

KNOWLEDGE OF BEAUTY IN PLATO'S SYMPOSIUM

I

Plato's *Symposium* consists of six speeches on Eros with the addition of Alcibiades' praise of Socrates. Of these speeches Socrates' speech is philosophically most important. It is true that the speech is given as a report of Diotima's view on Eros, but 'she is a double of the Platonic Socrates',¹ and we take her view as the theory of Socrates in this dialogue.²

Early in his speech it is asserted that Eros is intermediate between wise and ignorant, beautiful and ugly (good and evil), and mortal and immortal.³ Stripped of the mythological disguise, the lover (now a human, not the demon) is intermediate in these three cases, and strives for the knowledge of beauty, beauty itself and immortality, respectively.⁴ Here are three aims in our dialogue. Let the first of them be called a cognitive aim and the last two ontic aims.

The three aims are not of equal importance, and their relative priority is as follows. The final goal, from the beginning to the end of Socrates' speech, is beauty. In order to possess it everlastingly, there is the need to strive for immortality.⁵ It turns out that of the three forms of immortality⁶ the highest one, if it is possible for the lover, results from his creation of real virtue and not from the creation of its shadows.⁷ The latter is due to the divine gift,⁸ and the former to knowledge.⁹ Hence there is the striving for the knowledge of beauty or good. To sum up, immortality is the condition of everlasting possession of beauty or good, and the knowledge of the latter is a means to the immortality possible in the highest form. The series begins with striving for the knowledge of beauty.

From the interrelationship among the three aims it is seen that the cognitive aim can be treated alone with occasional reference to the two ontic aims. This is what we are going to do in the following.

II

1. a. a. The steps in striving for the third form of immortality are mingled with the steps of cognitive striving until the last step. The first step in both cases has beautiful bodies for its objects. The pursuer of beauty should know that beauty in all beautiful

¹ W. C. K. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy* iv (Cambridge, 1975), p. 385.

² Throughout this paper by 'Socrates' is meant the speaker Socrates in Plato's dialogues without any implication of an answer to the problem of the historical Socrates.

³ 202a2–9; b1–5; d10–e1. Cf. W. Kranz, 'Diotima von Mantinea', *Hermes* 61 (1926), 440; he gives more cases which do not concern us here.

⁴ The lover being intermediate in these cases does not have wisdom (knowledge of the good and, therefore, also of the beautiful) and beauty and is not immortal. Hence he strives for them (cf. the general account of *ἐπιθυμειν* 200a5 ff.), and makes an effort to possess them (cf. 204e2–4).

⁵ i.e., the possessor himself must be deathless; hence there is the striving for immortality.

⁶ The three forms are immortality in the form of prolongation of the life of the race, 207a6–208b6; in the form of leaving behind oneself everlasting fame, 208c1–209e4; in the highest form resulting from creating real virtue based upon the knowledge of beauty or good 210a1–212a7.

⁷ 212a3–5.

⁸ *παντοία ἀρετή* created by statesmen (209d4–e3) is *οὔτε φύσει οὔτε διδακτόν, ἀλλὰ θεία μοῖρα παραγινομένη ἄνευ νοῦ*. . . (*Men.* 99e5–100a2).

⁹ Philosophic virtue is based upon wisdom, as is known from earlier dialogues; see especially the last argument for the inaccurately formulated thesis that virtue is knowledge in *Prot.* 359a2–360e5.

bodies is one and the same. But, at the beginning, the pursuer has not come as far as he will later; what he actually realizes at the present moment is only that the beauty in this body is akin (*adelphon*) to the beauty in that body.¹⁰ The beauties in these bodies are not a single beauty and the beautiful bodies are also different bodies, as is seen in the case of twins.¹¹ The lover concentrates on the fact that this body has the same quality as that body; the object of his knowledge is really this or that beautiful body as deindividualized, i.e., without regard for its possessor (e.g., Alcibiades, Charmides). Consequently, he loves all these bodies indifferently, not the beauty-in-all-bodies as such.¹²

Next comes the beauty in souls. He regards it as higher in value than the beauty in bodies. Yet what he loves is the beautiful souls of young men and not the beauty-in-all-souls as such, because he creates beautiful discourses to improve these youths in virtue, i.e., to make their beautiful souls more beautiful, not the supposed identical beauty within the 'level' of beautiful souls.¹³ Hence what the lover has in mind is still beautiful instances.

Next to beautiful souls are beautiful institutions and laws.¹⁴ The same thing happens

¹⁰ 210b3. *ἐν τε καὶ ταῦτόν... τὸ ἐπὶ πᾶσιν τοῖς σώμασι κάλλος* is what the lover should know b2-3, but what he at present actually thinks is *ὅτι τὸ κάλλος τὸ ἐπὶ ὁτῶν σώματι τῷ ἐπὶ ἐτέρῳ σώματι ἀδελφόν ἐστι* 210a8-b1. I take *τοῦτο* in 210b4 as referring to a8-b1 not to b2-3, the latter being inserted as a parenthesis to explain what the pursuer of *τὸ ἐπ' εἶδει καλόν* should know, not what he at present does. If it refers to b2-3, it is in conflict with *συγγενές* in c5 and *τῶνδε* in 211b5. 'Akin' is Jowett's translation of *ἀδελφόν*; more exact is Schleiermacher's 'verschwistert' in German; cf. also Robin's translation into French: 'soeur [de la beauté]' (*Le Banquet* (Assoc. Budé), Paris, 1926, p. 68).

¹¹ J. M. E. Moravcsik, 'Reason and Eros in the "Ascent"-Passage of the *Symposium*', in Anton and Kustos, *Essays in Ancient Greek Philosophy* (Albany, N.Y., 1971), pp. 287-8, finds his pattern of R-steps in 'first, reasoning recognizing common features of a plurality of instances, and isolating the common element and grasping its unity'. After quoting R. G. Bury, *The Symposium of Plato* (Cambridge, 2nd ed. 1932), p. xlii, he continues: 'It is crucial to note, however, that... the relation between unities on any given plane and their instances is not the only "one and many" relation described in the passage. For in addition to seeing the unity within each level, the mind has to grasp that all the levels are "akin"; they are, one might say, species of beauty.' Though Moravcsik emphasizes the second relation (to which we shall return; see n. 23), for the moment we shall concentrate on the first point - which he takes for granted. He finds a 'unity within each level'. This supposed unity is questionable. In his R1, 288, the lover recognizes only that the relation among the instances is *ἀδελφόν*. Even twin brothers are not a single person and their characteristics, though similar, are not a single characteristic; no matter how much they are like each other, their relation is not one of identity. There is no unity to replace *ἀδελφόν εἶναι*. The lover realizes no more than this 'Verschwistertsein' among beautiful bodies; he does not realize the beauty as such in all beautiful bodies. Otherwise he would love one and the same *κάλλος ἐπὶ πᾶσιν τοῖς σώμασι* instead of *καταστήναι πάντων τῶν καλῶν σωμάτων ἐραστήν* (210b4-5). One may compare the *Laches*: when the general has been made to understand the nature of the question, he gives a definition of courage as such, not of its instances distributively (192b5-c1). To return to our dialogue, when the lover advances to love beautiful institutions and laws, he still grasps only their *συγγένεια* (210c3-5) and not the *γένος*; being *συγγενές* is not the same as being one and the same genus.

¹² 210b4-5. I take the word 'deindividualize' from Robin, op. cit., xciii, although he uses the word differently. For deindividualization, cf. T. Gould, *Platonic Love* (London, 1963), p. 55, who, without having this concept in mind, yet rightly says about this fact: 'and actually [we] quite forget the individual who first quickened our awareness.'

¹³ 210b6-c3. Since this passage comes between the passage on beautiful bodies and the passage on beautiful institutions and laws, *τὸ ἐν ταῖς ψυχαῖς κάλλος* is to be understood as parallel to *ἀδελφόν* and *συγγενές* in the other two passages. It is not the supposed unity within 'level' of beautiful souls.

¹⁴ For Robin's interpretation see below, n. 26.

to the lover as before; he sees that the beauty in them is of one family (*syggenes*), but he does not grasp the genus itself.¹⁵

The last group of beautiful objects to which he is led is the sciences. His knowledge here still does not go beyond instances, namely, single beautiful sciences.¹⁶ This is testified to by the metaphorical expression ‘the vast sea of the beautiful’.¹⁷

The objects of all these groups are particular instances of beauty. The lover’s knowledge expands from one group of beautiful objects to another group horizontally. It moves in the sphere of particulars,¹⁸ in the part of the realm of being which is, so to speak, flat and without tiers.

β. The lover – or more exactly in terms of his cognitive striving the *philosophos* – who has progressed this far must stop and not proceed for a while. He must wait until he has been strengthened and grows by contemplating the vast sea of beautiful instances. Then he will suddenly behold the beauty itself which is beautiful.¹⁹

b. Two words are important here: ‘until’ (*heōs*) and ‘suddenly’ (*exaiphnēs*). By paraphrasing them we may elucidate the whole method of apprehending the Idea of beauty. The expansion of knowledge from one group of beautiful instances to another group occurs smoothly and gradually; there is no need to wait for anything before taking the next step. But having reached the group of beautiful sciences the *philosophos* has to wait before proceeding further. This indicates that the transition from knowledge which has reached this point to the beholding of the Idea is different in nature from the previous successive expansions from knowledge of one group to knowledge of another group. This transition, not the foregoing process of expansion, is the ascent proper.²⁰

¹⁵ 210c5 *συγγενές*; cf. above, n. 11.

¹⁶ 210c6–7. Moravcsik, op. cit., 294–5, stresses this ‘level’, the group of beautiful sciences or *τὰ καλὰ μαθήματα*, and distinguishes correctly between sciences and bodies: ‘The instances of Science are themselves already on the plane of the abstract and general’, whereas instances of bodies are not. However, he misses the point in the discussion. The topic is the striving for beauty through the love of beautiful *instances*. Socrates’ speech in this section starts from *τὰ καλὰ σώματα* 210a6. They are relevant instances only when our attention is focused on their being *καλά*, not on their being *σώματα*. Beautiful bodies without regard for their being beautiful are not instances of beauty, but of body; as instances of body, they are irrelevant to the topic. It is similar with beautiful souls, beautiful institutions and laws, and beautiful sciences. Though beautiful sciences *qua* sciences have a different ontic status from beautiful bodies *qua* bodies, in regard to their being beautiful they are particular instances of beauty and thus strictly parallel to beautiful bodies, which, *qua* being beautiful, are also particular instances of beauty. The section deals with beauty and its instances, not body and its instances, and equally not science and its instances. Beautiful bodies *qua* bodies and beautiful sciences *qua* sciences are equally irrelevant here. So far as they are relevant, they are regarded as particular instances of beauty. This is why all of them are designated *τάδε τὰ καλὰ*. (See the passage given below in n. 18.)

¹⁷ 210d4. This can refer to nothing else but the great quantity of instances in which beauty itself is instanced, as is clear from the recapitulation. See the next note.

¹⁸ All of these objects of knowledge are designated in the recapitulation 211b5–d1 equally *τάδε, τάδε τὰ καλὰ* in contrast to *ἐκείνο τὸ καλόν* (cf. 210e3–6; the same contrast is there) which the lover has not come to behold yet.

¹⁹ 210d6–e1, e1–5. *ῥωσθεῖς καὶ αὐξηθεῖς* is a biological metaphor, which can be best understood from the passages on nourishing in the *Phaedo* (84b1) and the *Phaedrus* (247d1–4 and 248b4–c2). We may paraphrase the same metaphor in the three dialogues in the following way: when the soul cognizes, it is in the state of cognition. The more it cognizes, the richer becomes its cognitive content. In this sense the soul is nourished and grows in cognition by the object it cognizes. We may neglect the differences in these passages for the present.

²⁰ Scholars usually speak of the ascent in terms like ‘the “Ascent” - Passage in *Symposium*’. Exactly where the ascent is should be determined by a careful examination of the text. From 209e5–212a7 *ἐπι* is used with a verb of motion or as a prefix for a compound verb of motion a total of twelve times. (We disregard it when used neither with a verb nor as a prefix of a

Between the particular instances and the Idea of beauty there is a hiatus. The process of horizontal expansion cannot cross it and has to stop for a period during which the mind is intellectually strengthened by contemplating the vast sea of deindividualized instances which are all akin in being beautiful. The interval lasts until the mind has grown strong enough to take suddenly the upward leap and to cross the ontic gap cognitively. This leap is indicated by '*exaiphnēs*'. The leap is the ascent, the ascent to the vision of the Idea of beauty. The preceding process of expanding in the horizontal direction and the interval of intellectual strengthening mediately and immediately prepare the way for it.

2. a. Scholars like to interpret this method of apprehending Ideas in terms of abstraction and generalization,²¹ whereby they read empirical logic into Plato's theory of Ideas. In fact, there is neither abstraction nor generalization for Plato as there is for later empiricists. The deindividualization of which we spoke above is not abstraction. What is reached by abstraction is something common, but the beautiful body deindividualized is still a particular body; it is just that its possessor is being disregarded. Generalization in empirical logic produces a concept; for Plato the apprehending is of an Idea – in the *Symposium*, the Idea of beauty, a being, an entity, not a concept.²²

Leisegang, op. cit. Col. 2449, finds even here the *dihairesis* (division) of Plato's later dialogues and interprets the Idea of beauty reached by 'generalization' as the 'Spitzenbegriff', which is divided into 'das geistige und sittliche, das seelische und körperliche Schöne'. Moravcsik, op. cit. 228, understands his 'unities' as 'species or kinds of beauty'. As a matter of fact, there is in this passage of the *Symposium* neither the generic relation anachronistically read into it by Leisegang nor the 'one and many'

compound. Such passages are found twice [210b2, and 3] and are irrelevant to the ascent.) The twelve cases are:

- | | | | |
|------------|-------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| (1) 210a5, | (2) 210a6, | (3) 210c6, | (4) 210d3, |
| (5) 211b6, | (6) 211b7, | (7) 211c2, | (8) 211c3, |
| (9) 211c4, | (10) 211c5, | (11) 211c6 (ἐπί), | (12) 211c6 (ἐπ'). |

Of these twelve cases case (1) is taken up in case (6). (For ἐπί in these two cases, another preposition πρὸς is also used at 210e2.) They concern pursuit of Eros, but not directly the ascent. Of the rest, ἐπί in cases (2), (3) and (4) is used in the same way. Case (2) is expressed more fully in (8) and (9). This leaves the following cases: (5), (7), (8), (9), (10), (11) and (12). Cases (10), (11) and (12) seem to form a series of ascending steps

ἀπὸ τῶν καλῶν σωμάτων ἐπὶ τὰ καλὰ ἐπιτηδεύματα,
 ἀπὸ τῶν ἐπιτηδεύματων ἐπὶ τὰ καλὰ μαθήματα,
 ἀπὸ τῶν μαθημάτων ἐπ' ἐκεῖνο τὸ μάθημα... ἢ αὐτοῦ ἐκείνου τοῦ
 καλοῦ μάθημα 211c4–8.

But in comparison with cases (8) and (9) ἀπὸ ἐνὸς ἐπὶ δύο καὶ ἀπὸ δυοῖν ἐπὶ πάντα τὰ καλὰ σώματα the ἐπί in (10) and (11) cannot indicate the ascent; it refers rather to the same horizontal expansion as in (8) and (9). The ἐπί in case (12) should be understood from cases (5) and (7) because the three ἀπό's 211c4 (10), c5 (11) and c6 (12) are the enumeration of ἀπὸ τῶνδε and ἀπὸ τῶνδε τῶν καλῶν which are summarily stated in 211b5 (5) and c2 (7), respectively. To sum up, in the context in question only the ἐπί's (as preposition or as prefix) in cases (5), (7), and (12) indicate the upward direction, the same upward movement to the Idea of beauty. This is the only ascent in the passage under discussion. The ascent has only one step and no more, i.e., the step from beautiful instances to the Idea of beauty; there is no ascent until the final step in the whole movement is taken. All the other steps in the process are steps of horizontal expansion preparing for the ascent. If this theory (which forms the ontic ground of the methodology for apprehending the Idea of beauty – or rather Ideas in general) is called a tier-metaphysics, then there are only two tiers, the level of Ideas and the level of particulars; there is no generic hierarchy yet.

²¹ e.g. W. Lutoslawski, *The Origin and Growth of Plato's Logic* (London, 1879), p. 236, Bury, op. cit., p. xliii, H. Leisegang, article 'Platon' in *RE*, 2 . xi (1941), Col. 2449.

²² ἐξαίφνης κατόψεται τι θαυμαστὸν τὴν φύσιν καλόν 210e4–5, which is variously expressed 211b6, c8–d1, 2–3, e1, 3–4; all of them refer to the Idea of beauty.

relation between the supposed unities as kinds of beauty and the Idea of beauty itself assumed by Moravcsik, who basically takes the relation of *adelphon* for identity.²³ Were there something between particular instances and the Idea, the whole cognitive striving would have two major transitional points, one between the beginning and the supposed *metaxy*, and the other between this and the termination of the whole process. The author of the dialogue indicates only one such point and makes an effort to draw his reader's attention to the temporary stop in the lover's further proceeding before reaching the goal and his sudden attainment of it.²⁴

Moreover, the recapitulation of the whole process of cognitive striving (211c1–d1) is stated too definitely to allow for the possible insertion of an intermediate such as 'das geistige und sittliche, das seelische und körperliche Schöne', or 'unity within each level' between 'the instances of beauty' and the Idea of beauty itself.

b. An interpretation of a different type by an anonymous scholar should be considered here. He in fact agrees with me in rejecting that type of interpretation of which Leisegang's and Moravcsik's are mentioned as examples, and he concedes that 'beauties are not ranged in any genus–species hierarchy'. But in his opinion 'there *does* seem to be an "ascent" in value', and my 'purely horizontal approach is unnecessarily overstated'. I agree to his ascent in value but with limitation as well as more positively. In my opinion, there *is* such an ascent in a certain part of the horizontal expansion, and I would like to supply, for our common view, the textual evidence which he neglected for this ascent. It is explicitly stated in the text that beautiful souls are *timiôteron* than beautiful bodies, and we may even add the designation of the latter as *smikron ti* in comparison with beautiful souls (and with beautiful institutions and laws, too).²⁵

Thus the same process from beautiful bodies to beautiful souls, or to beautiful institutions, from the ontic viewpoint is a horizontal expansion and from the viewpoint of value is an ascent. Both are present in the text and neither is meant to replace the other. And the replacement is also not necessary because as the same processes looked upon from different viewpoints they do not contradict each other. Then there is the question of preference of the one interpretation over the other with respect to their different approaches.

Let us consider the interpretation of the anonymous scholar. How far does his 'ascent in value' mount? Does it carry on to pass from beautiful souls to beautiful institutions? And still further on to beautiful sciences? The text knows no value-relation either between the first two groups or between the second two groups.²⁶ The ascent

²³ See n. 11. Moravcsik takes *pân* in 210c4 as referring not only to all *ἐπιτηδείματα* and *νόμοι* but to 'all of the levels', because only in this sense *pân autô autô syγγenés êstin* (210c4–5). If by 'levels' he means (a) groups of instances, then there are no *species* or *kinds* of beauty because these groups are not species or kinds. If he means (b) his 'unities' because they are akin, then they are species or kinds of beauty. But there are no such 'unities' (see above n. 11). Moreover, he must take 210c4–5 as a summary of his 'unities' on the preceding levels. But such a summary should wait until after the *ἐπιστημῶν κάλλος* 210c7 and include this as well.

²⁴ 210d6–e1, e2–5. 'Turning towards the vast sea of the beautiful', which Moravcsik, *op. cit.*, 294–5, stresses, is only a way to sum up what has been achieved and to prepare for the final step. It points to the subsequent transition. But there is no indication of the transition from the instances to the supposed 'unity within each level', neither indicated by a literary device nor implicit in the text.

²⁵ 210b7 and c5. *σμικρόν τι* here is a value predicate, 'of little importance'.

²⁶ The scholar in question may try to avoid the first of his two difficulties by following Robin's interpretation of the ascent as comprising 'en tout quatre degrés: 1° la beauté physique; 2° la beauté morale; 3° celle des connaissances; 4° la connaissance de Beau absolu, Voir p. 68, n. 2', *op. cit.*, 70–71. However, the second difficulty still remains.

Robin's 'ascension' is not an ascent in value. It is rather an ascent from emotions for different groups of beautiful instances to 'l'amour du savoir en général' (*op. cit.*, xciii), though

in value must stop with beautiful souls and cannot finally reach the goal, the Idea of beauty. But the text does say the lover under the right guidance will finally reach this goal. If the scholar in question will, as he must, do justice to the text, he must change his approach from the viewpoint of value to the ontic viewpoint of horizontal expansion. His approach is then, indeed, not purely horizontal as mine is, but impure in the sense of being a mixture of value-viewpoint and ontic viewpoint. We may ask: of two interpretations which are equally good or bad in other respects, is the one which does not go forward to the goal without changing its viewpoint preferable to the one which does not switch between two *toto genere* different viewpoints?

3. a. In the *philosophia*, the striving for the knowledge (of beauty), the *philos* attains his goal, cognitively touches the beautiful itself, gains direct intellectual contact with it or a vision of it. But what is the content of his vision, or what does he apprehend of the beautiful itself? In the text there is at first a number of negations predicated of beauty; corresponding to these are then four positive predications: itself by itself, with itself, uniform, and always being.²⁷

Do these predicates, positive or negative, severally or collectively, tell us exclusively what beauty itself is? No, not at all. There is not one of these which cannot also belong to some other Ideas among those enumerated in the *Phaedo*.²⁸ The passage in the *Symposium* gives a general description rather than a definition of the Idea of beauty; what this Idea essentially is, is not stated.

However, what is beheld must be much more than as given in the description. In beholding the Idea of beauty the lover touches the real and creates real virtues. But his acquaintance with these four positive characteristics is not sufficient for what he will achieve. He sees more, yet this something more is not stated in the text. It is more reasonable to assume than not that he apprehends not only the common nature of Ideas, but also the peculiar nature of beauty as a moral and/or aesthetic value. However, he does not define it, since to define beauty is not the purpose of the *Symposium*.

b. Three points need to be noted here. a. In the *Phaedo* both *logizesthai* and *dianoesthai* as well as *theasthai* and *kathorân* are mentioned in the description of the pursuit of the knowledge of Ideas,²⁹ but they are not further distinguished. Here in the *Symposium*, there are two distinct cognitions: first, the vision of the beautiful itself, and then a sort of *dianoia* expressed as a general description of it. The description

he distinguishes the movements before the final leap into movements from 'la beauté physique' to 'la beauté morale' and from 'la beauté morale' to 'celle des connaissances'. He does not explain how they are steps in an ascent, and in the text there is nothing which justifies his interpretation. See n. 24.

²⁷ 210e6–211b2. The four positive predicates are *αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτὸ μεθ' αὐτοῦ μονοειδὲς αἰεὶ ὄν*. *αἰεὶ ὄν* is mentioned twice, the first time at the beginning of this passage. Contrasted with it is change in various forms 211a1–2, and also b3–5. In contrast to *αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτό* is the relativity of different kinds 211a2–5. For *ὥς... αἰσχροτόν*, F. Solmsen, 'Parmenides and the Description of Perfect Beauty', *AJP* 92 (1971), 66, n. 14, is in favour of Vogelin's reading. *αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτό* seems easier to understand from the phrasing in a later dialogue, *Soph.* 250c6 *κατὰ τὴν αὐτοῦ φύσιν*. The *φύσις* of *τὸ καλόν* itself is *ὁ ἔστι καλόν* 211c8–d1. In contrast to *μεθ' αὐτοῦ* is a number of *τὰ καλά*, particular beautiful things, in which beauty manifests itself (211a5–b1). Finally, for the meaning of *μονοειδὲς*, considering the passage by itself without connecting it with Parmenides, I accept R. Hackforth's interpretation of *Phaed.* 81b2 (see his *Plato's Phaedo*, Cambridge, 1955, reprint New York, p. 81, n. 2); the word 'uniform' is borrowed from his translation. *μονοειδὲς* is repeated in 211e4, which explains *ἄμεικτον* in e1 from the other side; *ἄμεικτον* itself is the same as *μὴ ἀνάπλεων σαρκῶν* etc., e2–3.

²⁸ 75c10–d3.

²⁹ *λογίζεσθαι* 65c2; *διανοεῖσθαι* 65e8; *theasthai* see 66e1; *θεωρεῖν* 65e2, 84a7–b1; *kathorân* 66d7.

consists of a number of predications, both negative and affirmative. Though none of these terms from logic is found here, the difference between vision and predication is clear. The former is an instantaneous cognition; it is, so to speak, stigmatic. The latter is discursive, i.e., the mind goes from one term to another in affirmation as well as in negation when relating them. Certainly, predication is not *logismos*, but it is an intellectual running-through, a sort of *dianoia*.³⁰

β. Direct contact, the intellectual seeing, is more important than the intellectual running-through here described. It is prior, and it is the basis of the description. Just as description is discursive, so is any form of account-giving of Ideas.³¹ Accordingly, it is made clear that to acquire knowledge of the Ideas is basically to gain direct intellectual contact with them.

γ. It is true that a description is not a definition. Moreover, the description of the beautiful itself, as it is found here, is not even specific. But that no definition is given does not entail that it is impossible to give one.

III

In this theory of cognitive striving in the *Symposium* there is Plato's answer to the question of how we come to know the beautiful itself, which is a special case of how we come to know Ideas. In order to understand its significance more fully, we may compare it with the answer to the general question in the *Phaedo*. In treating of the epistemology in the *Phaedo* scholars pay attention usually and almost exclusively to the theory of recollection³² and the method of hypothesis³³ in that dialogue; however neither of the two tells us how knowledge – or more exactly, knowledge in the primary sense – of the Ideas is acquired.

1. a. In hypothesizing a *logos* concerning Ideas to solve a problem, so much of their contents as directly concerned must have been known: the method of hypothesis does not acquire it, but presupposes it. This knowledge precedes the hypothesizing. How is it acquired? In the *Phaedo* there can be no other answer than 'by recollection'.

b. Recollection in the case of Ideas is the recalling of the knowledge once gained before our birth and then lost at the moment of our birth. From recollection we have only second-hand knowledge. Then there is the question of how the original knowledge of Ideas is acquired. The primary sense of acquiring knowledge of the Ideas refers to acquiring the original knowledge of them.

c. For the answer to this question in the *Phaedo*, we must turn to that usually neglected part of the dialogue, the part on the genuine philosopher.³⁴ The answer is pessimistic. Socrates there states his fundamental belief that 'the impure is not permitted to lay hold of the pure'.³⁵ From it follows the basic principle of the method: to know the pure by the pure. The object pure is *auta ta pragmata*, or Ideas; the subject pure is the soul by itself. Man is a 'composite structure of soul and body'; in this composition the soul is kneaded together with the body and 'contaminated by such an evil', hence it is impure. It is impossible for us, as the composite structures, to have knowledge of Ideas when we are alive. If it is ever possible, it is only after death, i.e.,

³⁰ See J. Adam, *The Republic of Plato*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1926 and 1929), ad *Rep.* 511d5: 'διάνοια is the general word for a state (εἶς) of mind or mode of thought in Greek.'

³¹ And from *Rep.* 7, 517c1 we know that the intellectual 'seeing' is also the basis of reasoning. That it is the basis of defining hardly needs to be said, because definition is the formulation of the essential nature of what is intellectually seen.

³² 73c1 ff.

³³ 100a3 ff.

³⁴ 63e8–69e5.

³⁵ 67a6–b3; the translation is Jowett's.

when the soul is totally separated from the body and comes to be by itself.³⁶ The whole life of the genuine philosopher is the practice of dying, reducing the connection with the body to the absolutely necessary, by habituating the soul to gather itself together from every part of the body so that when purified he may acquire the desired knowledge after death.³⁷

2. According to the theory of cognitive striving in the *Symposium*, as seen above, the lover under the right guidance finally reaches his goal: he enjoys the vision of the beautiful itself. The contrast between the two theories in these two dialogues is too obvious to be denied. Then how does this difference come about?

3. a. First, it comes about from the change of the point of view. In the *Symposium* attention is paid neither to the dichotomy of life and death, nor of soul and body, and nothing is said about knowledge after death. Instead, Socrates focuses his attention on life alone. The pessimistic conclusion concerning acquisition of first-hand knowledge in the *Phaedo* becomes in the *Symposium* pointless and hence inapplicable. The success of cognitive striving will not be denied without further consideration as it would if the viewpoint in this dialogue were still the same as in the *Phaedo*. Now an account must be given of this striving from the present viewpoint; this account has a conclusion directly opposite to that in the *Phaedo*.

b. Secondly, the optimistic conclusion in the *Symposium* is due to the discovery of a new access, not found in the *Phaedo*, to Ideas, in the present case to the Idea of beauty. This consists of the following three points: α . the horizontal expansion, β . the pause for strengthening the mental power for the next step and γ . the final leap.

α . The *methodos* in the *Symposium*, like the recollection in the *Phaedo*, starts from sense-perception. From perceiving sensible objects recollection is prompted, and it immediately revives lost knowledge, e.g., from perceiving equal sticks ensues immediately the revival of the knowledge of the Idea of equality, and it ends in this second-hand knowledge. In the *Symposium* the initial love of one particular beautiful body is expanded to the love of a second, and then to all beautiful bodies. The expansion continues horizontally from particular objects which are sensible in the proper sense through particulars which are sensible in the improper sense to particulars which are hardly sensible in any sense.

In the *Phaedo* Socrates speaks of the philosopher's habituating his soul to gather itself together from the body, as far as possible, as the preparation for the acquisition of the knowledge of Ideas after death, but we are there not told in detail *how* to habituate. The horizontal expansion in the *Symposium* gives a detailed examination of such detachment.

β . In the horizontal expansion the habit of detaching is being built up; it needs solidification. The next step, the contemplation of the multitude of deindividualized instances of beauty, is for this purpose. It lasts until the intellectual power of the soul has become strong enough to take the final step.

γ . This step is the leap to the vision of the beautiful itself. The goal of the *methodos* is reached. Looked upon from the viewpoint of the epistemology in the *Phaedo*, the leap is the soul's transcending the scope of second-hand knowledge of Ideas – the scope to which the intellectual achievement of the genuine philosopher in his lifetime is limited – to gain direct contact with the Idea of beauty. Since the *thea* is the basis of all forms of *dianoia*, and since there is in the context in the *Symposium* no bar, explicit or implicit, to applying the same *methodos* generally to the acquisition of knowledge

³⁶ 66b5–7, d8–67a2 and 64c4–9.

³⁷ 64a4–8, 67a3–b1, c5–d1.

of all Ideas mentioned in the *Phaedo*³⁸ (among which the Idea of beauty is found), the philosopher by his leap obtains the desired knowledge in every respect.³⁹

It turns out that the detachment of the soul from the body in order to acquire first-hand knowledge of Ideas need not be so radical as demanded in the *Phaedo*, namely, the complete separation of the soul from the body, or death; the detachment of the soul from senses alone suffices for the purpose, while other life-processes can still go on. Throughout the whole *methodos* from the sense-perception in the beginning to the vision of beauty itself at the end, the *philosophos* is alive; he need not wait for death to acquire the desired knowledge.

Here we have Plato's answer to the question of how we come to have knowledge of the Idea of beauty in contrast to the answer to the same question in general in the *Phaedo*. The answer is optimistic, differing from the pessimistic answer in that dialogue, first in points of view and secondly in the detailed execution of the detachment.

University of South Florida

LUDWIG C. H. CHEN

³⁸ 75c10–d5.

³⁹ Namely, first in respect of direct vision and then in respect of intellectual running-through (*διάνοια*).