own ignorance, then we must continue to search by means of philosophy – we must continue to put our opinions to the test through continuously renewed cross-examination. As Napolitano Valditara states:

Whoever is in a state of *aporia*, in a state of interrogatory wonder – that is, in the certain, evident, intimate, and intense knowledge of both one’s own ignorance and

²¹⁷ See *Meno* 84c4-6: “Do you think that before he would have tried to find out that which he thought he knew though he did not, before he fell into perplexity and realized he did not know and *longed* (ἐπόθησεν) *to know*?” As Robinson points out (1971 (1), p. 83), the *aporia* helps the slave boy realize that there is a drive within him that may lead to real knowledge eventually.

See also Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1139b20-22: “We all suppose that what we know is not capable of being otherwise; of things capable of being otherwise we do not know, when they have passed outside our observation, whether they exist or not.” Two things spring from this: (1) we take for granted our belief that we have knowledge of things; (2) unless our ignorance is brought to our attention, we are not in a position to correct the situation.

one's own desire to know – can only do one thing: search. Or at least they *should* be able to do only this.²¹⁸

This we could term the “whole of soul” approach to cross-examination. The whole soul works together to get at the truth. The *voũς* recognizes the falsehood presented in the *aporia*, the wonder arises in the *thumos*, and desire to continue the pursuit of philosophy arises in the *epithumia*. Whereas the conditions conducive to such an outcome seem to arise in the practice of the maieutic method per the above discussions, it is a disordering of the aims of the soul in the interlocutors which leads to an undesirable outcome of the elenctic exercise (i.e., anger or paralysis).

2.6. A Circular Argument? Residual Issues with the Wonder Claim

As a final note on the matter of philosophical wonder in the context of cross-examination, we need to consider the apparent circularity of the claim. Socrates states “wonder is the pathos of philosophy, there is no other ἀρχή.” Wonder is the ἀρχή or origin of philosophy, yet, as we have seen, the claim is made during a philosophical examination. In other words, Theaetetus is already doing philosophy at the time the wonder claim is introduced.

In the context of the *Theaetetus*, one cannot escape this apparent circularity; there is no way that one could assert that that which precedes the wonder claim is anything other than a philosophical examination following the simplified formula explored above in Chapter 1 – at least the first part of it.

²¹⁸ Our own translation of Napolitana Valditara (2014, p. 168), “Chi sta nell’*aporia*, nella meraviglia interrogante, cioè nel sapere certo, evidente, intimo ed intenso della propria ignoranza e nel proprio desiderio, però, di sapere, non può fare che una cosa: cercare. O *dovrebbe* – almeno – poter fare solo questa.”

1.	P
...	Wonder Claim ... (Note that although not spelled out as in 2, Q and R have already been discussed pre-wonder claim.)
2.	$P \leftrightarrow (Q \wedge R)$
3.	$\sim Q \wedge \sim R$
4.	$\sim P$

There are a few ways that we can address this apparent circularity which are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Perhaps the easiest approach is to put into question whether or not Theaetetus is actually doing philosophy in the period before the wonder claim. In other words, we are putting into question what we just stated, “that we cannot state that what proceeds the wonder claim is anything other than philosophical examination.” Is this really true? There is certainly a reading which could suggest that it is, but what if it is not?

What we can say has taken place up to the wonder claim is that Theaetetus has answered the $\tau\iota\ \acute{\epsilon}\sigma\tau\acute{\iota}$ question and has allowed for the introduction of Protagoreanism and Heracliteanism to be added to the discussion. There has been a lot of agreement and exposition, but not a lot of critical examination. Theaetetus has spoken of P, Q, and R, but has not actually formulated the $[P \leftrightarrow (Q \wedge R)]$. Our note in the above figure becomes important: Q and R have been *discussed*.

According to this reading, the initial aporia of the dice and Socrates-big/Socrates-small (which lead to Theaetetus’ wonder) really are the first moment that these elements are put into question and the definition begins to be more critically developed and evaluated. Before this, Theaetetus is not really engaged in a *philosophical* discussion, just a regular discussion. To illustrate this, we could imagine the $\tau\iota\ \acute{\epsilon}\sigma\tau\acute{\iota}$ question replaced with “how is the weather?” To which a conceivable response (P) could be “it is nice.” Q and R could then be “the sun is shining” and “it is warm.” On face value, we have accomplished the same thing as Theaetetus’ pre-wonder claim, but surely no one would consider this conversation to be philosophical – or

even meteorological for that matter. It is not until the conditions are undermined that we get wonder and then philosophy.

Despite its simplicity, this approach to the question is quite strong. Certainly, there must be a first moment in the life of a philosopher when they begin to do philosophy – a first instance where they begin to question themselves and their own views. Along these lines, we can perhaps say that in the dialogues which fail to inspire wonder, the interlocutor is engaging with a philosopher (they are having a philosophical discussion), but they ultimately fail to do philosophy.²¹⁹ Theaetetus becomes a philosopher once Socrates awakens wonder within him.

This accounts to some degree for the denial that exposing P, Q, and R constitutes philosophy. If, however, we cannot deny that the situation preceding philosophical wonder is philosophical in nature, what recourse do we have left to understand the claim about wonder? It may be a question of simply accepting the circularity – as an idiosyncrasy of written expression. In other words, it may not be quite as problematic as it seems at first. We have already seen that cross-examination is itself a circular activity: a request for information (primary question), response, examination, refutation, aporia, wonder, request for information... and the cycle continues. This is perfectly displayed by the three definitions in the *Theaetetus*.

Dialogues, unlike a philosophical life, lived out in time, have clear terms: a narrative beginning and end. The fact that there are clear terms to the question and length of the conversations in the dialogues is a function of the written form of expression. The written beginning and end of the dialogues are in some sense arbitrary. If we look at cross-examination as an act in itself, unbounded by the strictures of the dialogues, we might say, as Nehamas does,

²¹⁹ Euthyphro, Calicles, and Meno all answer Socrates questions; however, if philosophy is conceived as a discipline which is perfective of the philosopher, can we really say that any of them are really doing philosophy?

that “the most dialectical attitude after all, may well be a view of philosophy which attributes to it neither a clear beginning nor a clear end.”²²⁰

It may help to look at a similarly circular claim: the origin of Socrates’ elenchus as recounted in the *Apology*. The story goes that Chaerophon went to the Oracle of Delphi to ask if there was anyone wiser than Socrates, to which the Oracle replies, no (*Apol.* 21a6-7). When Socrates hears this, he embarks on his mission to elenchically examine the wisdom of others. He is caught in his own sort of aporetic contradiction, being called wise yet knowing of himself that he does not know anything. This aporia, we might add, results in philosophical activity: Socrates seeks to overcome the aporia by practicing the elenchus.²²¹

This situation is circular for reasons similar to those which make the wonder claim circular. It is likely that Socrates was already practicing the elenchus before Chaerophon’s visit to the Oracle, yet Socrates claims that it is the words of the Oracle which inspire him to begin his elenchic examination.²²²

²²⁰ Nehamas (1990, p. 14). See also King (2008, p. 349), “To the extent that elenchus often winds up in aporia (and begins there), the lack of episteme would explain why.” “Episteme” in this context refers to divine knowledge, not human knowledge (or, using Vlastos’ distinction, Knowledge_C versus Knowledge_E).

²²¹ See King (2008 p. 346, and especially p. 350, footnote 12), “The oracle at Delphi understood here represents the god Apollo. The role of the oracle in revealing the nature of elenchus in the *Apology* is central. Not only does the oracle say that no one is wiser than Socrates, Socrates identifies the significance of this claim to him in the fact that he is not wise at all, and that the oracle does not lie. These sets of contradiction stimulate Socrates to inquire.”

See also *idem*, p. 153, “The meaning and force of the divine command is clarified through inquiry, although inquiry begins in aporia.”

²²² See *idem*, p. 350, “Socrates would already have been performing his characteristic practice long before the oracle’s saying. Thus, the saying could not literally be what catalyzed elenchic inquiry for Socrates. Its functions, instead, to tell what the purpose of elenchus is.”

Oddly enough, one might say that we have here the identical situation as the wonder passage of the *Theaetetus*. A philosophical activity which encounters or results in a contradiction within a subject based on information and beliefs, resulting in further philosophical activity. Here the word “θαῦμα” is not used; however, Socrates does state that he was for a long time in a state of aporia (at an impasse) to understand what the Oracle could mean (πολὸν μὲν χρόνον ἠπόρουσι τι ποτε λέγει, *Apol.* 21b7). The fact that this aporia results in a quest of examination and self-knowledge (i.e., *philosophy*) would suggest – if our argument is correct – that Socrates did experience wonder at this contradiction.

In the *Apology*, the account of the origin of elenchus is somewhat arbitrary, but it fulfills a necessary role: that of assigning a locus or beginning to the practice of elenctic inquiry. Though we cannot take this a factual beginning, it nevertheless underscores the importance of the elenchus as a possible means of making philosophical progress. In a similar way, in the *Theaetetus* especially, even though wonder punctuates the maieutic method throughout, this does not undermine its value and role as the ἀρχή of philosophy. Indeed, if we espouse the cyclical understanding of cross-examination – which is quite clearly on display in the *Theaetetus*, as there are three attempts made to produce a definition of knowledge, not just one – we see that wonder’s place in the periodic cycle stands directly before the interlocutor’s philosophical engagement with the aporetic situation at play.

Moreover, if we understand Plato’s dialogues as protreptic exercises, not just for the interlocutor within the dialogue, but more importantly for the readers of the dialogue, we may abstract from the literary confines of the dialogue and imagine ourselves seeking to respond to the same questions. Within the context of “personal time,” the primary questions posed are not as easily placed aside as they are in the dialogues. It is quite possible to imagine oneself struggling with these questions for one’s lifetime, repeating the cycle of response, examination, aporia, wonder, philosophical response... The placement of wonder within the cycle, however, is constant – at least for a philosophical soul.

Bringing this back to our question of the circularity of the wonder claim, we can say that although the claim seems to be arbitrary (and potentially problematic/contradictory), it does nothing to detract from the primacy of wonder as the *pathos* of the philosopher, nor does it falsify the claim. It could only falsify the claim if we were to think of cross-examination as a linear activity; however, it is not linear, but cyclical. In fact, understanding it as a cyclical

process does more to bolster wonder's claim as the *pathos* of the philosopher. Wonder becomes the litmus test for philosophical and spiritual progress.

We can tie this back to our earlier response to the circularity problem. Even if we posit a cyclical approach to cross-examination, there must be a first, catalysing moment which sets the cycle into motion. This we can think of as the transition from P, Q, and R as expository statements to an actual examination of them induced by the first instance of aporetic wonder.

2.7. Concluding Chapter 2

The aim of this chapter was to examine whether aporia by itself is sufficient to give rise to philosophical wonder as it does in the maieutic method. To this end we extended the examination of cross-examination beyond the immediate context of the maieutic method to include the elenchus, which is also a form of cross-examination often resulting in aporia.

This examination led us to the realization that, although it is hypothetically possible for philosophical or aporetic wonder to result from the elenchus – insofar as this method of investigation does result in aporia – there are substantial performative aspects which hamper this result. Among these contributing factors are the order of the interlocutor's soul, how the interlocutor perceives the examiner, the nature of persuasion and the method's ability to bring about this persuasion.

We then turned to an examination of the performative aspects which play a role in deciding what affective outcome will arise and how the maieutic method does a better job of meeting the needs of these performative aspects resulting in the favourable outcome of aporetic wonder. Elenchus, by contrast, requires much more work to satisfy these conditions, and so,

despite the hypothetical possibility of aporetic wonder, it more often results in some other affective response, such as anger.

Overall, this discussion led to a deeper understanding of the conditions necessary for methods of cross-examination to result in philosophical wonder, that is, wonder which facilitates the acceptance of one's own ignorance as realized internally, and which also facilitates a turn towards philosophical activity for deeper self-knowledge and self-perfection.

Finally, we returned to the notion of wonder as ἀρχή of philosophy as opposed to other affective outcomes. We also sought to address any residual problems of potential circularity in the claim about wonder.

Intermediary Conclusions: Part 1

To end this first part of the dissertation, we will bring together the salient points of the discussion thus far, delineating the characteristics and limitations of aporetic wonder as it relates to cross-examination.

The first thing to note, which is expressed in the wonder passage itself, is that wonder is a *pathos*. This entails a few things. First, as a *pathos*, wonder belongs to the *thumos* and accompanies rational realizations such as $(P \wedge \sim P)$. In the context of cross-examination wonder arises as a “spirited” (thumoeidetic) response to aporia. Second, as *pathos*, wonder translates into philosophical action. That is, when faced with an aporia, the wondering interlocutor is able to seek to overcome the aporia by means of philosophical engagement. This much is also indicated by the wonder claim itself but is further shown by the instances of Theaetetus’ wonder, and his continued philosophical engagement with the issues resulting in the aporia which give rise to the wonder.

Of note here is the relationship between wonder and aporia. Wonder arises in cross-examination dialogues as the result of aporia. However, this relationship between wonder and aporia is neither absolute nor necessary. We saw that there are a number of other possible (negative) affective reactions to an aporetic situation, chiefly, anger and paralysis. Whereas these latter two affects result in leaving philosophical dialogue behind or an inability to engage further, wonder, by contrast, views aporia more favourably. It facilitates both an acceptance of the ignorance manifested through the aporetic outcome, and a turn towards the issue. These differences are seen in the dialogues predominantly in the character of Theaetetus, who allows himself to be guided by Socrates in moments of aporia (as contrasted with Callicles who does

not). Socrates himself can also be seen reacting to aporia with wonder and further philosophical activity in dialogues like the *Apology*.

The contributing factors which seem to have some impact on deciding whether the aporetic situation will result in wonder or some other (usually adverse) affective reaction are: how the interlocutor views the examiner, the level of education or order in the interlocutor's soul, and the degree to which the interlocutor is doubly persuaded by the argument. These three elements seem to work together in deciding how an interlocutor will react to a given aporia.

Of particular note regarding persuasion is the notion of being internally persuaded of an argument. In the instances where an aporia ends in anger, for example, the cause of the aporia is perceived as extrinsic to the interlocutor. Such a result allows the interlocutor an excuse to not accept the contradiction presented in an aporia as their own, and stymies an acceptance and transition to simple ignorance. With internal persuasion, the interlocutor identifies themselves as the cause of the aporia, one which is rooted in the self and in personal ignorance, resulting not in anger, but in wonder which turns them back toward the question – either to examine the aporia for a solution, or to posit a new theory. In cross-examination, philosophical wonder is *internally* motivated. Despite cross-examination playing out as a dialogue between two or more individuals, the aporia and concomitant wonder arise within the subject (i.e., the interlocutor). It is the subject's beliefs and theories which result in aporia, not the *maia*'s. Aporetic wonder is not caused or brought on by external (objective) means.²²³

We saw that, due to its formal and performative structure, the maieutic method is better suited to producing the reaction of wonder, as it builds trust and persuasion into the very fabric

²²³ This subjective-objective distinction for the origin of wonder will be important for the second part of the dissertation and will be discussed further in the chapters which follow.

of its imagery and approach, which, in turn, facilitates the internalization of the aporia – there is greater ownership of the theory and any issues springing from the theory.

For all of these reasons, we speak of wonder as the ἀρχή of philosophy and not aporia *simpliciter*. We cannot accept the generalizations of some scholars and commentators who lump perplexity and wonder together in their understanding of the wonder passage. Aporia and wonder are not coextensive terms.

Finally, within the context of cross-examination, wonder acts as something like a litmus test for philosophical growth. Since wonder arises as the result of aporia, it signals that there is room for improvement on a theory, whether in whole or in part. As long as there is aporetic wonder, there is still examination to be done: the cycle of aporia, wonder, philosophy is renewed.

If we were to end our discussion of philosophical wonder here, we would appear to be faithfully following the mainstream historical interpretation of philosophical wonder. Our account is more complete or discerning than most other accounts of wonder's role in Greek philosophy, as it challenges the identification of aporetic perplexity and wonder; however, to this point it has still followed the broad strokes of the majority of existing sources which comment on philosophical wonder – as few and rare as they are – to the extent that so far we have only looked at its aporetic extension.

The purpose of this first part has been, in part, to thoroughly explain this mainstream historical interpretation, to show that it is more nuanced than many may believe. Fundamentally, however, it sets up a model which is largely acceptable and not necessarily problematic from the standpoint of a *prima facie* reading of the wonder passage, against which to compare the lesser-known, oft-neglected model of contemplative wonder. This contemplative wonder will be the

topic of the second part of the dissertation and is distinct from the aporetic wonder we have discussed here.

As mentioned in the general introduction when discussing the problematic dearth of literature on the topic of wonder, this historically prevalent interpretation which links philosophical wonder to perplexity and aporia is more Aristotelian in its origin and rooted in the oft-quoted passage of the *Metaphysics*:

For it is owing to their wonder that men both now begin and at the first began to philosophize; they wondered originally at the obvious difficulties, then advanced little by little and stated difficulties about the greater matters ... And a man who is puzzled and wonders thinks himself ignorant ... therefore since they philosophized in order to escape from ignorance, evidently they were pursuing science in order to know, and not for any utilitarian end (982b11 ff.).

In this passage, one is unambiguously meant to think of wonder as relating to ignorance. Philosophy and philosophical pursuit arise as a means to flee or escape this ignorance. Although this view can be predominantly attributed to Aristotle, it is in fact traceable further back to Hippocrates. As it states in the *Regimen*, “many wonder, few know” (πολλοὶ θαυμάζουσιν, ὀλίγοι γινώσκουσιν, *Reg.* 24, 7-8).

One should be careful not to associate this tradition with Plato – at least not too strongly. This is for two reasons: first, although wonder is indeed related to ignorance in Plato’s dialogues, arising from an aporia, this ignorance does not have the same negative connotation that it has for Aristotle and Hippocrates. In fact, it would be better, per Plato, to embrace one’s ignorance, rather than run too quickly toward a new false opinion – whether this be scientifically justified or not.

The second reason one should resist placing Plato in this tradition is that merely associating wonder with cognitive acts relating to ignorance and the pursuit of truth constitutes a reduction of the richness and diversity of philosophical wonder in Plato’s dialogues. As we shall

see in the next part of the dissertation, there is more to Plato's understanding of philosophical wonder thanaporetic wonder. There is at least one other kind of wonder which arises or results from philosophical contemplation. Just as contemplative philosophy is different from cross-examination, so too is contemplative wonder very different from – but no less important than –aporetic wonder.

Part II: Philosophy as Contemplation

As mentioned in the conclusion of Part I of this dissertation, confining Plato's use of wonder to aporetic wonder constitutes a reduction or oversimplification of the richness of philosophical wonder. Part II of the dissertation will explore one other kind of wonder which accompanies a different kind of philosophical activity in Plato's dialogues, namely contemplation of the forms.

The novelty of our thesis comes from recognizing and seeking to understand this new and different kind of wonder, which we will refer to as "contemplative wonder."²²⁴

The issues already alluded to regarding literature and commentary on the role of wonder in Plato's philosophy – i.e., that there is a dearth of such literature – are further exacerbated with this second kind of philosophical wonder. Nevertheless, there are some key works that will be integral in developing our argument.

The goal of this part of the dissertation is to show that contemplative wonder is in fact distinct from the aporetic wonder explored in the first part. To accomplish this, we will first need to distinguish cross-examination from contemplation, for, if they are not distinct, then the kinds of wonder we hypothesize to correspond to these philosophical acts could also be indistinguishable from each other. That is, they may be reducible to the same wonder. The distinction between the two types of philosophical act will be the focus of the third chapter. Key to this discussion are the notions of "sight" and "*theoria*." These notions will help us draw a firm distinction between "dianoetic" acts (to which we can say cross-examination belongs) and "noetic" acts (to which contemplation more properly belongs).

²²⁴ We say "new" and "different," but in some sense it is really neither. As we will see, this kind of wonder has roots in epic poetry and would likely have been a well-known kind of wonder in Plato's time. What is new is the specific thematization of this contemplative wonder as properly *philosophical*.

Having distinguished between the two philosophical acts, we will then look at whether and how contemplation admits of its own form of wonder. In this fourth chapter, we begin by rooting our understanding of this new kind of wonder in a broader cultural narrative. We will explore the characteristics of this wonder to set the groundwork for a discussion about how it differs from aporetic wonder and to see whether it still meets the criteria of the wonder passage, namely, that it is the “pathos of the philosopher” and that it is the “ἀρχή of philosophy.” This exploration will take the form of a careful, exegetical reading of the dialogues which builds up the picture of contemplative wonder from the ground up.

It was shown in Part I of the dissertation that aporetic wonder has its origin within the subject. Aporitic wonder arises as the subject realises that what one thought to be true was not – one wonders at oneself. In Part II, we will see that contemplative wonder has its origin outside of the subject. Its source is extra-mental objects.

By the end of this second part, we will be well-positioned to firmly distinguish the two types of wonder in the general conclusion.

Chapter 3: Drawing Distinctions: What is Contemplative Philosophy?

3.0. Introduction

As mentioned in the introduction of this second part, the goal of this part of the dissertation is, in part, to distinguish between cross-examination and contemplation. Put another way, we want to show that these are two different philosophical acts. This is the object of this third chapter.

To this end, we will look at the dialogues which deal with contemplation. These are the *Republic*, the *Symposium*, the *Phaedrus*, and the *Phaedo*.²²⁵ The philosophical action at play in first two of these dialogues is commonly referred to as “ascending dialectic,” which refers to a conceptual ascent of the soul from a focus on (what we would call today) “concrete objects” to more and more “abstract objects,” culminating in some kind of meaningful interaction with the forms. This will be our starting point in discussing the philosophical act of contemplation.

After looking at this act of ascending dialectic, we will examine an important heuristic model, which will further aid in drawing the distinction between cross-examination and contemplation. This model is the ancient Greek cultural practice of *theoria*, the pilgrimage to and attendance of religious festivals. Not only is this practice mimicked in the ascending dialectic of Plato’s dialogues, it also emphasises the importance of sight within the act of *theoria* itself and, by metaphorical extension, of contemplation.

It is sight which sets contemplation apart. The vision of religious ceremonies and mysteries is mirrored by the vision of the forms by the soul. Here we must talk about the “sight

²²⁵ Additional dialogues of interest are the *Timaeus* and the *Epinomis*, though authorship of the latter is generally ascribed to Philip of Opus rather than Plato.

of the soul” as a metaphor for some kind of immediate interaction between the forms and the understanding – i.e., an act of the $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$, or rational part of the soul.

This “sight of the soul” corresponds to “noesis” and is distinct from “dianoetic” acts of reason. “Noesis” can be defined as an intuitive, non-discursive contact with an object. In the cases that we are examining, these objects are the forms. “Dianoetic” acts, by contrast, are discursive, comparative, or dialectical (in the sense of subject-object or subject-predicate relationships or interactions). Contemplation is a noetic act, a simple “perception” of the form(s) by the “eyes of reason.” Cross-examination belongs more properly to the dianoetic category of acts of reason (if not the doxastic or eikastic categories), as, in the attempt to provide a definition, it marks a distinction between an object and its attributes.

We will explore these themes in greater detail throughout this chapter.

Having established a distinction between cross-examination and contemplation, we will be better positioned in chapter four to conduct an investigation into the kind of wonder which corresponds to the philosophical act of contemplation defined in this chapter.

3.1. Ascending Dialectic in Plato’s Dialogues

We begin, then, with a discussion of the philosophical activity of ascending dialectic. As a preliminary note, it is important to state that we are not using “ascending dialectic” and “contemplation” as synonymous terms.

As a general introduction, ascending dialectic is a philosophical activity which gradually moves the focus of the understanding from concrete, particular, limited things towards more perfect, unchanging, and true instances of those things; it moves the focus from the mutable and unstable to the immutable and stable. For Plato this means ordering the understanding toward the “really real” – the forms. There are two dialogues which deal with this philosophical act, though

in two distinct ways. These dialogues are the *Republic* and the *Symposium*. The former explains the process of ascending dialectic through multiple, layered analogies and metaphors, the latter is less metaphorical, and uses concrete examples which exemplify this process of ascending dialectic.

We will examine these two dialogues presently to get an idea of the different moments involved in ascending dialectic, from ignorance, to the ascent, to the vision of the forms, to the descent, and return. The goal of this section is not to provide a comprehensive account of the philosophical practice of ascending dialectic, nor of the instances of it in the abovementioned dialogues. As we have stated, contemplation is not coextensive with ascending dialectic considered as a whole. It can, however, occur within the context of ascending dialectic. The idea here will be to examine the practice so that we can point out where contemplation occurs, and eventually to show, by comparison, why contemplation is different than the non-contemplative parts of ascending dialectic.

3.1.1. The Allegory of the Cave

The first example that we will examine is the account in the *Republic*, at the beginning of book 7: the “Allegory of the Cave.” As mentioned, this is a metaphorical account of ascending dialectic. Though some aspects referred to within the metaphor are explicitly explained by Plato, there is no definitive, comprehensive legend to interpret the Allegory. In general terms, the journey described in the passage can be broken down into four stages: (1) the initial condition; (2) the ascent which is initiated by the “turning of the head” (περιάγειν, *Rep.* 515c7); (3) emerging from the cave and the (eventual) vision of the sun; and (4) the return to the cave. Central to this allegory are the notions of sight and light as analogues for understanding and

intelligibility respectively. Though it will take some argument, we will eventually see that contemplative wonder accompanies this knowledge, this intellectual sight of intelligible things.

Considered as a whole, the journey out of and the return to the cave as it is described in the passage might remind one of the practices of cross-examination which we outlined in the first part of the dissertation. The initial condition of the cave-dweller is one of bondage, a state of double ignorance. The individual chained in place and forced to look at the shadows dancing on the wall is unaware of their captivity, unaware of a higher reality. It takes another to free them, to turn them around and show them something greater, to make them aware of their ignorance – that what they have taken to be true is only a shadow of reality.

This looks suspiciously like the double ignorance in cross-examination. We are presented with an examiner who “frees” an interlocutor, potentially by some form of dialogical engagement.²²⁶ This turns the interlocutor-now-pilgrim away from the shadows of ignorance and towards a source of light. Thereupon the pilgrim begins their ascent, led on by the examiner-now-guide.

To further this comparison with cross-examination, the language of the passage describing the ascent from the cave (once freed) is reminiscent of the language and attitudes which we saw accompany aporetic situations – indeed, the word “ἀπορεῖν” is present at *Rep.* 515d6. Even the initial turning around (περιάγειν) of the soul is immediately confronted with the dazzling light and inability to see this new reality illuminated by firelight (διὰ τὰς μαρμαρυγὰς

²²⁶ Note that we say “potentially.” Although the language and imagery evoked in the account of the *Republic* puts one largely in mind of cross-examination as the means of setting the individual on their dialectical ascent, we will later see in the *Symposium* that there are other causes as well – such as the sight of a beautiful body. As we will continue to see throughout this second part of the dissertation, beauty is somewhat of a special case when it comes to contemplation, as those objects which participate in Beauty have a stronger pull on the soul toward this form than objects which participate in other forms.

ἀδυνατοῖ καθορᾶν ἐκεῖνα ὧν, *Rep.* 515c9). The soul is immediately (ἐξαίφνης)²²⁷ thrown into an unpleasant situation, where the increase in intelligibility (“light” within the analogy) initially exceeds the ability to understand (“sight”). The pilgrim is paralysed and blinded by an aporetic situation. Not unlike the instances of pain and paralysis of cross-examination, the pilgrim will be tempted to resist, refusing to accept this newly perceived reality as being truly real, preferring the safe, familiar darkness of the cave (*Rep.* 515d1-7).

Other vocabulary to support this position is the repeated use of “necessity-like” or “compulsion” words. There is repeated use of the term “ἀναγκάζειν,” “to be compelled (of necessity),” as well as “ἔλκω,” “to drag, scrape, or lacerate.” The progress of the pilgrim, then, is driven by necessity, if not by a painful imposition of external force. In the passage, this necessity and force seems to be imposed to some degree by the guide, though the exact “how” of the ascent and the tools of necessity are left for interpretation. If we interpret the ascent as mirroring cross-examination, we might look at this as the same kind of logical necessity produced by the consistency in beliefs or theories, introduced and guided by the examiner.²²⁸

An important aspect to keep in mind while reading this passage is that, despite the violent language employed throughout, the ascent and escape from the cave is an *idealised* account.²²⁹ The imprecise geography of the cave coupled with the simplified account of the ascent out of the cave leave room for the possibility of souls wandering, getting lost, regressing, etc. This mirrors the meandering nature of the practice of cross-examination. In cross-examination, the interlocutor wanders from theory to theory: as we saw, false theories are replaced with new

²²⁷ Though ἐξαίφνης means “of a sudden,” in Plato it often means something closer to “instantaneously.” As we will see, this word is found in many passages relating to sight. That is, when one sees a thing, one sees it instantaneously, there is no dialogue between sight and the object of its vision.

²²⁸ Though only one possible interpretation of this passage, it is nevertheless a plausible one.

²²⁹ Cf. Nightingale (2004, p. 105). This is an important issue to raise, that even successful ascents are difficult and painful. We will return to this point throughout the second part.

theories which are not necessarily truer. It would be unwise to assume that exiting the cave would be a simple affair, given the language of pain and resistance associated with the ascent. Even when the soul does finally exit the cave, the light of intelligibility is still overwhelming. The pilgrim will first seek out the shadows while their eyes adjust to the light.

One might rightly ask why we are looking at this allegory as an instance of cross-examination when our explicit topic of investigation is contemplation. The answer is in the following quotation:

Finally, I suppose, he'd be able to see (κατιδεῖν) the sun, not images of it in water or some alien place, but the sun itself, in its own place, and be able to contemplate (θεάσασθαι) it... And at this point he would infer and conclude 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 (*Rep.* 516b4-c2).

This is an extremely important passage to understand how contemplation differs from cross-examination. The pilgrim here is able to see and contemplate the sun itself in its own place, not in a mediated or mixed way. While still in the cave, the sight of the pilgrim was impeded by darkness. Even when journeying towards the light, the pilgrim experiences pain and rejects the brighter, truer objects with which they are presented or confronted. In other words, there is an oscillation between darkness and light, a fight for the attention of the pilgrim. This oscillation is no longer there at the sight of the sun; there is simply sight (κατιδεῖν) and contemplation (θεάσασθαι), a sort of immediate contact.²³⁰ Moreover, the sight of the sun is a solitary action. Although the guide facilitates and mediates the ascent from the cave, directing the gaze of the

²³⁰ We should note that both *katidein* and *theasasthai* are both aorist infinitives, which is interesting from a linguistic perspective. The aorist tense in Greek denotes a simple verbal aspect, that is, it expresses a moment in time (as opposed to a continuous action). Seeing the sun is an instantaneous act of noetic contemplation. We will continue to see this kind of language used throughout the passages which deal with contemplation, especially when dealing with noetic acts as opposed to dialectical or dianoetic acts.

pilgrim on the light and dragging them toward it, they are not mentioned as having a role outside of the cave.

Concomitant with this sight and contemplation comes an understanding (*Rep.* 516b9) of the object of sight. Whereas the darkness-light dynamic of the cave admitted of aporia, the encounter with the things themselves and eventually with the sun in the realm of the visible (and even more so with the Good in the realm of the intelligible) is devoid of such language. There is only sight and understanding.

The return to the cave ushers in the return to aporia. Just as the light of the ascent was disorienting to the previously ignorant pilgrim, so now is the darkness of the descent disorienting to the recently enlightened, contemplative pilgrim. As Socrates says, “But anyone with any understanding would remember that the eyes may be confused in two ways and from two causes, namely, when they’ve come from the light into the darkness and when they’ve come from the darkness into the light” (*Rep.* 518a1-3).

This metaphorical use of a journey, sight, and light is somewhat explained at *Rep.* 517a8 ff. The upward journey out of the cave is meant to represent the journey of the soul out of or away from the visible realm up to the intelligible realm. In the analogy, the sun represents the form of the Good, which the soul “sees” and understands as the source of truth and understanding. Just as sight of the sun brings understanding of the role it plays in rendering objects visible in the visible realm; the intellectual sight of the Good brings understanding that it is the source of intelligibility in the things which are.²³¹

²³¹ Paraphrase of *Rep.* 517b8-c5, “In the knowable realm, the form of the good is the last thing to be seen, and it is reached only with difficulty. Once one has seen it, however, one must conclude that it is the cause of all that is correct and beautiful in anything... and that in the intelligible realm it controls and provides truth and understanding.”

Taken as a whole, we can see that the exercise of ascending dialectic is composed of multiple elements or moments, beginning with a dialectical activity which may correspond to the activity of cross-examination. At some point, this dialectical activity changes in nature to a *noetic* act; it switches from an activity which vacillates between light and dark to an activity which is illuminated by the source of light itself, devoid of any darkness. Upon returning to the cave, the activity once again becomes dialectical; returning to the dark reintroduces the pain of aporia and blindness.

We will pick up these themes again later in the chapter, once we have considered more aspects related to philosophical contemplation. For now, we will turn our attention to a second metaphor within the *Republic*, which actually precedes the Allegory of the Cave.

3.1.2. Jotting the Divided Line

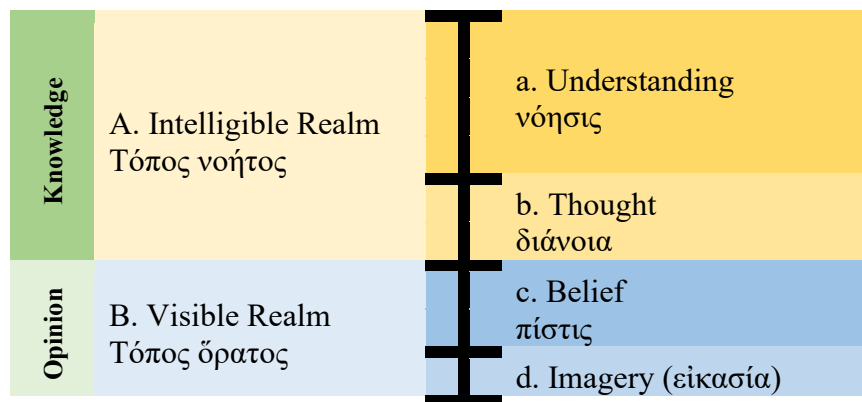
We used the term “noetic” just now as though its meaning had been firmly established – which is certainly not the case. The term is best understood in the context of another metaphor, one which is closely related to the Allegory of the Cave. This other metaphor is the Divided Line passage from the end of Book 6 of the *Republic*. For now, we will only outline the metaphor for the sake of complimenting the Cave passage. We will return to it at a later point to go into greater detail on certain points.²³²

²³² For the purposes of exposition, it is important to point out that we will be espousing a “traditional,” “quadripartite” reading of the Divided Line passage as a parallel to the Cave passage – though this reading is somewhat disputed. For a summary of competing readings, see Lafrance (2015, p. 167 ff.) and an apology for the quadripartite reading (*idem*, pp. 173-176). One of the main dissenters of the parallel between the Divided Line and the Allegory of the Cave is Robinson, who disputes that the number of divisions in the ascent of the prisoner in the Cave is so easily broken into four parts. He believes that such a division is arbitrary (1953, p. 182). This fails to distinguish between what we might call an “idealised” account and a “real/human” account of the ascent. The Allegory of the Cave should be understood as an idealised account.

Both the Divided Line and the Allegory of the Cave are situated in a broader metaphorical narrative, in the comparison between the visible and intelligible realm. On a traditional reading, this begins with the comparison between the Sun and the Good (*Rep.* 507d8-509d4), which is then elucidated by the Divided Line passage (*Rep.* 509d6-511e5), which is echoed in turn (in a more visual way) in the Allegory of the Cave (*Rep.* 514a1-518b5), and finally, after spending some time speaking about education (*Rep.* 518b6-533c6), Socrates returns to the Divided Line, relating it to the Cave imagery (*Rep.* 533c7-534b6).

The main focus of the Divided Line passage is to enumerate various kinds of knowledge act, each corresponding to objects at different levels of intelligibility, and relate them according to some proportion or ratio. The line is divided up unequally, but the proportion of each division is always the same.

The first division relates back to the earlier context of the Sun and the Good, the visible and the intelligible. We have as a starting point two unequal sections: the larger section corresponding to the intelligible realm and the smaller to the visible realm. Each of these sections of the line is then further divided according to the same proportion: the intelligible realm is broken up into understanding (νόησις) and thought (διάνοια); the visible realm is broken up into belief (πίστις) and imagery or imagination (εικασία). The resulting diagram is as follows:



In the Divided Line passage, the two main sections of the line (intelligible and visible) are not explained in the same way.²³³ Whereas the visible sections are described predominantly in terms of their objects, the intelligible sections focus mainly on the difference in the knowledge acts. However, if the proportions established in the construction of the line truly obtain, then there is much that can be understood about how the different segments of the line relate to each other based on what information is given.²³⁴

Let us take, for example, the main difference between belief (πίστις) and imagination (εἰκασία). The former deals with “real” physical objects and the latter deals with images or copies of these objects (*Rep.* 509e1-510a6). If the larger section in each dyadic pair along the line corresponds to an original and the smaller section corresponds to a copy, then we can say that understanding (νόησις) relates to real intelligible things, whereas thought (διάνοια) relates to copies of these intelligible things. Indeed, this is seen slightly later, when discussing the method

²³³ Other than that one section is larger than the other and that each pair maintains the same proportion, the exact proportions are not specified in the Analogy of the Divided Line itself. For illustrative purposes, we have used a 2:1 ratio.

Contra Raven (1953, p. 24), who takes the disparity in treatment as an excuse to deny any parallels with the Cave passage, it is likely that the reason Plato does not go into detail on the method of the sections of the divided line concerned with the visible realm because we all inhabit this visible realm; whereas, we need to learn how to ascend through dialectic, we do not need to learn how to opine about our perceptions about visible objects.

It is worth pointing out that some authors reverse the order of the proportions (again, see Lafrance, 2015, pp.163-166). While it is true that Socrates does not say which of the segments is the larger of a given pair, if the size of the line segments is meant to signify the intelligibility of the object, then it makes sense to present the line as we have done. Moreover, as we shall see in the next section on the Ladder of Love, objects become more intelligible – indeed, more real, the less they are particularised. In this sense, the shorter line segment can be seen as representative of its particularity.

²³⁴ The concept of “proportion” in Greek geometry is an important one. Books 5-8 (inclusive) of Euclid’s *Elements* study the topic exclusively (as compared to, e.g., only a part of Book 1 dedicated to triangles). It is curious, given the amount written on Plato and geometry, that there seems to be little to no literature linking the geometry of proportionality to Plato’s Divided Line. Though Euclid is historically half a century or so after Plato, much of the geometry that he codified in the *Elements* had already been developed by mathematicians who were contemporaries or predecessors of Plato – such as Theaetetus. See Nails (2002, p. 275).

of δίανοια. Socrates states that δίανοια uses images, not of concrete things, but of the forms of things:

They make their claims for the sake of the square itself and the diagonal itself, not the diagonal they draw, and similarly with the others. These figures that they make and draw, of which shadows and reflections in water are images, they now in turn use as images, in seeking to see those others themselves that one cannot see except by means of thought (*Rep.* 510d7-511a1).

This proportional relation can be applied again to the overarching sections of the intelligible and the visible – the latter being an image of the former. This dichotomy is the basis of the Allegory of the Cave (*Rep.* 518a8-c5). The inside of the cave corresponds to the visible realm, which mirrors (is a reflection of) the intelligible realm. The sun is a metaphorical copy of the good; the figures representing physical objects are copies of the forms; and, the shadows on the wall of the cave are copies of the reflections of the forms.

Already we begin to see how the Divided Line parallels and informs the Allegory of the Cave. The imagination segment relates to the initial prisoner-like state in the cave. Belief is the turning of the head (*περιάγειν*, *Rep.* 515c7)²³⁵ and movement toward the fire and marionettes. Dianoia relates to the soul looking at the images and reflections of the forms outside of the cave. Finally, understanding relates to a second kind of “turning of the head” towards the forms themselves, and eventually to the sight of the Good.

Note the spatial orientation in each of the pairs. In both imagination and dianoia, the focus is pointed away from the light toward the shadows – the attention is pointed “downward.”

²³⁵ Although it will not mean much now, it is nevertheless worth pointing out that the word used in tandem with *περιάγειν* is the same one that appears in contexts of *νόησις*. That word is *ἐξαίφνης* (immediately, straight away). When we look at the difference between noetic and dianoetic acts in a later section, we will see that one of the main differences is the immediacy of noetic acts. Certainly, this strengthens the potency of the proportional relationship between *πίστις* and *νόησις* as relating to originals. It also reinforces the sight metaphor, relating the way that the soul interacts with the forms to the way that the eyes relate to the sun.

This is even mentioned obliquely when Socrates describes the method of *dianoia*, “the soul is forced to use hypotheses in the investigation of it [the intelligible], *not travelling up* to a first principle, since it *cannot reach beyond its hypotheses*” (emphasis added, *Rep.* 511a3-6), rather it uses its hypotheses to reach a conclusion (*Rep.* 510b5-6).²³⁶ One’s eyes (whether physical or spiritual) are focused away from the originals. The opposite can be said of the other segments of the line: understanding and belief are both turned in some capacity toward the light source; they are turned “upward.”

We shall be revisiting the themes of *dianoia* as distinct from *noesis* later; however, we should end with the principal difference between the two. *Dianoia* uses hypotheses to reach conclusions, but (as *dianoia*) never gets beyond these hypotheses; *noesis*, in contrast, uses hypotheses as mere steppingstones on its upward journey, finally arriving at a first principle. It then reverses itself and applies this understanding of the first principle to better understand and explain those things on the lower segments of the line – without recourse to the visible, but making use “only of forms themselves, moving on from forms to forms, and ending in forms” (*Rep.* 511c1-2).

Given the compounded parallels, we assume that this first principle is the Good, and that it is perceived in a way that is analogous to sight: some kind of non-discursive, immediate act – but more on that later!

3.1.3. Climbing the Ladder of Love

The second example of ascending dialectic can be found in the *Symposium* (201d1 ff.), in Socrates’ account of Eros and the so-called Ladder of Love passage. This particular passage is

²³⁶ Socrates repeats his explanation of the difference between *dianoia* and *noesis*, hence the split citation. A better translation of “cannot reach beyond...” (at *Rep.* 511a6) would be “cannot extricate itself from (ἐκβαίνειν).”

quite important for the purposes of this dissertation, as it makes explicit use of the word “*thaumaston*” (wonderful) as a descriptor of the form of Beauty. We will not be addressing this use of wonder vocabulary here, as we do not yet have the foundation in place to analyse it.

Contrary to the Allegory of the cave, the account of ascending dialectic in the *Symposium* is not a metaphorical account. There is a specific form under consideration – the form of Beauty – and specific examples are used throughout the account.

In this example, Plato employs different language to speak about the ascent, but it is not difficult to find the homologues. For example, just as the pilgrim in the cave needed to be released from bondage before their ascent, Socrates must be “initiated” (μυηθείης, *Sym.* 210a1) before he can begin his own ascent. Here, Socrates is initiated by Diotima, squarely placing the latter in the role of guide to lead Socrates in the ascent of the Ladder of Love.²³⁷

The ascent of the ladder itself is likewise similar to the escape from the cave, in that they are both dialectical activities. The rungs of the ladder evolve from its bottom rung, a highly specific and concrete understanding of beauty: one particular beautiful body as the object of love. The ascent of the ladder corresponds to a two-fold evolution of one’s understanding of Beauty. One’s understanding is broadened and applied to more things (multiple beautiful bodies, beautiful actions, virtues, etc.); at the same time, one’s understanding changes to value intangible objects made more “real” and more perfect due to their abstraction from concrete particulars.²³⁸ This is seen in the move of the lover from focusing on the beauty of physical realities (such as a

²³⁷ There is a potentially long discussion to be had here about the use of words like “initiate,” “mystery,” etc. in conjunction with contemplative philosophical acts. We will touch on this a bit further in the next chapter. A detailed discussion on this topic, and its specific application to Beauty, can be found in Nightingale (2004, pp. 83-93).

²³⁸ There is a temptation is to call the forms abstract, yet, for Plato, they are what truly exist. They have real ontological weight – indeed, more than concrete objects because they simply *are*. They are not subject to generation and corruption.

particular boy) to the beauty of spiritual realities (such as the beauty of a just action). The dialectical nature of the ascent lies in the fact that the deeper understanding of higher instantiations of beauty informs, enlightens, and perfects the lover's understanding and love of "lesser" instantiations of beauty. The lover sees their beloved through the lens of Beauty itself.

Just as the escape from the cave culminates in a vision of the Good, so too does the ascent of the ladder culminate, finally, in a vision of Beauty itself. In the transition from the intermediary rungs of the ladder to the final rung, Diotima stops and explicitly requests the attention of Socrates' reason (νοῦν). This final rung of the ladder of love is a sudden vision of a certain wondrous sight, beautiful in its nature (ἐξαίφνης κατόψεταί τι θαυμαστόν τὴν φύσιν καλόν, *Sym.* 210e4-5).²³⁹ The lover sees the wonderful nature of Beauty itself.

This sudden vision of Beauty is fundamentally different from any of the preceding experiences of beautiful things. It is a vision of Beauty which is ever-existent (ἀεὶ ὄν); unlike beautiful bodies, it does not come to be beautiful, nor does it cease to be beautiful (οὔτε γιγνόμενον οὔτε ἀπολλύμενον); it is wholly beautiful. It is itself by itself, ever-existing in singularity of form, neither affected nor changed by anything (αὐτὸ καθ' αὔτο μεθ' αὔτοῦ μονοειδὲς ἀεὶ ὄν... μηδὲ πάσχειν μηδέν, 211a1-b5). It is that which Beauty is (αὐτὸ ὃ ἔστι καλόν, 211c6-d1).

There is a further intriguing confluence of terminology in this passage. The terms for "sight," "contemplation," and "communion" (κατιδεῖν, θεωμένου, συνόντος, 211e3-212a2) are used in conjunction to denote the contact with truth (as opposed to illusion). The implication seems to be that the other beautiful things experienced or perceived along the ascent of the ladder are in some way illusory and productive of falsehood when compared with the perfect vision of

²³⁹ Note here again we have the aorist κατόψεταί and the adverb ἐξαίφνης (all of a sudden, instantaneously) used to describe the perception of the forms.

Beauty itself. Diotima goes so far as to call these lesser beauties “mortal nonsense or foolishness” (φλυαρίας θνητῆς, 211e3).

This characterisation of the objects along the ascent of the ladder is reminiscent of the language employed in the Allegory of the Cave. Insofar as the light of the good was mixed with the darkness of the cave, the objects of perception were not clearly seen. They were εἰδῶλα (*Rep.* 516a7, *Sym.* 212a4), imperfect phantom images and reflections. Additionally, just as laying eyes upon the Good imparts understanding of the source and effects of the good on other intelligible things, so too in the vision of Beauty does the soul understand the participation of beautiful things (μετέχοντα, *Sym.* 211b2) in this beauty, and the transitivity of beautiful things by comparison.

To draw a preliminary conclusion before moving on, it is safe to say that in these instances of ascending dialectic, there are two distinct acts or moments: (1) the ascent or descent, where there is a greater degree of uncertainty and a greater possibility for the experience of aporia; and (2) the moment of sight, where there is no aporia, no ambiguity, only understanding.

We will be picking up on this theme again later. For now, we must turn our attention to another key theme, one which will help further generalise our claims about sight as a useful tool for understanding contemplation as distinct from cross-examination. This is the theme of *theoria*.

3.2. I Wonder as I Wander: The Notion of Theoria

In this section, we will look at the practice of *theoria* in Greek culture as a model which was appropriated as a model of philosophical practice centred on the “sight of truth.”²⁴⁰ We can apply this model of philosophical *theoria* to the two instances of ascending dialectic which we

²⁴⁰ This section of the dissertation is based in large part on the important work of Andrea Wilson Nightingale (2004). This is one of the few English texts which speaks about wonder in the context of contemplative philosophy.

looked at in the previous section. To these examples, we can also add some other examples which fit the *theoria* model, but do not necessarily fit the ascending dialectic model.

As for *theoria* itself, Andrea Wilson Nightingale provides the following definition: “In the traditional practice of *theoria*, an individual (called a *theoros*) made a journey or pilgrimage abroad for the purpose of witnessing certain events and spectacles.”²⁴¹ In general, these journeys were of a religious nature and had the sight of some religious mystery at their centre, normally within the context of some festival. Because of the religious overtones, the goal of this theoretic pilgrimage was to take in some kind of *divine* truth, some spectacle (some *θέα* or *θέαμα*) related to the divine.²⁴²

The practice of *theoria* has uprootedness built into the very notion. When we say “journey abroad” to some religious festival, we are not speaking of a simple walk down the street to the nearest church. We mean “outside one’s city state” or at the very least “extra-urban,” especially in the case of Athens.²⁴³ In other words, the journey is characterised by a lack of familiarity, and one is thereby thrust into a situation where all is “new and extramundane.”²⁴⁴

There are several ways that this journey or pilgrimage could take place, but in general it is composed of three parts (or five if considered symmetrically): (1) detachment from the familiar; (2) the liminal journeying phase; (3) consummation of the journey in the seeing of sights; (4) the return journey; and (5) arriving back and tendering a report.²⁴⁵ The first step is the move from stability, familiarity, and comfort – a situation where the surroundings are known – to

²⁴¹ Nightingale (2004, p. 3).

²⁴² As an important linguistic note, the action at play in *theoria* is “to contemplate” (*θέασθαι*). We will see later that this verb has direct ties to the notion of visual objects, sight, and sights, spectacles, etc.

²⁴³ Nightingale, (2004, p. 41).

²⁴⁴ *Idem*, p. 43.

²⁴⁵ *Cf. Idem*, p. 42. Nightingale is referencing Turner and Turner (1978) for the breakdown of the theoretic journey.

set out to experience something different. The second step is one wherein nothing is familiar, no longer in the safety of one's own home, nor yet in the safety of the festival city. There is the possibility of getting lost or sidetracked and not arriving. Finally, step three is the vision itself. Having arrived at the festival, the *theoros* looks on the spectacle or is initiated into the mysteries with the other *theoroi* from all around. However, this practice is not just about mingling with new people in new places. It also takes place for the sake of interacting with the god(s) presiding over the festival. As Nightingale says, “[h]ere, the *theōros* encounters the ultimate and most distant ‘other,’ a divine being. Though he does not literally ‘see’ this being, he does look at sacred images and symbols of the divinity and, by way of ritual, enters into a relationship with a god.”²⁴⁶

In the case of “civic” *theoria*, where the *theoros* was sent as a representative of the city, the *theoros* would return to their city to give a report or account of the festival to the leaders.

Though it may seem obvious, it is nevertheless worth pointing out that the goal of *theoria* is to arrive somewhere where the subject is not. In other words, the end is to see something that lies outside the subject and the subject's general theatre of experience. Framed in terms of contemplation, we can say that contemplation is driven externally – not by some set of beliefs or hypotheses about a given topic or object which may or may not be true. The truth of the object of contemplation is static and unaffected by the thoughts or perceptions of the *theoros*.²⁴⁷ The object of contemplation motivates the subject externally, as an object worthy of contemplation.

Perhaps most importantly, this theoretic journey has a transformative effect on the *theoros*. Indeed, as Nightingale says, the possibility of being changed is constitutive of the theoretic

²⁴⁶ Nightingale (2001, p. 33).

²⁴⁷ Cf. Nightingale (2004, p. 111).

process, and hence is likely to form part of the *theoros*' expectation *a priori*.²⁴⁸ Once the *theoros* has witnessed the divine spectacles, they cannot unwitness them. Upon their return, they may be considered an ideological threat to the status quo of their place of origin – and potentially put to death. To set out on a theoric journey, therefore, is to uproot oneself in a potentially permanent way: no longer belonging in one's own home, and not able to remain a *theoros* in the foreign city once the festival is over. In this sense, the *theoros* will belong most properly to the “liminal” second phase of *theoria*.²⁴⁹

Over time, this practice of *theoria* became an opportunity or excuse for intellectuals to gather and discuss philosophical questions. Hence, the gradual transformation of *theoria* from a religious activity, a seeing of religious practices to *theoria* as synonymous with philosophical activity, sight of the spectacle of Truth.²⁵⁰

It is perhaps already clear how this practice finds its homologue in the philosophy of Plato. For one, Plato calls philosophers the “lovers of the sight of truth” (τοὺς τῆς ἀληθείας... φιλοθεάμονας, *Rep.* 475e4) as analogous to the lovers of sights and sounds at religious festivals, thereby making a direct connection between religious and philosophical *theoria*. There is an almost one-to-one correspondence between this brief description here and the Allegory of the

²⁴⁸ Nightingale (2001, p. 44). See Nightingale (2004, p. 70), “In the activity of contemplation, the theorist rises above all earthly affairs – including his own individual human identity – in order to ‘see’ eternal and divine beings.”

See also Vasalou (2015, p. 116), “Having come into contact with higher metaphysical reality – having gone over to it in what we may call ... an act of contemplative pilgrimage – we can only be sent away transformed, so that when we return from this extraordinary reality to the ordinary human realm, we find ourselves beholding it with the detached eyes of a stranger, or indeed a god.”

²⁴⁹ See Nightingale (2004, p. 36), “Using mythic and rhetorical discourse, Plato attempts to make what is familiar strange and what is strange familiar, thus dislodging the reader from his ordinary beliefs. In his efforts to unsettle the reader, Plato uses a very distinctive rhetorical strategy – what I call the ‘rhetoric of estrangement.’”

²⁵⁰ As Nightingale points out (2004, p. 39), the centrality of “sight” as an outcome of philosophical *theoria* is a fourth century BCE innovation. Before this, though similar imagery of initiation and *theoria* are used, focus is placed more on “hearing” the truth. This is apparent in the Poem of Parmenides, Fragments 1, 23 and 2, 1.

Cave discussed in the previous section. We have the three principal parts of the journey: (1) the breaking of the fetters and the *περιαγωγή* of the soul from the familiar; (2) the upward journey, arduous and disorienting, from the cave; and, (3) the sight of the Good at the end. We equally have the return of the *theoros* which results in their potential ostracization and death at the hands of the community (*Rep.* 517a4-6). The journey “abroad” in contemplation is a sort of transcending of the physical, material realm (the visible realm), a journey which is variously represented in the dialogues by means of metaphors, two of which we have already seen.

Just as the journey of the civic *theoros* culminates in the participation in some mystery, the sight of some divine truth, so too does the arduous dialectical journey of the philosophical *theoros* culminate in some vision – however imperfect – of the divine Truth of the forms. We have hinted at this in the accounts of the Allegory of the Cave and the Ladder of Love, and will continue to see this parallel with *theoria* echoed in other dialogues through continued examination of contemplation.

Indeed, the Allegory of the Cave is only one of three such theoretic journeys described in the *Republic*. The dialogue itself begins with an allusion to Socrates and Glaucon going out of the city to the festival of Bendis, where they *see* the Theban and Athenian processions. In the middle of the dialogue is, again, the Allegory of the Cave. Finally, in book 10, there is the Myth of Er, who travels to the underworld/afterlife to be a messenger to humankind about the things found there (*Rep.* 614d1-3), to “listen and look” (*ἀκούειν τε καὶ θεᾶσθαι*)²⁵¹ at everything. While on this journey, Er is a second-hand witness to the “incomprehensible and beautiful sights” (*θέας ἀμηχάνους τὸ κάλλος*, *Rep.* 615a4) encountered by the souls returning to earth, and a first-hand

²⁵¹ On a point of translation, *θεᾶσθαι* could equally be translated as “contemplate.”

witness to the light stretching over the heavens and the earth, “like a rainbow, but brighter and more pure” (μάλιστα τῆ ἴριδι προσφερῆ, λαμπρότερον δὲ καὶ καθαρώτερον, 616b1-c5).²⁵²

Another example of a theoric journey is found in the *Phaedrus*. Here we have another metaphorical representation of philosophical *theoria*. This time the soul is likened to a chariot and charioteer. The charioteer represents understanding (νοῦς), and the chariot is pulled by the two horses of desire (an unruly and undisciplined horse) and *thumos* (an obedient horse). This account is different from the *Republic* and *Symposium* accounts, as these both seem to take place during one’s lifetime (the former analogically, the latter more literally). The account in the *Phaedrus* of the procession of souls, by contrast, takes place between lifetimes (similar to the Myth of Er). Nevertheless, the procedure is much the same as in the other two cases. There is an initial state where the soul is weighed down by the pursuits of the body, which in turn keeps it from seeing the divine realities, slowly spiralling downward and eventually losing the wings of one’s soul. For those souls still equipped with their wings, and for those able to regrow their wings, there is the possibility of joining the celestial procession to the hyperouranian plane, where the forms reside. For a human soul, this procession, much like the ascent from the cave, is arduous. It is made possible by that which is divine in the soul of man (i.e., reason), but it is made difficult by that which is worldly and bodily in man (i.e., the desires and emotions).

As we touched upon briefly in the first part of this dissertation when dealing with the tripartition of the soul, we saw that the degree to which the soul makes progress varies in direct

²⁵² We must remember that at this point in the *Republic*, light has already been used as an analogy for intelligibility as imparted by the Good. Moreover, in the *Theaetetus*, we have seen Iris (the rainbow) used as the divine embodiment of philosophy, born of Thaumás (wonder).

Another intriguing question to consider is “who is really performing the *theoria* in the Myth of Er?” In what direction does the *theoria* proceed? In the case of Er, he seems to go from the mortal realm to the realm of the dead (from embodiment to disembodiment); whereas, from the perspective of the souls in the afterlife, the dead are *returning* to the afterlife. The heavenly souls are pure and the returning souls are covered in dust and earth – not unlike someone returning from a journey.

proportion to the education and alignment of the more “bodily” parts of the soul with reason. Here this is exemplified by the degree to which the two horses obey the direction of the charioteer. If the soul is hopelessly disordered and the horses are in opposition to each other, or to the charioteer, then the soul will fumble along on its journey and will never make it to the hyperouranian plane, enticed as it is by the many material pleasures of the body. To be clear, even for those who are able to make the journey, the journey is still difficult and the vision of the forms is partial and imperfect.

Such is the life of the gods [to have unimpeded view of the forms]; but of the other souls, that which best follows after God and is most like him, raises the head of the charioteer up into the outer region and is carried round in the revolution, troubled by the horses and *hardly beholding the realities*; and another sometimes rises and sometimes sinks, and, because its horses are unruly, *it sees some things and fails to see others*. The other souls follow after, all yearning for the upper region but unable to reach it, and are carried round beneath, trampling upon and colliding with one another, each striving to pass its neighbor. So, there is the greatest confusion and sweat of rivalry, wherein many are lamed, and many wings are broken through the incompetence of the drivers; and after much toil they all go away *without gaining a view of reality*, and when they have gone away *they feed upon opinion* (*Phdr.* 248a1-b5, emphasis added).

There are, then, two potential outcomes of this procession: (1) the sight of reality however imperfect and incomplete, and (2) the failure to achieve this vision. The second outcome results in opinion about what this sight could be like, rather than *knowing* firsthand what it *is*. After this vision of the forms (or lack thereof), the soul returns to the world for another cycle.

Contrary to the accounts of the Cave and the Ladder, the “liminal” part of the charioteer’s journey is not dialectical – at least not in the same way. In some sense, the outcome of the procession of chariots is predetermined. The education of the soul, the growing of the wings, and the taming of the horses takes place during one’s life (*Phdr.* 251b1 ff.); the ascent takes place between lives and is successful to the degree that one is successful in regrowing one’s wings and

reigning in one's desires and emotions to desire and pursue divine realities (the forms). This taming of the horses and growing of the wings in life does resemble the dialectical activities of the ladder and the cave, in that the process is a messy and unpleasant affair. The light of Beauty shines out in the beauty of the beloved as a divine symbol (*ἀγάλματι*, *Phdr.* 251a6) and the mastery of the soul plays out as a battle between the two beauties: reason seeking the form of Beauty and desire seeking the beautiful body.

Regardless of the differences, we see the pattern emerge in each instance of philosophical *theoria*: an initial state of ignorance or worldly pursuits, an arduous journey of enlightenment, a vision of a form(s) in their own realm, and a return. Although we have not yet broken down each of these metaphorical accounts of philosophical *theoria* in great detail, we are nevertheless better positioned to make a claim about this pattern which is repeated in Plato's dialogues.

We turn our attention now to a closer examination of the "sight" of the forms as the defining factor and specific difference of the philosophical practice of contemplation.

3.3. Sight and Noesis: Contemplation as a Non-Discursive Act of Reason

In the previous section, we saw that, in the course of philosophical *theoria*, there comes a moment where the forms are seen in some capacity. Our claim has been that this "sight with the eyes of the soul" is what differentiates contemplation from other philosophical acts such as cross-examination. The aim of this section will be to show that this is the case.

3.3.1. Sight and Light

Sight plays an important role in Plato's dialogues in general. In the *Timaeus*, the eyes are listed as the first of the sense organs created. In this dialogue, sight is also named the most philosophical of the senses, since, through sight, one can gaze at the revolutions of the celestial bodies, which mirror the revolution of reason within man. Plato speaks of a dynamic tendency

between the eye and its object as facilitated and actualised by light. Central to this theme is the notion of “kinship” (συγγενεῖς, *Tim.* 47b8) between the eye and its object. There is a light within the eyes which reaches out and unites with the light of their object (*Tim.* 45b2-e4). This unity of experience (the coming together of percipient and percept) is the act of sight and is facilitated by the light of the sun.²⁵³

As we have seen, this motif and relationship of sight, light, and sun is also very present in the *Republic* – not as a physical or cosmological account as it is in the *Timaeus*, but as a running analogy for the acts and objects of reason. The Allegory of the Cave is only one instance where this motif arises. As we saw in the Divided Line passage which precedes the Allegory of the Cave, Plato speaks of two domains: the visible realm (ὄρατοῦ τόπος) and the intelligible realm (νοητοῦ τόπος). These two realms he puts parallel and proportionate to one another (cf. *Rep.* 508b12-d9). We understand the former through direct experience; whereas, the latter is understood as analogous to the former. That is, we have a direct experience of the visible realm because we inhabit that world; we see it with our eyes. There is a direct contact with the visible. The analogy between visible and intelligible realms show us that, in a similar way that the physical eye tends toward its object and that this action is facilitated by the light of the sun, the eye of the soul tends toward its object too, as facilitated by the light of the good. Socrates breaks down this parallel in the following way:

Let us say, then, that this is what I called the offspring of the good, which the good begot as its analogue. What the good itself is in the intelligible realm, in relation to understanding and intelligible things, the sun is in the visible realm, in relation to sight and visible things (*Rep.* 508b12-c2).

And again, shortly after,

²⁵³ We will continue to see throughout this second part of the dissertation that sight as it relates to acts of knowledge is an important notion in Greek culture. As Raymond Prier states (1989, p. 144), “Sight and light become one, and the eyes themselves become affective symbol-signs of recognition.”

Well, understand the soul in the same way [as the eyes].: When it focuses on something illuminated by truth and what is (ἀλήθειά τε καὶ ὄν), it understands, knows (ἐνόησέν τε καὶ ἔγνω), and apparently possesses understanding (νοῦν ἔχειν), 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 ... So that what gives truth to the things known and the power to know to the knower is the form of the good. And though it is the cause of knowledge and truth, it is also an object of knowledge (*Rep.* 508d4-e4).

This passage should be coupled with the account at *Timaeus* 45b2-e4 mentioned above, which speaks of the primacy of the eyes, whose natural inborn light flows forth and joins with the light of day.

Now whenever daylight surrounds the visual stream, like makes contact with like and coalesces with it to make up a single homogeneous body aligned with the direction of the eyes. This happens wherever the internal fire strikes and presses against an external object it has connected with (*Tim.* 45c2-6).

These passages (*Rep.* 508b12-e4, *Tim.* 45b2-e4) complement one another perfectly. They demonstrate not only the affinity of the eyes to light but also a “dynamic tendency” or natural predisposition between the eye and its object (the sun or light). *Mutatis mutandis*, we will see that the eyes of the soul (which are able to discern Truth) are by the same logic naturally predisposed to the form of the Good.

The above passage from the *Republic* is quite important, as it provides insight into the nature of the sight of the soul. When the eyes of the soul are fixed upon a true object, a being, the soul understands and knows it.²⁵⁴ The “sight” of the soul is *understanding* (νοῦς). When an eye (a physical eye) sees colour through the medium of light, there is no question as to whether or not that which is seen is truly colour – it is simply known. In other words, if an eye is open and

²⁵⁴ Here again we have the morphological idiosyncrasy of the terms for “understand” (ἐνόησέν) and “know” (ἔγνω) being expressed in the aorist tense. They have the simple aspect corresponding to a point-in-time rather than a continuous (ongoing or not yet finished) or a perfect aspect (perduring over a finite amount of time and having come to an end). This seemingly innocuous choice of verb tense is actually important if we understand the forms as atemporal beings.

functioning according to a normal standard, then when it encounters its object, it sees it, unerringly.²⁵⁵ In a similar way, when the soul looks at its proper object, namely truth (ἀλήθεια) and being (ὄν) through the medium of the Good (*Rep.* 508d4-509a5), it also does not err with respect to its object – it does not doubt that it is understanding something true. However, as soon as reason turns back to the world of becoming (the visible as opposed to the intelligible realm), one’s sight is darkened.

The “brightest” object of both faculties (sight and reason) also happens to be the medium which enables the activity of these faculties. The highest or “best” object of sight is the sun, whose light makes possible the sight of every other object and can itself be made the object of one’s sight. The highest object of reason is the Good. Here we have a conceptual difficulty, and perhaps even a breakdown of the parallelism: it is hard to understand how exactly goodness makes the other forms more intelligible or understandable to reason.²⁵⁶

This parallelism between sight in the visible realm and sight of the soul as it plays out in *Republic*, book 6 is perhaps best visualised in the following way:²⁵⁷

²⁵⁵ If we take the proper object of sight to be colour, then one cannot argue that what one sees is colour. One might debate *what* colour it is, but not *that* it is a colour.

²⁵⁶ This is a rather large and highly disputed topic which we will not discuss here, as an analysis of this topic would not be germane to our present dissertation. *That* Plato makes such a claim must be taken as sufficient for our purposes.

²⁵⁷ This is a modified version of Mattéi’s table (1996, p.128), which we have translated into English. The parallels between the visible and the invisible are broken down into five categories: the (1) cause of the understanding which corresponds to (2) a given organ; the (3) faculty which interacts with (4) its proper object; all of which is facilitated by (5) some medium.

		Τόπος ὄρατος (Visible Realm)		Τόπος νοήτος (Intelligible Realm)	
Analogy					
Cause	Analogy: Origin of understanding (<i>connaissance</i>) Understanding (<i>connaissance</i>)	Sun (Father of the Visible) (508a) (509b)	5	(508e)	The Good (Father of the Sun) (506e)
Object		Visible Things (Τὰ ὀρώμενα) (507c)	4	(508c)	Intelligible forms (Τὰ νοούμενα)
Medium		Light (Φῶς) (507e)	3	(508d)	Truth and Being (ἀλήθεια τε καὶ τὸ ὄν)
Faculty		Sight (Ὄψις) (507c)	2	(508c)	Understanding (Νοῦν)
Organ		Eye (Ὄμμα) (508ab)	1	(508d)	Eyes of the soul (Τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς)

In addition to the use of “sight” to describe this contact with the forms, in at least two locations, Plato also employs language of “grasping.”

Then will it not be reasonable for us to plead in his defense that it is the nature of the real lover of learning to struggle toward what is, not to remain with any of the many things that are believed to be, that, as he moves on, he neither loses nor lessens his erotic love until he grasps (ἄψασθαι) the being of each nature itself with the part of his soul that is fitted to grasp it (ἐράπτεσθαι), because of its kinship (συγγενεῖ) with it, and that, once getting near what really is and having intercourse with it and having begotten understanding and truth, he knows, truly lives, is nourished, and – at that point, but not before – is relieved from the pains of giving birth (ὠδίνος)? (*Rep.* 490a8-b7).

And again, “by the other subsection of the intelligible, I mean that which reason itself grasps by the power of dialectic (αὐτὸς ὁ λόγος ἄπτεται τῇ τοῦ διαλέγεσθαι δυνάμει)” (*Rep.* 511b3-4).

This is an interesting choice of vocabulary, as, with sight, one might associate the experience with distance. In the act of sight, there is a spatial mediation between what is perceived and what is perceiving (one which is facilitated or further mediated by light). With

touching or grasping, however, the sense of immediacy is even greater. There is a direct contact, an overlap between the one touching and the one touched. This is not unlike the account of vision tendered in the *Timaeus* which we touched upon briefly above. In this account, the fire of the eye goes out, like unto like (ὅμοιον πρὸς ὅμοιον, *Tim.* 45c4) to meet the fire of the object seen. The two fires unite as one.

Taken together, the use of sight and touch to signify the experience of reason when confronted with the forms helps us better understand this contemplative act. When reason perceives the forms, it does so immediately, simply, unerringly.²⁵⁸ The soul possesses truth and understanding in that moment. Furthermore, this simple vision, this immediate contact, transforms the mechanisms of thought in the contemplative philosopher, reversing them: rather than working from opinions and hypotheses to first principles, the soul begins to reason from the simple truths of the forms, the first principle of everything (τὴν τοῦ παντὸς ἀρχήν, *Rep.* 511b7), and draws its conclusions from this first principle. In other words, it applies the lens of understanding rather than the lens of opinion to its dealings with the world (both the visible and the intelligible realms). This will be further developed in the sections that follow.

3.3.2. Noesis versus Dianoesis: Non-Discursive versus Discursive Modes of Reasoning

We can already see the principal difference between the visible and the intelligible realms emerging. That which is truly knowable, intelligible, and that which we truly know are the forms. These are known through reason (νοῦς) directly. This act of reason which perceives and knows the forms (simply) is contemplation (θεάσασθαι). Sense perception in the realm of the visible is not true knowing. As Plato states,

²⁵⁸ See Fisher (1998, p. 17), “Only the visual is instantaneous, the entire object and all its details present at once.”

For the colorless, formless, and intangible truly existing essence (οὐσία ὄντως οὐσα), with which all true knowledge (ἀληθοῦς ἐπιστήμη) is concerned, holds this region and is visible only to reason/understanding (μόνον θεατὴ νῶ), the pilot of the soul (ψυχῆς κυβερνήτη, *Phdr.* 247c6-d1).

Whereas contemplation (sight) of the forms perceives the forms as unities (themselves, by themselves, monoeidetic, in their own place (*Sym.* 210e6-211b5)), sense perception sees objects as a contradiction of unity and plurality (*Rep.* 524d2-525a10). Until unity is perceived adequately by reason, there is no rest in the soul. As we will see, this implies that the realm of the visible is characterised by aporia. Insofar as there is this aporetic vision, the soul will strive for true understanding (or ought to do so).²⁵⁹

This notion that the realm of the visible is an aporetic realm is corroborated by the language used to describe the actions of the inhabitants of both realms. Because of the “indefinite plurality” experienced in the visible realm, we have words like “opine” and “competition” (cf. e.g., *Rep.* 516d2-3). The multitude of experiences of the same object – that is, the fact that an object can present itself in a plurality of ways – means that the opinions formed based on these experiences compete with one another and must therefore be justified and examined.²⁶⁰

In the realm of the intelligible we have words like “discern” and “contemplate” (*Rep.* 516b6). Again, we point back to our earlier comments on the sight of reason having an immediate contact with the forms. The opinion of the visible realm is replaced with the knowledge in the intelligible realm. As Plato states,

And beauty itself and good itself and all the things that we thereby set down as many, reversing ourselves, we set down according to a single form of each, believing that there is but one, and call it ‘the being’ of each... And we say that the

²⁵⁹ Cf. Napolitano Valditara (2014, p. 168).

²⁶⁰ Intriguingly, in many ways, the life of competing opinions is sufficient for most people. One might be tempted to ascribe this to the Protagorean and Heraclitean relativism and mobilism discussed in Part 1 of the dissertation – it certainly seems to adequately describe the current era of social media and a post-truth society; however, the hypothetical-deductive method of scientific inquiry would also technically fall into this category of competing explanations (shown through the notion of paradigm shifts).

many beautiful things and the rest are visible but not intelligible, while the forms are intelligible but not visible (*Rep.* 507b5-10).

Within the running analogy of light and dark as a spectrum of intelligibility in the *Republic*, the space within the cave is a realm of dim uncertainty, blunted edges, opinion, and ignorance (*Rep.* 508c4-7) – despite the possible sharp-eyedness of the cave dwellers (*Rep.* 516c9). The *κατιδεῖν* of the intelligible realm is not possible within the cave. *Κατιδεῖν* means “to discern,” which is to say, the ability to distinguish a thing from its surroundings and from other objects – to perceive it as a unity unto itself.²⁶¹

When we speak of contemplation, we are speaking about this difference: the difference between unambiguous, distinct understanding and dim, confused vision – if not blindness.²⁶²

The part of philosophical *theoria*, the journey to and from the forms, which takes place within the metaphorical cave, is distinct from the part of the journey where the forms are seen in the intelligible realm. Not only is opinion and competition replaced by knowledge and truth; discourse and plurality are replaced by being-with, and unity. Opining is replaced with certainty, imperfection with perfection, partial with whole, temporal with eternal (*Sym.* 210e6-211b5).

Key to understanding this is the difference between “noetic” and “dianoetic” forms of reasoning, which we began to see illustrated in the analogy of the Divided Line. In some sense, we have been alluding to this difference all along.²⁶³ When we speak of a noetic act of reason, we are really speaking of an intuitive act. Indeed, *noesis* and intuition are often seen to be

²⁶¹ A transliteration of the Latin “dis-cernere” is “to see apart.” As for the Greek term, *κατιδεῖν*, one could break it down in the following way “κατα-ιδειν” or “to look down upon,” or “to see against.” In its general use, the term means “to see or know distinctly,” as *οἶδα* and *ἴδειν* share the double meaning of “to see” and “to know.”

²⁶² *Rep.* 508c6-7, “their edges are blunted (*ἀμβλυόττουσι*) and they appear blind (*φαίνονται τυφλῶν*), as though pure vision did not dwell within them (*ὥσπερ οὐκ ἐνούσης καθαρᾶς ὄψεως*).”

²⁶³ For a good historical overview of the distinction between “*νόησις*” and “*διάνοια*,” see Boeri (2017).

synonymous.²⁶⁴ Νόησις in Plato denotes a conceptual grasping of an object by reason. The term is used predominantly to refer to the interaction between man's rational faculty (νοῦς) and the forms. In the Divided Line passage, this was shown by the soul ascending to an unconditional principle in νόησις – a per se notum truth. This was further illustrated in the parallel account of ascent to the realm of the forms in the Allegory of the Cave.

The noetic act is an immediate contact with the form, resulting in true knowledge and understanding of said form. In addition to the immediacy of this contact, we have also alluded to the instantaneity of the noetic act. Plato employs terms like “ἐξαίφνης,” “straight away,” “immediately,” “of a sudden.” He moreover predominantly uses the aorist tense for the verbs in these passages, which carries with it both an immediacy and an almost atemporal aspect. The “point-in-time” aspect of the Greek aorist is like a break in temporal continuity.²⁶⁵ In other words, noetic acts are experiences wherein a form is grasped directly and suddenly, in an almost atemporal way.²⁶⁶

The verbs used to describe this immediate, noetic function are, as we have seen, “sight,” “contemplation,” and “grasping.” What is seen, contemplated, and grasped in these acts is the

²⁶⁴ Cf. A.C. Lloyd (1969, p. 261) and Cornford (1932, p. 177).

²⁶⁵ If we consider time as a linear process, then the aorist would be a point on that line. Interestingly, from the standpoint of Euclidean geometry, a point has no extension and therefore takes up no space. It exists only as a limit of a line, or as a disjunction along a line. In this sense, the aorist expression of noetic κατιδεῖν and θεάσασθαι would be “atemporal” disjuncts along the timeline. This geometrical understanding of time is certainly espoused in Aristotle's *Physics*, Book 4, Chapters 10-14 in his treatment of the “now” (νῦν).

²⁶⁶ Nightingale states the following (2004, p. 95, note 3): “According to Plato, the Forms are eternal and changeless, whereas the soul is everlasting but exists in time (it is subject to motion and change). Plato does not offer a technical analysis of the soul's interaction with Beings that exist outside of time. Rather, he uses the narrative mode, which depicts the soul's theoretical journey as taking place within time. The philosopher's journey unfolds step by step; even when gazing on the Forms, the philosopher does not escape from time. Thus, in the soul's encounter with the Forms, a being that exists and evolves within time confronts and attempts to comprehend a timeless, changeless being.” Overall, Nightingale's aim is not to deny the possibility of contemplation thus construed. She does believe that philosophical *theoria* in the *Republic* is limited in non-negligible ways. The intent here seems to be more to highlight the difficulty of understanding the precise nature of contemplative sight.

forms, but perhaps more importantly, the outcome of this act is true knowledge of the perceived form. When we say that this is an “immediate act,” what we mean is that it is not an act which engages discursively with the object: the sight is not searching; the contemplation is not hypothesizing; the grasping is not reaching.²⁶⁷ Much like we stated earlier in Part One when discussing the nature of desire, one desires and pursues that which it does not possess. In the case of *noesis*, of contemplation, the soul possesses the form, sees it as it is, clearly, without (or perhaps despite) the obscurity of its physical iterations and instantiations. There is no further need to provide a definition which satisfies the question “what is x?” It is there, *per se notum*, self-evident. For this reason, Plato states that the νοῦς is worth more than a thousand eyes, for by it alone is Truth beheld.²⁶⁸ As Cornford states, “The one basic truth (ἀρχή) of all science will itself ‘rest on no hypothesis (ἀνυπόθετος), but be intuitively known with perfect clearness and unshakable certainty’.”²⁶⁹

Fundamentally, it is this immediate, atemporal nature which provides the difference between noetic acts and dianoetic acts. Dianoetic acts are temporal acts (the word itself δια-voειν means “reasoning through” and implies a temporal process). As we saw in the analogy of the Divided Line, the principal difference between noesis and dianoesis is that, whereas the latter proceeds by way of hypotheses, the former proceeds from first principles (*Rep.* 510b4-9, 511a3-

²⁶⁷ When describing different types of non-discursive act (in Plotinus), A.C. Lloyd states (1969, pp. 263-4) that “this type of thinking involves no distinction between the thinker or the thinking on one side and the object of his thinking or the thought on the other side.” As Lloyd points out, this kind of thinking would be familiar to anyone who has studied Aristotle; however, we can equally see it in Platonic terms. As we saw above, in the *Timaeus* (45c2-6) the light of the eyes goes out and unites with the light of the object – they are effectively united by that which they share in common.

²⁶⁸ *Rep.* 527d6-e3, “It is no easy task – indeed it is very difficult – to realize that in every soul there is an instrument (ὄργανόν τι ψυχῆς) that is purified and rekindled by such subjects when it has been blinded and destroyed by other ways of life, an instrument that is more important to preserve than ten thousand eyes (μυρίων ὀμμάτων), since only with it can the truth be seen (μόνῳ γὰρ αὐτῷ ἀλήθεια ὀρᾶται).”

²⁶⁹ Cornford (1932, p. 178).

8, 511b3-c2, 533e7-534a5). Dianoesis does not necessarily escape the limitations – and in some sense distractions – of visible representations.

When we say “proceeds by way of hypothesis,” we are reminded of cross-examination: a method of inquiry wherein a “τι ἐστὶ” or “τι ἐστὶ-like” question is posed and some theory (i.e., some hypothesis) is put forward for examination.²⁷⁰ We have seen that this method of hypothesis is a discursive method (both in the sense that it takes place as a discussion, and in the sense that it occurs over time).²⁷¹ Moreover, we have seen that dianoetic acts of reason(-ing) do not guarantee knowledge or truth in the way that noetic, contemplative acts are said to do. When discussing cross-examination, we saw that neither the truth of the given theory nor the truth of its replacement should it be found wanting were guaranteed by the method itself.²⁷² If it is the case

²⁷⁰ See Cornford (1932, p. 182), “But the ‘hypothesis’ of moral dialectic is an hypothesis in the original sense – not a true and demonstrable assumption of existence, but an inadequate tentative definition, *suggested* by the respondent, submitted to criticism by the questioner in the *elenchus*, and either amended or abandoned altogether.”

It bears pointing out that the interpretation of “proceeds by way of hypothesis” as some cross-examination-like activity is disputed. Many scholars see in dianoesis a particularly geometrical act with a set of geometrical objects as its end. This is based on the example given of the mental image of the square itself in the Divided Line passage, as well as the passage which lists the courses of study for the prospective philosophers after the main section on the Allegory of the Cave. Our interpretation seems at least equally plausible, given that in this latter section, when looking at those subjects which engage calculation (λογισμος), we see that the subjects are described as one-many dilemmas resulting in aporia of the soul (τὴν ψυχὴν ἀπορεῖν, *Rep.* 524a7). Eventually, these subjects move to questions like “what is the one itself” (*Rep.* 524e6-525a2). In the end, they seem to be anything that turn the soul toward Being. Moreover, if dianoesis studies the image of the forms (their reflections, per the Allegory of the Cave), then we also know that geometrical figures cannot be the only objects of dianoia. We know from other dialogues that there are forms of Beauty, Justice, Temperance, etc.

²⁷¹ To this notion of discursion could be added the following from A.C. Lloyd (1969, p. 262), “in the jargon ‘discursive’ has always connoted some passage or transition ... When it means ‘demonstrative’ or ‘inferred’ the reference to a transition of thought from premiss to conclusion is evident. When it is roughly equivalent to ‘propositional’ the transition is supposed to be that between concepts.”

²⁷² We are using cross-examination as one potential extension of dianoetic reasoning, as the characteristics mentioned in the *Republic* align with our account of this generalised method in Part One. This is not necessarily the only extension of dianoesis. Indeed, as mentioned, mathematical disciplines such as arithmetic and geometry also seem to apply and play an important role in the overall educational background necessary to achieve a view of the forms, because, as studies, they direct the soul to higher realities (*Rep.* 525a3 ff.). It stands to reason that there could be others as well.

that cross-examination is a dianoetic act, then aporia belongs most properly to dianoetic reasoning insofar as aporia result from the examination of hypotheses.

If what we are proposing about the difference in the nature of noetic and dianoetic reasoning obtains, then aporia would not belong to the former and this for the following reason: noetic, intuitive contemplation is, per our above description, what we might call today an analytic or tautological cognitive act. Because the object of contemplation is seen itself by itself, in its own place, there is no need to hypothesise about it. To adopt a Heideggerian expression, “it lets being be.” It is really an ($x = x$) moment of understanding. Dianoesis, by comparison, does not admit the same analytic simplicity. Postulating a hypothesis introduces multiplicity – and hence alterity – from the very outset.²⁷³ To reply to the question $\tau\iota \ \epsilon\sigma\tau\acute{\iota} \ x$ with anything other than “x” runs the risk of falling victim of aporia. To state that “x is y” could translate as “x is greater or less than x,” “x is not x,” or “x is not *just* x.”²⁷⁴ This is perhaps why definitions of philosophical concepts tendered by the interlocutors in Plato’s dialogues seldom stand up to scrutiny.

²⁷³ As Gill states (2012, p. 119), “Attaining truth demands two acts, first a perception, then a judgment about what is perceived.”

²⁷⁴ See Arendt (1978, p. 121), “Thinking, however, in contrast to cognitive activities that may use thinking as one of their instruments, needs speech not only to sound out and become manifest; it needs it to be activated at all. And since speech is enacted in sequences of sentences, the end of thinking can never be an intuition; nor can it be confirmed by some piece of self-evidence beheld in speechless contemplation.” Much of this sentiment is echoed in Arendt (2004), but with the inclusion of wonder (see especially pp. 447-453). Unfortunately, wonder in this text is conflated both between accounts of aporetic and contemplative wonder and Aristotelian and Platonic accounts of wonder.

See also *Rep.* 477b2-e3: “‘Is there a thing which we call opinion?’ ‘Surely.’ ‘Is it a different faculty from knowledge ($\epsilon\pi\iota\sigma\tau\eta\mu\eta$) or the same?’ ‘A different one.’ ‘Then opinion is set over one thing and knowledge over another, each by virtue of its own distinctive faculty ($\delta\acute{\upsilon}\nu\alpha\mu\iota\varsigma$).’ ‘That is so.’ ‘May we say, then, that knowledge is naturally related to that which is, to know that and how that which is is?... To return, then, my friend,’ said I, ‘to knowledge, do you say that it is a faculty, or in what class do you put it?’ ‘Into this,’ he said, ‘the most potent of all faculties.’ ‘And opinion – shall we assign it to some other class than faculty.’ ‘By no means,’ he said, ‘for that by which we are able to opine is nothing else than the faculty of opinion.’”

It is fair to say, then, that these two acts of reason are not the same. Noesis is an intuitive, instantaneous (atemporal?) act, which has as its outcome knowledge and understanding and arises through contemplation. Dianoesis is a hypothetical and temporal act which deals with opinion and judgements about a given object and *can* play out through cross-examination – though it is not necessarily reducible to it. This in turn opens dianoesis up to potential aporetic outcomes. As Trabattoni states, “what is not compatible with a non-propositional conception of knowledge ... is falsehood. ... [T]he expression ‘false opinion’ only makes sense in relation to propositional forms of knowledge.”²⁷⁵

This is not to say that dianoesis is better or worse than contemplation – only different. Indeed, it is a necessary part of educating the soul to look beyond the visible. The internal confrontation of reason through aporia in the realm of becoming is instrumental in pushing one to look for what is.²⁷⁶

3.3.3. Grandmother, What Perceptive νοῦς You Have... All the Better to Know You With

Now that we have looked at the difference between the two philosophical acts, it is important to examine how they relate to each other. Nightingale begins her book with an interesting literary reference, Palomar the astronomer.²⁷⁷

Within a multi-layered, metaphorical context of *theoria*, sight, light, etc., Nightingale sets the stage rather perfectly with the image of the astronomer Palomar and his star charts. The character of Palomar is effectively trying to straddle two worlds, the direct contact with the stars

²⁷⁵ Trabattoni, (2016, p. 9).

²⁷⁶ *Rep.* 524d9-525a2, “If the one is adequately seen itself by itself or is so perceived by any of the other senses, then, as we were saying in the case of fingers, it would not draw the soul towards being. But if something opposite to it is always seen at the same time, so that nothing is apparently any more one than the opposite of one then something would be needed to judge the matter. The soul would then be puzzled, would look for an answer, would stir up its understanding, and would ask what the one itself is.”

²⁷⁷ Nightingale (2004, pp. 1-3). Nightingale takes this example from Calvino (1985; 1983).

and the imagistic representation of these stars on his chart. We say “direct contact,” but there is the thorny matter of the telescope, and herein lies the intrigue. In order to view the stars, he must turn off his lamp and look through the telescope; his eyes must adjust to the darkness before he is able to discern the stars and constellations. When he has viewed what he needs to view, he turns away from the telescope, relights the lamp, and begins to work on his chart again – but, his eyes must readjust to the light again before he can begin writing or drawing the charts. And so the process continues *repeatedly* until the charts are finished: telescope, adjust, stars, lamp, adjust, chart, repeat...²⁷⁸

This example of Palomar further demonstrates some interesting points, the first of which is the division between the two realms of experience. A dichotomy is established whereby the conditions of experiencing one set of objects (the stars, say) prevent the possibility of experiencing the other set of objects (the star chart).²⁷⁹ That is, the light needed to view and manipulate the star chart makes it impossible to see the stars themselves. Conversely, the darkness required to view the stars makes it impossible to see the chart. Not only does this schism of experience exist, it is so great that one cannot directly pass from one activity to the

²⁷⁸ This is an interesting reversal of the *Republic* account of the Cave, though the same sentiment is expressed. As we have seen, in the *Republic* account, the forms (i.e., true objects of knowledge) are luminous beings, illuminated by the light of the Good. Opinions, by contrast, are obscure to a greater or lesser degree and are portrayed as belonging more properly to the darkness within the cave, presumably based upon their remoteness from the forms of which they are opinions. Moreover, in the *Republic*, darkness is said to destroy the sight of the eyes (*Rep.* 516e3-6, 518a1-3). In the example of Palomar, we have the opposite, the stars are seen clearly in the darkness and the representation or facsimile of (in some sense the equivalent of an opinion about) the stars are seen and elaborated in the light. Nevertheless, in both instances, in both directions there is blindness and a need to readjust one’s focus. In both the Allegory of the Cave and the Palomar account, the sharp contrast between the two realms is preserved.

Serendipitously, the example of astronomy is still appropriate today – if not more so. Most observatories must be far away from city centres due to light pollution. The light from city life makes it impossible to see all but the brightest stars. In order to successfully view the stars (or, to continue the analogy, the forms), one must leave the city life behind.

²⁷⁹ Cf. Chrysakopolou (2012, p. 110), where the author, referring to the *Symposium*, speaks of Plato’s use of “mystery” language, the idea of “shutting the eyes (*muêo*) of the body – in order to open the eyes of the soul.”

other. The two realms are so distinct that the change between them blinds the individual. There is need for *time* to process and adjust before the (noetic) vision of the stars can be reproduced (dianoetically) on the star chart.

We say “noetically” and “dianoetically” because seeing the stars is a contemplative act. Palomar does nothing but view the stars and through this vision knows (intuitively) how they relate to each other.²⁸⁰ The writing of the star chart is an attempt to render an accurate account of this vision. It is therefore subject to error through the process of reproduction. Contrary to the vision of the stars which simply *are* and need no further justification for their existence, the chart must be reviewed and revised.²⁸¹

We can compare the example of Palomar with a few sections of the *Republic*, specifically 484c6-d3 and 501b1-7. Both of these passages speak of the philosopher king and reformer of society first looking at Justice, Temperance, and Beauty themselves, then seeking to reproduce these forms in the city through legislation and education. The former activity of gazing at the forms is a contemplative (noetic) act and the latter acts of legislation and education are discursive (dianoetic) acts. This is because this legislative or educational act is fundamentally an attempt to render an account of the forms. As we have seen and will continue to see, it is in the rendering of an account that one reintroduces the possibility of *aporia*.

²⁸⁰ In the next chapter, we will see that in some dialogues contemplation has an astronomical extension.

²⁸¹ See Trabattoni (2016, p. 4), “It [the traditional interpretation of Plato on epistemology] entails the idea that according to Plato there exists a kind of pre-linguistic objectivity, understood as a form of intellectual intuition, which is available to man already in this life; the latter stands in contrast to a weaker kind of thought, of the discursive sort, which only manifests itself in language. The salient difference between the two kinds of thought lies in the fact that the former grasps truth in a direct way, independent of speech, dialogue and hence the *doxastic* act by which the soul freely answers questions with a yes or no.” Trabattoni’s book is somewhat strange, in that he is clearly trying to undermine the intuitive nature of *noesis*, yet the majority of his arguments tend to strengthen this intuitive character and its distinctiveness. Later (e.g., *idem*, p. 187), he states that such an intellectual vision is inaccessible to man, yet fails to explain why this is the case.

This strict dichotomy is why Nightingale states that the theoretic gaze – or in our case, the gaze of the philosopher – is not panoptic. That is, the philosopher cannot “see” both realms at once. Attempting to do so leaves them blind. Put once again in the spatial terms of *theoria*, one cannot both attend and be on their way to the festival at the same time – the *theoros* cannot both be at rest and in motion at the same time. As Nightingale states,

Plato’s theoretical philosopher, in sum has blind spots: the vision of the theorist is not panoptic, since he sees differently – and different objects – in each realm. When contemplating the Forms, he does not see the world, which now appears dark; and when he pursues practical and political activities back in the cave, he sees the Forms less clearly.²⁸²

This balance between the two realms is perhaps more delicate than one might initially think. Human nature seems to be prone to questioning, comparison, sharing, and discussing one’s experiences – all of which are discursive activities. In this sense, it is perhaps best to think of the contemplative vision of the forms as being a short-lived experience, one which is maintained with great difficulty and which quickly falls back into the dianoetic realm.²⁸³

This brings us to the second point of interest exemplified by Palomar, namely, the objectivity of the stars and the subjectivity of the star chart. This point returns us to the notion that the forms are the true objects of knowledge and that the representations, accounts, or opinions about the forms are only true to the degree that they conform to the reality of the forms – that is, whereas the forms are true by definition, independent of any perception of them, the opinions or accounts are subject to the possibility of falsification (insofar as they are mutable).

The forms exist in their own place, following their own – to borrow the vocabulary of the *Timaeus* (47b7) – “revolutions,” regardless of whether or not man experiences or comes to know them. In short, the existence of the forms is not impacted by whether they are perceived or not;

²⁸² Nightingale (2004, pp. 103-104).

²⁸³ More on this in the next section on the possibility of contemplating the forms.

nor is their truth contingent upon whether they are understood as true. As Nightingale states, “in Plato’s view, perfectly good and wise souls will see the Forms clearly; if our own view is limited, this is not because of their obscurity but because of the dimness of our vision.”²⁸⁴

If we take the star chart as a metaphor for an opinion about the forms, or at the very least some discursive account of one’s interaction or experience of the forms, then we can see how this opens one up to the possibility of falsehood – the representation is only as good as the memory and the drawing skills of the one drafting it.²⁸⁵

The difference between the stars and the star chart further underscores the difference between contemplation and cross-examination. Contemplation simply beholds the objective reality, and cross-examination (or dianoetic activity broadly) engages subjectively with this reality. In fact, according to the Palomar account, which is consonant with the *Republic* at least, in cross-examination, the philosopher engages with an after image of the objective form.²⁸⁶ This is due to the transitional, intervening blindness. When Palomar writes his star chart, he does so from a memory of the vision of the stars. This leads to multiple trips back and forth between the telescope and the writing table: there is a need to validate, edit, change, tweak, etc. because of

²⁸⁴ Cf. Nightingale (2004, p.111).

²⁸⁵ One might look to the account of the demiurge in the *Timaeus* as a further comparison. There are a few places we could mention in this dialogue. At *Tim.* 27e5-28a4, there is the distinction made between what always is and never becomes, and that which always becomes and never is; the former is knowable by reason alone. There is also the passage at *Tim.* 29a2-b1, which speaks of the demiurge creating copies of the forms by looking at them. Finally, we have the passage at *Tim.* 37d1-38c3. Here, the demiurge creates images of the forms; however, insofar as they are not the forms themselves, they must constantly strive to perfect themselves in an effort to fulfil the nature from which they are born, and in the likeness of which they are created. This is identified as the origin of time, as the copies are “moving images of the eternal” (κινητόν τινα αἰῶνος, *Tim.* 37d5). This exercise is mirrored in discursive/dialogical methods of philosophical inquiry (such as cross-examination), as an opinion or theory must be constantly revised to better correspond to the form of which it is an opinion or theory.

²⁸⁶ See A.C. Lloyd (1970, p. 269). Speaking of Plotinus, Lloyd states, “He [Plotinus] says that we do not recognise our intuition until we ‘withdraw from it’ again. When we have done that, we reflect and we attend to a ‘trace’ of it like a footprint or an after-image, which we can describe in words; the words will not describe the intuition but they will describe something which resembles it.”

the weakness of human memory and the possibility of human error in reproducing the vision of the forms.

As a final point, when one is beholding the stars, there is no need to ask questions like, “what is it?” “How do the parts relate to the whole?” The vision is sufficient, because it is there, before one’s eyes.²⁸⁷ Once that vision is gone, the need arises to remind oneself of the vision. It is here that the potential for doubt and *aporia* arises. This further results in the account rendered admitting a degree or spectrum of verisimilitude to the original vision – one which may require justification via (e.g.) cross-examination or some other discursive method. As Cornford states,

A defining formula is expressed in words; it can be written in a book and intellectually understood, like the definition of any other Idea. ... But the intellectual understanding of formulae expressed in words is not the same as the intuitive vision of the reality which the formulae profess to describe.²⁸⁸

3.4. Is Contemplation Actually Possible, Though?

The last question that needs answering before moving on is whether contemplation is actually possible or not. That it is distinct from cross-examination would not be particularly

²⁸⁷ See Arendt (1978, p. 118). While speaking of the difference between intuition and speech she states, “the former always presents us with a co-temporaneous manifold, whereas the latter necessarily discloses itself in a sequence of words and sentences.” Arendt makes reference to Plato’s famous *Seventh Letter*, 342c5-6 which states that knowledge of an object resides neither in words nor in the body but in the soul (οὐκ ἐν φωναῖς οὐδ’ ἐν σωματίων σχήμασιν ἀλλ’ ἐν ψυχαῖς ἐνόν); moreover, in the passages preceding it is stated that this knowledge is different from (1) the word used to name the thing, (2) the definition of the thing, (3) the physical manifestation or sign of the thing, and (4) the ontologically distinct thing (*Epis.* VII, 342a7-b3).

Slightly further along, Arendt states the following of truth understood in terms of vision, that it “relies on the same powerful self-evidence that forces us to admit the identity of an object the moment it is before our eyes... For no discourse... can ever match the simple, unquestioned and unquestionable certainty of visible evidence” (1978, pp. 119-120).

See also, Cornford (1957, p. 189). Commenting on *Sophist* 231b ff., he says, “There must be some fundamental feature common to all these many arts, and our next business to ‘see it clearly’ (κατιδεῖν) – Plato’s favourite word for that act of insight or intuition (νόησις) which *sees* directly, without any process of discursive reasoning.” And in the footnote to this comment he states, “In *Rep.* vii, καθορᾶν is frequently used as a synonym of νοεῖν in this sense of immediate intuitive vision or a prior truth or premiss to be used in the proof of a desired conclusion.” A similar sentiment is expressed much earlier in Cornford (1932, p. 182).

²⁸⁸ Cornford (1932, pp. 188-189).

important if one cannot actually engage in the activity of contemplation. Moreover, there can be no experience of contemplative wonder if there is no contemplation.

It is clear to readers of the dialogues that there is some kind of transition which takes place from dianoesis to noesis and back; however, the exact nature of this transition is unclear. The closest thing to an explanation of this transition can be found in Plato's *Seventh Letter*, where he states the following:

Only when all of these things – names, definitions, and visual and other perceptions – have been rubbed against one another and tested, pupil and teacher asking and answering questions in good will and without envy – only then, when reason and knowledge are at the very extremity of human effort, can they illuminate the nature of any object (*Epis.* 344b3-c1).²⁸⁹

The first part of this quotation very much resembles the efforts of cross-examination, definitions being challenged one by one. Eventually, these efforts will reach the end of human abilities (it hits some kind of limit or asymptote) and makes an almost intuitive leap, which seems to just happen – or at least it happens if the nature of the man is akin to the nature of the object perceived (*Epis.* 344a2-4).

One of the main challenges related to the accounts of contemplation is that they are all metaphorical, relying heavily on imagery and representations.²⁹⁰ Perhaps precisely because of this rather fundamentally ineffable nature of noetic action, which resists discursive explanation, we have the notion of “sight” replacing “reasoning” in order to approximate an explanation which is more palatable. For this reason, we should note that metaphorical and mythological explanations are not necessarily “worse” than rigorous, logical explanations. They provide a

²⁸⁹ Compare with *Rep.* 533a1-3, “You will not be able to follow me any longer, Glaucon, even though there is no lack of eagerness on my part to lead you, for you would no longer be seeing an image of what we are describing, but the truth itself.” In other words, they have gone as far as discourse can take them and now they must *look* at the being themselves.

²⁹⁰ Cf. Nightingale (2004, p. 95). In this section of the book, the author points out that metaphorical explanations resist one-to-one translations into “analytic discourse.”

means to speak of things which could otherwise be too complicated (if not impossible) to express. One has direct experience of the immediacy of sight, for example; therefore, to say that noesis is “like sight” allows one to make a connection that is more intuitive than saying “noesis is a direct, non-discursive contact with the forms which is utterly distinct from any discursive reasoning about said form.”

We will now look at some locations in the dialogues which show the actual possibility of undertaking and successfully achieving the end goal of this contemplative activity.

Due to the strong metaphorical tendency in dealing with contemplation, it is initially ambiguous in the dialogues whether or not we can, in this life, contemplate the forms. And, if we can, it is not clear to what degree we are able to do so.

In the *Parmenides*, the young Socrates asserts that it would be “wonderful” to encounter any aporia arising at the level of the forms (*Parm.* 129d6-130a2). This passage is somewhat problematic given how the dialogue continues. The second half of the dialogue is a dialectical exercise that shows that, performatively, when one actually tries to describe the one or the many, one sees that the one is many and the many are one: we have precisely that outcome which was described as being “wonderful.” Nevertheless, shortly after the quoted passage, Parmenides himself states that we *must* posit that the forms exist and distinguish a definite form in every case. To do otherwise would destroy the significance of discourse (*Parm.* 135b5-c3). Indeed, “only a man of extraordinary gifts will be able to see that a form, or essence just by itself, does exist in each case, and it will require someone still more remarkable (θαυμαστοτέρου) to discover it [the forms] and to instruct another who has thoroughly examined all these difficulties” (*Parm.* 135a7-b2).²⁹¹ So, we have the beginnings of the proof that we need. By this

²⁹¹ We will be looking at the *Parmenides* in greater detail in the next chapter, as it presents an interesting perspective on contemplative wonder.

account, the forms stand as conditions not just for the truth of propositional logic, but for the meaningfulness of language generally. It does appear that in these passages Parmenides is suggesting that one is able to come to know the forms, though it is very difficult – indeed, only remarkably well-endowed individuals will be able to see them as they are.

The fact that there are multiple aporia in the dialogue may be caused by the fact that it is a *dialogue* and not contemplation properly speaking. As we have seen, aporia are the product of discourse, and therefore belong more properly to dianoesis. For this reason, we asserted that discourse *about* the forms (dialogical/dianoetic) is distinct from noetic or intuitive contact with the forms (*Rep.* 511c3 ff.).

In the *Phaedo*, beginning at 64a4, we have a relatively short passage which describes philosophy as the practice of dying to the body in order to favour and attend to the soul. The body is seen to distract from the pursuits of the soul. Socrates rhetorically asks at one point: “is it not in the course of reflection (λογίζεσθαι), if at all, that the soul gets a clear view of being (τῶν ὄντων)?” (*Phd.* 65c2-3). There is an insistent repetition that, for anyone who clings to the body, there is no hope for attaining the intellect’s object of truth. Later, we are presented with an apparent dilemma which might make one doubt the possibility or usefulness of such an exercise. It states: “If no pure knowledge is possible in the company of the body, then either it is totally impossible to acquire knowledge, or it is possible only after death” (*Phd.* 66e4-6). Even here, though, we are still encouraged to enact this purgation of the body in life, for anyone who is not pure in life will not justly attain the realm of truth in death (*Phd.* 67b1-2).

This purgative act, which is aimed at contemplation, consists in teaching the soul the habit of “collecting and bringing itself together from all parts of the body” and living alone, freed from the body (*Phd.* 67c5-d2). Contemplation, properly speaking, is an activity of the soul,

separate from the experiences of the body. Later in the dialogue, Socrates states that the soul, separating itself from the body, makes its way to the invisible, divine, immortal, etc. (*Phd.* 81a4-6), and that the philosopher follows reason, contemplating the true and divine, not as an object of opinion (*Phd.* 84a2-9). Moreover, he states that in this life philosophy persuades the soul to withdraw from the senses and trust only reality, itself by itself, which the soul understands (*Phd.* 83a5-b1). Nevertheless, it is important to stress, with Socrates, that this is only possible *to the best of our abilities*. We must seek to overcome our bodies as far as possible while reckoning with an embodied existence.

These periods of detachment from the concerns and pursuits of the body which allow for contemplation, though brief due the incarnate nature of human beings, are nevertheless total and complete while they last.²⁹²

In the *Republic*, we have, in book 7, the Allegory of the Cave. Just as in the *Phaedo* we have a method which seeks to arrive at true knowledge (of the forms) by means of purifying the soul of the body, so too do we have in *Republic* a method which seeks to purify the intellect of phantasmagorical or imagistic representations of the forms by means of the analogy's ascending dialectic. We read very clearly at *Rep.* 516b4-7.: "and so, finally, I suppose, he would be able to look upon the sun itself [the form of the Good] and see its true nature, not by reflections in water or phantasms of it in an alien setting, but in and by itself in its own place." Indeed, not only can one see the form of the Good, but one will *not give up* until one has seen it (*Rep.* 532a5-b2).

This vision obviously occurs at the apex²⁹³ of one's "theoric journey" as Nightingale calls it. In the spirit of full disclosure, Nightingale also points out that the journey of the one leaving

²⁹² Cf. Nightingale (2004, pp. 99-100).

²⁹³ It is perhaps best to speak of an "apex" rather than an "end" of a philosophical life. As we saw in Part I, it is not clear that the philosophical life ever has a satisfactory end in Plato's dialogues, but rather culminates in *aporia* or (as it now appears) sometimes in a contemplative vision.

the cave is an account of an *idealised* philosopher, one who is able to look at the sun, the form of the Good. (In this sense it would perhaps be more appropriate to call them a “*sophos*” and not a “*philosophos*” – that is, one in actual possession of wisdom, not one in pursuit of wisdom.) She does not, forasmuch, believe that it is impossible for a philosopher to make the journey and achieve a full view of the forms, but rather posits that the human, non-ideal philosopher will need to make many journeys in order to get multiple, partial views of the forms each time.²⁹⁴ This is corroborated by the *Republic* itself at 517b8-c1, where it states: “... in the region of the known the last thing to be seen and *hardly seen* is the idea of the good” (emphasis added). In this passage it is affirmed that it is possible to see the forms; however, this sight is not perfect or easy. Like the astronomer, Palomar, there is a need for frequent visits to the realm of the forms to keep the memory fresh and to keep the account of the vision of the forms as close to the originals as possible.

That there is an experience of the forms in death also seems inescapable from the Platonic point of view. Indeed, the theory of recollection as well as the myth of the charioteer in the *Phaedrus* depend upon it.

In the *Phaedrus* we have yet another narrative of the soul’s purification and attainment of the hyperouranian plain of the forms with the analogy of the charioteer and his horses. In this narrative the soul arrives at the plain of the forms after death; however, one must have already regrown one’s wings before death – after death it is too late.²⁹⁵ In order to regrow one’s wings, one must adopt a philosophical lifestyle. Only the philosopher keeps as close as possible to the

²⁹⁴ Cf. Nightingale (2004, pp. 99-100).

²⁹⁵ That this is the case is demonstrated by the fact that the soul is comprised of all three parts in this account, both the rational, spiritual part and the two “bodily” parts. It is safe to assume that the body is gone at the time of the ascent if it takes place after death. Therefore, the state of the bodily parts of the soul is fixed and cannot be improved during the interval between embodied periods of the soul.

realities which make the gods divine (*Phdr.* 249c5-6).²⁹⁶ In this mythological section no mention is made of dialectic; rather, what is referenced is *seeing* beautiful boys and recognising that these beautiful objects participate in Beauty itself. This leads one to understand that one must desire Beauty. This desire for Beauty is how the soul regrows its wings allowing one to participate in the divine procession to the forms in order to glimpse them after death. In other words, we must practice contemplating the forms in this embodied life, reigning in our passions – however imperfectly – in order to have a more perfect view of the forms after death, when we shall no longer be encumbered by our bodies.

We would be remiss if, speaking of the philosophical perception of Beauty, we were to neglect speaking about the *Symposium*. The section that most concerns us comes towards the end of Socrates’ – or rather Diotima’s – speech in praise of Eros at *Sym.* 209e5-212c3. The Ladder of Love section delineates the ascent or purification of the lover from particular beautiful bodies to the Beautiful itself. Diotima gives a very clear outline of the regime to follow in order to accomplish this journey. We begin with love of individual beautiful bodies, then move on to the love of beautiful bodies in general, then to beauty of the soul, then to beautiful activities, then to the beauty of knowledge, and finally, “the lover is turned to the great sea of beauty, and gazing upon this, he gives birth to many gloriously beautiful ideas and theories, in unstinting love of wisdom, until, having grown and been strengthened there, he catches sight of knowledge, and it is the knowledge of such beauty...” (*Sym.* 210d3-e1) the traits of which Beauty as are described at *Sym.* 210e2 ff. The dialogue is also bookended by accounts of Socrates stopping in his tracks, seemingly in moments of contemplation: the first as Socrates and Aristodemus are on their way

²⁹⁶ Presumably along the same lines as discussed at *Phd.* 83a5 ff. See also the digression of the *Theaetetus* and the paradigm that has as its end the “becoming like the gods” (*Tht.* 176b1).

to Agathon's house (*Sym.* 174d4-e8); the second is Alcibiades' account of Socrates standing contemplating an issue for a whole day while on campaign in Potidaea (*Sym.* 220c3-d5).²⁹⁷

We have, it might be argued, reason to doubt the possibility of our actually ascending this “ladder of love” for a few reasons. The most important and problematic of these reasons has to do with Diotima herself. Like the Eleatic Stranger in the *Sophist*, we know virtually nothing about the person or background of Diotima. One of the few things that we are given in her initial description is that she is wise (σοφῆ, 201d3). This description needs to be taken seriously, because in many places in the Platonic corpus *sophos* is not the same as *philosophos*; whereas the philosopher loves and seeks knowledge of which he is not in possession – hence the Socratic dictum “I know that I do not know” – the *sophos* does in fact possess secure knowledge.²⁹⁸ In other words, this Diotima passage could be interpreted as yet another idealised but ultimately unrealisable goal handed down by a possibly divine, otherworldly character.²⁹⁹ This difficulty is

²⁹⁷ Linguistically, these passages describing Socrates' fugue states are ambiguous, as the account at *Sym.* 174d4-e8 does not employ the same language as *Sym.* 220c3-d5; however, the two passages are phenomenologically identical. Translations of the passages tend to use language like “working out a problem/puzzle.” Commentators seem to be split. Some explicitly interpret Socrates as lost in contemplation, others believe it is closer to an examination. The Greek text could be interpreted either as contemplative- or cross-examination-leaning. It is worth pointing out that there are sight words present in these passages as well as aorist verbs, both of which we have taken to indicate noetic activity. In both passages, moreover, the word “νοῦς” is present (substantively at *Sym.* 174d5 and as the verb “συννοήσας” at *Sym.* 220c3). Needless to say, we interpret this as leaning more towards contemplation.

Nightingale points out (2001, p. 34) that Socrates, the “contemplative” philosopher portrayed in the *Symposium* is a novel role, that “we find no trace of this kind of activity in the earlier dialogues.”

²⁹⁸ Indeed, the *sophos* is almost to be revered as a god, as can be seen at *Rep.* 398a2-6, wherein should a man possessed of wisdom come to the city, “we should fall down and worship him as a holy (ιερόν) and wondrous (θαυμαστόν) and delightful (ἡδύν) creature, but should say to him that there is no man of that kind among us in our city, nor is it lawful for such a man to arise among us, and we should send him away to another city.”

²⁹⁹ In the dialogues, having knowledge, or being *sophoi* is often associated with the gods. For example, *Tht.* 175d7 ff., the two paradigms, illustrates that the one who dedicates himself to the pursuit of knowledge belongs to a divine caste, whereas the lawyer-type, the one who must survive on sophistical arts, belongs to a godless class. There is also the passage in *Parmenides* (134e7-8) where Socrates states that if a god were stripped of knowledge, then the argument would be too “wonderful” in the sense of perplexing or extraordinary.

countered at *Sym.* 211d1-3, where Diotima explicitly states: ““And there *in life*, Socrates, my friend ... there if anywhere should a person live his life, beholding that Beauty”” (emphasis added). This passage makes it reasonable to believe that such an ascent to the form of Beauty is in fact possible in this life. Moreover, Socrates states that he is convinced of Diotima’s account of Love, that he has assimilated it, and that he makes a point of propagating it to others (*Sym.* 212b1-4).

Let us draw together our conclusions from this rather lengthy excursus. The first thing to note is that contemplation of the forms is possible in this life – difficult, certainly, but possible. There is enough of a textual basis to make this claim. We must nevertheless differentiate between the ideal contemplation as it is spelled out in the various dialogues we have examined and the actual, embodied practice of contemplation. The former theoretically permits one to remain in the realm of the forms to gaze directly at the form of the Good; the latter implies a constant struggle against the tendencies of the body (to the best of one’s abilities) and an arduous dialectical journey, repeated continually over the span of one’s life, for the sake of brief glimpses of the forms.³⁰⁰

The second conclusion that we can draw is that it is by means of continuously engaging in contemplation (and the dialectical activity which facilitates it) that we prepare our souls to

³⁰⁰ See Nightingale (2004, pp. 99-100), “Where does this leave the ordinary, nonideal philosopher (a particular individual like Socrates)? As a human being, he must journey again and again to the metaphysical region, each time gaining a partial view of the Forms... In short, he must shuttle back and forth between two worlds in an ongoing endeavour to contemplate the Forms and to imitate and instantiate them on earth. The human philosopher can never become the idealized *theoros* depicted in the Analogy; though he can, over a lifetime, make real progress in contemplating the Forms.”

The context here is that, since the ideal philosopher depicted in the Allegory of the Cave struggles in his ascent, that the human philosopher will fare even worse, as the latter will need to make multiple trips. It is not clear, based on this alone, how the ideal philosopher is any better off. As we have seen, the ideal philosopher is often portrayed as also needing to make multiple trips to the realm of the forms, and as modelling the city on the forms of Justice, Temperance, and the Good by looking back and forth between the two realms.

encounter the forms, relatively unhindered, after death, as seen in the accounts of the *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus*. This becomes especially important in the *Phaedrus* with the redistribution of souls and the cycle of reincarnation, since the philosophical soul, it is implied, escapes this cycle after a time (*Phdr.* 249a1-5).

The third conclusion we can draw is a corollary of what has gone before. Contemplation of the forms is a transformative experience. The philosopher who makes the journey to the realm of the forms in the *Republic* returns to the *polis* a changed person.³⁰¹ This is shown in the *Phaedo* and the *Symposium*, in that the pursuits of reason (and the practice of dying) in the former and the ascent of the Ladder of Love in the latter both beget true virtue (*Phd.* 68b8 ff.; *Sym.* 212a2-5). In the *Phaedrus*, the regrowth of one's wings through the pursuit of philosophy naturally leads to a "life of happiness and harmony here on earth, self-controlled and orderly, holding in subjection that which causes evil in the soul and giving freedom to that which makes for virtue" (*Phdr.* 256a8-b3). In other words, contemplation is perfective of its subject here in this life.

The last conclusion to draw is a return to the imperfection and limits of language when referring to one's experience of the forms. When we talk about the forms, we often run into aporia. Due to the simple, analytical truth of the forms, we affirmed that aporia would not be possible in the case of a noetic or intuitive grasp of the forms. By contrast, discursive activities, especially description, produce a multiplicity where before there was only a self-identical form, by introducing a subject-predicate distinction – hence the difficulty, if not impossibility of coherently describing the forms. In the next chapter, we will explore how this distinction is not quite so clear-cut when we look at the *Parmenides* dialogue. In this dialogue, the idealised line

³⁰¹ See Nightingale (2004, p. 97), "When he [the philosopher] returns to the human realm, he sees (and is seen) very differently: the philosophic *theoros* will henceforth dwell in a world where he is never fully at home... Yet it is precisely this 'outside' status that enables him to achieve the radical freedom necessary for impartial and virtuous action."

demarcating noetic and dianoetic activities seems to be blurred when it comes to the actual practice of contemplation.³⁰²

3.5. Concluding Chapter 3

The goal of this chapter has been to distinguish between our two main categories of philosophical act, between cross-examination and contemplation. We went about this by distinguishing dianoetic acts which are characterised by their discursive, temporal, mediated nature from noetic acts, which are intuitive and immediate by nature.

Integral to this discussion has been breaking down and understanding multiple metaphors, most of which have some relationship to sight and light. The metaphors of the Cave, the Divided Line, and the Ladder of Love all emphasise in some way not just the importance of sight, but also the nature of noetic intuition – which we have equated with contemplation – as analogous to sight.

The use of theoretic language associated with ascending dialectic allowed us to further strengthen this relationship between contemplation and sight of the mind. It moreover gave us the foundation to begin making distinctions between dianoetic and noetic acts. It achieved this by admitting a distinction between the journeying and the theoretic vision proper. The former being this wandering (discursive) activity, which has as its aim the participation in a theoretic sight but is not the same as this sight. The sight is a distinct, discrete (intuitive) moment. Another way to look at it is that if one has not yet arrived at the festival or spectacle, then one cannot be observing it, and if one is observing the spectacle, then one is no longer journeying.

³⁰² This seems to contribute to the experience of wonder in this dialogue.

The remainder of the chapter was spent parsing out the distinction between discursive and non-discursive acts and further showing in what way contemplation belongs more properly to the non-discursive category; whereas, cross-examination belongs to the discursive category.

At this point we have not really applied the notion of wonder in this second part, except in passing. The purpose of this chapter has been to establish a firm distinction between the two types of philosophical act, lest it be argued that they are not sufficiently distinct to posit a second, distinct kind of wonder corresponding to contemplation. Our findings suggest that such a distinction is justified.

The main differences that we have seen (other than the discursive-non-discursive distinction) are that dianoetic acts seem to be initiated in some way by the subject, they are concerned in some sense with reproductions of objects, whether hypotheses, or accounts. These accounts and hypotheses, moreover, take place over time. Finally, as we see through the example of Palomar, these formulations and reproductions are based on the afterimage or memory of a given vision and therefore can admit some level of falsehood. It would be difficult to say the same of a noetic vision – it simply is, all at once. Moreover, because contemplation is always contemplation of some extra-mental reality – that is, it is initiated by an object that is ontologically distinct from the subject – the truth of the object contemplated is not dependent upon any pronouncement of the contemplating subject.

Having established this distinction, we must now turn our attention to the role of wonder in this contemplative philosophical act. The aim will be to understand how this new wonder differs from what we examined in Part I of the dissertation when looking at aporetic wonder.

Chapter 4: Contemplation of Wonderful Forms

4.0. Introduction

In the previous chapter, we spent a great deal of effort attempting to distinguish noetic acts from dianoetic acts, that is, non-discursive acts of reason from discursive acts. We further stated that Plato categorises contemplation (θεάσασθαι) within the list of non-discursive, noetic, or intuitive acts of reason and that the forms are the objects of this contemplation. We have yet to show that this contemplation of the forms elicits a wondering response from the philosopher.

We alluded that this could be the case when we touched upon the section of the Ladder of Love account in the *Symposium*. In this section, we see the wonderful sight of the nature of Beauty (θαυμαστόν τὴν φύσιν καλόν, *Sym.* 210e4-5). This chapter will further elaborate on this wonderful nature – not just that of the form of Beauty, but of the forms generally.

To accomplish this, we will once again turn our attention to the contemporary literature of Plato’s time, and the uses of θαῦμα which exhibit a direct connection with the notion of sight – a notion which we know from our examination in Chapter 3 to have a strong relationship to contemplation. Key to this discussion will be an exploration of epic, Homeric poetry. The task will then be to take what we learn from these passages and apply it to Plato’s dialogues.

Just as with aporetic wonder, we will see that contemplation does have its own version of wonder – which we will refer to as “contemplative wonder” – which is a distinct-but-no-less-important *pathos* of the philosopher. We will examine this new *pathos* of contemplative wonder, its differences from aporetic wonder, and whether and how it still plays the role of an ἀρχή of philosophy.

An important consideration to keep present in mind throughout this chapter is that the *pathos* of contemplative wonder arises as the result of beholding (contemplating) a wonderful

object. Contemplative wonder, contrary to what we saw with aporetic wonder, is driven by external objects. It is not the product of internal, subjective mechanisms. This, we will see, is based on its association with noesis – the sight of the forms. This alone could be sufficient to set it apart as notionally distinct from aporetic wonder.

As a preliminary disclaimer to begin this chapter, we will see that there is very little research on this particular subject of contemplative wonder – certainly in English scholarship. As discussed in the general introduction, where the literature on the topic does exist, there are certain limitations regarding its applicability, based on how wonder is thematized.³⁰³ This has led to a more exegetical approach to the dialogues. For this reason, we will need to rely heavily on the dialogues and the contemporary literature of Plato’s day.

4.1. The Importance of Seeing Wonderful Objects

In the previous chapter, we discussed the act of contemplation through the analogy of sight. Contemplation is to the Good what sight is to the Sun. In order to understand the role that wonder plays in the act of contemplation, it will be helpful to examine the relationship between sight and wonderful objects that are seen.

This section will look at the relationship between sight words and wonder words themselves from a linguistic perspective. This will already show us some important links between the notions of wonder and contemplation. We will then move on to examples of sight

³⁰³ There is some work on this topic among Italian and German scholars, but not much. Here again, we will rely on Nightingale’s (2004) book; however, though she does make a distinction between aporetic and contemplative wonder, it is not always clear that this distinction is as pronounced as one might wish. This is still the case in Nightingale (2017), where there is an acknowledgement of two kinds of wonder, but one is not developed, and contemplative and aporetic contexts are used somewhat interchangeably (pp. 43-44).

An interesting case is Napolitano Valditara (2014), who acknowledges two kinds of wonder which correspond almost exactly to our two kinds (p. 134, “meraviglia contemplante e meraviglia interrogante”); however, contemplative wonder gets relegated to a footnote (p. 137), as the author does not see it contributing to philosophical engagement – a sentiment we hope to reverse in this chapter!

and wonder in Homer in an attempt to understand the different dynamics at play between the objects perceived and the subject perceiving them. Some important questions to keep in mind both here and moving forward are “what is the response of a contemplating subject before a wonderful object?” and “what makes something wonderful?”

4.1.1. The Linguistic Roots of θαῦμα

The most straightforward link between wonder and contemplation is the words themselves for both concepts. As one might be able to tell when they are put side by side, wonder (θαῦμα) and contemplation (θεάσ(ασ)θαι) both come from the same linguistic root, the “θέα” root.

This linguistic root has to do with sight. The word “θέα” itself means “spectacle,” “vision,” “contemplation.” Θέα is also the Greek word for “goddess” (feminine version of θεός, “god”), which will be important as we turn our attention to the treatment of θαῦμα in Homeric poetry.³⁰⁴ In general, we might infer from this divine connection that both the act of contemplation as well as the objects of this act have some inherent dignity. Most importantly, however, insofar as both belong to the same linguistic family as sight, we can infer that within the context of contemplative philosophy, wonder is wonder at what is *seen*. Indeed, though the principle use of θεάομαι is “to contemplate,” it has an important, secondary meaning of “to behold with wonder.”³⁰⁵ As we progress through this fourth chapter, we will see more reasons why this could be the case.

³⁰⁴ Additionally, though it is unclear if it is related to the same linguistic root, the verb θέω means “to shine out, to gleam, etc.”

³⁰⁵ See also the verb θαυμάϊνω, which translates to “to gaze at, admire.” In this verb we have both a looking and a wondering aspect.

Hans Joachim Mette begins his article “‘Schauen’ und ‘Staunen’” by delineating a number of “wonder words” which all belong to the same etymological family.³⁰⁶ Among these we find “θαῦμα(τ-),” “θη(F)-έ(j)-ο-μαι,” “θέαμα,” “θαυμάζω,” “θαυμα-ν-έ-ω,” and “θέ(F)α.” He then goes through the history and principal uses of these terms from Homer through to Plato. Much of what Mette writes in this analysis of θεα-root vocabulary will be further elaborated throughout this chapter. Of special interest for our purposes is his conclusion that Homeric uses of *thauma* indicate that the sight of a divine or otherwise exalted object produces an affective response of wonder in the observer. As Mette states, “admiration is joined with the ‘act of beholding’.”³⁰⁷

Another great contribution to the literature on wonder vocabulary is Raymond Prier in his book *Thauma Idesthai: The Phenomenology of Sight and Appearance in Archaic Greek*. Prier also speaks to this etymological family of *thea*-root vocabulary, all of which share the common trait of relating to sight. He states explicitly that,

Thauma (“wonder”) is closely related to a set of verbs of which *theaesthai*... forms an important human activity. The component *thea-* signifies “sight,” “view,” “survey,” “look,” and the verb *thēesthai* in Homer betokens wonder and astonishment for oneself and functions similarly to *agasthai*.³⁰⁸

We will be returning to these authors throughout this chapter to support our argument in favour of contemplative (θεασάμενον) wonder (θαυμάζειν).

³⁰⁶ Mette (1960). In Chantraine (1999, p. 425), the author lists Mette as an authority on the link between θεάομαι and θαυμάζειν in the entry for “θέα” in the etymological dictionary.

³⁰⁷ Mette (1960, p. 49), “Mit dem ‘Schauen’ verbindet sich die Bewunderung.”

³⁰⁸ Prier (1989, p. 82). In general, Prier’s account of wonder vocabulary is far more complete than Mette, though he restricts himself to the works of Homer. For example, Prier includes verbs such as “*agasthai*” and “*thambein*,” which, for reasons of scope, we will not be looking at. See especially Prier’s chapter 1 for this comprehensive account of sight and wonder vocabulary.

See also, Pinotti (1989, p. 30), “Lo spettro dei significati registrati nell’uso linguistico del campo lessematico θαῦμα-θαυμαστόν-θαυμάζειν (di cui stupore, meraviglia e ammirazione spesso appaiono inscindibili flessioni) ne indica la costante funzione di connotatore del regime percettivo della visione.”

4.1.2. The Literary, Homeric Roots of θαῦμα and the θαῦμα ἰδέσθαι

We turn, then, to Homer. It is quite clear to a reader of both Homer and Plato that the latter has been heavily influenced by the former – both as an object of criticism and as an appeal to authority. It is only natural that we would look to Homer as a starting place in our examination of contemplative wonder, as not only does he occupy this place of influence in Plato’s dialogues, but we must remember that Plato wrote these dialogues for an audience, and that this audience would have been educated in Homeric, epic poetry.³⁰⁹

So, we must ask then, what role does wonder play in the works of Homer? Perhaps surprisingly, the answer is: a very large one! There are roughly 44 instances of a direct reference to “thauma” in Homer’s epics, and a great deal more which employ versions of the θεα-root vocabulary. Most of the instances of θαῦμα in Homer’s works are so-called “formulaic” uses, generally in one of the two following formulae: (1) θαῦμα ἴδεσθαι (a wonder to behold),³¹⁰ or (2) μέγα θαῦμα τόδ’ ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ὀρῶμαι (a great wonder which I behold (for myself) with my eyes). Often these uses of θαῦμα refer to some kind of relationship between the gods and men, usually a reference to the greatness of the gods, or some godlike, majestic, or kingly quality in

³⁰⁹ Cf. Rorty (2008, pp. 15, 21, 24-25) on the permeation of poetry in everyday life. Cf. also Kenaan (2011, p. 20), who believes that we can reconstruct the richness of Greek wonder by turning to archaic poetry – though his interpretation diverges in substantial ways from our own. Against the immediacy of sight espoused by Plato, Kenaan associates vision with distance. He also disproportionately associates the wonder of poetry with fear, shock, and alarm, which is certainly the case some of the time but (as we will see) is not representative of the experience.

³¹⁰ Prier (1989, p. 91). In this section, Prier describes a “thauma idesthai” as “an intermediation between the polarities of men and gods, visually linguistic symbols of power...” Slightly later (*idem*, p. 94), he states, “A *thauma*, however, becomes again more internalized and hence more of the ‘this’ if it is ‘*seen for a moment* for itself and oneself,’ that is, if it is a *thauma idesthai*.” Prier prefers to use “this” and “that” to refer to “subject” and “object” respectively, and so here he is speaking of an internalization of the wonderfulness of the wonder to be beheld. We might think of this internalization as a subject responding by wondering at the wonderful object they are observing – a wonderful thing eliciting a response of wonder.

men. In fact, in virtually every case the object of wonder has some relation to the divine.³¹¹ This is of particular interest within the context of contemplative philosophy, as it shows that there is a wealth of textual support for the claim of sight – that is, the sight of wonderful objects – resulting in wonder.³¹²

It is important to stress that these are cases of an *object* of wonder.³¹³ By this we mean an extra-mental and ontologically distinct source of wonder, something possessed of a wonderful quality which incites the feeling of wonder in an individual.

We cannot neglect to point out that these formulaic uses of θαῦμα give us a clue as to how Homer may have understood wonder, namely – and perhaps ironically – through sight.³¹⁴ A wonder, as an object, is something that is perceived, that is seen, or which comes to light. In other words, the wonderful, divine object is perceivable; it can be both experienced and comprehended. This is shown rather definitively in two places. The first being *Odyssey*, 7. 144-145, “a hush fell upon all that were in the room at sight of the man, and they marvelled as they looked upon him (θαύμαζον δ’ ὀρόωντες).” And later at *Odyssey*, 8, 459, “And Nausicaa, gifted with beauty by the gods, stood by the doorpost of the well-built hall, and she marvelled at

³¹¹ As Prier states (1989, p. 103), “It must be said, however, that wonder and the gods are in close proximity.”

³¹² See Pinotti (1989, p. 31). After naming a number of “*thauma idesthai*,” Pinotti states, “le infinite e mirabili forme in cui *il reale si presenta allo sguardo* costituiscono la coinè della meraviglia e del meraviglioso” (emphasis added). This is a quite important for our purposes, as it relates wonder to “the real” as and when it is perceived.

³¹³ See Vasalou (2015, p. 17), “‘How remarkable,’ ‘How extraordinary,’ or just ‘wow’ – the expression of wonder often appears as an attribution to the object rather than an emotional state ascribed in the first person to oneself.” Later Vasalou mentions that this may be due to a “lack of the strong rational core” in wonder, contrary to other emotions (*idem*, p. 29). This almost certainly stems from Nussbaum’s reading of wonder as a “non eudaimonistic” emotion (2001, p. 55). By this Nussbaum means that, despite the clear value of its object, wonder does not appear to relate as readily our plans or to judgements about our personal flourishing. It is not necessarily clear whether Nussbaum distinguishes between philosophical wonder and, e.g., surprise. We will see later that this is a hard claim to maintain, as the pleasure of contemplating the forms does influence (at least in Plato) our actions, and indeed *changes* our plans.

³¹⁴ Homer is believed by some to have been blind, based in part on the character of Demodocus in the *Odyssey*.

Odysseus, as her eyes beheld him (θαύμαζεν δ' Ὀδυσῆα ἐν ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ὀρώσα).” In these as in other similar passages, we see the sight of a wonderful object (divine or kingly) accompanied by a wondering subject.³¹⁵

Due to this objective character of wonder, we are manifestly speaking of a different source of wonder than the wonder of Theaetetus in the eponymous dialogue (the wonder which leads Socrates to make of wonder the ἀρχή of philosophy). As we have seen in Part I, Theaetetus’ wonder is a rather unambiguous instance of wonder which not only inheres within but arises in a subject. At *Tht.* 155c8-9, Theaetetus exclaims, “ὑπερφυῶς ὡς θαυμάζω,” “I wonder greatly.” He is wondering at the aporia present *within* himself, which would be a subjective source of wonder.

Indeed, even the instances in Homer where it seems that there is a subjective account of wonder, it is brought forth from an external source – one which provokes a response of wonder.

The simplest of these examples, and one which most readily shows the wonder of the subject, can be found in the *Odyssey*, 8, 264-5, “Ὀδυσσεὺς μαρμαρυγὰς θηεῖτο ποδῶν, θαύμαζε δὲ θυμῷ,” “Odysseus gazed at the flashing of the feet and wondered in his spirit.” This passage, though short, gives us quite a bit of information. Not only do we have a clear example of wonder in the subject, but we are also told that the locus of wonder in the soul is once again the *thumos*.³¹⁶ This information is quite helpful, but we must also be aware that Presocratic

³¹⁵ See also, *Od.*, 3, 373, Nestor’s wonder at Athena’s transformation into a sea eagle, *Il.*, 18, 466-467, Hephaestus’ weapons which will cause wonder in those that will see them, and *Il.*, 22, 370, where the Achaeans marvel at Hector’s “form” (*eidos*). Cf. Prier (1989, p. 85) for further examples of wonderful objects inciting wonder. Note that (*idem*, pp. 101,104) there are some instances in Homeric literature of wonder at *eide*, *eidos* does not necessarily mean the same thing for Homer as it does for Plato.

³¹⁶ If we were to expand the wonder vocabulary to include *theasthai*, there are further examples of wonder in the *thumos* at *Od.*, 7, 133-134 and 15, 132. The former details the wonder in Odysseus’ *thumos* at the gardens and lands of the Phaeacians, the latter details the wonder in the *thumos* of Peisistratus at the gift from Helen.

psychology is a highly complex, and none-too-stable area of inquiry, in that accounts of the soul's make-up change from author to author, and (as some claim) change to some degree within the same author.³¹⁷ In Homer at the very least, there seems to be enough evidence to associate the *thumos* with the rational soul, or the seat of thought,³¹⁸ rather than *νοῦς* in a post-Anaxagorean sense. That is, for Homer, *thumos* has more to do with reason than with sense perception.

The second example comes from the *Iliad*, 24, 629ff.:

αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ πόσιος καὶ ἐδητύος ἐξ ἔρον ἔντο,
ἦτοι Δαρδανίδης Πρίαμος θαύμαζ' Ἀχιλλῆα
ὅσσοις ἔην οἴος τε: θεοῖσι γὰρ ἅντα ἐφάκει:
αὐτὰρ ὁ Δαρδανίδην Πρίαμον θαύμαζεν Ἀχιλλεὺς
εἰσορόων ὄψιν τ' ἀγαθὴν καὶ μῦθον ἀκούων.

When they had thrown out the desire of drink and food
verily did Priam son of Dardanus marvel at Achilles
at his size and at the kind of man he was: for he was like the gods to look upon:
And Achilles marvelled at Dardanian Priam
both looking upon his good appearance and listening to his counsel.

In this second example, we see a special – and rather important – relationship between wondering subjects. It is important to stress that both of the characters are having a subjective experience of wonder. It is also important to note that the source and object of this wonder is the other. There is something to be wondered at in the two characters, and this something is related to the formulaic instances of wonder: a divine aspect, or greatness, or magnanimity of some

³¹⁷ See Sullivan (1995, p. 2), “The ideas we have chosen are ones that remain greatly important to the Greeks. They do not fade but they certainly, in some cases, do alter.”

See also Miller (1995, p. 85).

³¹⁸ Cf. Liddell and Scott (1996, p. 810), entry for “θύμος.”

See also, Sullivan (1995, p. 55), “*Thumos* is mentioned in connection with several intellectual activities. These include pondering, thinking, knowing, deliberation, planning, and perceiving.” However, at the same time, per *idem*, p. 54, the *thumos* also, proves to be a source of energetic action.”

sort.³¹⁹ We can draw the following conclusion from this example, namely, that something that is a wonderful object (external to the subject and possessed of a wonderful trait) can and does elicit a wondering response from the subject.

The final example that we are going to look at shows wonder occupying an intermediate role between man and the divine.

The passage in question occurs in the *Odyssey*, 13, 105ff.:

ἐν δ' ἴστοι λίθιοι περιμήκεες, ἔνθα τε νύμφαι
φάρε' ὑφαίνουσιν ἀλιπόρφυρα, θαῦμα ιδέσθαι:
ἐν δ' ὕδατ' ἀενάοντα. δῶμα δέ τε οἱ θύραι εἰσίν,
αἱ μὲν πρὸς Βορέαο καταβηταὶ ἀνθρώποισιν,
αἱ δ' αὖ πρὸς Νότου εἰσὶ θεώτεραι: οὐδέ τι κείνη
ἄνδρες ἐσέρχονται, ἀλλ' ἀθανάτων ὁδὸς ἐστίν.

Therein [within the cave of the Naiads] are large looms of stone, upon which the nymphs are weaving webs of purple dye, a wonder to behold: and therein are ever-flowing waters. And there are two doors, one toward Boreas, the North Wind, descended by men, but the other, toward Notos, the South Wind, is more divine: no such men enter therein, for it is the path of the immortals.

This passage is less straightforward in terms of subject-object relationships. It is helpful to notice that neither door, neither extreme is the wonder in this example. The θαῦμα ιδέσθαι (wonder to behold) is the intermediary, the place of meeting, which (unsurprisingly) is a place of weaving: wonder weaves together the divine and the mortal. This is most obviously represented by the purple colour of the dye—a colour which is not only representative of the divine, but also

³¹⁹ See Prier (1989, p. 86), “The marvel in the presence of the immortals extends to recognition in an act of *direct*, instinctual communication.”

Nightingale reflects at length on the wonder of this passage (2001, p. 45; 2004, p. 257), relating it to notions of kinship in the way that sight is akin to light and νοῦς is akin to the forms in Plato. Knowingly or not, she also seems to read this passage in Homer through a somewhat Heideggerian lens, that despite the kinship, there is an estrangement. The object is both familiar and unfamiliar, usual and unusual. Cf. Heidegger (1994, p. 144).

of the kingliness of man.³²⁰ In other words, we have wonder arising in the meeting place between the mortal and the divine. The two are woven together into a wonderful unity.

We have, then, instances of wonder which cover all possible relations of subject and object.³²¹ Wonder inheres as a quality in an object, usually as some sort of divine, or exaggerated, superhuman quality, trait, or characteristic. Wonder arises within a subject in the *thumos* or spirit of the subject, usually as a response to something displaying “objective” wonder. Finally, wonder seems to play some role in binding the subject and object together—a meeting and exchange between the human and the divine by means of some kinship or common trait (the purple dye). Whether or not Homer has a satisfactory explanation as to how or why the human and the divine are compatible is unimportant for our purposes.

4.2. Plato and the Wondrousness of the Forms

One of the most important points which we can take from the linguistic and Homeric accounts above is the notion that wonderful objects inspire wonder in the observer. In the examples taken from Homer, we see divine and kingly objects – gods, kings, the places where they reside, the objects that they fashion, and their actions – as being wonderful sights to *behold* (θαῦματα ἰδεσθαι). In at least one of these accounts, a wonderful sight is shown to elicit a

³²⁰ This is not the only time or even first time that the colour purple and the term θαῦμα appear in the *Odyssey*, there is another instance much earlier in the epic: “... Till you come to my mother who sits at the hearth in the light of the fire spinning the purple yarn, a wonder to behold...” (*Od.* 6, 304 ff.). The passage is speaking about Arete, the mother of Nausicaa.

For Plato on the colour purple, see *Rep.* 420c4-8, “Suppose, then that someone came up to us while we were painting a statue and objected that, because we had painted the eyes (which are the most beautiful part) black rather than purple, we had not applied the most beautiful colours to the most beautiful parts of the statue.”

For more on the significance of purple, see Elliott (2008, especially p. 182 ff.) and Jensen (1963). Though the latter focuses predominantly on the pigmentation process, he does speak about how the economy of production contributed to the elevated status of the colour.

³²¹ This is certainly not an exhaustive list of instances of *thauma* in Homer. For more examples, see Mette (1960, pp. 49-53).

response of wonder in the *thumos* of Odysseus. In another, we see the mutual wonderment of Priam and Achilles as they see the divine, kingly aspect (a wonder to behold) in each other.

As we turn now to Plato, it is important to keep these considerations at the forefront of our minds to better understand the role of wonder in contemplative philosophy.

4.2.1. The Wonderful and Divine Sight of the Forms

We spent the previous chapter looking at the clear distinction between cross-examination and contemplation as they are described and practiced in Plato's dialogues. Throughout this discussion, we reaffirmed that contemplation results in a "sight" of the forms, one which is non-discursive. In this act, the forms are ontologically distinct from the contemplative philosopher (or observer)³²² and exist in a realm which is also distinct from the physical realm inhabited by men – i.e., distinct from the realm of appearances.

We have not, as yet, really examined any characteristics of the forms themselves which might lead us to better understand the philosophical (or indeed, "thaumatological") impacts of this noetic sight of the forms. There are two such characteristics of interest for our purposes: the forms are "divine" and "wonderful."

The more predominant of the two characteristics of the forms is that they are "divine."³²³ This characteristic is of particular importance for us, as it helps us to draw a parallel between

³²² Cf. Nightingale (2004, pp. 110-111), "The 'visibility' of the Forms to the mind, in short, reveals their substantiality and ontological presence... In Plato's view, perfectly good and wise souls will see the Forms clearly; if our own view is limited, this is not because of their obscurity but because of the dimness of our vision." In this way, we see that the truth and reality of the forms is not created by the philosopher, rather, they impress themselves on the philosopher. Unlike opinions or judgements about the forms which stem from individuals and can be challenged or manipulated, the truth of the forms is not dependant on one's perception or understanding of them.

³²³ Nevertheless, Cornford suggests (1932, pp. 89-90) that the experience of the forms should be thought of as a "metaphysical insight" rather than a religious experience. As he says, "the knowledge is of a kind in which the soul is united with the harmonious order it knows, an insight which harmonises the soul's own nature and illuminates the entire field of truth."

Homeric and Platonic accounts of sight and wonder. If it is natural for one to wonder at that which is divine – which is certainly a conclusion that we can draw from our earlier Homeric account – and the forms are divine, then it stands to reason that it is natural that one would wonder in the presence of the forms.³²⁴

In virtually every dialogue which speaks about the forms, some mention is made of their divine status. In the *Phaedo*, for example, we have Socrates speaking about the soul reaching its object (i.e., the forms), saying, “a soul in this state [separating itself from the body] makes its way to the invisible, which is like itself, the divine, and immortal and wise, and arriving there it can be happy” (*Phd.* 81a4-6). Later in the same dialogue, Socrates states that the one who pursues bodily pleasure “can have no part in the company of the divine, the pure, and uniform” (*Phd.* 83e1-3) and that the soul of the philosopher “follows reason and ever stays with it in contemplating the true, the divine, which is not the object of opinion” (*Phd.* 84a7-9).

This last quotation is particularly interesting as there is an explicit use of the verb “to contemplate” (θεωμένη) in conjunction with “the true” and “the divine”, as opposed to the opinable. In short, we have at this point a (noetic) contemplative act with a divine object. Socrates is not just drawing a strong distinction between the objects of contemplation and opinion. He is also making a statement about the nature of the two acts. He sets up a strong dichotomy: anything short of contemplation of the forms is opinion – only the former deals with the true and the divine.

One might argue that at this point in the dialogue, Socrates is merely speaking of “the invisible.” Although the term “εἶδος” does not enter the text until *Phd.* 100b4, Socrates has

³²⁴ “Divine” here is a translation of θεῖος and its cognates. There are hundreds of instances of this term in Plato’s dialogues, we have contented ourselves with just a few instances connected with contemplation in the more “contemplative” dialogues.

nevertheless already spoken about the Just itself, the Equal itself, etc. much earlier in the dialogue (as early as *Phd.* 74a9-12). Socrates later returns to the path of the well-ordered soul at *Phd.* 108a6 ff., hearkening back to the above-noted passages at *Phd.* 83e1-84a9. Moreover, the characteristics of “true,” “divine,” “invisible,” “immortal,” etc. are mentioned as descriptors of the forms in other dialogues, as we shall see.³²⁵

The *Symposium* also uses the “divine” characteristic to describe the form of Beauty, first saying that Beauty shares a harmony with the divine (*Sym.* 206d1-2), and later saying that the sight of Beauty is divine, and that contemplating and being with it (θεωμένου καὶ συνόντος αὐτῷ) would not be a bad life (*Sym.* 211e3-212a7). Indeed, this vision is what allows one to give birth to true virtue.³²⁶

The *Phaedrus* is perhaps the most extreme take on the divinity of the forms. Not only do they reside outside of the heavens in the hyperouranian plane – demanding that even the gods make pilgrimage to them – Socrates also goes as far as saying that the forms are the “realities by being close to which the gods are divine” (*Phdr.* 249c5-6).³²⁷ In other words, the forms are almost “super divine” in nature and impart divinity on those who are able to be close to them.³²⁸

³²⁵ Additionally, the passage at *Phd.* 108c5 ff. goes on to describe the “real heaven,” i.e., the place of the forms and the place where the philosopher strives to be. This passage will be further examined slightly later, when discussing the realm of the forms.

³²⁶ “‘What if he could behold the divine beauty itself, in its unique form? Do you call it a pitiful life for a man to lead—looking that way, observing that vision by the proper means, and having it ever with him? Do but consider,’ she said, ‘that there only will it befall him, as he sees the beautiful through that which makes it visible, to breed not illusions but true examples of virtue, since his contact is not with illusion but with truth. So, when he has begotten a true virtue and has reared it up he is destined to win the friendship of Heaven; he, above all men, is immortal.’” (*Sym.* 211e3-212a7)

³²⁷ The Greek here is “πρὸς γὰρ ἐκείνους ἀεὶ ἔστιν μνήμη κατὰ δύναμιν, πρὸς οἷσπερ θεὸς ὢν θεϊὸς ἔστιν.” Many translations of this passage are awkward. The gist is something along the following lines, that the philosopher is always striving towards the forms (by means of memory and to the best of his ability), and that proximity to the forms is what grants the gods their divinity. This also implies that any human soul capable of making pilgrimage and successfully approaching the forms would be considered divine.

³²⁸ Nightingale reads the account of Beauty in the *Phaedrus* as a special case even among the forms. We cannot delve into this here. However, for our purposes, let it suffice to say that she takes the descriptor of

Finally, we turn to the *Republic*. Here we see again that the philosopher seeks to consort with the “ordered and divine” (*Rep.* 500c9-d2), which in turn makes the soul of the philosopher ordered and divine. Moreover, just as Palomar looks at the stars to guide his drafting of the star chart, so too does the philosopher king look to the divine models to paint true happiness and virtue in the city (*Rep.* 500d10-e4). The philosopher’s occupation with the good in the knowable realm is, moreover, a “divine contemplation” (θείων... θεωριῶν, *Rep.* 517d4-5).³²⁹

This characterisation of the forms as divine is important, because, as we know from Homer, that which is divine can bring about a response of wonder in the observer. The dialogues which we have just mentioned are all contemplation-oriented. That is, they all have some expression, insight, or demonstration of philosophical contemplation – even if it is in a metaphorical way. As we saw in the previous chapter, contemplation for Plato is heavily sight-based. Hence, we have essentially the same situation in Plato as we have in Homer, namely, the sight of something divine. This leads us to our second, arguably more important characteristic of the forms.

The second characteristic of the forms that interests us is that they are “wonderful.” It may seem that we have buried the lead by putting this second – why would we place the express

Beauty as a “divine idol” (ἀγάλματι, *Phdr.* 251a6) to associate it more strongly with the divine. See especially Nightingale (2004, pp. 37, 87, 139, and 163-4).

³²⁹ Nightingale (2004, p. 82) also refers to contemplation as a divine *theoria*, referencing the passage from the *Republic* (521c3) which likens the ascent from the cave to an ascent out of Hades to the gods (ἐξ Ἅιδου... εἰς θεοῦς). See also (*idem*, p. 259), “Here, the philosopher’s wonder at what is divine and different leads him to assimilate himself to – and find kinship with – this higher reality.”

Strangely enough, the *Theaetetus* also refers to the forms as divine in an oblique way. Though the dialogue does not make reference to the forms – despite being the dialogue expressly dedicated to knowledge – it nevertheless speaks about two paradigms for living one’s life: one which is divine and blessed, another which is evil and unhappy (*Tht.* 176a5 ff.). The one which is divine is characterised by the pursuit and inquiry after what is (τὸ ὄν) and the effort to become like god according to their ability (ὁμοίωσις θεῷ κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν). The association with “what is” is a clear nod to contemplation – especially as it is compared against language of eristic and competitions. This dichotomy between paradigms is also found at *Rep.* 516e8-517a6, where the soul, recently-returned from the intelligible realm, is meant to compete with the cave dwellers while still recovering from the blindness of the descent.

theme of the dissertation second on a list of characteristics? The reason is partly to take the time to strengthen the link between the wonderful objects of Homer (which are virtually always divine or exalted objects of experience) and the forms. Another reason to organise the characteristics in this way is that there are fewer examples where Plato expressly uses the term “wonderful” to describe the forms. For this reason, it is important to establish a tie to the literary, historical approach on divine, wonderful objects upon which to base our suggested theory.

Though there are not many explicit uses of “wonderful” (θαυμαστόν) to describe the forms, there are enough to suggest that the existing instances are not just hyperbole or literary flourishes. These instances break down into two categories: the forms themselves and the realm of the forms.

We turn then to the instances of θαυμαστόν used to describe the forms. Chief among these instances is the passage to which we have alluded multiple times already. This is the *Symposium* passage where, after a long ascent, the philosopher and true lover of beauty will “suddenly (ἐξαίφνης) see for himself a certain wonderful sight, beautiful in its nature” (τι θαυμαστόν τὴν φύσιν καλόν, *Sym.* 210e3-5). Here we are not just speaking of any beautiful nature; we are speaking about the nature of Beauty itself. This nature is described as a *wonderful* sight. If we return to an earlier turn of phrase from Homer, we can say that, according to this passage, the nature of Beauty is a θαῦμα ἴδεσθαι – a wonder to behold.

This passage is the only one in the dialogues where wonder and the forms are directly linked (in an obvious way). The importance of this characterisation cannot be emphasised enough. If asked what Plato believed about the form of Beauty, we can respond immediately and unequivocally that “Beauty is wonderful.”

What makes Beauty wonderful? What makes it stand out from other beautiful things? Clearly all of the instances of beauty perceived along the ascent of the ladder are beautiful, but only the Beautiful itself is described as wonderful. This may be due to the other characteristics of the form which Diotima lists shortly after: its eternity, constancy, simplicity, and unity (*Sym.* 210e6-d1). Beauty can be said to be familiar insofar as it is recognisable in particulars, but unfamiliar due to its pre-eminence and perfection. No material instance of beauty is experienced as perfectly as the form of Beauty.

We will continue to deepen our understanding of why this might be the case as we look at other instances of “θαυμαστόν” in connection to the forms.

Although the *Symposium* passage is the only direct mention of the forms as wonderful, there are nevertheless indirect links that can be made between the forms and the qualifier “wonderful.” We will now examine a few references where this link is mediated by allusions to the revolutions of the heavens, regular cosmic motion, and cosmic order generally.³³⁰ That we can draw this link between the forms and wonder through cosmic causality comes from a few passages from the *Timaeus* – some of which we have alluded to earlier. These passages are further strengthened by arguments of participation.

The first of these passages is one which provides the origin and explanation of motion and time. In this passage, the demiurge creates material objects in the image of the forms, and the former become “moving images” of the latter. This motion is a perpetual attempt by material beings to approximate themselves to the perfection and eternity of the forms (*Tim.* 37d1-38c3). Chiefly among these moving images of eternity are the heavenly motions. As Timaeus says,

³³⁰ Although often used to describe the regular motion of the planets – which a native English speaker might term “cosmic motion” – the Greek word κόσμος simply means “order.” In this light, it is not difficult to understand how a reasonable link between cosmos and forms could be drawn, as the latter are metaphysical and epistemological principles of order.

Now surely it is clear to all that it was the eternal model that he [the demiurge] looked at (ὡς πρὸς τὸ αἰδίων ἔβλεπεν), for, our universe is the most beautiful of all the things that have come to be (κάλλιστος τῶν γεγονότων),³³¹ and the demiurge is the most excellent of causes. This, then, is how it has come to be: it is a work of craft, modeled after that which is changeless and is grasped by a rational account, that is, by wisdom. Since these things are so, it follows by unquestionable necessity that this world is an image of something (*Tim.* 29a4-b2).

Per *Tim.* 37d1-38c3, we know that the “something” upon which the demiurge models the world of visible things is the eternal forms.

The last passage of import from the *Timaeus* is the passage which addresses the primacy of sight.

Let us rather declare that the cause and purpose of this supreme good is this: the god invented sight and gave it to us that we might observe the orbits of intelligence in the universe (τὰς ἐν οὐρανῷ τοῦ νοῦ κατιδόντες περιόδους) and apply them to the revolutions of our own understanding. For there is a kinship (συγγενεῖς) between them, even though our revolutions are disturbed, whereas the universal orbits are undisturbed. So once we have come to know them and to share in the ability to make correct calculations according to nature, we should stabilise the straying revolutions of our own understanding by imitating the completely unstraying revolutions of the god (*Tim.* 47b5-c4).³³²

This last passage makes no mention of the forms, yet there are undeniable homologues to accounts of the forms in other dialogues. One such account is the account of contemplation which occurs at the end of the ascent of the divine procession in the *Phaedrus*. This ascent is described as a revolution. Moreover, the vision of the forms in the hyperouranian plane is said to strengthen the soul and to guarantee that the philosophical soul does not falter in the next

³³¹ We might point out that the “most beautiful of generated things” beckons us back to the *Symposium* passage we spoke of above, that the nature of beauty is a wonderful sight. If we are speaking of material things, the most beautiful of these would still rank very low compared to the beauty of virtue and knowledge, and certainly of Beauty itself.

³³² It is perhaps worth mentioning that immediately preceding this passage *Timaeus* states that sight is a pre-eminently philosophical sense, launching into this text about observing intelligence in the cosmic revolutions of the universe. This is almost reminiscent of the Aristotelian claim about wonder that it was first by observing changes in the stars and moon, and the motion of the heavens (*Aristotle, Met.* 982b15 ff.).

revolution, guarding the wings of the soul and keeping them safe (*Phdr.* 247c3-d5). In other words, the vision of the forms stabilises the soul, in the same way that observing the unwavering revolutions of the cosmos stabilises the revolutions of the soul.³³³ Another homologue which applies to both this passage and the preceding passages (*Tim.* 29b5-c4, 37d1-38c3) is that found in the *Republic* (and indeed in the example of Palomar): just as in the *Republic* where the philosopher king looks at Justice, Temperance, Virtue, etc. to reproduce the image of these perfections in the city, in the *Timaeus* the philosopher looks at some eternal truth and seeks to reproduce that perfection in their soul.³³⁴

In other words, the revolutions, the regular motion of cosmic order seems to bear more than a passing resemblance to the order conferred on the soul by the contemplation of the forms. For this reason, the following additional examples of wonder as predicated of cosmic regularity may also be predicated of the forms. Indeed, if the forms are the cause of this regularity (these “moving images of eternity”), how much more wonderful will they themselves be?

Let us round out this picture of the wonderful cause of cosmic order by turning to the *Philebus*. This is an important dialogue for our purposes, as one of the themes is the difference between things that are mixed and things that are pure or unmixed. The forms fall comfortably in the latter category – indeed, they may be the only things which fall in this category. At *Phil.* 28d5-9, Socrates asks whether the cosmos is ordered by chance or by a “certain wonderful prudence” (φρόνησιν τινα θαυμαστήν),³³⁵ to which Protarchus replies the latter. By itself, this does not amount to more than a question and an unchallenged response. This is followed,

³³³ Again, in the *Symposium*, the sight of the Beautiful gives rise to true virtue, not its appearance.

³³⁴ Though certainly Plato can be said to have something akin to formal causality through his account of participation, this also seems to be a sort of account of final causality, insofar as those objects which participate in a form also tend toward said form.

³³⁵ Note the similar construction as the *Symposium* passage “a certain wonderful sight” (τι θαυμαστόν τὴν φύσιν καλόν, 210e3-5).

however, by a short discussion on what amounts to the nature of participation and how material beings possess qualities only to a meager degree compared to that which has the quality by its nature – i.e., the quality itself “unmixed.” As Socrates states, “And that fire which is in us is small, weak, and poor, but that which is in the universe is wonderful in quantity, beauty (θαυμαστὸν καὶ κάλλει), and every power which belongs to fire?” (*Phil.* 29c1-3).

There may be a desire to dismiss this instance of wonder as being tied to a material thing – fire – but we should not be so quick to dismiss it. We are effectively speaking of the highest determination of something material. The fire of the universe is described here as that which is pre-eminently “fire,” possessed of all of the perfections of fire, to the highest degree (pun not intended), in the same way that Beauty is pre-eminently beautiful.

In essence, what we are told in this passage is that that which is some one thing by its nature (itself by itself) is wonderful and beautiful. This is further elevated and elaborated by way of analogy, applying the principles of participation to the principle which orders and regulates the seasons, years, etc. – i.e., the cosmic order – which Socrates names “wisdom” and “reason” (σοφία καὶ νοῦς, *Phil.* 30c6). Despite the absence of the word “form” here, we are nevertheless speaking of a reality which is virtually (if not actually) identical to the forms. Here Socrates speaks of a principle which guides, directs, and orders; one which is pre-eminently rational, possessing the fullness of wisdom and rationality in the same way that the universe’s fire is the perfection of fire; and any wisdom that we might possess is “small, weak, and poor” in beauty and wondrousness in comparison to this pre-eminent wisdom – indeed our wisdom is caused by it.

It is hard at this point to deny certain similarities between this passage and the imagery present in the Allegory of the Cave. Our wisdom is like the shadow of the wisdom outside of the

cave; the fire below compared to the sun above. But most importantly, just as in the *Symposium*, this wise cause of regular motion in the *Philebus* is *wonderful*.³³⁶

The next dialogue which speaks about the wonderful nature of the forms – though again *indirectly* – is the *Laws*. One passage of particular interest states that the one who honours the body above the soul does not understand how wonderful this possession is (ὡς θαυμαστοῦ τούτου κτήματος ἀμελεῖ), for nothing born of the earth is to be honoured more than that which comes from Olympus (paraphrase of *Laws* 727d6-e3). Here the soul has some divine origin and is described as “wonderful.” This passage is not just about proclaiming the soul to be superior to the body, but rather that the pursuit of excellence in the soul is to be valued over the pursuit of beauty in the body (i.e., the excellence of the body). This excellence of the soul is achieved by “avoiding evil and hunting down and grasping the best of all things (τὸ πάντων ἄριστον) and dwelling together with it” (*Laws* 728d1-2).

The second passage in the *Laws* comes at 898c1-899a10 and the surrounding text. This passage speaks of cosmic motion as guided by some perfect principle (Soul), that this principle is visible to reason alone (*Laws* 898e2-3), and that there are three ways that this cosmic Soul could conceivably operate.

Either (a) the soul resides within this visible spherical body and carries it wherever it goes, just as *our* soul takes us around from one place to another, or (b) it acquires

³³⁶ One could argue that there is a more straightforward example of the forms being wonderful at the beginning of the *Philebus*. At *Phil.* 14c7 ff., Socrates states that that about which they were speaking earlier is of a wonderful nature (πεφυκότα θαυμαστόν), “for that the one is many and the many one are wonderful claims (θαυμαστὸν λεχθέν).” Socrates goes on to say that the unities he is speaking of are the monadic forms themselves, not mutable or perishable beings. Certainly, this can be read as asserting that the forms are wonderful; however, just as noesis is one predication away from dianoesis, this claim is dangerously close to aporetic wonder. As we will see later, this is very complicated. Depending on how one interprets the passage, it could conceivably support either a contemplative or an aporetic account of wonder. If the claim is that monadic forms are wonderful *simpliciter*, then it works to support our thesis about contemplative wonder. If on the other hand, the claim is that the forms are wonderful because as unities they exhibit multiplicity, such that wonder arises as a result of considering the multiplicity, then it falls most properly in the camp of aporetic wonder. We will touch upon this complexity further when we consider the *Parmenides* as this dialogue deals with the same situation.

its own body of fire or air of some kind (as certain people maintain), and impels the sun by the external contact of body with body, or (c) it is entirely immaterial, but guides the sun along its path by virtue of possessing some other prodigious and wonderful powers (ἔχουσα δὲ δυνάμεις ἄλλας τινὰς ὑπερβαλλούσας θαύματι, *Laws* 898e8-899a4).

Two of these are material operations or are reliant upon matter in some way (a and b), but the third is an immaterial operation – and a wonderful one at that! The dialogue does not actually resolve this question definitively by concluding which of the three options is really how this cosmic Soul operates, rather stating that, whatever the case, the Soul which guides the heavenly motions is divine (*Laws* 899b5-7). It seems strange, therefore, that the Athenian would not take the next logical step, given the immaterial nature of the soul described in this dialogue and others, that its efficient causal power is not also ascribed to the immaterial.

Using the same reasoning employed in the *Philebus*, which compares the level of perfection between a form and its instance, we might ask if the (particularised) soul which is a “wonderful possession” at *Laws* 727d6-e3 is not some poor derivation of the heavenly, cosmic “Soul” of *Laws* 899a3, which is possessed of “wonderful potential.” Just as in the cases of fire and wisdom we looked at in the *Philebus* earlier, here too, with “soul,” we also have an embodied instance and a pure instance, both of which are described as wonderful. In some ways, this is also reminiscent of the *Timaeus* passage about the revolutions of the cosmos being reflective of and perfective of the revolutions of one’s own reason. Here, however, we abstract one layer further, as Soul is that which drives these revolutions; whereas in the *Timaeus* it was the forms which performed this function.

The last passage that we will look at comes from the *Epinomis* at 986c5-4d.³³⁷ Here again we are speaking of the visible cosmos, ordained by the divinest reason of all to be visible

³³⁷ The inclusion of the *Epinomis* is not without issue. Though, as its name suggests, the *Epinomis* is a continuation of the *Laws*, it is very likely not written by Plato. This is evinced in the

(κόσμον ὄν ἔταξεν λόγος ὁ πάντων θειότατος ὄρατόν). The first reaction of one who sees this divinely ordered cosmos is one of wonder (ἐθαύμασεν).³³⁸ This reaction is followed by a passion to learn all there is to know of mortal nature, pursuing a life of virtue, and finally becoming a spectator of the most beautiful things (θεωρὸς τῶν καλλιστῶν). This passage is different from the preceding passages in that this vision is of a material, visible object rather than a rational object. That is, it is perceived by the eyes and not by the νοῦς. Nevertheless, it is important to point out that within the materialist context of the *Epinomis*, the vision and understanding of the heavenly motions – the cosmological order – is the highest science and is, as it were, the best object of rational pursuit. In some sense, it is like a literal interpretation of the vision of the sun in the *Republic*'s Allegory of the Cave. The form-like quality is therefore maintained in a highly qualified way.

These are examples of the direct usage of the word “wonderful” (θαυμαστόν) and its cognates as descriptors of the forms and form-adjacent concepts. We are starting to see a pattern emerge with these examples. We see the forms described as divine, wonderful, and beautiful visions, perceivable through reason, removed from the material world.

4.2.2. A Wonderful Place for Wonderful Things

What about the realm of the forms? One might claim that the association between the forms and wonder is still too tenuous to make any strong assertions based solely on the adjectival uses of *thaumaston* in relation to the forms themselves. There are, however, additional references which describe the *realm* of the forms as wonderful. Is it a stretch of reason to state that this

dialogue by the fact that wisdom is identified with the study of astronomy. The prevailing theory is that the dialogue was written by Philip of Opus, a student of Plato who transcribed the *Laws*.

³³⁸ Note the use of the aorist here, as in the other contemplation dialogues discussed in chapter 3.

realm, this “place of meeting” between the divine forms and the contemplative philosopher is wonderful because of the forms that are there?

This realm is pretty much impossible to imagine in a non-metaphorical way.³³⁹ We know from various dialogues that the forms are not visible, they do not occupy physical space – they are not physical objects. Yet, Plato does maintain their ontological distinctness. A constant in the various dialogues dealing with the forms and the realm that they inhabit is that this realm is “geographically distinct” from the visible or physical realm. We have seen these two separate realms discussed as the realm of true being and the realm of appearance. The former falls utterly outside of the latter: whether as the inside of the cave versus the outside (*Republic*), the place above the air (*Phaedo*), or the hyperouranian plane beyond the heavens (*Phaedrus*). Each of these examples, furthermore, has some kind of threshold that must be breached and mediates the transition between the two realms and requires some non-negligible period of adjustment.³⁴⁰

In some sense the exact nature of the realm of the forms is unimportant. What is important is that, in the dialogues, there is an encounter between the human $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ and the forms which occurs in some realm outside of the normal scope of human experience (i.e., outside or beyond of the material, sensible world).³⁴¹

³³⁹ See Pinotti (1989, p. 50), “Platone sa bene che solo l’immagine verbale ... è in grado di trasportare l’occhio dell’anima sul piano dell’invisibile, ovvero su quel piano *irrappresentabile* delle idee di cui la memoria ... serba nostalgicamente sfocate pittografie” (emphasis added).

³⁴⁰ We have the cave entrance (*Rep.*), the air-aether barrier (*Phd.*), and the “ridgeline” (*Phdr.*). Again, we are faced with the idea that contemplation is not panoptic; one’s eyes must adjust to the light (or lungs to the aether) in ascending, to the darkness in descending.

³⁴¹ One might be tempted to suggest that the $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ itself is the locus of the forms, as this is where the encounter happens in the soul. This leans a little too close to a traditionally Aristotelian view insofar as it could be interpreted as stating that the forms only exist in the mind. Plato, by contrast, posits the real existence of the forms as extra-mental realities. We are not espousing the former, Aristotelian view; however, given the immaterial nature of the forms in Plato, coupled with the fact that the forms are grasped by the materially independent $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$, one might say that while the $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ is attached to a body it is the closest thing to a material location one could ascribe to the forms.

Accepting this limitation in our understanding, let us turn our attention to a few examples, beginning with the *Phaedo*.

Shortly after introducing the forms in the *Phaedo*, Socrates begins to describe the “geography” of reality. He begins this passage, saying, “there are many and wonderful (πολλοὶ καὶ θαυμαστοὶ) places upon the earth” (*Phd.* 108c5-6).³⁴² “Earth” here does not exclusively mean the visible realm that we inhabit, but rather the whole of all places existing in reality – the living realm, the realm of the dead; places occupied by physical beings and places occupied by spiritual beings. This includes, as we shall see, the true earth, the realm of the forms. This “true” earth lies above the air and water, in the aether, and we live in the hollows of this earth (109b4-c5).³⁴³

Those who inhabit the physical realm believe that their world is the true earth, because they are ignorant of the higher reality. But, as Socrates states,

If anyone got to this upper limit, if anyone came to it or reached it on wings and his head rose above it, then just as fish on rising from the sea sees things in our region, he would see things there and, if his nature could endure to contemplate (θεωροῦσα) them, he would know that there is the true heaven, the true light, and the true earth (*Phd.* 109e2-110a1).

The things of the true earth are further described as being brighter and purer than those of our realm, of a wondrous beauty (άλουργῆ εἶναι καὶ θαυμαστὴν τὸ κάλλος, *Phd.* 110c3).³⁴⁴ Indeed, the true earth is a sight for the blessed (ιδεῖν εἶναι θέαμα εὐδαιμόνων θεατῶν, *Phd.* 111a3-4). Notice that here the true earth is described in terms of divinity, beauty, wonder, and light, being spatially removed from everyday experience. The reference to fish in the above passage is also

³⁴² It is interesting that he uses the plural “θαυμαστοί” here, as the adjective only appears one more time in this passage – when he is describing the true earth, the realm of the forms.

³⁴³ We should note (as Nightingale does (2017,52)) that this account is analogous to the Allegory of the Cave. A notable exception to this comparison is that Socrates does not speak of the earth and the true earth as metaphors in this text, but rather as different areas within the same geographic continuum.

³⁴⁴ It is important to point out that this use of θαυμαστὴν refers to the colours of the things seen in this earth. The specific colour is purple, which we have seen above to be the colour of divine and kingly majesty.

intriguing, as it suggests that, though capable of glimpsing this realm, humans are not necessarily made to survive in this realm – at least not as they are constituted in the physical realm – and so must be content with mere brief glimpses.³⁴⁵

As with other passages we have discussed above, the *Phaedo* is also peppered through with participation discourse. Here too we have a description of the things of the visible world as paling in comparison with their counterparts in the true earth. The things that we consider beautiful here below are but poor, decayed copies of the things above. This hearkens back to *Phaedo* (100c3-6), which is an explicit mention of participation (μετέχειν) in the dialogue: “if there is anything beautiful besides the Beautiful itself, it is beautiful for no other reason than that it shares in that Beautiful.”

There is a similar passage found in the *Phaedrus*, though it is important to note that this passage has no mention of θαῦμα or θαυμαστός. The passage in the *Phaedrus* begins with a statement about the space within the heavens, that there are many and blessed sights (πολλὰ καὶ μακάρια θέα) within the heavens (*Phdr.* 247a4). We can compare this to the “many and wonderful places” of the *Phaedo* passage discussed above. The difference here is that in the *Phaedrus*, Socrates is speaking about the places within the heavens. The passage continues, however, to discuss the hyperouranian plane, that is, the place outside or above the heavens. If there are many and blessed sights within the heavens, one can only imagine what awaits beyond.

³⁴⁵ This is comparable to the notion of looking at the sun in the *Republic*. In the Allegory of the Cave, it is suggested that after much struggle, the soul could look on the form of the good, just as the eyes look on the sun; however, the experience of looking at the sun suggests that this practice is potentially quite dangerous and very short-lived. On this, see Nightingale (2004, p. 98), “The very idea of a person looking directly at the sun suggests that the tale is an *adunaton*: no ordinary human could do this without being permanently blinded.” Nightingale goes on to state that rather than a prolonged exposure, the philosopher will take multiple, quick glances at the forms.

Indeed, we are not disappointed, as Socrates states, “the place beyond the heavens – none of our earthly poets has ever sung or ever will sing its praises enough!” (*Phdr.* 247c3-4).³⁴⁶ That which occupies this place is “without colour or shape, intangible, a being that really is what it is, the subject of all true knowledge, visible only to intelligence, the steersman of the soul (ψυχῆς κυβερνήτη μόνῳ θεατῇ νῶ)” (*Phdr.* 247c7-8). Any soul fortunate enough to see this realm will see being and truth, greeting it affectionately and contemplating it until the soul finishes its cycle (ἕως ἂν κύκλῳ ἢ περιφορᾷ εἰς ταῦτόν περιενέγκῃ, *Phdr.* 247d4-5). The use of the term “cycle” here reminds us of our earlier comments on the *Timaeus*, *Philebus*, and *Laws* passages which spoke of the wonderful revolutions of the heavens as moving images of the eternal forms, and that the revolutions of the soul mirror these revolutions. In the *Phaedrus*, the divine procession to the realm of the forms culminates with the gods (and those who are able to follow them) carried about in a circular motion on the uppermost ridge of the heavens (*Phdr.* 427b6-c2). We might take this as meaning that the revolutions of the heavens are what bring about this cyclical motion, in which case, the perfection of the soul mirrors or aligns with the revolutions of the cosmos allowing one to view the eternal truths of the forms.

The soul feeds on this vision (τρέφεται) and delights (εὐπαθεῖ) in it (*Phdr.* 247d4). The term “feed on” may strike us as strange; however, later it is explained that the plane where truth is found is like a meadow which has the “right kind of food for the best part of the soul” (*Phdr.* 248b5-c2). In other words, the kinds of beings that inhabit this hyperouranian realm – the forms – are what reason craves; they are that which can satisfy the needs of reason. That this is a good thing is shown by the use of the term “εὐπαθεῖ”: delight. This word implies that the feeling

³⁴⁶ Nightingale (2017, pp. 60-61) draws a parallel between the Cave and the Divine Procession and Parmenides’ poem (DK B1) as a “dramatic journey out of the phenomenal world and into a divine realm that offers a remote and hidden truth.”

accompanying the vision of the forms – which we presume to be wonder – is a pleasant and delightful feeling. The word itself breaks down etymologically as “to undergo something (πάσχειν) good (εὖ-).”³⁴⁷

From these passages we can see the beginning of an answer to our question about whether or not the realm of the forms is wonderful on its own merits or if it is rather due to the forms which inhabit this realm. The “wonderful beauty” of this realm of the “really real” is wonderful because the objects there (the forms) are more real – more themselves. Returning to the language of sight, they are brighter, more visible, and more sharply defined. We will further discuss the phenomenological aspects of wonder later. For now, it is sufficient to point out that the sight of the forms in the hyperouranian plane (the praises of which cannot be adequately sung) results in some *pathos*.

We see, then, two related adjectival uses of “*thauma*” which refer to the forms: the forms themselves and the realm of the forms. It is not clear, moreover, the degree to which the latter adjectival use is independent of the former. That is, the wonderfulness of the realm of the forms is likely a function of the wondrous nature of the forms themselves.³⁴⁸

Whatever the case may be, we have a similar case in the Homeric account of the cave of the Naiads which we saw earlier. The cave itself was a wonder to behold, and it stood as a meeting place between gods and men. In this cave, the Naiads weave their purple cloth – a colour representative of the best qualities of both the human and the divine. In other words, it is a meeting place where that which is held in common between the mortal and the divine is woven

³⁴⁷ We will return to this notion of “delighting the νοῦς” in a later section when discussing the *pathos* of contemplative wonder.

³⁴⁸ An example of this in Homer can be found at *Od.*, 5, 54 ff. This is an account of Hermes visiting the gardens of Calypso, where one might gaze and wonder – as indeed Hermes Argeiphontes does – at all of the wonders and marvellous sights therein contained.

together. In Plato's dialogues, we now see that there is a wonderful meeting place where mortals encounter the immortal and divine (which are wonderful in their own right). Moreover, this encounter happens through the human νοῦς, which is akin to the forms (συγγενεῖς), for which reason it is able to perceive them. This is the purple thread: the wonderful intelligibility of the forms is seen by the wonderful intelligence of man.

Having looked at these instances of wonderful objects we turn now to a consideration of the messiness of contemplation in practice.

4.3. Parmenidean Puzzles

When speaking about wonder as it relates to the forms, one might think of the difficulties raised about the forms in the *Parmenides* as a counterexample.³⁴⁹ Although the dialogue does pose difficulties regarding a few of the concepts we have looked at while discussing contemplation such as the unity and simplicity of the forms, the noetic act and the knowability of the forms, and *dianoesis* versus *noesis*, our interest in the dialogue is not so much in examining it as a counterexample *per se*.³⁵⁰ We will address these issues only insofar as they inform the question of contemplative wonder and its relation to the forms. In so doing, we may use this as

³⁴⁹ It is impossible to conduct a full analysis of this dialogue here. We must be content to explore only those parts of the dialogue which impact the current discussion, with a special emphasis on arguments which may be seen as undermining our argument in favour of contemplative wonder.

³⁵⁰ There does not seem to be much consensus in the reading of the *Parmenides*. For an excellent account of competing theories with a focus on the topic of knowledge of the forms, see Rickless (1998).

Some scholars have argued that this separation of the forms is merely a didactic tool to teach dialectic. Cf. Robinson (1942, pp. 58-66). In this passage the author states that the arguments presented in the *Parmenides* are "neither fatal nor negligible." That is, they are not necessarily the most devastating arguments against the existence and knowability of the forms, but they nevertheless bear examination.

For a stronger argument against the unknowability of the forms, see Lewis (1979) and Forrester (1974).

an opportunity to enrich our understanding of how and why contemplation is a wonderful experience.

This section can be broken down into the following subsections: context, the unity and multiplicity of the forms, the limitations of human understanding, and the temporal aspect of rational activity. The latter three of these subsections are all quite closely related.

4.3.1. Contextualising the Problem

There are only a handful of direct references to wonder in the *Parmenides*, but they are all quite important.³⁵¹ The word θαῦμα and its cognates only appear nine times in the dialogue and are concentrated in two places. The first set of occurrences is at 129b1-e4, where Socrates discounts the possibility of aporia arising at the level of the forms (and therefore any aporetic wonder at that level). The second set of occurrences is at 134e6-135b2 where Parmenides speaks of the prodigious ability necessary in one who would experience the forms and the yet *more* wonderful ability required for such a one to communicate the forms to another.³⁵²

Let us explore these wonder passages briefly, as they do impact our current endeavour to understand contemplation and, by extension, contemplative wonder. Indeed, we can read the *Parmenides* as the titular character educating the young Socrates in philosophical wonder.

In the first passage (*Parm.* 129b1-e4), the young Socrates states that there is no reason to wonder at the fact that material objects admit some share in opposites. This is not a new position

³⁵¹ It is important to point out that the dramatic setting of the dialogue is the Panathenaea. In other words, Zeno and Parmenides are in Athens on a theoric journey. We might take this as symbolic of the philosophic theoric journey about to unfold in the dialogue itself.

³⁵² These occurrences follow the three arguments against the theory of the forms: part-whole relations and the problem of participation (*Parm.* 130a3 ff.), the infamous Third Man argument (*Parm.* 132a1 ff.), and the argument against the knowability of the forms (*Parm.* 133b4 ff.).

held by Socrates and can be seen explained in other dialogues.³⁵³ If, however, the form, itself by itself, admitted by its nature some measure of its opposite, this *would* be a cause for wonder. Throughout the remainder of the dialogue, Parmenides gives Socrates much to wonder about, first through the examination of the theory of the forms and then through the deductions and antinomies developed in the second part of the dialogue.

In some sense, the One-Many example treated throughout the dialogue can be taken as emblematic of any form, as the forms are generally understood as monadic, self-identical beings – i.e., as “one” thing – and if they admitted of some contrary, then they would be many and one simultaneously.³⁵⁴ It is clear in the *Parmenides*, however, that Socrates does not think that this is possible. Given that there is no mention of what we call contemplative wonder in this passage, Socrates seems to be – perhaps unintentionally – discounting the possibility of wondering at the forms. He is almost dogmatic in this assertion about the monadic nature of the forms.

The second passage (*Parm.* 134e6-135b2) follows Parmenides’ response to Socrates’ statement about contraries among the forms. Parmenides (assuming an almost maieutic role) examines Socrates’ theory of the forms and his claim about the simplicity of the forms and begins to demonstrate that there are problems. A good portion of this examination undermines the theoretical unity of the forms espoused by Socrates. The final argument of this examination culminates in a strict divide between the world of the forms and the world of matter, between which there can be no interaction and no knowledge: gods belong to the former world and humans belong to latter world. It is this notion of denying the gods knowledge of human affairs

³⁵³ As we have already touched upon in Part I, this is most readily seen in the treatment of the forms in the *Phaedo* when looking at opposing or contrary forms such as “greatness” and “smallness” (*Phd.* 102a11 ff., see especially 102d5-7).

³⁵⁴ The specific example of “oneness” and “maniness” is slightly more complicated as one and many are not just contrary to one another (i.e., not just different) but contradictory.

which reintroduces the topic of wonder (*Parm.* 134e6). That is, when examined, Socrates' claim about wonder-free forms results in wonder.

Despite multiple difficulties with positing the forms, the dialogue does not end here with Parmenides terminating Socrates' spiritual pregnancy. Rather, Parmenides states that to overcome the wonderful resistance (*θαυμαστῶς ὡς δυσανάπειστον*) of those who deny the existence of the forms, one must be extremely gifted and possess an even more wonderful (*θαυμαστοτέρου*) ability to come to know the forms and to teach their existence to another (*Parm.* 135a3-b2). Moreover, without positing the existence of the forms, the power of discourse itself breaks down (*Parm.* 135b5-c3). In other words, despite the difficulties, it is necessary to both posit the forms and come to grips with them. This launches the rest of the dialogue, beginning with the methodological consideration of needing to examine something from all sides and moving on to the deductions which comprise the meat of the dialogue.

The key here is that Parmenides does not dismiss the forms. Nor does he say that Socrates' affirmation about the simplicity of the forms is wrong. He only states that considering the forms is replete with these difficulties or “wonderful accounts.”³⁵⁵ Indeed, the remainder of the dialogue is a series of these wonderful accounts – even if the term “θαῦμα” is absent.³⁵⁶ Moreover, there are a few places where Parmenides, rather than discourage Socrates, is urging

³⁵⁵ Socrates calls the argument which concludes that the gods are closed off from knowledge of the material world a “wonderful account” (*θαυμαστὸς ὁ λόγος*, *Parm.* 134e7). Compare with *Phil.* 14c9, “For, that the many are one and the one many are amazing statements (*θαυμαστὸν λεχθέν*).”

³⁵⁶ That Socrates is not disabused of his interpretation in the dramatic timeline can be seen in the almost identical restatement of the relationships between the forms at *Phil.* 14c7-15c3. This account, however, does seem to be informed by his discussion with Parmenides. It has been tempered to acknowledge the complexity of the issue, and the topic is couched in terms of wonder. At *Phil.* 15b8-c3, Socrates states that if these kinds of questions are not settled properly, they lead to difficulties; whereas, if they are settled properly, they lead to progress.

Other useful (Platonic) tools to understand the relationship between the forms come in another Eleatic dialogue, the *Sophist* and its treatment of the “μέγιστα γένη” or “great kinds” (being, change, rest, same, different, *Soph.* 249c10-259e2). In this dialogue, the great kinds help provide a grammar to speak about inter-form relationships.

him to continue the examination of his theory of the forms, but with greater rigour. He wants to encourage him to pursue philosophy – an invitation to wonder.³⁵⁷

It is also important to point out that, despite the myriad difficulties presented in the *Parmenides*, there are curiously few instances of the term “ἀπορία” and its cognates – and seemingly no instances after *Parm.* 135a3, which is well before the deductions and antinomies which comprise the majority of the dialogue. We can only speculate as to why this is the case; however, given the role of aporia in other dialogues to denote a failed argument or hypothesis and the need to replace or rethink one’s beliefs, we might take the absence of the word in this dialogue as a sign either that we are doing something totally different than what is at play in those dialogues, or that the difficulties are not as definitively ruinous as the aporia in cross-examination dialogues – again, *Parmenides* does not dismiss the forms; he encourages a more detailed analysis.

4.3.2. Unity and Multiplicity of the Forms:

The first question that we must examine is whether the difficulties stemming from the existence of the forms and how they relate to each other are the same as the aporia of cross-examination. This is rooted in the apparent contradictions which seem to arise when examining the forms – a phenomenon that Socrates stated was not possible. Though the aporetic situations of both contemplation of the One and Many and of cross-examination look very similar, they are not.

The aporia of cross-examination which we examined in the previous part of the dissertation arises due to conflicts in one’s *beliefs* about a given thing. In this sense, they are epistemic or logical aporia; they arise from a subject’s hypothesis or beliefs about an object, and

³⁵⁷ See especially *Parm.* 130e1-4 and 135c7-d6.

the interaction and consistency between the premises within that hypothesis or set of beliefs. They are the result of an inductive process.³⁵⁸ In the second part of the *Parmenides*, the apparent aporia which arise throughout follow directly from positing the existence or non-existence of the One and the Many and deducing what follows. It is a deductive act (*cf. Rep.* 511b3-c2). In this latter case, the aporia seem to be on the *ontological* level. That is, if *x* exists and we understand it to exist in *y* way, then it necessarily follows that *z*.³⁵⁹ Considering the forms as they are, we perceive them as existing in relation to one another, sometimes in ways which appear to contradict their essential simplicity. In other words, we see them as both singular and plural simultaneously – or singular and existing among and in relation to a plurality. As Proclus states,

We must say that each of them is precisely what it is and preserves its specific nature undefiled, but also partakes of the others without confusion, not by becoming one of them, but by participating in the specific nature of that other and sharing its own nature with it, just as we say that Identity partakes in a way of Difference without being Difference ... (*In Parm.*, II, 755)

Indeed, this seems to be a function of the noetic act. Returning to the image of Palomar, he does not see each star individually, presented to his senses in a temporally discrete way. Rather, he sees constellations – indeed as much of the night sky as is available to him through

³⁵⁸ One might be tempted to consider the first part of the *Parmenides* an example of cross-examination insofar as Parmenides examines the theory of the forms while asking secondary questions (such as, “what kind of things can be forms?” *Parm.* 130c5-d9). It is not necessarily clear from the text however that this is the case, as it does not follow the pattern we saw in the first part of the dissertation. Despite finding many shortcomings in Socrates’ theory, Parmenides does not discard the theory of the forms by virtue of the contradictions. Rather, he seems to state that there is something contradictory about our experience of the forms. There is also the implication that due to youth and inexperience the theory has not yet been developed thoroughly enough, or that Socrates does not have the necessary tools to defend the theory of the forms – hence the provision of a method (*Parm.* 135b5-137c3). Without the skill and experience necessary to defend it, even a true hypothesis could be overturned. On this point, see Proclus, *In Parm.*, I, 634.

³⁵⁹ The difference between the two kinds of aporia seems to be an echo or a spectre of the divided line. The one proceeds from hypothesis to hypothesis in the pursuit of a first cause, the other proceeding from an unconditioned, non-hypothetical principle of all (τοῦ ἀνυποθέτου ἐπὶ τὴν τοῦ παντός ἀρχὴν, *Rep.* 511b6-7). The fact that Parmenides and Socrates can entertain this deductive pursuit is rooted in their positing the necessity of the forms.

the lens of his telescope. The stars exist in relation to one another and to other constellations. In fact, one would not be able to recognise or make sense of the stars without experiencing them in this way. It is when one goes about writing the star chart that this simple vision gets protracted in time, discretely mapping out the stars and their relations and relative positions.³⁶⁰ That is, in rendering an account or recalling the vision, we introduce or are made aware of the multiplicity and complexity of what was initially one and simple; we stretch out in time that which is eternal and unchanging. We can perhaps already see how this can result in a “wonderful account.”

We have tapped into this interesting complexity of the forms and how the *voũç* perceives them to some degree already. In the dialogues which speak of contemplation, the forms are described with adjectives that are not identical to the pre-eminent, “essential” quality of the form itself. That is, despite their ontological simplicity, we nevertheless have statements like “the form of *x* is divine, beautiful, wonderful, etc.” On top of these qualities, there are a number of properties ascribed to the forms *qua* forms, such as “eternal,” “immutable,” “intelligible,” etc. We can call these the “categorical” properties of a form.³⁶¹

³⁶⁰ Vlastos speaks of another possible approach to this problem which supports the above (1965, p.17), namely, “All of its [the form’s] properties must stick to it with logical glue, so that they can never get unstuck with changes in time, spatial location, or causal environment. It must be eternally invariant and as logically transparent as geometrical concepts come to be when all of their properties have been exhibited as the necessary consequences of their formal inter-connections.” We can take this to mean that, even though there are relations between contraries and even contradictories at the level of the form, these relations are not to be understood as transitory. Rather, the relations between the forms are analytic. Take for example the concept of “tree”: in some ways this unity is inextricably linked to a number of necessary elements, such as “leaves,” “trunk,” “brown,” “green,” etc.

³⁶¹ Lewis (1979, p. 106) draws an important distinction between qualities in the form *x*. There are qualities in the form of *x qua x* and qualities of *x qua form*. The latter are what he calls the categorical properties of a form (what makes a form a form rather than a sensible thing); the former we might call the specific difference or essential quality of the form.

4.3.3. Limitations of Human Understanding:

This simultaneous simplicity and complexity of the forms leads us to the second theme, namely, the limitations of the highest faculty of the human soul, the $\nu\omicron\delta\zeta$. When we say “limitation” here, we do not mean that the $\nu\omicron\delta\zeta$ is limited in its ability, but rather in its scope, as the eyes do not see all visible things, but only that which falls within the field of vision.

Returning to the analogy of sight may help us better understand this unity and multiplicity in the perception of the forms. There are multiple levels of understanding visual perception. On one level, sight is simply the perception of a plenum of colour; however, this is not how we generally tend to process the sense data. We see unities (or perceived unities) which stand in various relations to each other and to themselves. It is not difficult to recognise at this level that, e.g., the book is distinct from the desk atop of which it sits. The book is moreover not reducible to the black ink of its title or any one of its pages. In other words, we can see things standing in relation to other things and being composites without losing their distinct unity and without being reducible to any one part.

What the *Parmenides* does exceedingly well is demonstrate the real messiness of contemplation and dialectic as they play out in real time as compared to the metaphorical accounts that we have seen in other dialogues. The Allegory of the Cave, the Ladder of Love, and the Divided Line all seem to nicely delineate the clear roles of the different parts of the soul, the different acts and faculties thereof, and their relationship to objects of knowledge. This logical delineation of faculties and objects fails to highlight the “κατὰ δύναμιν” sections of these texts, that is the “according to, or to the best of one’s ability” sections. In other words, the idealised accounts of ascending dialectic may lead a casual reader to gloss over the inherent limitations of imperfect human understanding as it relates to perfect beings (the forms) – even if

the $\nu\omicron\zeta$ naturally tends toward them as a faculty to its object and is calibrated, as it were, to perceive them. We shall attempt to understand these limitations presently.

In some sense, this limitation can be summarised by the difference between the *existence* of the forms and their inter-relationships at the level of the forms, on the one hand, and the *perception* of the forms and their relationships by the $\nu\omicron\zeta$, on the other. The existence and truth of the forms is independent of any perception of them or judgement about them. The $\nu\omicron\zeta$ can be said to be limited in both of these ways – namely in the *scope* of its perception and in the formulation of its accounts or judgements, both of which are wonderful in their own way. The first of these we will look at now. The second will be discussed more in the next section.

That the forms are perceived as problematically mixed may have something to do with the limited scope of the $\nu\omicron\zeta$. As we stated earlier, Palomar cannot see the totality of the night sky, only that which is available to him through the lens of his telescope. He must then base his account on what he can see, what is available to him. Moreover if he wishes to see a different part of the night sky, he must shift his focus. As Nightingale says, “In Plato’s view, perfectly good and wise souls will see the Forms clearly; if our own view is limited, this is not because of their obscurity but because of the *dimness of our vision*.”³⁶² We might change this last part to “but because of the *narrowness* of our vision.”³⁶³

³⁶² Nightingale (2004, p. 111). See also Proclus (*In Parm.*, II, 755-756), where one form partaking of another does not diminish the identity or essential quality of a form, nor does it diminish the ability of a form to contribute its essential quality to other forms. In this way, even contradictory forms can be seen to contribute and partake of each other. Proclus ties this to the *Sophist* (256a1 ff.) which speaks about the inter-relationships of the great kinds.

³⁶³ We can think here of *Sym.* 210d4 where the scope of beauty is already described as an “ocean” even before arriving at the form of Beauty. If the scope of the form is understood as greater than the penultimate rung on the Ladder of Love, are we also to understand it as metaphorically greater than an ocean?

This is corroborated to some degree by the method provided by Parmenides (*Parm.* 135b5-137c3) and by the dialectical exercise of the second half of the dialogue. Parmenides says that we must look at the One and the Many in as many ways as possible in order to come to understand them. There are some implications in this approach: (1) that we cannot see the whole of the form all at once, otherwise we would not need to look at its under multiple facets, and (2) the number of facets or aspects that we can examine at any one time is limited. Contemplating a form under one aspect will therefore tender different outcomes than contemplating it under a different aspect; there will be different questions, insights, and even aporia.

There is something wonderful about the interaction between reason and the forms: that one could be confronted with something which is by its very nature true, understand that it is true by means of one's noetic faculty (which is akin to the forms and both capable of and ordered toward seeing and understanding the forms), and yet be left feeling somehow more confused by the interaction than before.³⁶⁴

We have seen already that the νοῦς can understand the forms as proper objects.³⁶⁵ This we saw through the metaphorical explanation that, just as the faculty of sight sees visible objects, so too is the νοῦς capable of both seeing and grasping the forms. The simplicity with which we can spell this out is misleading, as it suggests that the act of understanding the forms is itself easy, or that it is an activity that is readily available. It is important to reiterate that noetic contemplation is only achieved after much difficulty – despite the simplicity with which it is often explained. The *Parmenides* stands as a monument to this difficulty. We will turn out

³⁶⁴ As Robinson points out (1942, p. 159), the method employed in the *Parmenides* creates more confusion than it resolves. This makes sense if part of the purpose of the dialogue is to introduce philosophical wonder into Socrates' life. The latter, having stated that he would be amazed if the forms admitted contrary qualities, is now faced with a series of bewildering arguments.

³⁶⁵ Again, the exact nature of this act is never really explained. We must be content that Plato believed that it is possible.

attention to the notions of “scope” and “clarity” as they relate to the νοῦς. How much of the forms is perceived and how clearly?

The *Parmenides* thematizes the same objects (namely the One and the Many) from different perspectives and arrives at different, often contrary, conclusions in each case. Depending on how one approaches a given object of contemplation – the facet which presents itself – it seems that there will be other aspects which may not be seen. This affects the way that the object gets internalised and interpreted later.

In an attempt to understand the difficulty or limitation of the scope of the νοῦς, let us return briefly to the examples of Homer, where the wonderful objects are experienced directly – they are seen, and one can testify to their existence or occurrence – yet in some sense they also transcend explanation. We can take, for example, Poseidon’s transformation of the Phaeacian boat into stone (*Od.* 13.155-165). Any onlooker would see this and would wonder at it as a truly wonderful sight – and certainly a divine sight; however, the actual turning to stone is only a part of the whole event. There are certain elements that elude the understanding of the onlooker, and hence the comprehension of the event, such as the divine nature of the act, the motivation behind the act, etc. In other words, there is a level of transparency and opacity simultaneously. One understands immediately that it occurs, yet part of the experience lies outside the realm of the directly experienced – hence, in some way, one both knows and does not know the same event simultaneously.³⁶⁶ (The human observer does not have a god’s eye view.)

A similar experience with Beauty in the *Phaedrus* helps us understand the difference that is made by how the forms are perceived. When the lover looks at the beloved, he sees Beauty itself reflected back. That is to say, he sees the infinite, perfect, unchanging Beauty reflected

³⁶⁶ Again, we can point to the example of Palomar’s telescope which allows him to see the stars clearly, but not the whole sky at once, only that which falls within the range of the lens.

back in a finite, imperfect, mutable body – familiar and unfamiliar, imperfect and perfect, partial and total simultaneously. He sees the form of Beauty and understands it both as it is and as it presents itself and yet there is a real sense of a larger, undisclosed totality beyond the bounds of the individual human which presents the characteristic “beautiful.”

Again, we would not call this a *logical* aporia, because at the level of perception there is no real judgement or belief formed about Beauty. In the end, we still just have “beauty = beauty.” It is not a situation of falsehood, but rather of incompleteness – sort of like trying to pour the desert through a funnel: only so much can go through at a time, but it is all still sand. This simple equation is more complicated (and wonderful) than it first appears, because really we are talking about a particular beauty (Bp) which participates in the form of Beauty (Bf) and when one experiences Bf, one experiences it through and as though it were Bp, yet knows it as Bf. To the observer, Beauty seems to be both Bf and Bp simultaneously!³⁶⁷ The whole is experienced partially. Conceivably, the partiality of the experience also affects how we understand the inter-relatedness of the forms.

Let us relate this to the formal, categorial properties discussed previously: they are unlike anything we experience in day-to-day life. No material object one encounters gives any indication of true perfection, incorruptibility, simplicity, stability, etc.... In the above example, we have an essential quality (beauty) which is familiar, and valued, yet it is experienced in a way that is totally unfamiliar. Instead of being a mutable beauty, it is perceived as unchanging, perfect, and in some sense *more* intelligible (and more real) than the particular, because, unlike

³⁶⁷ See Heidegger (1994, p. 144), “The usual and the most usual – precisely the most usual whose usualness goes so far that it is not even known or noticed in its usualness – this most usual itself becomes in wonder what is most unusual.” See also Llewelyn (1988, p. 187), “And no wonder, therefore, that we should find that ‘wonder’ is a word that points in opposite directions. Ontological wonder is wonder over the between of the *heimlich-unheimlich* ...”

all particular instances, it does not change. We have effectively caught sight of the form. This dynamic relationship between the perception of the perfect form by the $\nu\omicron\upsilon\zeta$ and the imperfect material instance – which is nevertheless capable of pointing one to the form – is wonderful.

The sight of a form is certainly a moment of clarity, and indeed one which brings peace. This is wonderful in itself – a kind of awe before the really real – but there is an added dimension of wonder relating to how this same experience can be in some sense incomplete (in that the limited cannot fully capture the unlimited) as well as a dimension relating to recapturing or coming to terms with the experience after the fact (“why is it so difficult to explain?” moments).³⁶⁸ This thought naturally leads to our third point.

4.3.4. Temporal Aspect of Rational Activity

The next question that we should examine is why this is the case. Why is it that the $\nu\omicron\upsilon\zeta$, which is ordered towards the forms, is of the same nature of the forms, and can experience the forms, should fall short in fully grasping the forms? This is not a question that we can fully answer – certainly not here! We can, however, attempt to offer some limited explanation based on some themes we have already touched on and which also appear in the *Parmenides*: the notion of the act of understanding within a temporal context.

Throughout this second part of the dissertation, we have drawn a distinction between discursive (dianoetic) and intuitive (noetic) acts of reason. The difference between the two

³⁶⁸ Some scholars attribute this to the mixed nature of the tripartite soul. This makes sense considering that two thirds of the soul share greater affinity to material things. Hence the depiction of the soul in *Phaedrus*, where, even in death, the material parts of the soul distract and weigh down the $\nu\omicron\upsilon\zeta$ such that even in the best of circumstances it only gains a partial, laboured vision of the forms. Though this likely plays some role, it is only one contributing aspect. As the *Parmenides* shows, the starting point matters when seeking to give an account of the forms (“if x exists...” “if y does not exist...”). Because of the limited scope of the $\nu\omicron\upsilon\zeta$, the “view” of the form will change depending on this starting point – hence the methodology of exploring and examining as many facets of a problem as possible. We will also see below that temporality plays a role in the difficulty of explanation.

categories is that one is temporal (discursive, dianoetic acts) and the other is “atemporal” at least insofar as it is not discursive (noetic, intuitive acts). We have maintained that cross-examination belongs to the discursive category, whereas contemplation belongs to the non-discursive category. This interpretation is based on textual analysis of the dialogues, the use of simple aspect verbs, and importantly the use of words like “ἐξαιφνῆς” (immediately) when describing the interaction between the νοῦς and the forms. As we have just seen, this neat logical distinction is shown to be far less neat in the execution of contemplation.

This should come as no real surprise – certainly not from a phenomenological point of view. If we conceive of time as a linear function, as temporal beings (at least in this lived, material existence) our life and activities can be mapped out along this line. This temporal line can be divided up or punctuated (quite literally) with points. Unlike a line, however, a point does not have extension – it is a zero-dimensional figure. Hence a point on a line can denote a before and an after, but does not itself participate in or take up any space along that line.³⁶⁹ Moreover, whereas a line can be defined by a set of points (one can mark off a line by means of two points and speak about the intervening space), a point cannot be described in terms of a line. Applying this to time, a point in time (an instant, ἐξαιφνῆς) can occur along the timeline, but it is not itself extended in time. Something of the immediacy of the point is lost when translated, described, or expressed through linear, temporal categories.³⁷⁰

³⁶⁹ Trabattoni takes this as a potential argument against the direct, intuitive, non-discursive act of noesis (2016, p. 148).

³⁷⁰ See Proclus (*In Euc.*, 87), “Matter muddies their precision; the idea of the plane gives the plane depth, that of the line blurs its one-dimensional nature and becomes generally divisible, and the idea of the point ends by becoming bodily in character and extensible together with the things that it bounds.”

In the third deduction of the dialectical exercise of the second half of the *Parmenides*,³⁷¹ the imagery of points on a timeline is used to help understand changes in how the One seems to present different aspects at different times. If at one point it is seen to be in motion, and at another point it is seen to be at rest, and if motion and rest cannot exist simultaneously within the same object, then it follows that at some point there is a change between the two and that this point of change does not occur in time, yet separates and distinguishes the two states (*Parm.* 155e4-157b5). The point in question is the “instant” (ἐξαιφνης). In order to save the forms from contradiction, at this instant along the timeline the One is neither in motion nor at rest. The same argument applies to any set of contrary traits. One could take this as meaning that at the “instant” the One is just itself (by itself) with no other determination.

We can think of philosophical life and activity in a similar way. This life would be characterised by a generally discursive philosophical act, such as cross-examination or some other dianoetic activity. This philosophical activity would play out in a temporally linear way. This timeline also has the possibility of being punctuated by ἐξαιφνης moments of contact with or contemplation of the forms – however limited these may be. A moment of sight or insight, a moment of perfect clarity hidden between discursive acts of reasoning. This contact certainly will impact the way that the philosophical life continues, and almost certainly marks a moment of change in the life of the philosopher. Nevertheless, due to the limitations that we have raised in this section the way that one experiences the forms in contemplation is neither fully understandable nor fully expressible. An imperfect being cannot fully capture a perfect being, a point cannot be described in linear terms – yet this seems to be the natural course of action for

³⁷¹ This is the third of nine such deductions in the second half of the dialogue. Some authors divide the second half of the *Parmenides* into eight deductions and consider this section an appendix to the second deduction (e.g., Gill, 2021). In either case, this third deduction (or appendix) is of central importance for our purposes here.

the human philosopher. The philosopher seeks to understand in time the vision contemplated all at once.

Let us dwell on this a moment. Human *voũç* is instantiated in temporal beings and is exercised (by living humans) in time. Yet, the *voũç* is ordered toward atemporal beings and, per Plato, is capable of experiencing or perceiving the atemporal forms in intuitive, *ἐξαιφνης* moments of contemplation. However, the attempt to make sense of this contact with the forms is intrinsically limited, because it too must play out in time – hence the inclusion of predicates and identity claims which may eventually result in *aporia*.³⁷² This is something truly wonderful: that the mind can experience and enjoy something the simplicity of which it cannot fully express.

Take, for example, the faculty of sight to which noetic contemplation is compared. In the act of sight, we are not confronted by visible objects as truncated by their qualities and traits. We do not first see extension, then shape, then colour, then relation, etc. It is an experience of a sensible unity, a plenum of experience. However, when we begin to speak about this vision, we then break it down into its composite parts. The simplicity of sight is complicated by the multiplicity of language. “Apple” does not contain enough information to adequately recreate the scene, one needs descriptors that were not necessary for sight: “large, red apple, over there...” And even with this information, another person may be left imagining a different scene.

This is to say that, although the sight of noetic contemplation is in some sense simple, whole, and consistent *qua* perception of a form – the forms simply *are* – recreating or attempting to relive the experience for oneself necessarily takes place in time. It introduces multiplicity to what was previously one. In some sense, then, existing in time naturally moves the *voũç* from

³⁷² Cf. Heidegger (1994, p. 148), “It is simply an attempt at a retrospective sketch of the simplicity and incomprehensibility of that displacement of man, into beings as such, which comes to pass as wonder.”

See also Nightingale (2004, p. 95, note 3) on temporal interactions with eternal beings.

wondering at the wonderful forms in a simple way to wondering at the unity and multiplicity of the forms in a temporally discursive way, as one attempts to make sense of the vision of the forms. The next logical step would be to cross-examine this unity and multiplicity, which may eventually lead back to aporetic wonder.

Again, if we should call this unity and multiplicity of the forms an aporia, we would have to distinguish it from logical aporia, as there is no falsehood or contradiction in beliefs at the level of perception (the forms just are). Rather, it is more of an ontological aporia having to do with what we might call the “inadequate adequacy” of one’s *voũç* to understand the truth of being – the really real – and one’s limited ability to express the experience after the fact. One might be caught wondering at both the perception of the forms and at one’s inability to speak of them – even before one attempts to verbalise an account and runs into an aporetic situation and its concomitant aporetic wonder.

In terms of possible conclusions to be drawn, we can perhaps better see in this messiness how contemplation and cross-examination are complementary – or, at the very least, more complimentary than they first appear. When one catches some insight into the forms or the relation that exists between forms and seeks to express this, one finds oneself struggling and even winding up in a contradiction or aporia. This leads one to try to go back to the initial insight. And here, in the attempt to recapture that vision, one might catch sight of some new, wonderful aspect of the same form (a new facet), leading to new or deeper insights into the nature of the forms, and (potentially) new and different aporia – real or apparent. This is just like our earlier example of Palomar and his star charts, where the moment of sight of the stars and the relation between them (the noetic act) translates into the discursive process of charting (an

attempt to recapture the moment of sight). When doubt creeps in about the accuracy of the chart, he returns to his telescope.

The forms, then, are wonderful at the level of noetic perception (contemplation) because they can be viewed under multiple aspects, because they are unlike any experience of their particular instances, and because they are perceived as sharing in some relation to their contraries while maintaining their unity and identity. And (to begin to show the complementarity with cross-examination), they are also wonderful because attempting to express or render an account of the contemplated reality results in seeing the forms as simultaneously one and many, which naturally invites a philosophical soul to critically cross-examine one's account, which potentially results in an aporia.

The dialogue takes the young Socrates' statement, that it would be wonderful if contradictions should arise at the level of the forms, and shows it to be true: wonder gushes from every page of the dialogue. We see these ontological difficulties at the level of the forms themselves in how they relate to themselves and to each other, and at the level of the $\nu\omicron\delta\varsigma$ and how it relates to, grasps, and expresses its understanding of the forms.

4.4. Contemplative Wonder as the Pathos of the Philosopher and as Arche of Philosophy

Is wonder a pathos of contemplative philosophy? So far, we have shown that contemplation is different from cross-examination and that the objects of contemplation are wonderful (as well as beautiful and divine). Though we have alluded to it, we have not yet shown that a wonderful object elicits a wondering response in the perceiving subject – at least not in Plato's dialogues. We have seen that wonderful objects can elicit such a response in Homeric literature. We will turn our attention to this issue now, first looking at the textual

grounds to posit a wondering response, then examining the phenomenology of contemplative wonder, and finally looking at the effects of this new wonder. We maintain here our earlier definition of “pathos” as an affective state which exhibits both passive and active phases.

It is important to keep in mind the following distinguishing factor throughout this section, namely, that contemplative wonder is wonder at an object perceived. This object is external to the wondering observer. In other words, whereas aporetic wonder has its origin within the interlocutor, contemplative wonder has its origin external to the subject, from the ontologically distinct and independent forms. The question becomes whether this objective, wonderful thing has the power to bring about wonder in the subject perceiving it.

4.4.1. θαῦμα ἰδεσθαι: From the Wonderful to Wonder

As mentioned, we have already seen in Homer that wonderful objects elicit wonder in the beholder observing them – Odysseus wondering at the flashing of the feet, Priam and Achilles wondering at the divine and kingly aspects which each recognise in the other. Indeed, even the gods themselves are said to wonder at such wonderful sights.³⁷³ In Homer, this response seems to be a function of recognition.³⁷⁴

³⁷³ *Od.*, 5, 74-76, Hermes goes to meet Calypso, whose gardens “...even an immortal, who chanced to come, might gaze and marvel, and delight (θηήσαιτο ἰδὼν καὶ τερφθεΐη) his soul; and there the messenger Argeiphontes [Hermes] stood and marvelled (θηεῖτο). But when he had marvelled in his heart at all things, straightway he went into the wide cave...”

One might rightly argue that this is the verb “θεάομαι” rather than “θαυμάζειν;” however, as we saw at the beginning of the chapter, these two verbs are related. Moreover, in this context, there is also a verb for “gaze at” in “ἰδὼν” which leads one to use the secondary meaning of “θεάομαι” of “to marvel at.”

³⁷⁴ Prier (1989, pp. 77-78), “It is wonder or amazement, then, that accompanies the sight of recognition, the sight of the eyes, those phenomena imbued with such power. It is assuredly in the experience of amazement and wonder that sight is no longer a pure phenomenon of the ‘this’ and that the force of appearance is no longer purely of the ‘other/that.’”

In Plato we have this response of wonder as well. We saw in the *Epinomis* that the sight of the cosmic order arouses wonder in the observer (ἐθαύμασεν, *Epin.* 986c5-d4).³⁷⁵

A somewhat more trivial example is the account of the Ring of Gyges. This passage in book II of the *Republic* has nothing to do with the forms; however, it does give an account of a subject, Gyges, who happens upon a trove of wonders (θαυμαστά), and upon seeing them wonders (ιδόντα δὲ καὶ θαυμάσαντα, *Rep.* 359d5-6). This example is perhaps closer to the Homeric accounts where often the objects of wonder are handcrafts of the gods, physical objects or traits which are perceived with the eyes. Nevertheless, it is a positive example of a wonderful object resulting in an affective state of wonder in the subject.³⁷⁶

This makes sense, if we consider why something is “wonderful” – it is wonderful because it makes us wonder. In Greek, there is a linguistic connection between θαῦμα and θαυμάζειν (beyond the obvious verb-substantive connection). The construction of the words themselves give us a clue about this relationship. Many substantives in Greek ending in “-μα” often relate to their verbal forms as cause to action. Hence, θέα-μα (sight) is something that results in or provokes contemplation (θεάομαι). So too does θαῦμα, a wonder (or a wonderful object) result in wondering (θαυμάζειν).³⁷⁷

³⁷⁵ There are, again, disputes over authorship with this dialogue. Compare with *Phdr.* 251a5 which describes the reaction of the lover upon observing the beloved. Here the pathos at play is “reverence” (σέβας) and not wonder. There may be a (weak) connection between reverence and wonder via Homer who sometimes switches out “σέβας” for “θαῦμα” in the formulaic expression “σέβας μ’ ἔχει” (reverence holds me fast).

³⁷⁶ To this example could be added the pseudo-mythological account of Solon and the Atlanteans in the *Timaeus*. The Atlanteans were, in this account, “great and marvellous” (μεγάλα καὶ θαυμαστά, *Tim.* 20e4-5). Upon hearing of Atlantis, Solon wondered (θαυμάσαι, *Tim.* 23d2) and wished to learn *everything he could*, whereupon he also learns of their wonderful power (θαυμαστική δύναμις, *Tim.* 25a6). This is interesting as it shows contemplative wonder resulting in an almost hungry desire for knowledge.

On this reference to Solon, see Proclus (*In Tim.*, 41b), “Wonder, therefore, precedes, because in us, also, this is the beginning of the knowledge of wholes. But in divine natures, it conjoins that which wonders with the object of wonder.”

³⁷⁷ The other side of this dynamic is the suffix “-σις,” which is often the result of an action. There is no “θαῦ-σις” in Greek as far as we know; however, θέασις, the result of θεάομαι, means “insight.” For an

To return briefly to our primary example of the wonderful forms, the *Symposium*, we see an intriguing dichotomy play out regarding wonder. Throughout the speech of Diotima, we see the priestess repeatedly tell Socrates *not* to wonder. We see this at *Sym.* 205b4 (μη θαύμαζ', ἔφη), when Socrates wonders why some fall in love and others do not; and again, at *Sym.* 207c9 (μη θαύμαζε), when Socrates is at a loss for the cause of love in animals. In these instances of aporetic wonder – instances where Socrates is unable to provide an account – Socrates is led on by Diotima.³⁷⁸ She provides him with the answers to these questions, because, in some sense, they are trivial in comparison to where she is leading him. The one point where Diotima speaks of wonder in a positive way is when she speaks of the wonderful nature of Beauty – indeed, she makes certain to call his attention (his understanding) to it specifically (πειρῶ δέ μοι, ἔφη, τὸν νοῦν προσέχειν ὡς οἶόν τε μάλιστα, *Sym.* 210e1-2). In other words, whereas the quibbling aporia which preceded on the Ladder of Love are not worthy of wonder, the nature or form of Beauty *is*.³⁷⁹

example slightly closer to English, we have “κρί(ν)μα” (crime), which results in “κρίνειν” (to judge), and further results in a “κρί(ν)σις” (crisis). These are not necessarily one-to-one translations, but they nevertheless convey the point.

³⁷⁸ Chrysakopolou (2012, p. 112) compares the Mystery language in the *Symposium* to the maieutic language of the *Theaetetus*, specifically the words *muêsis* (shutting of the eyes) with *maieusis*. The shutting of the eyes in the mysteries was meant to symbolise the opening of the eyes of the soul. This returns us to our above comments of contemplation not being panoptic, and the example of Palomar. See also Nightingale (2004, p. 84) and Couloubaritsis (1992, pp. 271-272).

³⁷⁹ Cf. Nightingale (2004, pp. 258-259). See also Pinotti (1998, pp. 33-34): “Il tentativo di tracciare una linea di demarcazione fra dispositivi che producono meraviglia in ordine all'inganno e processi che l'esauriscono in ordine alla teoria, il delinarsi di una fenomenologia della conoscenza ove la meraviglia è innesco dell'indagine, la permutazione della stupefazione di fronte a realtà non protette e fondate dal sapere in ammirazione noetica della loro intelaiatura ontologica, sono segmenti che individuano le forme e il senso di un discorso altrimenti irreperibile sulla meraviglia del filosofo.” Here Pinotti is saying that understanding philosophical wonder means coming to terms with the difference between sophistic wonder, productive aporetic wonder; understanding how wonder results in investigation; and understanding how one goes from stupefaction to noetic wonder when faced with the ontological framework of reality.

The examination of Beauty in the *Symposium* does not end with Diotima's words. The final speech in the dialogue is in some ways an analogy of the wonder of the forms and the wonder that it elicits. The orator of this last speech is Alcibiades and the stand-in for Beauty (the object of Eros) is Socrates. Throughout this speech, Socrates is praised as divine and wonderful, both descriptors of the vision of Beauty in this dialogue; however, perhaps the most definitive comparison with the forms comes at *Sym.* 221c6, where Alcibiades states that the most wonderful thing (παντὸς θαύματος) about Socrates is that he is unique, unlike any other – which puts us firmly in mind of the αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτό of the forms, unmixed, himself by himself.³⁸⁰

That Alcibiades wonders at Socrates is no real surprise, given his loving description, but others too are seen to marvel at the (wonderful) person of Socrates. At one point in the speech, Alcibiades tells the story of Socrates, who, while on campaign in Potidaea, was struck motionless by a problem³⁸¹ in the dead of winter, wearing nothing but a light cloak and bare feet despite the cold. Importantly, the soldiers passing by and seeing him began to wonder (θαυμάζοντες) at his standing there all day (*Sym.* 220c6). In some sense, this is a double account of wonder, as Socrates is clearly wondering at some truth, and the soldiers wonder at him in turn.

This short excursion allows us to say, then, that in Plato as in Homer, the sight of a wonderful object (α θαῦμα ἴδεσθαι) can and does result in wonder in the observer.³⁸² At this

³⁸⁰ Compare with *Lach.* 184c1-4 where excellence of the soul is seen as wonderful: “The reason for this is that a man who pretends to knowledge of this sort is the object of envy, so that unless he is outstandingly superior to the rest (θαυμαστὸν ὅσον διαφέρει τῇ ἀρετῇ τῶν ἄλλων), there is no way in which he can possibly avoid becoming a laughingstock when he claims to have this knowledge.” See also Renaut (2014, p. 91).

³⁸¹ We should note in the text here there is no mention of aporia. There is, however, mention of sight-related language, “σκοπῶν.” We can take it then that whatever philosophical exercise is occurring here is closer in kind to contemplation than to cross-examination.

³⁸² Speaking of aesthetic experiences, specifically the Seven wonders, Fisher states (1998, p. 17) that “wonder is the outcome of the fact that we see the world.” We could amend this to be more resonant with Homeric and Platonic contemplation by saying that “wonder is the outcome of seeing the really real.” See also, Vasalou (2015, p. 90).

point we have seen that contemplation is distinct from cross-examination, that the objects of philosophical contemplation in Plato are wonderful, and that these wonderful objects result in a response of wonder. We can say that there are at least two types of wonder related to philosophy in Plato. It remains to be seen how this wonder is characterised. We turn our attention to this now.

4.4.2. What is Wonder, Baby Don't Hurt Me!

What does this contemplative wonder look like, what does it feel like? These are the questions that we will look to answer here.

If we were to assume that the phenomenological experience of contemplative wonder was the same as that of aporetic wonder, we would have difficulty affirming that an experience of contemplative wonder actually occurs. That is, the phenomenological characteristics which we described in the first part of the dissertation when discussing aporetic wonder are utterly lacking in the descriptions of contemplation. The pain and conflict which are concomitant with aporetic wonder are absent in the act of contemplation.

One might interject that the account in the *Republic* is in fact perfectly resonant with aporetic wonder. One need only read the text as we saw in the previous chapter: the violent, painful dragging of the soul upward, intercut with moments of dazzling blindness. Certainly, this is perfectly – if metaphorically – representative of the experience of aporetic wonder. Yes, it is! However, this fails to recognise the distinction we made between the ascent to the forms and the simple sight of the forms.

Indeed, the language used to describe the vision of the Good in the *Republic* and the sight of Beauty in the *Symposium* – both acts replete with wonder – is very different. Though Plato admits the difficulty of seeing the forms, he does not associate it with the pain and discomfort

that characterised aporetic wonder. From what we stated in the previous chapter, this makes perfect sense, because contemplation cannot, rightly speaking, admit of *aporia*.³⁸³ Indeed, in the accounts of the *Republic*, *Phaedrus*, *Symposium*, and *Phaedo*, the act of contemplation is altogether pleasant.³⁸⁴

As we have seen in the *Phaedrus*, the soul that sees the forms *delights* (εὐπαθεῖ, *Phdr.* 247d4) and feasts on them. The “undergoing of a positive affectation” implied by the word “εὐπαθεῖ” is further emphasised by the imagery of feasting. In contemplation, the soul finds a meal most befitting of understanding (νοῦς), the steersman of the soul. The imagery conveys the sense of satisfying some fundamental need of understanding.

This feasting is presumably a joyous event, one which reminds us of the *Republic* 580d3 ff., which speaks of the aims of the tripartite soul. Each part of the soul has its own desires which it pursues for its own kind of pleasure.³⁸⁵ Whereas the desirous part of the soul looks for sex, food, and money and the *thumoeidetic* part looks for mastery, honour, victory and esteem, the understanding strives for knowledge of the truth (πρὸς τὸ εἰδέναι τὴν ἀλήθειαν ὅπη ἔχει πᾶν ἀεὶ τέταται, *Rep.* 580e2-581b7). It is in this knowledge of the truth that the understanding gets its pleasure (*Rep.* 581d10-e4).³⁸⁶

³⁸³ It may be helpful to reiterate our earlier point when we looked at the *Parmenides*. There cannot be logical *aporia*, as there are no beliefs being examined to contradict one another. One may nevertheless experience some level of wonder at the inter-relatedness of the forms even among contrary forms.

³⁸⁴ Commenting on Aristotle, Pinotti states (1989, p. 40), “Al soggetto della conoscenza è connaturato, a livello teoretico e non percettivo, quel piacere (ἡδονή) che Platone considera privilegio esclusivo del filosofo in virtù della sua contemplazione del reale (θέα τοῦ ὄντος).” Although Pinotti does not speak of wonder here, we have shown that this contemplation of the real is accompanied by the pathos of wonder. In this way, wonder is seen as a pleasant result of contemplation. Pinotti further ties the wonder of noetic contemplation to *theoria* (*idem*, p. 43).

³⁸⁵ Cf. Renault (2014, pp. 179-180) for more on the passions and aims of the tripartite soul, with a focus on the *thumoeidetic* part of the soul.

³⁸⁶ One might argue that in the account of the ascent to the hyperouranian plane, all three of these desires or aims are on display. The bad horse lusts after every beautiful body it catches sight of (ποιεῖσθαι τῆς τῶν ἀφροδισίων χάριτος, *Phdr.* 254a6-7); the good horse remains obedient to the charioteer in an effort of

In the *Philebus* too, Socrates states that contemplation of *pure objects* (like the forms) is more beautiful and truer even in small amounts than large amounts of contact with mixed or impure objects (*Phil.* 53b5-8). He then goes on to say that pleasure which is unmixed with pain is pleasanter and more beautiful than one that is mixed with pain (*Phil.* 53b8-c2). Given that, by this reasoning, contemplation is a pure pleasure of understanding, one which is unmixed with the conceptual pains associated with *aporia*, we can say that the wonder accompanying this contemplation is not just pleasant, but more pleasurable, beautiful, and true than whatever concomitant pathos accompanies aporetic wonder, which is mixed with the pain of *aporia*.

This is further elaborated in the accounts of the *Republic* and *Symposium*, where this experience is not just pleasurable, it becomes the preferred state of the philosopher. In the *Republic*, although the dialectical ascent is painful and the confrontation with the light is initially harder, once the philosopher's eyes adjust and they are able to look at the things themselves, the intelligible realm tempts the philosopher to stay in this newfound state of happiness (*Rep.* 516c4-d7, 518b1-4), rather than redescend into the darkness of the original condition (*Rep.* 517c7-d2, 519d4-7). Indeed, the philosopher must be coerced into returning out of civic duty.³⁸⁷ In other words, the pain and confusion of the aporetic life in the cave is replaced by the peace of contemplation.³⁸⁸

self-mastery (τιμῆς ἐραστῆς μετὰ σωφοσύνης τε καὶ αἰδοῦς, καὶ ἀληθινῆς δόξης ἐταῖρος, *Phdr.* 253d6-7), and perhaps hoping for praise from the charioteer; and the charioteer feasts on this vision of the forms.

³⁸⁷ This return has consequences which we will address in the next section.

³⁸⁸ See Nightingale (2004, p. 114), "As this metaphor [of an upward journey to the forms (*Rep.* 532a1 ff.)] indicates, the philosopher who achieves a vision of the Forms is at rest or repose (*ἀνάπαυλα*) rather than doing battle: he is gazing upon – rather than battling for – the truth." Again (*ibid.*), "The activity of seeing Truth, then, differs from that of hunting and pursuing it. To 'see' Being involves a state of receptivity on the part of the soul: the soul, in short, is gazing and receiving rather than hunting or grasping." And finally (*ibid.*), "Contemplating the Forms is depicted as an intellectual activity that is not technical or methodical or effortful."

Finally, in the *Symposium*, we see not only this positive language of a rapturous encounter with Beauty, we also receive two accounts of the *physiological* effects of contemplative wonder. Indeed, the *Symposium* is bookended by accounts of Socrates struck suddenly by some philosophical quandary: once on the way to Agathon's home at the beginning of the dialogue (*Sym.* 174d4-e8), and again, as we have seen, in Alcibiades' speech in praise of Socrates (*Sym.* 220c3-d5). In both instances, Socrates stops where he is, not moving, barely aware of his surroundings – if at all – not worrying about food, drink or the body, and stays there for some time. He shows a lack of concern for the body, which echoes the sentiment expressed by Diotima when describing the outcomes of perceiving the nature of Beauty at *Sym.* 211d1-8, that contemplation of Beauty makes one forsake the pleasures of the body (μήτ' ἐσθίειν μήτε πίνειν).³⁸⁹

Not only is Socrates unconcerned with the body; he seems to be unaware of the passage of time. This is perhaps as close as one can get to the atemporal forms. There are some scholars who posit atemporality as a barrier or difficulty to contemplating the forms or having any contact with them. The idea being that that which is fundamentally temporal and material cannot belong with that which is fundamentally eternal/atemporal and immaterial. We could, however, counter argue that the *voũς* is not material, and is immortal – or at the very least sempiternal – and adheres to the matter of the body accidentally, as indeed some dialogues state.³⁹⁰ The description of Socrates as motionless and unaware of his surroundings and the passage of time may be taken to indicate a transportation of the *voũς* to its proper object.³⁹¹ The sentiment is echoed in the

³⁸⁹ That and the fact that there is no mention of *aporia*, but there is mention of “seeing” (*σκοπῶν*, *Sym.* 220c4).

³⁹⁰ Cf. *Phaedrus*, the soul's steersman (247c7) and *Phaedo*, the soul as imprisoned in the body (82d9 ff.).

³⁹¹ As we saw earlier, the passages outlining Socrates' fugue states are ambiguous and could be taken to refer to either contemplation or cross-examination. We interpret these passages as leaning more to contemplation, due to the use of sight and *noesis* language at these locations.

digression of the *Theaetetus*, where Socrates asserts that the philosopher is unconcerned with the flow of time (captured in the image of the clepsydra) as long as he is able to get to what is (τοῦ ὄντος, *Tht.* 172d9). The part of the soul which seeks the pleasure of congress with the forms is not confined in the same way as the part which seeks pleasures of the body.

Just as in Part I of the dissertation, we saw that there were four stages of an affect or pathos as it applied to aporetic wonder, we begin to see some similarities emerging with contemplative wonder. To reiterate:

There are thus three stages of astonishment: (1) a striking experience, usually visual, but sometimes aural; (2) a consequent physical paralysis; and (3) a mental reaction which results in something being learned which may be followed by (4) a new action.³⁹²

We have a repeat of these steps in contemplative wonder as well. Rather than something visually striking, we have (1) something which is conceptually striking, though in a different way than with aporetic wonder. With aporetic wonder, the striking source was internal to the subject; by contrast, contemplative wonder, more analogous to sight (and hence somewhat “visually striking”), has an extramental object as its source. There is also (2) a physiological response, a sort of physical arrestation. In the *Symposium*, Socrates is shown to be frozen in place, as though “only his body is on earth” (*Tht.* 173e2). The mental reaction to such striking things (3) is, of course, contemplative wonder. Here we have a pleasant wonder at an object which is ontologically distinct from the observer, which is perfect, divine, and beautiful.

Finally, we have (4) an action. We will discuss the fourth stage of the pathos of contemplative wonder in the next section.

³⁹² Onians (1994, p.12).

Here, even more than in Part I, the widening of the eyes described by Frijda³⁹³ as a physiological response to a given wonder is appropriate. The physiology maps very well to the metaphorical account of contemplative wonder that we have been discussing throughout this second part. Contemplative wonder opens up the eye of the soul to take in as much as it can from the experience. Indeed, as Fisher points out, “in the attention brought about by wonder, the capacity to notice the actual details of the object is a strategy on the part of pleasure that seeks to last as long as possible.”³⁹⁴

4.4.3. Wonder, Take Two, and... Action!

Finally, we turn our attention to the outcomes of contemplative wonder. If we are to talk about this second kind of wonder as a “pathos” of the philosopher according to our own definition of the term, we need to look at whether and how this wonder translates to action. Moreover, if we want to call it an “ἀρχή” of philosophy, then this action must also be philosophical in nature.

There are at least three ways that we can say that contemplative wonder results in action: (1) through a heightened desire to return to the forms; (2) through a sort of contagious life of virtue; and (3) through political activity.

As to the first of these actions, heightened desire to return to the realm of the forms, we have already seen many accounts. Predominant among these accounts are the *Republic* and *Phaedrus* and the idea that the sight of the forms (and the feasting thereupon) satisfies the desires of the νοῦς. What is missing from this account is the effect of awakening this desire. In the initial

³⁹³ Frijda (1987, p.18) states that the true expression of surprise is one of “open attentiveness.”

³⁹⁴ Fisher (1998, p. 39). Here Fisher is speaking about an aesthetic experience (dealing with “the mobility of attention, interest, and delight” (*ibid.*)), and one which does fade. Nevertheless, within the analogy of sight and understanding, the claim seems to stand. One could argue that this is shown in the *Phaedrus* account of the charioteer, where the soul is able to cut past all of the distraction of the horses and the beautiful bodies down below when it raises itself above the ridgeline and catches sight of the forms.

condition of, say, the cave, the soul only has the shadows. It is ignorant of the true objects of reason, and therefore it cannot desire them (the soul does not know that it does not know). The soul must make do with the phantasms with which it is presented. After seeing the forms, however, it is no longer ignorant; it can and does desire these forms to the point that it no longer wishes to concern itself with worldly affairs and ever feels the upward urge to return (οὐκ ἐθέλουσιν τὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων πράττειν, ἀλλ' ἄνω ἀεὶ ἐπείγονται αὐτῶν αἱ ψυχαὶ διατρίβειν, *Rep.* 517c8-9).³⁹⁵

Returning to the imagery of the *Phaedrus*, just as the bad horse cannot control itself at the sight of a beautiful body (the object of desire of the more sexual ἐπιθυμία), it stands to reason that νοῦς would also charge after its proper object – the forms. The feasting imagery is appropriate, as once one leaves the feast, one will still crave the food and seek to return to satisfy the appetite once again.³⁹⁶

The second potential action resulting from philosophical wonder is “giving birth to true virtue” (*Sym.* 212a3-7). We have returned to the notion of pregnancy of the soul and “giving birth” in a different philosophical context – and with some non-negligible differences from the pregnancy of the soul that we examined in the maieutic method. In the *Symposium*, pregnancy of the soul is brought about by proximity to beauty (*Sym.* 206d3-5) and results in the birth of wisdom and virtue for the right ordering of cities and households (*Sym.* 209a3-7). We will touch

³⁹⁵ Vasalou (2015, p. 116), “Having come into contact with higher metaphysical reality – having gone over to it in what we may call, again in a calculated religious register, an act of contemplative pilgrimage – we can only be sent away transformed, so that when we return from this extraordinary reality to the ordinary human realm, we find ourselves beholding it with the detached eyes of a stranger, or indeed a god.”

³⁹⁶ Nightingale (2004, p. 166), “Here, the *theoria* of the Form of Beauty produces both a reaction and, in turn, an action.” And again (*idem*, p. 167), “This feeling or *pathos* [of reverence] accompanies the rational apprehension of the Form, and it plays a major role in the redirection or turning of the philosopher away from bodily desires and towards reality.” Though Nightingale speaks of “reverence” here, in the epilogue of the text, this reverence is more or less equated (functionally) to contemplative wonder.

upon the aspect of ordering cities next, but must first examine this pregnancy – more specifically, the child engendered.³⁹⁷ This pregnancy seems to be possible even at the sight of beautiful bodies. How much more powerful, then, is the wisdom and virtue born of proximity and sight of Beauty itself, “since he is not fixed upon a phantom but upon truth” (*Sym.* 212a4-5)? This latter declaration implies something very important: contact with beautiful bodies gives rise only to the phantoms (εἴδωλα) – that is to say, the appearance – of wisdom and virtue;³⁹⁸ whereas, contact with true Beauty gives rise to true wisdom and virtue. On its own, this pregnancy of the soul may not seem decidedly philosophical; however, the picture can be completed by matching the *Symposium* passages with those of the *Phaedrus*.

The *Phaedrus* is another dialogue which has as one of its many themes the effects of Beauty on the soul. In fact, Beauty is treated as a special case among the forms, shining with a particular brilliance (*Phdr.* 250d1).³⁹⁹ We have returned to the language of light and visibility. Because Beauty shines so brightly among the forms, it is etched more permanently in memory during the procession to the hyperouranian plane between corporeal lives. Moreover, it shines forth more readily in the physical objects which participate in it, such that the sight of beautiful

³⁹⁷ This pregnancy of the soul seems to differ in some substantial ways from that of the *Theaetetus*. For one, the labour of this pregnancy is brought about by proximity to an external source. Moreover, that this type of pregnancy seems to result exclusively in the birth of positive outcomes (wonder and virtue) further sets it apart from the “aporetic” pregnancy which can – and often does – result in false offspring. A point of similarity is that the potential for pregnancy is necessary in both instances. This account of pregnancy would seem to contradict the *Theaetetus*, as in the *Symposium* Socrates seems to admit to having been led to the form of Beauty by Diotima, and by his own reasoning would have therefore given birth to wisdom and virtue. This would go against his claim in the *Theaetetus* that he has never born offspring.

³⁹⁸ One further step in reasoning suggests that true wisdom and virtue are not possible with anything less than contact with the forms. As Platonists, it is perhaps easier to accept this outcome as it relates to wisdom, since the dialogues seem to suggest that true knowledge and wisdom can only arise from that which truly is – i.e., the forms. It is not entirely clear in the *Symposium* how true virtue is exclusively possible from contact with the forms. In other dialogues it is perhaps clearer as one can only model one’s life justly if one has seen Justice.

³⁹⁹ On this, see Nightingale (2004, pp. 37, 87, 139, 163-4).

bodies reminds the soul of true Beauty. In other words, the sight of a beautiful body by the eyes may potentially transport the soul back to its perception of Beauty itself by the νοῦς.

We say “potentially,” because in the *Phaedrus* we see, once again, the need for a *well-ordered* soul for the virtuous response of self-mastery and authentic love of Beauty. In an ideal situation, the perception of Beauty allows the soul of the lover to regrow its wings (*Phdr.* 251b1-7)⁴⁰⁰ and translates into a kind of mentorship between the lover (who is remind-*ed* of Beauty) and the beloved (who is the remind-*er* of Beauty). Eventually, through an example of self-mastery and true reverent love, the beloved is himself inspired and begins to regrow his own wings (*Phdr.* 255c4-d3),⁴⁰¹ erotic love is elevated and reciprocated by the love of true friendship (φιλία, *Phdr.* 255e2). This relationship is further cultivated by a regimented life of philosophical pursuits (*Phdr.* 256a7-b3). Taken together with the *Symposium* passage, the vision of Beauty has the proximal result of wisdom and virtue, and the remote result of mentorship and a philosophical life.

Certainly, this mentorship and regime of philosophy does not seem to occur immediately from contemplative wonder. Nevertheless, the narrative of the *Phaedrus* heavily implies that each time that the lover views the beloved, the soul is again transported before Beauty itself (and is hence filled with renewed wonder). This further implies a few things: first, in an ideal scenario, insofar as the two are together there is a continuous “proxy” contemplation, in which case, it is possible that contemplative wonder leads directly to a life of philosophy. That is, at

⁴⁰⁰ It is moreover the nature of the wings to lift the soul to be nourished. This is a return to the first philosophical action that we discussed. Not only does the vision of Beauty result in virtue, it also furnishes the soul with the means to return to this vision.

⁴⁰¹ To belabour the point, the beloved sees the Beauty that the lover sees in him. The lover becomes like a mirror which reflects the Beauty back to the beloved. “Think how a breeze or an echo bounces back from a smooth solid object; that is how the stream of Beauty goes back to the beautiful boy and sets him aflutter” (*Phdr.* 255c4-5).

some point along the continuum, there would be a moment where the philosophical life takes root.⁴⁰² Second, this best-case scenario relies heavily on the degree of order present in the soul, such that, in the first instance the sight of the beautiful body could result simply in an erotic response at the level of desire (ἐπιθυμία); however, as the soul is perfected, the likelihood of a philosophical response increases, and would, given enough time, occur.⁴⁰³ In both scenarios, the constant is the proximity to the beautiful body as an aide-mémoire and proxy for Beauty itself.

It bears noting, however, that in order for the soul to remember Beauty, it must have first *seen* it in the hyperouranian plane (at least per the *Phaedrus* account), and this sight relies on a well-ordered soul capable of making the trip. This would mean that the soul that is capable of seeing Beauty in the beautiful body is likely to be fairly well-ordered already, which would further contribute to its philosophical and virtuous response.⁴⁰⁴

As a final word on this notion of transformation and the virtuous life, we turn to

Nightingale:

This kind of reverence [in the *Phaedrus*] is not unthinking or dogmatic piety. Rather, it is a feeling of wonderment that accompanies the activity of reason as it engages in *theoria*. The philosopher looks with wonder at the superhuman reality of the Forms, which are distant, awesome, and divine; but this same wonder leads the philosopher to assimilate himself to the divine – to find the kinship with divinity that is his birthright. The philosopher is not, then debased or annihilated by this

⁴⁰² In this particular instance, we are looking at contemplation of Beauty through the beloved as a continuous action. Although the contemplative action may take some time, the sequence of events would still be pre-contemplation, contemplation, philosophical life. The *Phaedrus* text seems to imply that the contemplation continues as an integral part of the philosophical life.

⁴⁰³ The order of the soul and likelihood of a philosophical response are directly proportional.

⁴⁰⁴ This goes against Nussbaum's non-eudaimonistic account of wonder (2001, pp. 54-55). Though the notion of "value" is important for emotions and emotional responses on some level, to state that in wonder one is "maximally aware of the value of the object, and only minimally aware, if at all, of its relationship to [one's] own plans" fails to take into account the actions generated by emotions – and specifically of wonder. For Plato, contemplative wonder puts one in contact with the maximally intelligible which leads one to reorder one's life toward these forms and consider all else "mortal garbage" (φλυαρίας θνητῆς, *Sym.* 211e3). One sees in the forms the unique importance of the forms for personal flourishing and happiness.

encounter with divine reality. Rather he recognizes and reveres a distant yet familiar truth ...⁴⁰⁵

The final action returns to the idea of giving birth to wisdom and virtue for the sake of the “proper ordering of cities and households” (*Sym.* 209a3-7). This action is, then, related to political action. If we return briefly to our earlier analogy of *theoria*, specifically, *civic theoria*, we are reminded that after taking in the sights, the *theoros* is responsible for returning to his city and rendering an account of said sights. This is certainly echoed in the *Republic* by the return of the contemplative philosopher to the cave, and their civic duty to legislate based on their vision of the forms (*Rep.* 519c8-520a4).

One could make the argument that this political activity is itself philosophical – indeed for Plato this seems to be the case. An easy way to see the philosophical extension of this political action of ruling and legislating is to understand that the philosopher kings share their time between contemplation and civic duty (*Rep.* 520d6-8). This is doubtless a life not dissimilar from our astronomer friend Palomar: legislation on the *Republic* model is rendering an account of the forms of Justice, Temperance, etc. Having beheld these forms personally, the philosopher is uniquely qualified to tender such accounts. As Socrates states, “insofar as [someone is] unable to give an account of something, either to himself or to another, do you deny that he has any understanding of it?” (*Rep.* 534b4-6). And again, “For once you are [accustomed to seeing in the dark], you will see vastly better than the people there. And because you have seen the truth about fine, just, and good things, you will know each image for what it is and also that of which it is the image.” (*Rep.* 520c3-6).

It also requires the back and forth between visible and intelligible realms to ensure that the account is adequate. Moreover, this rendering of an account can be made into an object of

⁴⁰⁵ Nightingale (2004, p. 261).

cross-examination.⁴⁰⁶ Thus there are multiple philosophical outcomes from the political action: both a continued, repeated contemplation of the forms of the good and civic virtue and cross-examination of the accounts rendered.

In this way, we can say that contemplative wonder results in some philosophical activity with a degree of necessity. The experience of contemplation seems to transform the soul in such a way that it naturally produces these outcomes.

One might ask whether this philosophical outcome is a product of contemplative wonder or simply of contemplation. One might respond by pointing out that it is unclear the degree to which contemplation and contemplative wonder are separable. If the forms are θαύματα (wonders) or θαυμαστά (wonderful objects) – which we have shown to be the case – then they would elicit a wondering response by reason of this wonderful character, as we have argued. In other words, the vision of the forms and the wonder at them are co-temporal; one experiences contemplative wonder for as long as one contemplates the wonderful forms.⁴⁰⁷ This feeling of wonder concomitant with the contact with the forms is, moreover, pleasant and to be desired and pursued by the νοῦς – per our first philosophical outcome. This is at least one positive account of philosophical activity arising from philosophical wonder. If contemplation and contemplative wonder are truly not separable, then the same reasoning would apply to the other two remaining outcomes of philosophical action.

We have, therefore, achieved the goal of this chapter and this part of the dissertation, namely, to demonstrate the existence of a second type of philosophical wonder in Plato's dialogues which responds to the criteria of both *pathos* and ἀρχή.

⁴⁰⁶ “‘What is Justice?’ ‘Justice is x.’ ‘Interesting, what about...?’”

⁴⁰⁷ See Vasalou (2015, p. 30), “The astonishment we experience at such events, thoughts, or discoveries is one that seems inseparable from the experience of beauty or positive significance that accompanies them.”

4.5. Concluding Chapter 4

In this chapter, we set out to look at instances of wonder as they apply to the philosophical act of contemplation, having previously distinguished it from discursive acts of philosophy, such as cross-examination. One of our main concerns has been whether this new type of wonder still responds to the criteria of philosophical pathos and origin of philosophy.

The first step was to examine how wonder fits into the sight-like paradigm we previously associated with contemplation. This was accomplished most easily by first looking at the notion of wonder in its linguistic roots and by looking at the uses of wonder in Homeric, epic poetry. This was a fruitful avenue of inquiry, as the words θαῦμα (wonder) and θέασθαι (to contemplate) share a linguistic root, a root which is associated with sight. Homer, moreover, describes wonderful objects as θαῦμα ἰδεσθαι, “a wonder to behold.”

Our next step was to apply this sight paradigm to Plato, examining where the sight of the forms and wonder intersect in the dialogues. In order to draw a deeper parallel with the Homeric uses of wonder, we first examined the divine aspect of the forms, as in Homer it is the divine, more often than not, which is a source of wonder. Having looked at the divinity of the forms, we then built up a case for the wonderfulness of the forms, beginning with the *Symposium*'s reference to the nature of Beauty as θαυμαστόν (wonderful). We then looked at the order and regular motion of the cosmos as wonderful and the attempt to understand this wonderful nature as a function of its form-like stature. In some dialogues, this regular motion is treated as the end of contemplation on par with the forms. Finally, we examined the place of the forms as wonderful – and wonderful precisely because the forms reside there.

Having looked at the forms and the realm that they inhabit as wonderful, we turned our attention to one of the most challenging dialogues, the *Parmenides*. This dialogue had the

potential to pose certain difficulties with our reading of Plato's notion of contemplative philosophical wonder, as it revolves around several difficulties about the nature of the forms. We tried to approach this dialogue carefully in such a way that, rather than challenge our thesis, it provided a more realistic understanding of contemplation and helped us to understand the interplay between cross-examination and contemplation better.

The final part of this chapter was spent applying the wonder claim of the *Theaetetus* to this newly painted picture of contemplative wonder, to see if the elements of pathos and ἀρχή still apply, and if so how. In the end, we were able to say “yes” to both of these elements. It is a pathos in that it accompanies the philosophical act of contemplation. And it is an ἀρχή in that it results in a philosophical life and the application of one's philosophical experiences through political life and purified, reciprocated eros and true friendship (φιλία).

It is common to think of contemplative wonder as arising “at the end” of philosophy; however, this is perhaps not quite so helpful, as it implies some level of finality.⁴⁰⁸ As we suggested at the end of the first part of the dissertation, it is perhaps best to think of the philosophical process (and life) as cyclical. What we really have are two distinct types of wonder which are complimentary in many ways, the combination of which show a life replete with philosophical wonder. When one is not contemplating, one is examining. Per the *Parmenides*, contemplative wonder seems to naturally pass back to aporetic wonder, which can cycle through further aporia or may indeed make its way back to contemplative wonder.

⁴⁰⁸ See Nightingale (2004, p. 257), “These dialogues suggest that the philosophic journey ends – or, better, *culminates* – in wonder (since strictly speaking, *philosophy never comes to an end*)” (emphasis added).

Conclusion of Part II

In this second part of the dissertation, our aim has been to recognise a kind of philosophical wonder in Plato that is distinct from aporetic wonder, namely, contemplative wonder. To attain this goal, we worked under the assumption that for a distinct kind of wonder to be unambiguously established we would first need to have a philosophical act that was itself sufficiently distinct from cross-examination (which results in aporetic wonder).

The act of philosophical contemplation meets this need as it is distinct in its object, distinct in its aims, and distinct in its execution. This we saw in Chapter 3, when setting up the differences between discursive and non-discursive acts, between the account of what is seen and the act of sight itself, the possibility and the impossibility of aporia. Contemplation is a simple act of noetic intuition, best understood as analogous to sight, which, properly speaking, does not admit of logical or epistemic aporia. Hence, aporetic wonder cannot be the result of contemplation.

Despite this lack of aporetic wonder, we still experience some form of wonder in contemplation. We have a wonder that is not born from within the subject, but which is introduced externally by the object of contemplation – the forms or “form-adjacent” objects. The forms themselves are wonderful in their nature and elicit a wondering response in the contemplative subject. This pathos of contemplative wonder, however, is distinct from the pathos of aporetic wonder, in that the discomfort and disorientation we saw accompany aporetic wonder is absent from contemplative wonder. The wonder which accompanies contemplation is pleasant and restful. Moreover, it results in further philosophical activity, and hence also responds to the criteria of our initial wonder claim.

In the conclusion to Part I of the dissertation, we stated that to apply the Aristotelian account of wonder to Plato would constitute an oversimplification and reduction of the richness of how Plato himself uses the philosophical notion of wonder. As stated, Aristotle's claim strongly associates wonder with ignorance and aims for its dissolution through causal knowledge. In other words, once one understands the reason why a given thing or state is the way that it is, there is no further reason to wonder.

Given what we have seen, it is hard to believe that Plato would accept this account of wonder. Certainly, insofar as aporetic wonder is concerned, there is sufficient overlap with the Aristotelian account.⁴⁰⁹ However, when it comes to causal knowledge or understanding doing away with wonder, it seems clear that Plato would resist this thinking – at least if we take the forms to be the pre-eminent objects of understanding, true in themselves. Plato sees the forms as both wonderful and eliciting wonder – not dissolving it.

In other words, for Plato, we have first an account of wonder elicited at the beginning of philosophy through cross-examination, one which remains and repeats for as long as there is aporia. We also have an account of wonder at the acme of philosophical experience, the sight of Being and Truth in the forms. It seems, then, that philosophy is characterised by wonder at every stage.

⁴⁰⁹ See Rubenstein (2011, p. 12), "Aristotelian *thaumazein*, one might say, seeks the very resolution that Socratic *thaumazein* struggles to resist; for, all the way up the ontological chain, causal knowledge gradually replaces the very wonder that sets it in motion." This is not for exactly the same reasons that we have put forward. Rubenstein's claim is rooted in the notion that what she calls "Socratic" wonder is based on aporia, and aporia never goes away. That is, it is not due to the culmination in contemplative wonder. For more on this, see Vasalou (2015, p. 59).

See also Fisher (1998, p. 41), "Philosophy begins in wonder, continues on at every moment by means of wonder, and ends with explanation that produces, when first heard, a new and equally powerful experience of wonder to that with which it began." This, one could contend, does not go far enough. In the moment of noetic sight, an explanation is not necessary, yet the "powerful experience of wonder" is there.

General Conclusion

This dissertation took as its starting point Plato’s claim about wonder in the *Theaetetus*, “For this is the pathos of the philosopher, to wonder. There is no other origin of philosophy than this” (*Tht.* 155d2-4).

For such an extraordinary claim, the topic of philosophical wonder has received remarkably little coverage. The aim of this dissertation has been, broadly, to understand this claim, to understand the role and importance of philosophical wonder in Plato’s dialogues. More specifically, we have been proposing a novel reading of Plato’s claim which posits at least two separate but equally important kinds of philosophical wonder: aporetic wonder which accompanies acts of cross-examination and contemplative wonder which accompanies noetic contemplation.

Throughout the dissertation, we have argued for the plausibility of this reading, how and why the two types of wonder are distinct. It is opportune, at this point, to draw together the characteristics which define these two kinds of wonder in one place. As an initial summary, we can look at the following table which compares the two kinds of wonder.

	Aporetic Wonder	Contemplative Wonder
Philosophical Act	Cross-Examination	Contemplation
Source	Subjective Opinions, Hypotheses, Beliefs	Objective Forms
Aspect or Act of Reason	Mediated Dianoetic / Discursive	Immediate Noetic / Intuitive
Pathology or Phenomenology	Painful	Pleasant or Peaceful
Timeline	“Beginning”	“End”
Outcome	Philosophy	Philosophy

In this table, we see clear differences in the characteristics of these two types of wonder. The first difference is the source of the wonder itself. Aporetic wonder is born from the subject's own realisation of ignorance, based on an examination of their beliefs or hypotheses; contemplative wonder, by contrast, arises at the perception of an extra-mental, intelligible form by the soul's faculty of reason. This difference is further accentuated by the acts of reason themselves. In the case of aporetic wonder, it arises through discursive acts such as cross-examination – most commonly, though not exclusively, through the maieutic method. These examinations take place over time, they deal with hypotheses and beliefs. More specifically, the examination tests the truth value of a given hypothesis or set of beliefs. Contemplation is a *simple* act analogous to sight, wherein a totality is glimpsed all at once, immediately (ἐξαιφνῆς). There is an immediate contact with the forms (however fleeting or imperfect) during which intervening time there is no need to verbalise, internally or externally, any opinion or judgement about the forms. Moreover, the truth value of the forms is independent of the contemplating subject. As such, aporia is not possible while one is actually contemplating the forms.

Finally, the way that the two kinds of wonder are experienced is also different. The pain of aporetic wonder leads one to continue their philosophical journeying by making the individual abandon their false belief and set up a new hypothesis for examination, hence “beginning anew.” With contemplative wonder, however, the experience is not painful, but pleasant. The pleasure of this wonder can be seen as reason resting in its object at the “end” of its arduous upward climb.

As we suggested in Part I, these notions of “beginning” and “end” are misleading, as the philosophical life is more cyclical than it is linear in Plato. This is further shown by the fact that both kinds of wonder result in continued philosophical activity. If contemplation were truly the end of philosophy, there would be no re-entry to the cave. Rather, aporetic wonder can occur

multiple times throughout a dialogue (as indeed it does in the *Theaetetus*), each time setting up a new cycle, a new proposed definition or hypothesis – a new response to the *ti esti* question. Contemplative wonder is more like the acme or summit of philosophical activity, the top of a sine wave – it is not the end of a philosophical life. Taking our image of the Divided Line, we can say that aporetic wonder incites wonder from the bottom up, contemplative wonder inspires wonder from the top down.

Within this cyclical model, the two kinds of wonder can be seen as complimentary. Aporetic wonder can accompany that spiritual journeying toward the forms and contemplative wonder can easily fall into a situation requiring cross-examination when rendering an account of the noetic vision – contemplation is only a predication away from cross-examination.⁴¹⁰

These differences between the kinds of wonder emerged through a careful examination of the philosophical acts to which they correspond or belong – not just the differences between contemplation and cross-examination, but also the differences between types of cross-examination. In all cases that we have examined, the education of the soul plays some important role in a “successful” wonder outcome. In cross-examination, a well-ordered soul is necessary to avoid deleterious emotional responses; in contemplation, a well-ordered soul is a prerequisite to make the dialectical ascent to the realm of the forms. Here again, we can see the

⁴¹⁰ See Pinotti (1989, p.30), “Tratti timico-aspettuali connotano i significati del campo lessematico che oscillano fra la stupefazione affine allo spaventato sbigottimento (ἐκπληξίς) e l’ammirazione marcata dal valore, dalla stima (τιμή) e dal piacere (χάρις).”

See also Nightingale (2017, p. 44), “As he [the philosopher] develops philosophically, he will gain some knowledge; but he must continue to wonder about the things he does not know ... [H]e will have to move back and forth from noetic contemplation of higher realities to ordinary life on earth.”

Both authors are stating similar things, namely that the philosopher will spend his life oscillating back and forth between the realm of the intelligible where contemplation takes place and the realm of the visible where opinion (and therefore cross-examination) reigns.

complementarity nature of the two philosophical acts, as cross-examination can provide purification of the soul necessary to ascend to the forms as one of its principal outcomes.

We believe, therefore, that we have adequately demonstrated our thesis that in Plato's dialogues there are at least two types of philosophical wonder which are distinct, which correspond to different philosophical acts and which equally respond to Plato's claim about wonder in the *Theaetetus*.

As we have mentioned, the work on the topic of philosophical wonder is woefully underdeveloped. There are several potential areas for further study. To note just a few, it would be an interesting exercise to do an in-depth comparative analysis between Plato and other authors, such as Aristotle or Heidegger, both of whom make of wonder an explicit principle of philosophical activity. Further analysis is also needed on other wonder vocabulary within Plato's dialogues. Does Plato, for example, favour θαυμάζειν to other wonder vocabulary, such as θάμβειν or ἄγασθαι, when referring to philosophy? How does he use these words? Perhaps the most important question one is left with, however, is why did Platonic contemplative wonder – a wonder which has its roots in the most important pieces of Greek literature – fall out of popular consciousness?

It may be that there are not answers to all of these questions. Unfortunately, we are not in a position to explore them further here. The literature and scholarship must further mature and we must conclude.

Abbreviations

Plato

<i>Apol.</i>	<i>Apologia,</i> <i>Apology</i>
<i>Charm.</i>	<i>Charmides</i>
<i>Epin.</i>	<i>Epinomis</i>
<i>Epis.</i>	<i>Epistolae,</i> <i>Letters</i>
<i>Eud.</i>	<i>Euthydemus</i>
<i>Euth.</i>	<i>Euthyphro</i>
<i>Gorg.</i>	<i>Gorgias</i>
<i>Lach.</i>	<i>Laches</i>
<i>Laws</i>	<i>Laws</i>
<i>Lys.</i>	<i>Lysis</i>
<i>Meno</i>	<i>Meno</i>
<i>Parm.</i>	<i>Parmenides</i>
<i>Phd.</i>	<i>Phaedo</i>
<i>Phdr.</i>	<i>Phaedrus</i>
<i>Phil.</i>	<i>Philebus</i>
<i>Prot.</i>	<i>Protagoras</i>
<i>Rep.</i>	<i>Republic</i>
<i>Soph.</i>	<i>Sophist</i>
<i>Sym.</i>	<i>Symposium</i>
<i>Tht.</i>	<i>Theaetetus</i>
<i>Tim.</i>	<i>Timaeus</i>

Aristotle

<i>Ars Rh.</i>	<i>Ars Rhetorica, Rhetoric</i>
<i>Met.</i>	<i>Metaphysics</i>

Homer

<i>Il.</i>	<i>Iliad</i>
<i>Od.</i>	<i>Odyssey</i>

Proclus

<i>In Euc.</i>	<i>In Primum Euclidis</i> <i>Elementorum Librum</i> <i>Commentarii,</i> <i>Commentary on Book I of</i> <i>Euclid's Elements</i>
<i>In Parm.</i>	<i>In Platonis Parmenidem</i> <i>Commentaria, Commentary</i> <i>on Plato's Parmenides</i>
<i>In Tim.</i>	<i>In Platonis Timaeum</i> <i>Commentaria, Commentary</i> <i>on Plato's Timaeus</i>

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