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MYTHS, IMAGES AND ALEGORIES. PLATO'S INTERPRETATION OF MYTHS (PART I)

A careful analysis of Plato's later dialogues reveals several semantic structures based on the relation of analogy, which may in turn be interpreted in terms of images-alegories or an elaborate symbol.[1] The discovery and study of these analogies throws some light on Plato's ruminations on symbols, characteristic for Plato's later works, and his preoccupation with finding a method to express deepest, essential intuition.

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[1]P. Ricoeur (1975: 7-24) considers symbols to be a separate category of signs and defines them as semantic structures (a) with a double – i.e. primary and secondary – intentionality; (b) which are untransparent and whose primary, literal meaning indicates the existence of a second denotation existing only within the framework of the primary one. He regards myth as a type of a symbol which takes the form of a story taking place in a specific location and at a specific time, which cannot be assigned to any existing spatial or temporal framework. Ricoeur, quoting Jaspers, distinguishes between the language of codes, the language of myths which serve as intermediaries for primary symbols, and the so-called tertiary, speculative symbols. The metaphorical and symbolic myths created by Plato ought to be included in this last category. Allegories differ from symbols, as they constitute a veiled literality. A necessary complement for an allegory is allegoresis, i.e. the interpretation of significance which nullifies the effect of the 'mask' of an allegory, rendering it superfluous. See also: Pepin 1976, who emphasizes the 'tautegorical' nature of the meaning of symbols and myths, as opposed to the allegorical meaning. The latter consists in an external, the former – in an internal reference (p. 71-72). Both symbols and myths are autosemantic structures – unless of course the myth transforms into an allegorical parable, as it is often the case with Plato. This issue shall be discussed in more detail in the course of our considerations on Plato's mythological and metaphorical hermeneutics.

Plato's symbolical and allegorical hermeneutics stems from cognition and perception of the essence, i.e. the noëtic paradigm – a model for perfection. It encompasses the domain of experience as well as expression and the art of interpretation or, rather, simply CONSTITUTES an art of seeing, expressing and explicating being, achieved by means of dialectic ascent, which makes use of all benefits of various sciences but is nonetheless superior to them in the light of the greatest clarity of being. The instrument of this art is the myth – the oldest, most archaic agent of human thought grappling with the enigmas of the visible reality and that which may only be experienced by the thinking mind. It is also an art constrained by certain rules. Plato's analysis of myths reveals a hierarchy of very particular functions.[2]

Plato starts with a methodical revaluation of the myths that played a vital role in the poetic and musical tradition of ancient Greece, shaping world-views and the cultural awareness of the Hellenes.[3] Book II of *The*

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[2]Cf.: Stewart 1905, Bréhier 1914, Hirsch 1921, Reinhardt 1927, Tate 1929, Frutiger 1930, Stöcklein 1937, Schuhl 1947, Dąmbska 1948, Edelstein 1949, Marignac 1951, Guisdorf 1953, Riet 1960.

[3]G. S. Kirk (1970) lists three basic types of mythical functions: the narrative and aesthetical function, the operative and evaluative function (the archaic function related to religion and moralising) and the speculative and explanatory function. This last role of the myth is at the same time a phase in the evolution of mythology. In the classical period, it was the dominant function. Plato's analysis of myths attempts to create an intellectual framework for the 'beautiful mythology' – Plato's viewpoint is thus in direct opposition to the primary notions of thought and explanation. In Plato's philosophy, a myth a form of a cultural archaism – a historical relic of a culture long gone, but a deliberately introduced and controlled method of expressing and interpreting metaphysical truths. This does not mean that it is a fully rationalised and allegorical form, even though platonic myths do perform such roles. Plato achieves a transposition and a travesty of old mythological topoi into the categories of a new beautiful mythology which is his own creation. Plato's philosophising of mythology consists in an arbitrary construction of RULES OF MYTHOLOGISATION with regard to both form and content (typology and topology). Allegorical and symbolical/metaphorical myths devised by Plato are used to draw attention to certain metaphysical truths – they are not the result of a free, creative fantasy. The rational construction of mythological rules does not cancel out the involvement of a poetic inspiration that is beyond reason and does not constitute the spontaneous evocation of irrational emotions. It results from a particularly lofty state of mind and not from the visions brought forth by the subconscious. In this sense, poetic frenzy (*mania*) may be a characteristic of sages. Thus, the hypothesis put forward by E. R. Dodds that Platonic philosophy may be understood in terms of the Freudian doctrine of sublimating the irrational (Cf.: Dodds 1951: 218), can hardly be considered just. Plato's mythology is a method of explanation with clearly defined rules and hermeneutic goals. It has more in common with the mythologism streak of modern avant-garde literature (Cf.: Mieletinski 1981).

Republic contains a critical analysis of traditional myths and their creators from the perspective of ethical and political education. Plato claims that in poetic parables an opinion is all too often more powerful than knowledge or truth. He warns that they may be the means of spreading falsehoods and propagating immoral conduct. Plato also criticizes Hesiod and Homer for the anthropomorphism and amorality with which they portray the gods, as well as for glorifying acts of cruelty and violence, contributing to the deterioration of the citizens' reasoning and morals. Plato's primary motive for painting such a negative picture of the myths is the *paideia* (cf. Jaeger 1964: vol. II). He feels compelled to draft a program of upbringing for the citizens of the ideal state described in his *opus magnum*. Driven by concern for their spiritual health he starts by introducing censorship, especially with regard to literature for the youth. He also draws attention to the way philosophers use myths in explaining philosophical problems available only to the chosen few – those with the very best of natures – whose mental capabilities enable them to cherish knowledge and to become the rulers of the ideal state (*The Republic* 366B-367E).

By rejecting mendacious myths, Plato builds the theoretical anti-ethical framework for a beautiful mythology. He also specifies the rules of employing stories and images for educational and hermeneutic purposes. Such means should always be used with utmost care and controlled by competent pedagogues who are known for their wisdom and know the 'types' the poets ought to employ to create myths. Any myth which does not conform to these regulations should not be allowed to be known to the public (*The Republic* 369A).[4]

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[4]Plato assumes that the value of all products of culture is measured by their moral effect and that the citizens' level of cultural refinement depends directly on their natural capabilities. Those capabilities, in turn, determine the positions held by individual people and by the social classes of an ideal state within an organically structured entity. Plato does not leave room for any changes in the hierarchy and distribution of social roles, consistently propagating the introduction of a universal censorship of culture. This task ought to be undertaken by the most competent stratum of society – namely legislators *cum* philosophers. Plato's view of his native culture is so critical it verges on an allegation of moral decadence: he disapproves of mimetic visual arts and theatrical performances, dislikes popular poetry and music, holds religious superstition and divination in deep contempt and stigmatises the charlatanry of priests and the naïvety of bigots. With regard to state religion, Plato's views are influenced by the rationalistic scepticism displayed by his tutor Socrates. He considers himself a member of the educated elite – people privy to the knowledge of the values that ought to become the foundation of a real culture. As evidenced by the tragic trial of Socrates, this knowledge is not available to the masses, yet it is neither impossible nor actually

1. The Roles of Myths in Dialectics and in the *Paideia*

The stories told by myths must be critically analysed not only in terms of their content, but also the way they are told. The only acceptable ones are those that portray something beautiful and do so with a serious intent, in accordance with the rules specified by the law (*The Republic* 379A-B, 392C, 398A-B). The songs of storytellers (*mythológoi*) consist of words, harmony and rhythm (*ibidem* 389C). The word ought to be presented in a suitable linguistic form, appropriate for the model – type – of the story, while harmony and rhythm should follow the word. The combination of the three elements ought to shape the structure of the soul (*psychés éthos*). A well-formed phrase (*eulogía*), harmony (*euarmostía*), chord (*euschemosýne*) and rhythmicity (*eurythmía*) align with the nature of the soul (*euetheía*), which is to be found not in maudlin stirrings of emotion, but in beautiful and true convictions. The lack of harmony, dissonance and arrhythmia coupled with inappropriate words (*kakología*) are a projection of the disorder within the soul (*ibidem* 400E-401A). The only poets sought for by the educators in an ideal state would be those able to portray virtuous and beautiful characters in a harmonious and rhythmical manner. An upbringing which employs poetry and music is felt deeply within the soul and shapes our personalities, instilling and developing the ability to connect separate elements into a harmonious body in accordance with the idea that forms the foundation for all entities and the model for all images – natural or artificial. What vision (*théama*) could be more beautiful than one which involves seeing (*theástai*) a mutual convergence of the beautiful nature of the soul with an appropriate musical framework of a poetic performance (*ibidem* 402C-D)?

The basic criterion for creating a beautiful mythology, apart from educational considerations, is the noëtic principle of IMITATIVE REPRESENTATION (*afomoiosis*). It stipulates that the representation ought to be

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necessary to educate the people to such a degree. Knowledge should be administered in carefully measured doses, due to the natural limitations of those people who were not born to be philosophers. Granting access to a specific portion of knowledge to the various social strata ought to be the role of the intellectual elite of educators, whom Plato regards as the most competent to form the ruling caste of an efficiently functioning state. The government ought to control the citizens' access to products of culture in order to eliminate the danger of anarchy, revolution and social unrest and to prevent the unenlightened masses (who cannot control their behaviour) from becoming morally corrupt. A state based on an appropriate functional hierarchy, well defended by public security forces is the mainstay of the harmonious coexistence of all people. It also provides the perfect environment for the most valuable social stratum – the philosophers (Cf.: Jaeger 1964: vol. II, p. 306n).

presented in such a manner that even the verbal lie of a myth (*pseudología*) would have some semblance of truth. This criterion seems a clear paradox, yet Plato adds a number of very specific methodological rules that are to be applied in the process of making a mythical lie similar to the ideal truth. Through these regulations, mythology becomes subordinate to noëtics and dialectics. If applied to, they prevent the lie from instilling faulty convictions or propagating morally wrong attitudes (*pseudopaideia*), rendering the myths useful.

Plato's analysis of myths is based on the elementary rule of the paradigm – the analogy between the representation and the represented. The rules and models defining the implementation of this general rule are clearly visible in Plato's hermeneutics. He also distinguishes three basic functions of stories, images and comparisons that serve the art of discourse, which lead the best part of the soul up to the contemplation of what is best among realities (*ibidem* 532C-D).

The first type of images mentioned by Plato are examples (*parathítema*) which play an illustrative and aesthetic role. They constitute a literary embellishment that is nevertheless useful in terms of dialectics, as it helps the listener (or reader) to concentrate and piques his or her interest. The beauty of expression, the aptness of comparison and the expressiveness of an image draws the attention of the audience towards the subject of the lecture or discussion. It attracts the listeners, stirring their minds from lethargy – it is an aesthetic wake-up call. Such a role is performed e.g. by comparing the benefits of the educational influence of poetry and music to a wholesome climate in which young and impressionable disciples of the first stage of education are brought up[5] (*ibidem* 401C). The realistic description of the surroundings in which the conversation between Socrates and Phaedrus takes place may also be considered a background – a stage design – for an intellectual drama which is about to play out in the celestial sphere of being (*Phaedrus* 229A–230E).

Plato's dialogues are full of images-examples whose primary function is to enrich and aesthetically improve the lecture on serious and difficult philosophical concepts. This is achieved by peppering the argument with comparisons or stories, many of which are allegorical in nature and can easily be 'translated' into the language of the discussion. Such a translation is usually provided – it discloses the hidden moral truth. One example of such

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[5]J. Adam, a commentator of Plato's *Republic*, points to the poetic melodiousness of the verse in this fragment. The very cadences resemble gentle gusts of wind described by the author (cf. *The Republic of Plato*, vol. I, p. 166, note to verse 401C21).

an image-allegory is the comparison of the soul hidden within the body of the sea-god Glaucus, 'whose first nature can hardly be made out', because 'the original members of his body are broken off and mutilated' by the waves 'and other parts have attached themselves to him, accretions of shells and sea-weed and rocks, so that he is more like any wild creature than what he was by nature' (*The Republic* 611C-D). A similarly allegorical role may be ascribed to the example of a strong but a slightly deaf and visually impaired shipmaster, who is deemed unfit to be a leader (*ibidem* 488A-E). Allegorical images may take the form of a comparison or sometimes a parable with an illustrative and educational role. Such stories often contain a humorous or ironic aspect. One such allegory is the myth of the birth or Eros, told by Aristophanes in the *Symposium* (189C-193C), or the longer story of the creation of mankind included in *Protagoras* (320D-322D). The latter parable borders on explanatory stories whose aim is to illustrate an analogy presented in the language of discourse with the help of an image.

The second type of images is a myth followed or accompanied by a more or less precise paraphrase into the language of discourse. Usually the story is long and contains a moral lesson corresponding to the claim the allegory is explaining. A parable-myth resembling a historical (as in *Protagoras*) or a metaphysical legend (as the famous story about people trapped in a cave, described in book VII of *The Republic*) plays an interpretative and explanatory role which runs parallel to the line of discourse. Such stories are auxiliaries for reason, usually based on analogy. Plato also uses images-likenesses description of that which may easily be presented in a graphic form, e.g. a model of the stages of cognition compared to the levels of reality of various forms of being in book VI of *The Republic* or the description of the biaxial revolutions of the soul of the universe described in *Timaeus*. What these images and allegorical parables have in common is that the author himself demythologizes them: precise composition of a model, image or parable is accompanied by a provocative decomposition – the image-comparison is brought down to the level of discussion or the compilation of theoretical conclusions. The rules of composition and decomposition of myths are based on the model of analogy that assigns specific elements and entire relative structures according to the level of formal and qualitative similarity. The model of analogy – especially the analogy of proportion – is based on mathematical proportions of elements and systems.

The subjects for myths-comparisons, images-examples and allegorical parables are often taken from religious and literary tradition. However, Plato always tries to bring the intellectual core of the stories and legends to the

foreground, by presenting a rational transposition of the plot which – if understood literally – is fictional or at least unverifiable. The beauty of myth consists in the hidden thought on some essence or truth, which has to be revealed through explanatory interpretation, showing a model of logical thinking in line with some analogy. This way even a fictional image-likeness may be lifted to the level of idea-models. This is the true knowledge of the type in accordance with which myths are to be created and explained. The formal structure of analogy found in images-likenesses and allegorical parables represent the order of the world, the rules of cognition and the model of dialectic ascent. Analogous mimesis constitutes the warp of reality – the relations of being – cognition, expression and interpretation.

The third type of mythical stories are symbolical myths performing a singular analytic function. They have no discursive equivalent in the form of a demythologizing interpretation, nor do they hint at the existence of such an interpretation. Their primary role is psychagogicial – they aim at conveying metaphysical truths pertaining to objects which are either too remote in space and time (like e.g. the cosmological myth in *Timaeus*) or escape both conjectures and terminological knowledge (e.g. the myths about the nature and fate of the soul included in *Phaedro* and *Phaedo*). Here, a mythological story is a substitute of a discussion, not its auxiliary. It does not aim at presenting a dialectic line of argument in a graphic way or at illustrating an analogy, but at introducing a new type of intuitive experience -vision (*theoría*) evocative of religious initiation into orphic or Pythagorean mysteries.[6]

Symbolic myths appearing in Plato's works touch on the most important metaphysical subjects and constitute the greatest achievement of his beautiful mythology and the art of discourse. Philosophical wisdom cannot be described in the language of science and dialectics. It requires a special explanation that may be effected with the help of means that – like a spark – light up

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[6]Such a parareligious understanding of the analysis of myth is connected to the role of propagating a message that is more than a simple information, but also a revelation, an explanation and a translation. It facilitates understanding – in other words, brings a meaningful, but not sufficiently clear message closer to the audience. "The meaning of *hermeneúein* runs in three directions: speaking, explaining, translating. [...] What all hermeneutic aspects have in common is the assumption of the existence of a deeper level of the studied phenomena , searching from the truth which is not given ostensibly, for a reality that for some reason remains hidden. [...] It is assumed that the deeper meaning is true and the 'shallow' sense is not authentic (Cf. Bronk 1982: 28). The Platonic domain of deep structures on a semantic level corresponds to the sphere of pure noësis and the domain of essentials on the level of being.

the fire of understanding within the soul, which then continues to shine and feed oneself (*Letter VII*, 341C-D). The structure of metaphor in myths of initiation is a type of the formal model of the analogy of proportion. However, in order to grasp it properly, one must know not only comparisons based on similarity, but also accept the improbability (i.e. un-truth) of the story which, despite having an imaginary plot, does not become a figment of imagination or a lie, but a SYMBOL of a truth concealed in its additional meaning. Here, a fabrication of a story has a positive aspect, as it does not result from free fantasy, but describes an image born of thought and touching essence by the power of direct seeing. This truth ought to be sought not in the external explanatory and likelifying interpretation, but within the metaphor which penetrates deep into the deep structure and its meaning.

2. Allegorical Hermeneutics 2.1 Isomorphic and Homomorphic Proportions

Before we discuss the analytical function of myths-allegories, we ought to focus on the issue of analogy.[7] The formal structure of such myths resembles the model of the analogy of proportion: *A:B::C:D*. The myths-analogies found in Plato's works make much use of the analogous relation of homomorphism, which can be depicted as the following:

$$\frac{(AB)}{(CD)} = \frac{S(AB)}{S'(CD)} = \frac{ARB}{CR'D} \cdot \frac{A(Ra)}{C(R'c)} \cdot \frac{B(Rb)}{D(R'd)}$$

This model is to be read: the set (pair) of *AB* and the set (pair) *CD* are analogous if and only if the structure S of the set (pair) *AB* is homomorphic to the structure *S'* of the set (pair) *CD*. The structures *S* and *S'* are homomorphic if the relation *ARB* is homomorphic to the relation *CR'D* and when *A* in its relative properties *a* resulting from the relation *R* is homomorphic to *C* in its properties *c* resulting from the relation *R'*, and *B* as an element of the relation *R* is homomorphic in its relative properties *b* to *D* in its properties *d.*

The terms of analogy comprise the structuralised sets (pairs) of objects: *AB* and *CD*. Analogous elements of those terms are the parts of the compared relative properties: *a, b, e, d*. The relation of proportional analogy include the so-called piloting term – the starting point of an analogy , and the piloted term – the element being compared to something else. If the elements, relations and properties of the building blocks of analogy are subject to the

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[7]The general description of these issues is based on the article by Dąbska (1962). The author illustrates various models of thinking on analogies with the examples of Platonic myths.

same law and adhere to the same rule which constitutes the basis for analogy, then the similarity between the piloting and the piloted term is isomorphic in nature, whereas analogy is an essential. The relation of homomorphism is at the same time a relation of similarity, which depends on the degree of connection between the property, the elements and the structural relations and the principle – the basis – of the analogy. The homomorphism of structures, comprising the relations and properties of the segments of analogy, defines their mutual assignations that are not mono-mono-meaningful, but mono-multi-meaningful, determining the partial and gradable similarity between the compared terms. The analogy of homomorphic structures is contextual in character – its occurrence, significance and the degree of mutual assignability of terms depend on the assumed thesis or hypothesis, which forms the basis for the analogy and refers to the broader theoretical context. The demythologizing interpretation of allegorical images based on analogy/homomorphism must, therefore refer to philosophical premises, which indicate the correct direction of deciphering their meaning.

The fact that the piloting term usually belongs to a different area, a different ontic or noëtic category, than the piloted term is characteristic of Platonic analogies disguised as myth-allegories. Justification of conclusions drawn from an analysis of homomorphic representations should be conducted either (1) by checking the propositions regarding the compared objects or systems in a different manner, without referring to the analogy (Dąmbska 1962: 47-48), or (2) by demonstrating (in a discursive commentary completing the interpretation of the myth) that despite their ontic heterogeneity, both terms of the analogy are subordinate to the same law arising from the fundamental homology of all manifestations of being. Plato applies the second method of justifying analogies. Referring to the common principle, which governs all reality and constituted the basis for the homomorphism of compared structures, he treats this principle as an irrefutable thesis-axiom. An allegorical image based on the analogy of proportion can, in the end, be interpreted only when given the understanding of the more general conception of being and cognition, postulated practically at the point of departure. A myth-allegory assumes the character of a hypothetical model, whose function is to graphically explain the postulation assumed without proof.

The pattern of the relation of analogy of a homomorphic character constitutes the formal basis for an expanded philosophical argument referring to the nature of cognition. Analyses of this problem extend over two books in a row, that is books 6 and 7 of *The Republic*, and contain three consecutive

stages of hermeneutic explanation: (1) image – comparison; (2) model – schema, the deciphering of which is a continuation of the operation of comparing; (3) image – allegorical myth, revealing the following aspects of the problem under analysis.

2.2 Analogy of the Structures of Cognition

The first stage *(The Republic* 508A-509D) can be presented as the following theses:

(1) There are things which we cognize by sight; there are also those which we cognize by thought without seeing them.

(2) In order to see, the necessities are: (a) sight, (b) light, (c) the sun, which is the source of light, (d) the object seen.

(3) In order to cognize by thought, the necessities are: (a) the mind; (b) veracity (the clarity of an idea); (c) the Idea of Good, which reveals ideas and imparts veracity on the subjects of thoughts; (d) the subject of thoughts: the idea.

The following proposition provides the basis for a comparison of the structures of two areas: cognition by sight (*tópos horatós*) and cognition by mind (*tópos noetós*):

(4) To what the Idea of Good is in the area of thoughts and subjects of thoughts, the sun is to the visible world in relation to the objects seen (508C).

This analogy can be expressed by the following diagram:

$$\frac{S(ABCD)}{S'(WXYZ)} = \frac{ARC}{WR'Y} \bullet \frac{BRD}{XR'Z} = \frac{A(Ra)}{W(R'w)} \bullet \frac{C(Rc)}{Y(R'y)}$$

(S = structure of cognition by sight; S' = structure of cognition by mind; the piloting term: A = the sun, B = the light that makes an object visible, C = sight, D = the object seen by sight, R = seeing with sight, a = lighting of the visible object, c = visibleness; the piloted term: W = The Idea of Good; X = clarity making the object veritable, Y = the mind, Z = the object of thought (i.e. the idea), R' = seeing with the mind, w = clarification of the idea (the making true of the idea), y = cognizability by thought).

In order to complete the relation of analogy, it would be necessary to add to this diagram the following segments of the relation of similarity: $\frac{BRD}{XR'Z} \bullet \frac{ARD}{WR'Z}$, which should be read as: (1) light refers to the seeing by sight of the visible object in the same way as the clarity of the idea to the seeing by mind of the object of thought; (2) the sun refers to the seeing by sight of the visible object in the same way as the Idea of Good to the seeing by mind of the object of thought (the idea). However, Plato does not drive his analogy

precisely in this direction. The issue of the relation of the Idea of Good to all the remaining ideas, and the issue of the manner in which the Idea of Good reveals other ideas – subjects of thought, still remain unexplained. It is also unclear whether the above analogy could be broadened to include all types of sensual perception, given that, for example, the similarity of the clarity of idea and light, and the sun and the Idea of Good, fails in the case of perception by hearing. What is more, the relation of analogies that might seem a typical case of the homomorphism of the structures of sensual and mental cognition is founded by Plato on a principle of the obligatoriness which is formulated by him much more strongly than it evinces from the relation of similarity of the compared terms alone, thereby suggesting that this analogy is essential in character – that it is isomorphic, based on the principle of participation (*méteksis*) of all being and cognition in the Idea of Good.

The Idea of Good, the super-celestial divinity, is the overlord, the source of seeing and visibility, and at the same time the source of all that is seen. The corporeal sight is the instrument that most resembles the sun, although it is not the sun, but only derives from it, as from the cause, the possibility of seeing – it is, so to speak, the sun of the body. The sun, in turn, is the creation and image of the Idea of Good. The relation of the sun to seeing by sight is such as the relation of the Idea of Good to seeing by mind. The clarity of an idea is the analogue of the light. As we cannot see without light, we cannot cognize by thought without clarity. Clarity is the veracity of the idea. As the sun is the cause of light, and thus of visibility and of cognition by sight, so the Idea of Good is the cause of clarity, and thus of veracity of everything that is cognized by means of thought. Although, however, both truth and thought are beautiful, the Idea of Good must be thought of as something different from them and more beautiful than they. This is because the Idea of Good exceeds both truth and thought, and it exceeds that which is being thought as the subject of thought. From the Idea of Good the subjects of thoughts, the ideas, derive their "essentialness", their truth and cognizability. Thus, both the ideas (the essentials) and thought participate in what exceeds them and is separate from them (*horismós*). The Idea of Good is a hyperbole for all essentialness and all cognition (*The Republic* 509C).
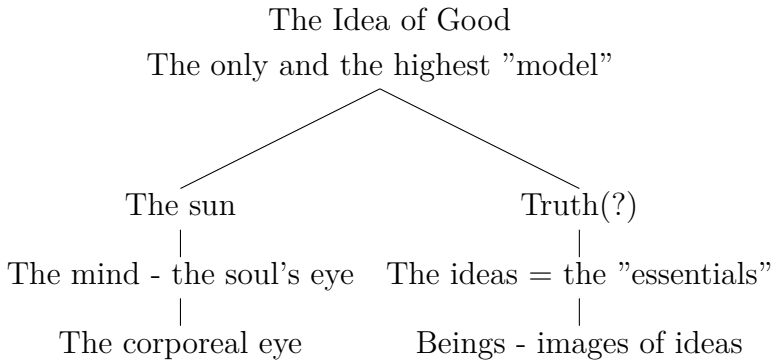
In Plato's ontic hierarchy of values, Good is the super-essential that exceeds in beauty the truth grasped by thought.

The thesis derived from the following argument is the foundation for the analogy of the S and S' structures:

(1) every cognition is a kind of seeing,

(2) every seeing is dependent on something external which makes the seen object visible,

(3) every cognition is dependent on something external that makes the object of cognition cognisable.

It is true that with respect to seeing with sight (as Plato's noëtics is thoroughly iconic!), what enables it from the outside is the sun; but the metaphysical source (*arché*) of every capability of cognition is the Idea of Good. It is from the Idea of Good that the sun derives its capability of shedding light on visible objects, following the pattern of, and due to, the Idea of Good.

The double hierarchy of ontic and noëtic representation according to Plato's pattern of analogy, reducing the one and the other to their shared prime cause, should finally appear as follows:[8]

The Idea of Good
The only and the highest "model"

The sun   Truth(?)

The mind - the soul's eye   The ideas = the "essentials"

The corporeal eye   Beings - images of ideas

The above analogy does not explain participation and derivation of being and cognition; it suggests and points to it at most. What is more, the relation of analogy under analysis ought to be reversed: the piloting term should be the structure of mental cognition as the one closer to the source of cognition and being, referring the seeing-cognition to the metaphysical principle and hence the clearer one; then, the piloted term would be the structure of

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[8]A slightly different classification of the hierarchy of cognition and being is given in the running commentary to *The Republic* by J. Adam (1907: vol. II, p. 60, note to 508D29 and "Appendices to Book VII", *ibid.*, p. 171). In Plato, the metaphor of the light (clarity, veracity) of the sun (the Idea of Good) fulfils various ontic and noëtic functions. Its primary role, fully exploited and expanded by Plotinus, is to demonstrate not only the parallelism of the ontic and noëtic spheres, but also to the co-derivation and co-participation of being and cognition in the one, absolute and transcendental proto-principle. Cf. also Ferguson 1921 and 1922, Murphy 1932.

sensual seeing, which would be explained by referring, by analogy, to the first one. However, Plato fails to conduct such an operation ordering the analogical perception, at least on the level of discourse dialectics, where he follows the chronological order of knowledge in accordance with the stages of teaching. He does that with full awareness of the innate imperfection and inevitable indirectness of human cognition, which through necessity must begin from the level of sensual experiences and must resort to comparison and explanatory examples. Hence, Plato uses analogy to demonstrate that indirectness on the one hand, and on the other to point out that visibleness and cognizability, clarity and essentialness, in their final cause can be seen and understood thoroughly only with pure thought.

The operation of comparing structures, relations and elements is based on a principle which is proportionally and analogously fulfilled by visibleness and cognizability. The obligatoriness of this principle does not arise logically from the similarity of configurations alone, but is based on a thesis which is external to the analogy itself and forms the basis for the mutual relation of compared segments. Analogy is therefore only a elucidative method, helping to understand fundamental theorems of Platonic ontics and noëtics.

Here, however, lies a certain hermeneutical circle[9] in Plato's dialectics:

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[9]Concerning this, R. E. Pa1mer (1969: 25-26) writes: "For the interpreter to 'perform' the text, he must 'understand' it: he must pre-understand the subject and the situation before he can enter the horizon of its meaning. Only when he can step into the magic circle of its horizon can the interpreter understand its meaning. This is that mysterious 'hermeneutical circle' without which the meaning of the text cannot emerge. But there is a contradiction here. How can a text be understood, when the condition for its understanding is already to have understood what it is about? The answer is that somehow, by a dialectical process, a partial understanding is used to understand still further, like using the pieces of a puzzle to figure out what is missing. A literary work furnishes a context for its own understanding; a fundamental problem in hermeneutics is that of how an individual's horizon can be accommodated to that of the work. A certain pre-understanding of the subject is necessary or no communication will happen, yet that understanding must be altered in the act of understanding. [...] Interpretation as saying is reminiscent of the performatory nature of reading; yet even for the performance of reading a literary text, the performer must already 'understand' it. This implies explanation; yet here again explanation is grounded in preunderstanding, so that prior to any meaningful explanation, he must enter the horizon of the subject and situation. He must in his own understanding grasp and be grasped by the text. His stance in this encounter, the preunderstanding of the material and situation which he must bring to it, the whole problem, in other words, of the merging of his horizon of understanding with the horizon of understanding which comes to meet him in the text – this is the dynamic complexity of interpretation. It is the 'hermeneutical problem''. These remarks can be applied in full to the Platonic method of dialectics of

the point of departure for the operation of comparing turns out to be a thesis, the acceptance of which is a condition for the correct reading of the analogy and for the recognition of the similarity between the compared elements. The aim of the analogy is to clarify understanding, to grasp the truth more clearly; acceptance of the fundamental thesis is a necessary condition for this. Being the basis for the homomorphism of structures, this thesis is, therefore, both the implicit point of departure, a pre-judgment for the operation of comparing, and the point of arrival in the shape of the clearly expressed concluding judgment. Understanding the sense of homology, the relation of analogy, must be based on the same principle that enables the allegorising interpretation of a comparison. Hence the explanation of the basic thesis through analogy relies on the paradigmatic approaching of the same truth, and the hermeneutic operations that bring closer its explanation and understanding are mainly of an intensive, not extensive character. This arises from the intuitive-imagistic (contemplative) conception of cognition, which emphasises the increasingly clear and distinct seeing/understanding. This conception of cognition, which is obviously dominant in later Platonic dialectics, attaches the greatest importance to the method of actualisation, through a certain type of hermeneutic persuasion, the subjective conditions of mental seeing and finally leads to the idea of un-forgetting (*anámnesis*) as the proper act of reclaiming knowledge.

2.3 The Schematic Model of Cognitive Structures

The second stage of the elucidative analysis of the nature of cognition, found in Book VI of *The Republic*, can be presented as a geometric model illustrating proportional relations between various types and phases of cognition and various areas of being – the subject of cognition. This model is described by Plato in much detail (*The Republic* 509D-511C). A diagram of the proportion of the area of seeing and area of thought with respect to their gradable clarity is obtained by dividing a straight line into two unequal sections, which in turn are again divided into two shorter ones in the same proportion. The first section of what is visible are images, among which Plato counts shadows, phenomena reflected in water or in smooth, lustrous surfaces, and other similar images that are fabrications of imagination. The second section are those things, of which the former are

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ascent, with the proviso that the text to be read and understood is here the *lógos* of reality itself, whose essential deep structure requires to be revealed in the process of interpretation. Thus, in Plato, the 'performing' of the text would be noticing analogous structures – relations between the pattern and the imitation of the pattern – which impose order on the hierarchy of the spheres of being and cognition.

images, shadows and likenesses, i.e. natural and created objects to which opinions and convictions refer. The section of those things, which are graspable by thought, is divided into two sections as well. The first section is the one to which dialectics pertains while formulating hypotheses, which provide a starting point in moving from them, as assumptions/premises, towards principles/conclusions by using visible objects and images as comparisons and examples and thus acquiring permanent convictions. The second and last section of the thought area are objects which are graspable by thought alone, without images or comparisons, i.e. principles, from which one descends to the preceding conclusions and thus acquires sure knowledge. The third stage (section) represents the subject of sciences and arts based on mathematics and geometry. The fourth section represents the subject of the dialectic operations proper. This is the above model in graphic form:

a	b		c	d
A	B		C	D
α	β		γ	δ

The length of sections in this diagram illustrates the degree of the "essential" perfection, i.e. clarity and distinctness, generality and necessity of cognition, analogously to the degree of perfection of the appropriate categories of being.

Categories of being as a subject of cognition:

a = shadows, reflections, representations, images/likenesses (*skiai, fantásmata, eikónes*)
b = natural objects and phenomena, created objects (*fytentón genos, zóa, skeuastón genos, fainómena*) } *horoméno génos horatá, dokastá*

c = numbers, schemata, geometric figures (*schémata, mathémata, goníon eíde*)
d = ideas, subjects of thought (*eíde, noetón génos metá archés*) } *nouméno génos, noetá*

Types of cognition with regard to perfection types – clarity, distinctness, generality, necessity:

A = representation *(eíkon)*
B = conviction *(pístis)* } opinion (*dóksa*)
C = discursive thinking *(dianoía)*
D = scientific knowledge *(epistéme)* } mental awareness (*nóesis*)

Types of cognitive capabilities:
α = imagination and fancy *(eikasia, fantasta)*
β = sensual experiences *(afsthests)*
γ = reason *(lógos)*
δ = mind *(nous)*

The above model may subsequently be translated into the diagram of the analogy of proportion, which develops the preceding image/comparison:

$$\frac{a}{b} :: \frac{c}{d} :: \frac{A}{B} : \frac{C}{D} :: \frac{\alpha}{\beta} : \frac{\gamma}{\delta}.$$

Reading the above diagram, it is possible to formulate the following propositions:

(1) the lower categories of being are an analogous (proportional) representation of the higher categories of being,

(2) the lower types of cognition are an analogous (proportional) representation of the higher types of cognition,

(3) the lower capabilities and cognitive actions are an analogous (proportional) representation of the higher capabilities and cognitive actions.

The diagram of this analogy can be developed in the following way:

$$\frac{a}{A} : \frac{b}{B} \cdot \frac{c}{C} : \frac{d}{C} :: \frac{A}{\alpha} : \frac{B}{\beta} \cdot \frac{C}{\gamma} : \frac{D}{\delta} = f\left(\frac{a}{b} : \frac{c}{d}\right) :: F\left(\frac{A}{B} : \frac{C}{D}\right) :: \varphi\left(\frac{\alpha}{\beta} : \frac{\gamma}{\delta}\right)$$

(f = a feature of the perfection of being; F = a feature of the perfection of cognition, φ = a feature of the perfection of capability and cognitive action)

From this diagram, the following general statements can be drawn:

(4) every category of being/subject of cognition is analogous (proportional) to the type of cognition that pertains to it,

(5) every type of cognition is analogous (proportional) to the type of capability and cognitive action,

(6) every category of being/subject of cognition is analogous (proportional) to the type of capability and cognitive action,

(7) the feature of perfection of every category of being/subject of cognition, and the feature of perfection of the type of cognition that pertains to it, and the feature of perfection of capability and cognitive action, are mutually analogous (proportional),

(8) categories of being/subject of cognition, types of cognition and types of capabilities and cognitive actions belong to the mutually analogous (proportional) areas,

(9) the ontic area of the subjects of cognition and the noëtic area of cognition and capabilities and cognitive actions are analogous (proportional) with respect to the respective perfection of being and cognition.

An analogous (proportional) feature of perfection pertains to relevant areas such as: (a) an ontic identity and immutability of the being/subject of cognition; (b) a noëtic clarity, distinctness, generality and necessity of cognition; (c) infallibility and reliability of capabilities and cognitive actions.

The relations of analogy occurring between the type of cognition and the being/subject of cognition, between the type of cognition and the type of capability and cognitive action, and between the lower and higher types of cognition, as well as the lower and higher categories of being and the lower and higher types of capabilities and cognitive actions, fulfil the scheme of representation, universal in Platonic dialectics, based on the analogy of proportion which occurs in a non-symmetrical and non-reversible manner, with respect to the appropriate degree of the feature of perfection. Thus, the analogy of proportion of the structures of being and cognition is, in Plato, combined with the analogy of attribution – according to the gradation of the feature of perfection, which to the initial term, the analogon, is appropriate in the highest degree, and to the consecutive analogates is appropriate in the suitably (proportionally) lower degrees.

The question arises: to what analogon – the epitome and optimum of perfection – does Plato finally compare the structures of being and cognition and the features of perfection of the terms under comparison? The answer to this question, the question about the *tertium comparationis* of analogy, must out of necessity have an external character in relation to analogy itself, and must refer to the central theses/axioms of Platonic ontics and noetics. It is clear from the earlier conclusions that:

(a) in the area of being, the optimum of perfection is the Idea of Good,

(h) in the cognitive sphere, the optimum perfection is fulfilled by the direct, purely mental (i.e. dispensing with the intermediary representations) vision of the Idea of Good as the proto-principle of being and cognition,

(c) in the sphere of capabilities and cognitive actions, the optimum is reached at the stage when the most perfect part of the soul, the mind, becomes similar to the Idea of Good by participating in it.

Thus we return to the hermeneutic circle, typical to Platonic analyses based on analogical thinking. This circle is based on the gradual explanatory

and elucidative clarification of essentially the same fundamental truth. This process of interpretation is completed by a mythical image – the allegory of the cave. This third stage of hermeneutic elucidation is a development of the preceding stages, which advances, or rather deepens, the understanding of the nature of cognition in relation to being.

2.4 The Myth-Allegory of the Cave The demythologising 'translation' of this myth[10] into the language of discourse is, to a great extent, done by Plato himself. At the very start of the image-allegory he offers a clue[11] that steers the interpretation of the story in a specific direction. One should envisage the state of one's nature with respect to education (*paideia*) and lack thereof (*apaideia* – 514A). This image is accompanied by considerations on the cognitive situation of the people whose perception is limited to a single aspect of reality: they sit in a subterranean cave, fettered to the ground, unable to turn their heads; they look ahead, unaware of what transpires behind their backs. They can only see shadows moving on the cave walls, silhouettes of men carrying various objects, illuminated by the fire that burns somewhere behind the prisoners. The shackled people hear no voices, only faint echoes. The image symbolises limitation of the mind to

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[10]On the myth of the cave in *The Republic* cf. Wright 1906, Raven 1953.

[11]This clue may be treated as a kind of a 'performative utterance' which defines the interpretation of the entire passage. This is a measure characteristic of literature and poetry, and takes the form of an overt or covert semantic directive: 'seeing as'. This issue has been widely discussed by analytical philosophers influenced by Wittgenstein's later works (*Philosophical Investigations*). Cf. Aldrich 1958, 1962, Hester 1967. P. Ricoeur defines *seeing as* in the following manner: 'Seeing as' is the sensible aspect of poetic language. Half thought, half experience, 'seeing as' is the intuitive relationship that holds sense and image together. How? Essentially through its selective character: "'Seeing as' is an intuitive experience-act by which one selects from the quasi-sensory mass of imagery one has on reading metaphor the relevant aspects of such imagery. This definition contains the essential points. 'Seeing as' is an experience and an act at one and the same time. On the one hand the mass of images is beyond all voluntary control; the image arises, occurs, and there is no rule to be learned for 'having images'. One sees or one does not see. The intuitive talent of 'seeing as' cannot be taught; at most, it can be assisted, as when one is helped to see the rabbit's eye in the ambiguous figure. On the other hand, 'seeing as' is an act. To understand is to do something [...] the image is not free, but tied; and in effect 'seeing as' orders the flux and governs iconic deployment. In this way, the experience-act of 'seeing as' ensures that imagery is implicated in metaphorical signification: 'The same imagery which *occurs* also *means*'. [...] Thus, 'seeing as' quite precisely plays the role of the schema that unites the *empty* concept and the *blind* impression; thanks to its character as half thought and half experience, it joins the light of sense with the fullness of the image. In this way, the non-verbal and the verbal are firmly united at the core of the image-ing function of language." (1977: 212-213).

the dimensions of space and time, the incapacitation of cognition with the inertia of matter and corporeality, the reliance on uncertain and changeable sensory experiences and the quasi-idolatry of the shadow, immobilisation of perception, a focus on the phantoms of objects unavailable to direct vision. There exists, however, a different aspect of reality – unseen by the people in the cave – which includes actual being and the light that enables them to see at all. The shadows they perceive are changeable, flickering phantoms and apparitions, deceitful figments of the imagination.

The myth-allegory illustrates the mental state of people who are as if in a dream – in a state of ignorance they mistake for knowledge. On the lowest of levels, they are able to perceive only faint, fickle, unstable and transient phenomena, unable to reach their factual, permanent basis of being – the essentialness. They may at most form faulty convictions and temporary conjectures, having no knowledge and reaching no truth, but merely the semblance of truth. The original state of ignorance and mental passivity subject to the relativism of the perspective of the world they see in front of their corporeal eyes, is a kind of a prison, difficult to break out from. To exit the cave (*eisódos*), free oneself from the fetters of illusion and false conjecture and lift one's gaze upwards towards the light, one needs to fulfil a number of internal and external conditions – not all individual are capable of performing such a feat or ever get the opportunity. To be cured of ignorance one must have a wise and demanding teacher, who can ask questions and force his student to contemplate the nature of things, to determine whether there is a more existing existence than what seems obviously extant (as it is seen by the eye); is there something more real than the likenesses, the constant motion and relativity of the shadows, phantoms and apparitions. A student compelled to make such an effort resists and shies away as someone unused to seeing the sun. This stage is difficult and painful both to the student and to the teacher. Very few are able to continue their ascent (*anábasis*) until they reach the exit from the cave and reach true knowledge.

The image-allegory refers to the previously presented linear model and the image-comparison. The cave represents an image of the visible world (*kósmos horatós*) illuminated by the sun, to which the backs of the ignorant are turned, so that even their sensory perception is distorted and limited to the realm of shadows, phantoms and apparitions. It is as though despite having corporeal eyes they are unable to see actual things but only reflections, remaining in the darkness of unawareness. The way upwards from the shadows of the cave represents the gradual turning of one's sight towards

the bright light of the world of thought (*kósmos noetós*). Upbringing is primarily the process of shaping the mind – the essence ethical bravery is reason (*frónesis*) and the path to reason is at the same time the path towards purification (*kátharsis*) of the human ethos. The theoretical and practical domains of human life (*theoretikós bíos – praktikós bíos*) are interconnected and respective to one another (*homológia*), while the Idea of Good is both a metaphysical and noëtic principle, and the basis for axiological order and ethical bravery.

The process of learning must be gradual. The stages of cognition follow one another in necessary order determined by the state of the nature entangled in sensuality and accustomed to what is corporeal and conjectural (*doksastón*). Education does not consist in filling the emptiness of the mind with knowledge, but in a gradual awakening of thought and turning the eye of the soul away from shadows, phantoms and phenomena-likenesses towards the truth of being and the brightest light of the Idea of Good. The thought revolves in an upward motion, in sharp contrast with the horizontal turns of sensual experiences, conjectures and opinions which revolve around what is changeable, multifarious and diffuse (518B-521D). This process represents the stages of penetrating the nature of reality, from seeing shadows, images, likenesses and corporeal objects and interpreting them by making distinctions, noticing differences and similarities, perceiving analogy and opposition, differentiating between sensations that 'awaken thought' from those that let it lay dormant (523A-524C). At this stage, it is especially important to engage in physical education – gymnastics – and practice poetry and music as well as craftsmanship. This is, however, a pre-scientific beginning of upbringing and education, a kind of an ethical training – instilling good habits and skills that prepare the student for the mental ascent.

The next step is to reach a level of mental discipline – be able to analyse the nature of things with the use of mathematical sciences. These sciences (*mathemata*) are taught in the following order: (1) a study of numbers and logistic (*arithmetiké, logistiké*), (2) geometry (*geometria*), (3) stereometry (*sfairiké*), (4) astronomy (*astronomía*), (5) harmonic (*harmoniké*) (cf. Adam 1907, vol. II: 163-179). This knowledge helps the student understand the structure of reality as a whole, with all its constant and permanent elements. From wrapping his mind around the simplest notions: numbers, points, lines and planes, through three-dimensional figures and spherical coordinate systems, the student learns to understand spatio-temporal and rhythmic harmonic structures. The aim of studying mathematics is to comprehend ever more complex entities, the inner, organic connection of elements within a

whole, finally reaching the level of a mathematical order of the greatest entity – the order of the world and the inner harmony of the soul structured by an educated mind. Such a soul becomes a harmonious (*symfónos*) equivalent of the musical structure of the cosmic spheres (525C-531C). The human soul is a sister to the soul of the universe (cf. *Timaeus* 35A).

According to Plato, the core of education is mental ideation which purifies the mind from the sensual, and not abstraction (in Aristotle's understanding of the term) based on an inferential generalisation of sensory experiences. The mind is cleared through perfecting its understanding of structures and forms that may only be encompassed by thought and are ever closer to ideas – essentials. The Platonic concept of learning is therefore purely idealistic and anti-empirical. Plato emphasises the higher use of impractical sciences – treating them with neglect leads to mental disarray and consequently – ethical and political disorder (528B-D).

Sciences are the stepping stone between ignorance and proper knowledge. They do not speak of ideas – essentials – but draw us closer to perceiving them with our minds, accustoming the intellect to that which is eternal and unmoving (*aidía kaí akinetá*). They are the propodeutic (*propaideia*) of dialectic. The way to mental elevation leads through dialectic ascent[12], which allows the prisoners to leave the cave and see the light of the ideas. The true

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[12]A. J. Festugière (1950) describes the way of the dialectics of ascent (*la dialectique ascendente*) as the way of twofold purification of the mind: through the so-called qualitative abstraction, consisting in a gradual dematerialisation of sensory information, and the so-called quantitative anstraction, which unifies and reduces the extensive and particular knowledge to a single, all-encompassing contemplative vision (p. 104n.). The author points to the parallelism of discourse in *The Republic* and *Symposium*, which essentially lead to the same theoretical and methodological conclusions: [. . .] just like the ascent to Beauty in itself in *Symposium*, the search for the Idea of Good through ideas in *The Republic* is an ascent [*anábasis* – 519D]. Each stage [*epibásis*] of the ascent is a new leap, marked by the perception of the essence in the multitude of being" (p. 184). "Thus in *The Republic*, as in *Symposium*, the movement is a return towards entity. The mind adapts to it inasmuch it is able to transcend that which is complex to reach complete concentration on unity, through a synoptic gathering into one" (p. 171–172) (trans. – JM). The only fault to be found in Festugière's detailed analysis is that in introducing the categories of qualitative and quantitative abstraction he 'translates' Platonic thought into the language or Aristotle's philosophy (or even mediaeval interpretations thereof), which seems a distortion. He is right in emphasising the fact that ascent is proceeded by leaps, yet he does not come to the conclusion that seems natural to the reader of Platonic dialogues – that their author propagates primarily a mental 'detachment' from empiricism, and not the continuity of the cognitive process or a constant return to images, characteristic for the process of abstraction as described by Aristotle.

aim of cognition is to see the Idea of Good – the basis for cognizability and veracity.

Plato's characteristic of ideas runs in two directions. With regard to ontic, he distinguishes essentials (*ousíaí*), separate beings (*horistá*), always mutually perfectly identical (*homoía*) different from whatever is detailed and changeable, and different from the mind, remaining in kinship (*koinonía*) with what can be described as the general and necessary element of the nature or form of things – the element which is grounded in the one and indivisible existing being (*óntos ón*) nevertheless manifests itself in the multiplicity of phenomena of the nascent and dying reality (e.g. what is beautiful or good reveals and points to beauty and beauty and goodness, a human being reveals humanity etc.). Plato describes the relation between ideas and phenomena using terms metaphorical in nature, such as: kinship (*koinonía*), manifestation (*parousía*), participation (*méteksis*), similarity between the image (*eikón*) and the model (*parádeigma*), or representation (*mímesis*). From the noëtic side ideas are described as something which is grasped by a pure thought (*noémata*) divine or human, something true (*alethés*), bright, clear and luminous (*fána, fanerá*).

Despite the original and theological explanations provided in *Timaeus* and the ethical considerations included in *The Republic*, the problem of the relation between the Idea of Good, the realm of phenomena and the realm of ideas – essentials – was never resolved by Plato by means of discourse. The manner in which the changeable world participates in the realm of idea-models, the fact that ideas stem from the Idea of Good and the representation of ideas in the mind and their perception in the light of the Idea of Good is described by means of allegories and metaphors. This issue, which is the axis of a hermeneutic wheel of many comparisons, parables and analogies, is discussed in the Dialogues time and again.

Platonic 'dialectics of ascent', i.e. the process of intellectual education supervised by an able teacher *cum* hermeneutician (cf. Festugière 1950: 160n), consists first of all in training the student to distinguish and connect (*diaíresis – sýnthesis, diakrísis - synagogé*) and to converse logically by asking appropriate questions and giving correct answers, to reach conclusions based on hypotheses and premises and to deduce on the basis of the principles of specific theses.[13] However, there is more to ascent than just dialectics. The final stage of mental elevation towards the highest clarity of being is the re-acquisition of knowledge (*analambánein epistéme*) through anamnesis.

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[13]Thus, Festugière distinguishes two aspects of the dialectic process: 'dialectic of ascent' and 'dialectic of descent' which complement one another (1950: 186).

The idea of cognition-vision (*theoría*) is explained through metaphorical and symbolic myths included in *Phaedrus* and *Pheado* (and also in *Symposium*). These dialogues describe the highest metaphorical and poetic experience of pure thought – Plato refers here to the musical and prophetic initiation, which may happen to the few individuals who are best and particularly persevering in their ascent, as they reach the top and the mind, illuminated by the light of truth, does not turn to individual sciences, reasoning and dialectic argumentation. This ideal may only be reached through the hardship of dialectic discourse. In order to purify the mind, one must have talent, patience and self-discipline, habitually strive to reach higher and higher, be astute, know how to use various tools of mathematics and dialectics as well as be proficient in the art of interpreting images, comparisons and parables. Gaining knowledge is strictly related to moral improvement – it requires ascetism – versatile exercises in bravery.

The problem of mental perception of an actually existing being is related to the self-cognition of the soul – the *residuum* of knowledge and the participant of the highest level of cognition. Plato tackles this issue on a different plane, aware not only at the achievements, but also of the limitations of the knowledge gained by means of the sciences and dialectics, using extra-discursive means and methods of expressing the deepest metaphysical intuitions.[14] This does not mean that he disregarded all that the

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[14]Due to the separateness and the radical transcendence of total vision with regard to sensory perception and terminological discourse characteristic for scientific thinking and dialectics based on reasoning, dispute and argumentation, seeing the essence constitutes a radical qualitative leap in the process of cognition. One ought to take into account both the holistic, intuitive and symbolical nature of experiencing pure thought, and the distinctiveness of its manner of expression with regard to descriptive language or dialogue argumentation. The intuitive act of anamnesis differs fundamentally from experiences, terms and scholarly reasoning, from the way of dialectic discourse to the end of which it constitutes. There is a proportionally wide epistemological difference between metaphorical and symbolical hermeneutics and dialectics of discourse and allegorical interpretation. Therefore, my understanding of the term 'mental perception' (*theoria*) is more narrow than that used by Festugière who supports the theory of the continuity of discourse and contemplation in Plato's works. In my opinion, scientific knowledge (*epistéme*, *máthesis*) and contemplative vision (*theoría*) are two heterogeneous types of cognition. The former starts with perception and seeing differences and similarities, differentiating and connecting in order to get closer and closer to mental perception through reasoning, questions and answers. The latter is an act of momentary and total comprehension of the entirety by the eye of the soul awakened through anamnesis. Both these perceptions differ with regard to both the method and the subject of cognition – scientific cognition and mental discourse do not touch in transcendence.

long dialectic ascent has brought. Only after having passed through all the stages of cognition does it lead to knowledge of what is good by nature in the soul of one who is good by nature. One ought to cognize, in an eternal struggle and lasting exertion, both truth and lies about every single being, rubbing against one another, as if on a grindstone, the things and words, visual images and sensory experience, testing their strength and using the method of questions and answers, honestly and persistently, perfecting cognition and knowledge, not out of lowly motives, but in search for the truth. Only then can one be illuminated with the light of true comprehension of all things and reach understanding stretched to the limits of human capability (*Letter* VII 343E–344B). According to Plato, the impulse that initiates the flash of understanding within the human mind is poetic metaphor, which constitutes the fabric of the dialogues discussing metaphysical psychognosis – reaching into the world of the human soul with an inspired thought.

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