

PLATO'S MIDDLE PERIOD DIALECTIC

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By

MATTHEW WAYNE GORMAN, B.A.

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AUTHOR: Matthew Wayne Gorman, B.A. (McMaster University)

SUPERVISOR: Professor S. Panagiotou

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis I propose an interpretation of Plato's middle period dialectic. I contend that the method of such dialectic has two components, the doctrine of recollection and the method of hypothesis, and that the two are intimately related. In contrast to the orthodox interpretation, which ignores recollection and sees the method of hypothesis as essentially deductive, I suggest that the discovery of knowledge occurs from the recollection of a pre-natal vision of reality (the world of forms), where such recollection is stimulated by dialectical questioning. Recollection is gradual and uncertain. The direction of the dialectical questioning is itself guided by one's intuition, or (incomplete) recollection of reality at the time, thus providing a progressive interaction between recollection and the method of dialectical questioning, reasoning by hypothesis. In this way, one builds a provisional picture of reality, where the prime relation between hypotheses about such reality is one of coherence. The true dialectician will not only develop a complete and coherent picture of reality, but will ultimately verify the accuracy of this picture upon apprehension of the unhypothetical first principle, the form of the good.

PREFACE

In this thesis I propose an interpretation of Plato's middle period dialectic. By 'dialectic' I mean 'method of discovery of knowledge'. I mean 'method' in a broad sense; some readers may not consider the interpretation of method I propose to be a method at all. I mean 'discovery' in the sense of 'realisation'. Plato's doctrine of recollection suggests that all learning is actually rediscovery of truths held latently in the soul. For the one recollecting, such learning constitutes new realisations, and I therefore include this under 'discovery'.

A study of Plato's 'middle period' dialectic requires consideration of the chronology of the dialogues. Although an exact determination of such chronology is problematic, division of the dialogues into three periods (early, middle, late) is generally accepted. In this thesis I follow Robinson (Plato's Earlier Dialectic, 2nd ed.:v) in regarding the following dialogues, listed in probable chronological order, as belonging to Plato's middle period: the Meno, Symposium, Phaedo, Republic, Parmenides, Theaetetus, and Cratylus. The dialogues of primary interest here are the Meno, the Phaedo, and the Republic.

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This thesis is dedicated to my wife Jennifer, without whose love, encouragement, and support it would never have been possible. Thank you for marrying me.

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I

INTRODUCTION

If there is a general theme to the dialogues of Plato it is a search for knowledge, a desire to discover of each kind of thing what is its essence. The questions 'What is X?' and 'Is X Y?' occur frequently throughout the dialogues.¹ Plato presupposes that answers to these questions exist and can be discovered; the interpretational issue discussed in this thesis is how Plato sees this discovery as occurring. In Plato's early period dialogues the method of discovery is the Socratic elenchus, a technique whereby one's views are examined with an eye to their consistency and possible truth. In the middle period dialogues the discovery of knowledge is tied to both the doctrine of recollection and the method of hypothesis.

The orthodox interpretation of Plato's middle period dialectic ignores the doctrine of recollection and interprets the method of hypothesis on its own.² It sees the method of hypothesis as essentially deductive, such deduction being "opposed not to induction but rather to intuition." (Robinson 1953, p105)³ In this thesis I propose an alternative interpretation. This alternative interpretation stems from my contentions that (a) the doctrine of recollection is

a seriously held Platonic epistemological doctrine, and therefore any acceptable interpretation of Plato's middle period dialectic must account for it, and (b) the method of hypothesis is intimately related to the doctrine of recollection and must be viewed in conjunction with it. I propose that when seen in this way the method of hypothesis is recognised to be primarily intuitive.

The appeal of the orthodox interpretation is easy to see; by interpreting the method of hypothesis as essentially deductive, it makes the method logically defensible by modern standards. The doctrine of recollection is ignored because of the difficulties involved in explaining its role in logical terms. It is therefore left aside, and the method of hypothesis is interpreted on its own.

My contention that the doctrine of recollection cannot be legitimately ignored is based upon the role that recollection plays in the dialogues in which it appears. Writing dramatic conversations rather than treatises, Plato includes in particular dialogues only as much information as he wishes to provide given the subject matter and interlocutors. No comprehensive systematic presentation of dialectic is provided; indeed, Plato's discussions of it are vague and brief. Readers must themselves interpret which are the components of dialectic, and how these components are related. This task is complicated by the likelihood that Plato's views on dialectic develop and change

over the course of the dialogues, including over the course of dialogues from the same general period. Interpretation of Plato's middle period dialectic thus requires consideration of both the similarities of and changes in dialectical components and their relations as revealed by the relevant passages. Additionally, such an interpretation must consider the middle period dialectic within the context of the early period dialectic from which it evolves.

Plato's early period dialectic is the method of Socratic elenchus. This method is an examination of the consistency of a set of views. It is sometimes thought that the elenctic method examines one particular view, but this is incorrect. Vlastos points out that it is a mistake to think that when a thesis is contradicted, "the consequence which contradicts the thesis is drawn from that thesis, that is, deduced from it." (Vlastos 1983, p29) Rather, the one offering the thesis agrees to further premises, and it is from these further premises that the negation of the thesis is deduced. Put logically⁴, the elenctic pattern is not

$$\begin{array}{l} p \text{ implies } (q.r) \\ (q.r) \text{ implies } \neg p \\ p \vee \neg p \\ \text{therefore } \neg p \end{array}$$

but rather

$$\begin{array}{l} (p.q.r) \\ (q.r) \text{ implies } \neg p \\ \text{therefore at least one of } p, q, \text{ and } r \text{ is false} \\ q \text{ and } r \text{ assumed true} \\ \text{therefore } \neg p^5 \end{array}$$

The elenchus thus does not test whether one particular view is self-contradictory, but rather whether a set of views is internally consistent.

Views which are both mutually consistent and mutually relevant I here refer to as 'coherent' views. Such views need not each be relevant to every other view in a coherent set, but no individual view or group of views may lack relevance to all remaining views in the set. A set of coherent views must therefore form an interconnected whole of some sort.⁶

As a view is not considered part of a premise set if it is irrelevant, the elenchus tests not just for consistency but also for coherence. In the late early period dialogue Gorgias Plato, through Socrates⁷, implies that such coherence is the criterion of truth. In this dialogue Socrates indicates both that views which survive the elenchus are not only consistent but also true, and that the negations of views which fail the elenchus are also true. The latter case is indicated when Socrates disagrees with Polus on a particular issue, where the refutation of Polus's view by means of the elenchus is deemed sufficient for Socrates to conclude that his own view has been proven true:

"Then has it not been proved that this [Socrates'] is a true statement?" ("oukoun apodedeiktai hoti alêthê elegeto;") (G 479e).⁸ Socrates also states that a view of his own, which has been supported only indirectly through the elenctic

refutation of his interlocutor's opposing view, "is held firm and fastened ... with reasons of steel and adamant" (G 508e-509a), thus again implying that elenctic refutation 'proves' the opposing view.⁹ The implication that what survives the elenchus is true occurs when Socrates states of a proposition, "either we must refute this statement ... or if this is true, we must investigate its consequences." ("ê ekselegkteos dê houtos ho logos hêmin estin ... ê ei houtos alêthês esti, skepteon ti ta sumbainonta.")

(G 508a-b) The two stated alternatives are the refutation of the statement and its truth; failure of the former apparently implies the latter.

The Gorgias thus indicates that by the end of his early period Plato sees dialectic as a method for discovering coherent views, such coherence being considered the criterion of truth. Yet this position is recognisably problematic; a coherent set of views can consist of coherent but false views, and multiple mutually contradictory sets of coherent views are possible. In neither case would one wish to set all such sets of views down as true simply based on their coherence. Something further is required.

It is in this context that Plato's middle period dialectic must be considered. Avoidance of a relativistic epistemology, of every set of coherent views being true, requires that while coherence is a criterion of truth, it cannot be the nature of truth.¹⁰ Rather, a unique set of

truths is supplied by a correspondence theory of truth: "the truth of a proposition lies in its agreement with --and so its correspondence to--the facts of the case" (Rescher 1973, p5). To Plato truths must be eternal and unchanging; therefore reality, the "facts of the case" with which true propositions correspond, must also be eternal and unchanging. Plato's acceptance of Cratylus's theory that the sensible world is in flux means that the sensible world cannot constitute reality. Plato therefore has three needs at this point: i) eternal unchanging objects of knowledge (=reality); ii) a method for developing a coherent set of views about such objects; and iii) a manner of verifying that a particular view or set of views corresponds to the real state of such objects. In the middle period dialogues Plato meets these needs with i) the theory of forms, ii) the method of hypothesis, and iii) the doctrine of recollection.

The dialogues examined here, the Meno, the Phaedo, and the Republic, all contribute to an understanding of these three aspects of Plato's middle period dialectic; however, the pictures of them they provide are not entirely unified. As noted above, both the individual nature of the dialogues and the development of Plato's thought lead to each dialogue having particular contributions to make.

The forms are not mentioned in the Meno. The dialogue does argue that knowledge is possible, but other than noting the soul's encounters with things in the "nether realms" (M 81c), no particular information about the nature of the objects of knowledge is provided except Socrates' statement that "all nature is akin"(M 81c-d). It is in the Phaedo that the objects of knowledge, the forms, are described as "uniform", "never in any way admit[ting] of change", and possessing "true being"(all Ph 78d). The forms are said to only be knowable to humans through recollection. (Ph 75e) The Republic reaffirms that it is the forms which truly are(R 507b) and are hence "entirely knowable"(R 477a).

The doctrine of recollection is first propounded in the Meno. Learning is expressly identified with the recollection of knowledge already held in the soul.(M 81d) Prior to such recollection one has true opinions, which may be awoken by questioning to become knowledge.(M 86a) As all nature is akin, by remembering one single thing one can go on to discover everything else.(M 81d) Recollection is not immediate; its first stages are described as having a 'dreamlike' quality, and it is only after reflection on why things are as they are, until opinions are made fast with "causal reasoning"(M 98a), that one truly understands and has knowledge.(M 85c-d) The doctrine is reasserted in the Phaedo. The Phaedo also introduces a distinction between two kinds of recollection, recollection from similars

and from dissimilars. (Ph 74a) It is recollection from similars which stimulates recollection of the forms. (Ph 74b) The forms can only be known by recollection, for the qualities of particulars, while similar to the qualities of forms, and hence stimulating their recollection, always fall short of the absolute qualities of the forms themselves. (Ph 74d) As humans thus never encounter absolute qualities in this life, awareness of forms of such absolute qualities can only be explained as recollection of pre-natal knowledge of them. (Ph 75c) The Republic does not explicitly raise the doctrine of recollection, but appears to allude to it in describing learning as a power in the soul (R 518c) rather than as something instilled by another.

The most explicit link between the three dialogues is their discussions of hypotheses. In the Meno, after having claimed that true opinions are awoken by questioning, Socrates suggests that the attempt to answer the question there at issue, whether virtue is teachable, be made from a hypothesis. (M 86b) The method of hypothesis described there focuses upon the determination of the necessary conditions for a positive resolution to the problem (M 87a, 87c), but the application of method proves inconclusive. In the Phaedo Socrates' resolution of the question of the cause of generation and decay again involves use of a hypothesis. There Socrates simply hypothesises the soundest logon, and sets down as true whatever seems to agree with the hypothesis

(Ph 100a), thus developing a line of reasoning which answers the question. If the hypothesis is itself questioned, it is to be justified by being similarly found to agree with an adequate 'higher' hypothesis. (Ph 101d-e) The Republic discusses but does not demonstrate treatment of hypotheses. Stress is laid upon the dialectical 'upward' path of justifying hypotheses mentioned in the Phaedo, except that the adequate grounding now sought is the unhypothetical beginning with which all reality agrees. It is by starting from a hypothesis and proceeding by inquiry that the ultimate first principle, the unhypothetical beginning, is reached. (R 510b)

The descriptions in these dialogues of the theory of forms and the doctrine of recollection are relatively uniform, except for differences in emphasis. The Phaedo account of recollection, which stresses recollection of particular forms through recognition of similarities in particulars, is compatible with the Meno account, which discusses how such particular recollections can serve as a springboard for further recollection. While the Meno account of the method of hypothesis is also compatible with the Phaedo and Republic accounts of the method, it is difficult to see the connection between the Meno account and the later and clearly related Phaedo and Republic accounts. The Republic account provides a further development of an aspect of the Phaedo account, whereas the Meno approach of determining necessary conditions is apparently not continued.

The key interpretational issue is the relation between the doctrine of recollection and the method of hypothesis. Recollection is said to be stimulated both by observation and by questioning/reasoning. In the dialogues dialectical reasoning takes the form of the method of hypothesis. The method of hypothesis may thus be taken to be the method by which relational recollection, or recollection of related knowledge from some initial observed recollection, occurs.

While the method of hypothesis thus stimulates recollection, recollection yet guides such reasoning by hypothesis. As is noted above, Plato at this point sees coherence of views as a criterion of their truth. It is my contention that the method of hypothesis is a method for developing a coherent set of views about the objects of knowledge, the forms. Hypotheses are about the nature of forms, and the agreement called for in the Phaedo account of the method of hypothesis is coherence, such that further propositions about forms are put down as true or not depending upon their coherence with the original hypothesis.¹¹ By developing a coherent set of views about the world of forms one meets the first criterion for discovering truths about such forms.

Two apparent difficulties arise in connection with this interpretation of the agreement mentioned in the Phaedo. First, it is possible, if not likely, that a multiplicity of propositions may each cohere with a hypothesis yet

themselves be mutually inconsistent. Such inconsistency denies that such propositions can all be set down as true; a choice between them is necessary. Plato sees dialectic as possible by reason alone, a priori; therefore such a choice cannot make appeal to experience.¹² The apparent lack of grounds for choice between such propositions is resolved by appeal to the doctrine of recollection. Dialectic is possible a priori in that it is possible prior to, or independent of, experience, so long as this is understood to be experience gained in this (human) life. One still has one's psychic experiences, possessed prior to birth by the soul and retained in human life as true opinions, to draw on. It is recollection which alerts one to the fact that it is indeed one proposition (P) and not another (P') which in reality agrees with the hypothesis (H), although logically speaking either coheres with it.

Such appeal to recollection to resolve otherwise unresolvable questions is what I mean by intuition. Without such appeal not only is there no way of determining whether P or P' 'really' agrees with H, there is no way of determining whether H is itself a more sound beginning than alternative hypothesis H'. Further, H, when itself questioned, must agree with some particular 'higher' hypothesis considered more sound than its alternatives. Such soundness can only be explained by appeal to intuition.¹³ In each case, then, for a particular proposition to appear most sound is for

it to appear most in accordance with one's recollection of reality. This is not in any way to suggest that intuition is infallible. As is noted above, the first stages of recollection have a 'dreamlike' quality; as such, missteps are to be expected. However, as recollection grows stronger, one's ability to (re)apprehend reality previously seen provides the grounding for one's ability for reasoned thought.

The other apparent difficulty is that even if a coherent picture of the world of forms is developed, its coherence is not a guarantee of its accuracy. Different pictures, each individually coherent, are possible. A manner for verifying that a particular picture accurately corresponds to reality is necessary. This matter is again resolved by recollection. The grounding of an entire picture occurs with the apprehension of the unhypothetical beginning with which the whole picture coheres. This unhypothetical beginning is grasped by a flash of intuition which is a direct recollection of the soul's pre-birth encounter with the forms, a recollection which itself verifies that the picture developed is accurate.

The interpretation I propose therefore involves considerable interaction between recollection and hypothetical reasoning. One initially recollects individual forms through recognition of similarities between particulars. One next attempts to hypothetically reason from such starting points to a broader set of views. Such recollection by reasoning

is initially foggy, and may be faulty. One is guided by one's own recollection of reality, but this early stage of recollection is uncertain. Further reasoning will serve to stimulate further recollection, while such further recollection will better guide further reasoning. The good dialectician will continue this process until a complete coherent picture of the world of forms has been developed. The accuracy of this picture is verified by the final stage of recollection, where clarity replaces cloudiness and the forms are intellectually 'seen' in their true reality. This final stage of recollection comes with the apprehension of the form of the good.¹⁴

In the following chapters I examine in some detail the Meno, the Phaedo, and the Republic for their contributions to an understanding of Plato's theory of forms, doctrine of recollection, and method of hypothesis, and for how these contributions can be unified to provide an overall interpretation of Plato's middle period dialectic.

II

DIALECTIC IN THE MENO

The Meno opens with Meno's abrupt question "whether virtue can be taught, or is acquired by practice, ... [or] whether it comes to mankind by nature or in some other way" (M 70a). This multifaceted question is quickly pared down to the central question of the dialogue, whether virtue is teachable. An initial inquiry into the matter ends with Meno reduced to aporia(M 80b). At this point he raises a question relevant to all epistemological study, how learning is ever possible. Meno suggests that perhaps any inquiry into the nature of virtue (or of anything else) is bound to be fruitless, for "on what lines will you look, Socrates, for a thing of whose nature you know nothing at all?"(M 80d) Socrates' answer is that learning is simply recollection stimulated by proper questioning. After demonstrating this, Socrates and Meno resume their study of virtue, guided by Socrates' suggestion that they reason 'from a hypothesis'.

II.i) Objects of Knowledge

The Meno provides little information about the objects of knowledge. As Gulley notes, the argument of the dialogue "is not concerned to determine the nature of the reality

which is known, but to demonstrate the possibility of acquiring knowledge at all."(Gulley 1962, p16) Plato does distinguish between "this world" and the "nether realms", and it is due to the soul's travels in the latter that it possesses the knowledge which it recollects in this world. This suggests that the objects of knowledge seen by the soul inhabit the "nether realms", but they are not identified. Socrates does note that "all nature is akin", which suggests that the objects of knowledge share a similar nature.

The forms are not mentioned. Plato does use the term 'eidos' (which, along with 'idea', are "[t]wo of Plato's commonest semi-technical terms for Forms"(Gallop 1975, p93)), but the emphasis here is on the defining characteristic of a concept rather than on concepts themselves as transcendent objects of reality. Socrates talks about "one common character [eidos]" by which all virtues are virtues, but there is not yet talk of a form of virtue itself, or of any other form.

II.ii) Recollection

The doctrine of recollection is recounted by Socrates as a reply to Meno's argument to the effect that learning is impossible. As Socrates restates Meno's argument,

a man cannot inquire either about what he knows or about what he does not know[.] For he cannot inquire about what he knows, because he knows it, and in that case is in no need of inquiry; nor again can he inquire about what he does not know, since he does not know about what he is to inquire. (M 80e)

Meno himself puts the latter point, "what sort of thing, amongst those that you know not, will you treat us to as the object of your search? Or even supposing, at the best, that you hit upon it, how will you know it is the thing you did not know?" (M 80d) The question of how Socrates will 'recognise' the object of his search provides a hint of the answer which follows.

While not originally his own, Socrates' answer is vouched for by him as "[s]omething true ... and admirable" ("alêthê ... kai kalon") (M 81a). Attributed to "certain priests and priestesses", the answer first asserts what is further defended in the Phaedo: "the soul of man is immortal, and at one time comes to an end, which is called dying, and at another is born again, but never perishes." (M 81b) It is the timeless experiences of the soul which provide its possession of knowledge:

Seeing then that the soul is immortal and has been born many times, and has beheld all things both in this world and in the nether realms, she has acquired knowledge of all and everything; so that it is no wonder that she should be able to recollect all that she knew before about virtue and other things. For as all nature is akin, and the soul has learned all things, there is no reason why we should not, by remembering one single thing--an act which men call learning--

discover everything else, if we have courage and faint not in the search; since, it would seem, research and learning are wholly recollection.
(M 81c-d)

The sense in which Socrates means that the soul "has beheld" (heôrakuia, literally "has seen") all things is not further explained, a matter of some concern regarding how recollection resolves Meno's paradox. This concern stems from the fact that Socrates appears to have merely pushed the problem back one step, changing the question from 'how does a man learn?' (answer - his soul already knows) to 'how does a soul learn?'. .

Meno's original question is ambiguous. It can be read as asking either how a person can learn or how anything can learn. Socrates' answer assumes the former reading. In addressing this more limited question Socrates also reduces the thrust of Meno's inquiry by reformulating the problem. Meno originally asks how Socrates will investigate something, "which you do not know anything at all about what it is?" ("ho mê oistha to parapan ho ti esti;")(M 80d)(my translation) Socrates' restatement of the paradox drops the term parapan (anything at all), allowing that one may know nothing explicitly, but yet possess latent (and recollectable) knowledge. This allows Socrates to sidestep Meno's objection by implicitly denying that one ever really does "not know anything at all" about something.

While this move resolves the immediate problem of how Socrates and Meno can learn, the question whether, and how, the soul does initially learn remains legitimate. Socrates does not make clear whether the soul learns at all. He notes that knowledge must be either "once acquired or always had"(M 85d). Demonstrating, via a slave boy, possession of knowledge not acquired in this life, Socrates concludes, alternately, the boy "learnt [the knowledge] during some other time [ie. "when he was not a human being"]", and the boy's soul "must have had this cognisance throughout all time"(both M 86a). Eternal possession of knowledge is one way out of Meno's paradox, for then the soul cannot be said to ever genuinely 'learn'--it always knows. If the soul does genuinely 'learn', then the paradox may yet be resolved by appeal to the unique nature of the objects of knowledge/recollection, the forms. Cherniss suggests that recollection is "of that which has already been directly known"(Cherniss 1936, p4), a manner which Thomas describes as "immediate and direct knowledge which ... takes the form of direct acquaintance with the Forms"(Thomas 1980, p129). If this direct apprehension of the forms is the answer, then Plato perhaps envisions such "direct acquaintance" as occurring in some such manner as the chariot ride of the soul described in the Phaedrus(246a-248b).

An obvious objection to the "direct acquaintance" solution to the problem is noted by Thomas: "If intuitive [ie. direct] knowledge is possible in a former existence, then why not in this present life?" (Thomas 1980, p130) While it is not immediately evident why the forms should admit of "direct acquaintance", or immediate recognition, in a manner in which objects of sensory perception do not, given the unique nature of the forms this is not an unreasonable conjecture. At any rate, the soul's eternal possession of knowledge is the better answer. If the soul does learn at some point in time, then either for some previous amount of time the soul is ignorant, and hence could be born into a human who would have no hope of recollecting knowledge, or the soul learns upon coming into existence, in which case it is not immortal. Each of these scenarios is avoided by eternal possession of knowledge. This answer, while perhaps not satisfying, is a plausible counterpart to an immortal soul, and hence a reasonable position for Plato to hold.

Meno does not immediately accept the doctrine of recollection, but asks for proof. (M 82a) Socrates demonstrates the truth of the doctrine by leading a slave boy, through appropriate questioning, to deduce the answer to a geometrical problem. The slave boy accomplishes this even though, as Meno vouches, no one has ever taught him geometry. Socrates explains the slave boy's ability by

suggesting, "he has had true opinions in him which have only to be awakened by questioning to become knowledge"(M 86a), these opinions having been possessed by his soul prior to his being born as a human being.

The doctrine of recollection thus resolves Meno's paradox, at least in its initial formulation of 'how does a man learn?'. The scope of what is recollectable extends to all knowledge. This is clear from two statements by Socrates. In his initial account of the doctrine he claims, "as all nature is akin, and the soul has learned all things, there is no reason why we should not, by remembering but one single thing ... discover everything else"(M 81c-d). Again, after his demonstration with the slave boy he suggests that the slave boy "can do the same as this [ie. recollect answers] with all geometry and every branch of knowledge." (M 85e)

Recollection is a gradual process. During his demonstration with the slave boy Socrates points out various stages in the slave boy's progress: initially, the boy cannot solve the problem but thinks he can; next, the boy recognises his own ignorance; finally, the boy comes up with the answer. The true opinions eventually expressed by the boy are not yet knowledge, for immediately after the demonstration the boy's opinions are only "stirred up in him, like a dream" (M 85c). The boy must rethink the process "in a variety of forms" before he comes to fully grasp the answer, but

if he does then he will come to have "as exact an understanding" of the matter as anyone(M 85c-d), a process Socrates later describes as making true opinions "fast with causal reasoning"(M 98a).

The trial and error nature of the slave boy's recollection of the answer to the geometrical problem indicates that such recollection is not an immediate or infallible process. Given this, what follows is less surprising. When Socrates and Meno resume their study of virtue, the dialectical questioning they employ in the hopes of stirring up their own true opinions begins from a hypothesis. This process also proves to be neither immediately successful nor infallible, for it leads to contradictory answers when applied from two different starting points. Thus while Socrates and Meno have a method for stimulating recollection, its application serves to reinforce awareness that such recollection is a gradual process and not an immediate event.

II.iii) Hypotheses

In the Meno the method of hypothesis fails to provide a conclusive answer to the question whether virtue can be taught; via the method Socrates initially 'proves' (M 87b-89c) that virtue is teachable, but then conversely 'proves' (M 89c-96d) that it is not. He is left offering the qualified response that if their discussion has been

correct then "virtue is found to be neither natural nor taught, but is imparted to us by a divine dispensation" (M 99e), but this claim of virtue's inability to be taught holds only "unless there should be somebody among the statesmen capable of making a statesman of another" (M 100a) (virtue being the defining characteristic of a statesman). This qualification reveals that Socrates does not accept as proven the answer that virtue is indeed not teachable. Given Socrates' remark in the Gorgias that he himself is "one of few, not to say the only one, in Athens who attempts the true art of statesmanship" (G 521d), perhaps (unsurprisingly) Socrates himself is the only potential teacher of virtue. Socrates' refutation of the teachability of virtue is based upon his observation that there are no teachers or learners of virtue. If learning is recollecting, and teaching is stimulating recollection, then perhaps only Socrates knows the right questions by which to teach.

Determination of why the Meno version of the method of hypothesis reaches contradictory results is dependent upon how one interprets the method. In both the geometrical example and the philosophical application of the method the procedure followed is to first determine the necessary conditions for a positive resolution to the problem. In each case the original question 'Is X G?' is analysed employing a known relation between G and F, such that the answer is now subject to certain limits: 'If X is F, then

X is G, and if X is not F, then X is not G'. The next step is the determination of whether X is F. In the case of the question whether virtue is teachable, equivalence between teachability and knowledge leads to the limits, 'If virtue is knowledge, then it is teachable, and if virtue is not knowledge, then it is not teachable'. The next step is the determination of whether virtue is knowledge.

There is no clear indication whether Plato considers the hypothesis to be the biconditional statement of the necessary conditions or a statement which employs those conditions. In the philosophical application of the method, Socrates' proof that virtue is teachable employs both the statement that virtue is knowledge and the statement of the necessary conditions; references to the hypothesis do not make clear which of these is actually considered to be 'the' hypothesis.¹

If the hypothesis is taken to be the biconditional statement of the necessary conditions, then the 'Is virtue teachable?' question is not adequately resolved because the hypothesis 'If virtue is knowledge, then it is teachable, and if virtue is not knowledge, then it is not teachable' produces different answers depending upon what other statements it is joined with, and no criteria are provided for choosing between such statements. Socrates initially joins the statement 'Virtue is knowledge' to the hypothesis, producing the answer 'Virtue is teachable'. He then joins

the statement 'Virtue is not teachable' (which he asserts based on empirical observation) to the hypothesis to produce contradictory results. Without criteria for choosing between possible statements which produce conflicting results, such a biconditional hypothesis produces no unique answer.

If the hypothesis is taken to be the statement 'Virtue is knowledge', where the biconditional statement simply serves as an intermediate premise, then the indecisive results stem from the hypothesis falling prey to the Socratic elenchus. The hypothesis, joined with the biconditional premise, does provide the answer that virtue is teachable. But the further admissions that if something is teachable then there must be teachers and learners of it, and that there are no teachers or learners of virtue, consequently undermine the hypothesis, for the further admissions imply that virtue is not teachable, and this assertion when joined with the biconditional premise refutes the hypothesis. Socrates thus disproves his own hypothesis in best elenctic fashion.

The use of hypotheses in philosophical method first arises at Meno 86e. After Socrates' demonstration that learning is wholly recollection(M 82b-85d), Meno returns the discussion to his initial question whether virtue can be taught. Socrates then suggests that the question "be examined by means of hypothesis", and adds, "I mean by hypothesis what the geometricians often do in dealing

with a question put to them"(both M 86e). After citing an example of a geometrical question and appropriate hypothesis, Socrates suggests that, with regard to the question about virtue, they should proceed "[i]n the same way", and "had best make use of a hypothesis in considering whether it can be taught or not"(M 87b). Clearly the geometrical example is thus intended to illustrate the method which Socrates is about to borrow from geometry and apply to philosophy.

II.iii.a) The Geometrical Example

The example of a geometrical question which Socrates cites is "whether a certain area [henceforth A] is capable of being inscribed as a triangular space in a given circle [henceforth C]"(M 86e-87a). Socrates suggests that geometers would reply thus:

I cannot yet tell whether it has that capability; but I think, if I may put it so, that I have a certain helpful hypothesis for the problem, and it is as follows: If this area [A] is such that when you apply it to the given line of the circle [C] you find it falls short by a space similar to that which you have just applied [the space "just applied" henceforth B], then I take it you have one consequence, and if it is impossible for it to fall so, then some other. Accordingly I wish to put a hypothesis, before I state our conclusion as regards inscribing this figure in the circle [C] by saying whether it is impossible or not.
(M 87a-b)

Bluck notes of this difficult passage: "The precise nature of the problem that Plato had in mind, and still more the

precise nature of the hupothesis which it is suggested a geometrician might make in dealing with it ... have exercised the ingenuity of numerous scholars, but no completely satisfactory solution has been found."(Bluck 1961, p322)²

Bluck is likely correct in further observing that the main point being made is the general procedure followed: "a geometrician, faced with a problem, might approach it by saying that if certain conditions are satisfied, then one result follows, whereas if they are not, the result is different."(Bluck 1961, p441) Nonetheless, some specific observations are possible. First, it is twice mentioned that the positing of the hypothesis occurs prior to the drawing of the conclusion; thus, the conclusion cannot itself be the hypothesis. Second, the geometricians employ an 'if-then' biconditional: the geometricians assert, "If [area A when applied in a particular way] falls short by a space similar to [area B], then I take it you have one consequence, and if it is impossible for it to fall so, then some other." Third, the biconditional assumes a known relation between a third component not mentioned in the original question and possible consequences. This relation is a necessary one, providing "the determination of the conditions for the possibility of the solution of a problem."(Gulley 1958, p7n1) The geometricians imply that the relation between area B (which is not mentioned in the original question) and possible outcomes is both

known and necessary; only this explains why if area A (applied in a particular way) falls short by a space similar to area B a positive outcome to the overall question is produced, and especially why if area A so applied cannot fall short by a space similar to area B then a different outcome necessarily follows. As it is not considered that the outcome may be the same regardless of the relation between areas A and B, the relation between the areas is taken to necessarily determine the consequent outcome.

II.iii.b) The Philosophical Application

After citing the geometrical example Socrates suggests that the question of whether virtue can be taught be treated "[i]n the same way", and begins by introducing a third component to the virtue/teachable question, knowledge:

what kind of thing must virtue be in the class of mental properties, so as to be teachable or not? In the first place, if it is something dissimilar or similar to knowledge, is it taught or not[?]
(M 87b)

Knowledge thus introduced, Socrates next establishes that, with regard to virtue, knowledge and teachability are equivalent. He accomplishes this in two steps, each of which receives Meno's assent. Socrates first claims, "the one and only thing taught to men is knowledge"(M 87c) (T implies K), thus indicating that if one is taught virtue then virtue must itself be knowledge(T_v implies K_v). Next Socrates claims, "if virtue is a kind of knowledge, clearly

it must be taught"(M 87c)(Kv implies Tv). Thus the equivalent relation is set up between virtue's being teachable and virtue's being knowledge(Tv implies Kv, Kv implies Tv, /Tv equivalent Kv). Socrates employs this equivalence in noting, "if virtue belongs to one class of things [knowledge] it is teachable, and if to another, it is not"(M 87c), and then further employs it in explicitly restating the question to be resolved to "whether virtue is knowledge, or of another kind than knowledge."(M 87c)

The parallels between the philosophical application and the geometrical example which precedes it are extremely close. First, the positing of the biconditional occurs prior to the drawing of the conclusion. Socrates formulates the biconditional prior to having drawn any conclusion as to whether or not virtue can be taught. Second, an 'if-then' biconditional asserting the necessary conditions for resolving the problem is formulated. Socrates claims, "if virtue belongs to one class of things [ie.knowledge] [then] it is teachable, and if to another, [then] it is not." Third, the biconditional assumes a known relation between a third component not mentioned in the original question and possible outcomes. Socrates introduces a known relation (equivalence) between knowledge (which is not mentioned in the original question 'Can virtue be taught?') and teachability to tie possible outcomes to whether or

not virtue is knowledge. The geometrical example Socrates cites thus clearly illustrates important aspects of the method he borrows for philosophical application.

Having gained agreement to the statement 'If virtue is knowledge then it is teachable' (M 87c), Socrates next states the new target of inquiry: "The next question, it would seem, that we have to consider is whether virtue is knowledge, or of another kind than knowledge." (M 87c) The proof that virtue is knowledge that follows runs thus³:

- P1) Virtue is good. (M 87d)
- P2) All good things are profitable. (M 87e)
- C1) Virtue is profitable. (M 87e)
- P3) The profitable will be wisdom. (M 88e)
- C2) Virtue will be wisdom, either all of it or a part. (M 89a)

Wisdom being equated with knowledge, Socrates thus demonstrates that virtue is either the whole of or a part of knowledge, and hence (via the biconditional) that

- C3) Virtue is teachable.

Immediately after drawing this conclusion, however, Socrates calls it into doubt, though he is careful to point out that it is the conclusion, and not the equivalent relation, which is the subject of this doubt:

I do not withdraw as incorrect the statement that [virtue] is taught, if it is knowledge; but as to its being knowledge, consider if you think I have grounds for misgiving. (M 89d)

The argument which underlies Socrates' misgiving includes an empirical observation and a crucial implicit premise regarding the implication of that observation. Socrates

begins by claiming:

- P4) If anything at all, not merely virtue, is teachable, then there must be teachers and learners of it. (M 89d)
- P5) If a thing had neither teachers nor learners, then it could not be taught. (M 89e)

Socrates next argues inductively for the antecedent of P5).

In discussion with Anytus, he points out that such virtuous Athenian statesmen as Themistocles, Aristides, Pericles, and Thucydides failed to teach their sons virtue, and this leads Socrates to conclude, "it looks as though virtue were not a teachable thing." (M 94e) In drawing this conclusion Socrates is clearly not relying on four random examples. Rather, he obviously assumes that if anyone possessing virtue would want to pass, and would be capable of passing, virtue on to their sons, these men would. It is only the strength of an assumption such as this which justifies the conclusion drawn. This conclusion provides the basis for the balance of Socrates' argument:

- P6) Themistocles, Aristides, Pericles, and Thucydides failed to teach virtue. (M 93c-94e)
- C4) No one can teach virtue. (M 94e)
- P7) If there are no teachers, there can be no learners. (M 96c)
- C5) Virtue cannot be taught. (M 96c)

This last conclusion (C5) contradicts the one of the earlier argument (C3), and Socrates goes on to pinpoint why. The earlier argument uses the premise (P3) that 'The profitable will be wisdom'. This premise in turn breaks down to two sub-implications, 'profitable implies rightly

used'(M 88a) and 'rightly used implies wisdom'(M 88c).

It is the second sub-implication which Socrates questions, for he now suggests that "true opinion is as good a guide to rightness of action as knowledge"(M 97b). The first argument may now be amended to conclude that virtue may be either the whole of or a part of knowledge or true opinion. If the second argument's conclusion that virtue is not teachable (and hence not knowledge) is added, then the answer which results is that virtue is true opinion.

Given the traditional Socratic doctrine that virtue is knowledge, the Meno's apparent conclusion that virtue is not teachable (= not knowledge) appears problematic. The conclusion to Socrates' first argument, that virtue may be either knowledge or true opinion, is less troubling when the doctrine that learning is wholly recollection is considered. In the demonstration of this doctrine Socrates shows that his subject has always "had true opinions in him which have only to be awakened by questioning to become knowledge"(M 86a). If true opinions are thus latent knowledge, needing only proper questioning to bloom, then Socrates' first conclusion is that virtue is either knowledge or true opinion (= latent knowledge), thus making the issue one of degree of development rather than of kind. The conclusion of the second (empirical) argument is (as noted above) not wholeheartedly endorsed by Socrates. Socrates' acknowledgement that the conclusion that virtue cannot be

taught holds "unless there should be somebody among the statesmen capable of making a statesman of another(M 100a) indicates that Socrates has not ruled out the possibility that it may yet be teachable (and hence knowledge). Thus, the traditional Socratic doctrine that virtue is knowledge stands, weakened but not refuted.

Both the conclusion virtue is knowledge/teachable and the conclusion virtue is not teachable/not knowledge follow from starting points accepted by the interlocutors (these starting points being, respectively, 'Virtue is good' and 'There are no teachers of virtue'). The Meno version of the method of hypothesis provides no methodological guidance on how one chooses between starting points which have contradictory consequences. Plato recognises that a methodological approach to the discovery of knowledge is desirable. He borrows from geometry a method of determining necessary conditions for answering a question, but it is not enough to simply know what must be the case for something to be true. A method for determining what is the case, whether the something meets those conditions, is necessary. Lacking direct awareness of what is the case, a method for determining what is most likely the case, for developing the most probable view of reality, is called for. Such a method must provide a particular starting point for reasoning, as well as a method of reasoning from that

starting point. These needs are provided for in the revised version of the method which appears in the Phaedo.

The scope of the method of hypothesis is not stated in the Meno, but in the Phaedo Socrates describes it as his method for discovering "the truth of realities", a method which applies "to cause or to anything else" (Ph 100a) (my emphasis). It is reasonable to expect, then, that the doctrine of recollection, of one's ability to recall all knowledge, will play a prominent role in a method which attempts to discover just such knowledge.

III

DIALECTIC IN THE PHAEDO

The central question of the Phaedo is 'Is the soul immortal?'. Socrates attempts to prove the immortality of the soul in order to explain why he thinks, "a man who has really spent his life in philosophy is naturally of good courage when he is to die, and has strong hopes that when he is dead he will attain the highest blessings in that other land." (Ph 63e-64a) In the course of his attempt to prove this matter Socrates provides four arguments.¹ The second of these arguments is built on the doctrine of recollection introduced in the Meno, while the fourth includes a statement and application of method of reasoning by means of a hypothesis. This method is considerably revised from its initial appearance in the Meno.

III.i) Objects of Knowledge

Before providing arguments for the immortality of the soul, Socrates first discusses why the body is a hindrance to the ability of the soul to learn. This is because it is "[i]n thought ... if at all, [that] something of the realities becomes clear to" the soul, and it "thinks best when none of these things [the bodily senses]

troubles it"(both Ph 65c). At this point the realities (the forms), which are the objects of knowledge, are introduced. Socrates asks Simmias if they do not think, "there is such a thing as absolute justice And absolute beauty and goodness"(Ph 65d); they agree that such things exist. Although, as Gallop points out, the theory of forms is "nowhere defended, but is simply accepted without argument by all parties"(Gallop 1975, p97), the theory is a central support for the arguments for immortality which follow.

After gaining agreement that the forms exist, Socrates again expresses his view that the forms can only be perceived through reason. It is the man

who employs pure, absolute reason in his attempts to search out the pure, absolute essence of things, and who removes himself, so far as possible, from ... his whole body, because he feels that its companionship disturbs the soul and hinders it from attaining truth and wisdom [who is the man,] if anyone, to attain to the knowledge of reality. (Ph 66a)

The manner in which the soul attains to the knowledge of reality is discussed below. The insistence that the forms are accessible only through reason suggests, as was suggested in the Meno, that the objects of knowledge have a level of existence separate from the sensible world.

Several passages shed light on the scope and nature of the forms. Socrates refers to mathematical forms ("the equal and the greater and the less") as well as moral forms ("absolute beauty and the absolute good and the just

and the holy"), summing them up as "all those things which we stamp with the seal of 'absolute' in our dialectical process of questions and answers"(Ph 75c-d). The forms exist: "the beautiful exists, and the good, and every essence of that kind"(Ph 76d). The forms, "which we in our dialectical process of question and answer call true being", are "uniform", and "never in any way admit of change" (all Ph 78d).

As the forms are uniform and unchanging, they provide the eternal and stable objects of knowledge which Plato needs to justify a rejection of a relativistic epistemology. It is these qualities which justify claiming that the forms have "true being", and are hence real. Plato's emphasis that the forms can be known only through the exercise of reason serves to further underscore the importance of the dialectical process.

III.ii) Recollection

The second argument for the immortality of the soul is offered by Cebes as a consequence of Socrates' own doctrine that 'learning is wholly recollection':

if it is true, Socrates, as you are fond of saying, that our learning is nothing else than recollection, then this would be an additional argument that we must necessarily have learned in some previous time what we now remember. But this is impossible if our soul did not exist somewhere before being born in this human form; and so by this argument also it appears that the soul is immortal. (Ph 72e-73a)

Cebes offers proof of the doctrine of recollection by recounting the essence of the slave boy demonstration of recollection from the Meno:

When people are questioned, if you put the questions well, they answer correctly of themselves about everything; and yet if they had not within them some knowledge and right reason, they could not do this. And that this is so is shown most clearly if you take them to mathematical diagrams or anything of that sort.
(Ph 73a-b)

Socrates adds his own agreement to what Cebes says, thus indicating that the doctrine as introduced in the Meno is still held. This is then supplemented by an argument which ties knowledge of the forms to recollection.

Socrates begins by asserting that when, by perceiving one thing, one "knows not only that thing, but also has a perception of some other thing, the knowledge of which is not the same, but different"(Ph 73c), then the perception of the other thing is due to a kind of recollection. Such recollection can be stimulated by similar or by dissimilar things.(Ph 74a) Knowledge of forms is stimulated by perception of similar things. It is by seeing particulars which appear equal (eg. "particular pieces of wood or stones") that one perceives a knowledge of abstract equality, the form of equality.(Ph 74b) One is further able to recognise that apparently equal particulars fall short of possessing true equality.(Ph 74d) But one can only recognise that particulars which appear equal are not truly equal if one

can compare one's perception of such particulars to a knowledge of true equality which one already possesses. (Ph 75a) As the senses are acquired at birth, prior possession of such knowledge can only be explained by possession of it prior to birth. (Ph 75b-c)

It is not only knowledge of "the equal and the greater and the less, but [of] all such abstractions" which is acquired in this way; this includes "absolute beauty and the absolute good and the just and the holy, and ... all those things which we stamp with the seal of 'absolute' in our dialectical process of questions and answers" (Ph 75c-d). Such knowledge is acquired prior to birth and then forgotten at birth. The process of recapturing such knowledge through the stimulation of the senses is called learning, but one should "be right in calling this recollection". (Ph 75e) Socrates goes on to conclude that the pre-natal existence of the soul and the existence of the forms are interdependent, suggesting that it is "equally certain that provided these things [the forms] exist our souls also existed before we were born, and that if these do not exist neither did our souls" (Ph 76e).

The doctrine of recollection is thus again, as in the Meno, expressly identified as the manner in which one 'learns'. Knowledge is of the forms, and one regains such knowledge through recollection. The conviction with which this doctrine is held is reaffirmed by its role later in

the dialogue. Socrates points out(Ph 92c) that Simmias's suggestion that the soul is a harmony of the elements of the body is incompatible with the doctrine of recollection. The doctrine of recollection is considered to be sufficiently certain that it in itself is grounds for rejection of the harmony theory.²

The doctrine presented in the Phaedo asserts that recollection of the objects of knowledge is accomplished through reason stimulated by similar sensible particulars. This emphasis is different from that of the Meno account, which asserts that if one recollects something, one can then recollect further relations to other objects of knowledge. The compatibility of these accounts is shown by the slave boy demonstration from the Meno. Prior to the demonstration the slave boy must have already experienced Phaedo-style recollection, for he knew things from which he could reason. He was familiar with squares, both their shape and that their sides are equal.(M 82b-c) He also knew how to count(M 82d), indicating that he was familiar with numbers. It is from these initial bits of knowledge that the slave boy recollects the answer to the geometrical problem; thus the slave boy must have experienced Phaedo-style individual recollection before being able to experience Meno-style relational recollection. Plato has not changed his view of recollection from the Meno to the Phaedo, but rather has broadened it.

III.iii) Hypotheses

The version of the method of hypothesis presented in the Phaedo explicitly formulates important methodological aspects found in the Meno version, as well as altering aspects found to be problematic in the earlier version. The belief that "all nature is akin", and hence that one can "by remembering one single thing ... discover everything else"(both M 81d) remains. The nature of this kinship, and hence the nature of the manner in which one can from one thing "discover" the next related thing, is the primary interpretational issue of the Phaedo account of the method. The doctrine of recollection being here reasserted provides support for an interpretation of the method of discovery as intuitional rather than deductive, while the application of method Socrates provides adds further weight to this view.

The method of hypothesis becomes prominent in a section (Ph 91c-107b) in which Socrates responds to difficulties raised by two interlocutors. A statement of method of reasoning by hypothesis is given in two passages (Ph 100a and 101d-e). The break between the passages consists of Socrates' attempt to clarify his meaning in the first of these passages by means of applying the method there described to the question at issue.

III.iii.a) Statement of Method at 100a

After offering an (allegedly) autobiographical account of his initial attempt to discover the cause of generation and decay³, Socrates next describes his second attempt (deuteron ploun) to resolve the issue. Afraid of blinding his soul by further sensory attempts to grasp reality, Socrates takes refuge in reason to contemplate "the truth of realities" ("tôn ontôn tên alêtheian"). He is careful to point out, however, that by proceeding in this way he is not at all becoming more dependent upon employing images to study reality than through his previous employment of the senses.⁴

This point made, Socrates next describes the method of reasoning he follows:

but at any rate in this way I set out, and hypothesising each time a reason [logon] which I judge to be soundest, whatever seems to me to agree [sumphônein] with this, I set down as being true, both concerning cause and concerning all the other realities, but whatever not [to agree], [I set down] as not true. (Ph 100a)(my translation)

all' oun dê tautê ge hôrmêsa, kai hupothemenos hekastote logon hon an krinô errômenestaton einai, ha men an moi dokê toutô sumphônein, tithêmi hês alêthê onta, kai peri aitias kai peri tôn allôn hapantôn tôn ontôn, ha d' an mê, hês ouk alêthê.
(Ph 100a)

There are two indications that the method described here is for general application rather than only for the discovery of cause. One is the wording: Socrates hypothesises 'each time' (hekastote), rather than this time only, and

he applies the method not only concerning cause, but also concerning "all the other realities". The other indication is the tense of the wording: Socrates switches from the past tense to describe his search to discover cause ("I set out"(hormêsa, 1st aorist of hormaô, 'to start')) to the present tense to describe his general applications ("I judge"(krinô), "I set down"(tithêmi)).

On each occasion Socrates hypothesises a reason which he judges to be soundest. A reason (logon) is expressed as a proposition, but whether a reason need be a particular sort of proposition is not indicated. The example Socrates later offers is qualitative--the forms exist (ie. have the property of existence)⁵.(Ph 100b) Socrates also earlier refers to another proposition, that the soul is a harmony, as a hypothesis(Ph 94b), and this latter proposition is also qualitative. If hypotheses are meant to lead to knowledge, and knowledge is of the forms, then it is likely that hypotheses are propositions about (the nature of) the forms. Socrates makes no statement for or against this likelihood.⁶

What makes one judge a particular reason to be soundest is not discussed. One wants a hypothesis to be the reason both most likely to resolve the issue and least likely to be refuted. But how one can tell this prior to testing possible hypotheses is left open. Only one's intuition is available for guidance at this point.⁷

Interpreting intuition as early-stage recollection, one hypothesises the proposition which seems most in accordance with one's recollection of reality at the time.

After hypothesising the reason which he judges to be soundest, Socrates sets down as being true whatever seems to him to agree (sumphônein) with this reason, and to set down as not true whatever seems not to. At this point the statement of method is broken off in favour of a clarification of what has been said thus far. This passage is best interpreted in conjunction with that clarification, which takes the form of an application of the method described thus far to the topic under discussion, the cause of generation and decay.

Defenders of the orthodox interpretation of the method of hypothesis have made numerous efforts to interpret sumphônein in this passage in such a way as to produce an overall procedure which is logically defensible. Those with this intention assume that there are only two possible meanings of sumphônein in this passage: sumphônein and its negation mean either consistency/inconsistency or deducibility/non-deducibility. Neither of these readings is alone satisfactory, however, leading interpreters to combine the two options in an effort to produce what they consider to be a satisfactory result.

A straight reading of sumphônein and its negation as either consistency/inconsistency or deducibility/

non-deducibility fails because each alternative is only half acceptable. While inconsistency with an (assumed true) hypothesis is grounds for denying the truth of a proposition, mere consistency with the hypothesis is inadequate for asserting the truth of a proposition. For propositions with sufficiently little relevance to the hypothesis, both the proposition and its negation could be consistent with (ie. could possibly be true concurrently with) the hypothesis. If consistency is considered adequate for assertion of truth, then such propositions and their negations would be considered concurrently true. As the body of truths must be consistent, this is an unacceptable outcome. Similarly, while the deducibility of a proposition from a hypothesis guarantees its truth if the hypothesis is true, the non-deducibility of a proposition from a hypothesis is inadequate for asserting that the proposition is not true. Insufficiently relevant propositions should not be regarded as not true simply because they cannot be deduced from the hypothesis. Rather, propositions which lack sufficient relevance to the hypothesis should not be assigned truth values at all. It is these difficulties which lead to the orthodox interpretation of the method described at 100a. The orthodox interpretation combines the acceptable halves of the above alternatives; by taking sumphônein to mean 'be deducible from' and not-sumphônein

to mean 'be inconsistent with' a logically defensible procedure is created.

One consequence of the hybrid interpretation described above is that it leaves Plato looking "careless and vague" for not expressing his meaning more clearly. This prompts the question why he would be so. It is true that Plato is not always precise in explaining his meaning in the dialogues. However, Plato is a thinker of extreme depth and imagination, and one result of the scope of philosophy which he explores is that he is necessarily vague when discussing matters where precision is not possible. There are points where speculation, or silence, is all one is capable of. A charge of vagueness is therefore sometimes accurate. A charge of carelessness is another matter altogether, and one not to be taken lightly.

Robinson suggests that Plato "chooses to be inaccurate, or at least inadequate, in order to preserve conversational simplicity." (Robinson 1953, p129) This explanation does not sit well with the dramatic action of the dialogue. Socrates follows his statement of method at 100a by saying that he wishes to clarify his comments, for, as he tells Cebes, "I think you do not understand me now." Agrees Cebes, "Not very well, certainly" (both Ph 100a). This clearly shows that a claim that Plato has compromised his language in order to "preserve conversational simplicity" is misplaced, for the ensuing

lack of comprehension on Cebes's part denies the benefit the claim asserts. Conversational simplicity which confuses one is not simplicity at all. Also, Plato has language to express particular relations if he wishes to use it. Hackforth notes that sumphônein, the relational term Plato uses in this passage, is "not, one would think, a natural substitute for sumbainein, which is the ordinary word in Plato and elsewhere for resulting by inference."

(Hackforth 1952, p139) Why Plato would substitute a less common (and more easily misunderstood) term for his usual one in order to preserve "conversational simplicity" is curious at the least.

A reading of sumphônein consistent in both its positive and negative senses must surely be preferred.⁸ Also, as is discussed below, the clarification/application of this passage which Socrates provides immediately following his statement of method not only fails to support a reading of sumphônein as 'be deducible from', but in fact indicates otherwise, thus rendering the composite reading untenable.

Another reading, proposed by Sayre, holds that propositions which symphonise with the hypothesis are both deducible from and consistent with the hypothesis, and conversely that propositions which do not symphonise with the hypothesis are both not deducible from and inconsistent with the hypothesis. The basis of this interpretation is the method of geometrical analysis. This method builds

on the point, "geometers typically are concerned with deductions in which both premises and conclusions are statements of equality which are mutually convertible" (Sayre 1969, p22). A proposition which one wishes to prove is used as the beginning of a chain of equivalent propositions. When the chain reaches a proposition which is known independently to be true, the equivalence of all its parts (ie. their mutual convertibility) allows for the direction of the chain to be reversed, thus permitting one to start with what is known and end with what is to be proven. Sayre suggests that Plato's undoubted familiarity with such mathematical techniques makes it reasonable to consider that Plato's method of hypothesis works in a similar fashion.

Sayre's suggestion is, if we "conceive the propositions in question [a hypothesis h and propositions which do or fail to symphonise with h] according to the analogy of the convertible propositions employed in geometrical analysis, these methodological instructions [at 100a] make perfectly good sense." (Sayre 1969, p28) This is because "any proposition (expressible in common terms with h) is either inconsistent with h or entailed by h ." (Sayre 1969, p28) Contextually, Sayre claims that the primary characters of the dialogue ("Cebes and Simmias in the prison audience and Echecrates in the 'outer dialogue'"), being ("mathematical" rather than "religious") Pythagoreans, would "naturally think of the hypotheses and related

assertions that Socrates was discussing as convertible propositions."(Sayre 1969, p21) Using this perspective, claims Sayre, makes "the difficulties ... disappear and Socrates' comments on method become perfectly lucid."
(Sayre 1969, p21)

Too much must be given away to give Sayre's position credence. The mutual convertibility of the propositions involved is essential to Sayre's position. Yet, Sayre himself notes, "it is a feature of geometry, not shared by logic either now or then, that it deals for the most part with assertions of equality"(Sayre 1969, p23)(my emphasis). Given Sayre's further observation, "If not all the successive consequences ... are convertible with their antecedents, then of course nothing is gained for the proof of the proposition in question"(Sayre 1969, p24), it appears that Sayre's suggestion, while theoretically appealing, has little practical value. Add to this the fact that, as with the orthodox interpretation, the clarification/application Socrates provides clashes with Sayre's suggestion, and a reading of sumphônein as both deducible from and consistent with also becomes untenable.

A major consideration in determining how to read sumphônein in this particular passage is how Plato uses the term elsewhere. Plato uses the term in both Phaedo passages which discuss the method of hypothesis, but not elsewhere in the dialogue. Examples are therefore drawn from other

dialogues considered to belong to the same general period of Plato's work as the Phaedo (ie. the latter early period and the middle period dialogues).⁹

The term sumphôn- comes from the words sun-, meaning 'along with', 'together', 'at the same time', and phônê, meaning 'a sound', 'a tone'. The parts combine to form the term's general meaning of 'sound together', 'be in harmony or unison' (LSJ)¹⁰. This is most literally a musical term, and Plato does use it in that sense. In the Symposium Eryximachus, in explicit reference to music, says, "harmony is consonance, and consonance is a kind of agreement" ("hê gar harmonia sumphônia esti, sumphônia de homologia tis") (S 187b). This example not only demonstrates the musical sense of the term, but also reveals something more significant. sumphôn- does not just mean 'sound together', but rather sound of a particular sort - a harmony, an agreement. This positive aspect of sumphôn- is reflected in the fact that it has a contrary (diaphôn-, used in explicit contrast to sumphôn- at Phaedo 101d).

Sumphôn- is also used in the sense of agreement of human sound - voices, or reasoning. This is the sense of sumphôn- relevant to the Phaedo passages. Plato artfully combines this latter sense with a musical context in book III of the Republic. There, Socrates discusses first what is appropriate regarding "that part of music that concerns speeches and tales". Going on to songs and tunes, Socrates

suggests that everybody could discover what must be said of their character, "if we're going to remain in accord with what has already been said" ("eiper mellomen tois proeirêmenois sumphônêsein") (R 398c). Other examples of sumphôn- meaning agreement in reasoning include Cratylus 415b - "since it agrees with everything we have said before" ("sumphônei gar tois emprosthen pasin") and Phaedrus 270c - "However, we ought not to be content with the authority of Hippocrates, but to see also if our reason agrees with him on examination" ("khre mentoi pros tô Hippokratei ton logon eksetadzonta skopein, ei sumphônei").

The important distinction to be drawn is the one between mere logical consistency and the sense of agreement argued for here. The difficulty with reading sumphôn- as mere logical consistency is that propositions unrelated to the hypothesis still get assigned truth values, whereas no truth value implication is warranted from an unrelated hypothesis. It is to avoid this difficulty that many commentators opt for a reading of sumphôn- as implication instead. Rather, Sayre is on the right track in discussing propositions "expressible in common terms with [hypothesis] h" (Sayre 1969, p28). He is quite right that the propositions concerned must have at least one common term with the hypothesis. Sayre's position fails because it is dependent upon propositions being completely expressible in common terms with the hypothesis in order to be assigned truth

values. Such propositions would have truth values, but, under Plato's method of hypothesis, so do propositions only partially expressible in common terms with the hypothesis, a point Sayre's position cannot account for.

The logical consistency/unrelated propositions trap is not applicable to Plato's method because sumphôn- means to agree on something common. To symphonise or not symphonise presupposes that the propositions so related are relevant to each other, or share a common term. Musical notes all symphonise in the positive or negative sense because they all have pitches, and the only relations available to notes are concord and discord. Speech (ie. reasoning) has the added possibility of no relation at all. Lack of a common element (ie. propositions with no common terms) makes some propositions neither concordant nor discordant; they are simply unrelated. If sumphôn- is read as relevantly logical consistency (= classically logical consistency + at least one common term), then the difficulty of consistent but unrelated propositions being set down as true does not arise.

If sumphôn- means relevantly logical consistency, then diaphôn- may sensibly be read as relevantly logical inconsistency (although the possession of common terms is required for classically logical inconsistency also). It remains to be shown, however, whether not-sumphôn- is the same as diaphôn-, or whether not-sumphôn- is distinguished

by its inclusion of unrelated propositions (ie. it must be shown that sumphôn- and not-sumphôn- are not simply contraries, but rather are contradictories).

A reading of not-sumphôn- as including unrelated propositions is unlikely for two reasons. First, the distinction between not agree (ie. not-sumphôn-) and disagree (ie. diaphôn-) is a logical one, but not necessarily one ordinarily observed. Though having no view on a subject is technically not agreeing with any particular view, to say that one does not agree is ordinarily to say more than that one has no view. Rather, to not agree is ordinarily to disagree, or to hold a clashing view. Plato has made no effort to indicate that a distinction between not agree and disagree is here being observed. The ordinary language reading of not-sumphôn- (not agree) in this passage is diaphôn- (disagree).

Second, a reading of not-sumphôn- as implying actual inconsistency rather than just the absence of relevantly logical consistency is supported by examples from Plato's work. At Cratylus 433b, after demonstrating that one position Cratylus has claimed clashes with another he claims, Socrates exhorts him to abandon one of them, "for if you maintain both positions, you cannot help contradicting yourself" ("ei gar tauta amphotera ereis, oukh hoios t'esei sumphônein sautô"). What is translated by Fowler as "cannot help contradicting" is more literally 'will not be

able to symphonise with'. Plato thus directly relates inconsistency to not-sumphôn-. Similarly, at Gorgias 457e Socrates tells Gorgias, "your present remarks do not seem to me quite in keeping or accord with what you said at first" ("hoti nun emoi dokeis su ou panu akoloutha legein oude sumphôna hois to prôton eleges"). That Gorgias's remarks are inconsistent make his later remarks not in accord, or more literally not in symphony ("oude sumphôna") with his earlier. Again inconsistency is tied to not symphonising.

To assess whether or not propositions symphonise presupposes that the propositions in question are relevant to each other. Once this presupposition is granted, then sumphôn- and not-sumphôn- can be seen for what they are to Plato, not just contraries but actual contradictories. An examination of Plato's use of sumphôn- and not-sumphôn- in other dialogues thus reveals a reading of sumphôn- as relevantly logical consistency, or coherence, and of not-sumphôn- as relevantly logical inconsistency, or incoherence.¹¹

III.iii.b) Clarification/Application of Method at 100a

A second major consideration in interpreting Plato's use of sumphônein in this passage is the application Socrates offers at 100b(ff) to clarify his meaning at 100a. Socrates starts out his application by demonstrating the first part of the method at 100a, and hypothesises the reason he judges

to be soundest. In this case Socrates hypothesises, "there are such things as absolute beauty and good and greatness and the like."(Ph 100b) Socrates then asks for, and receives, Cebes's assent to this proposition. Once that is done Socrates goes on, "see if you agree with me in the next step".

This is a significant point. By first hypothesising the existence of forms, and getting assent to that proposition before going on, Socrates is clearly establishing that as the hypothesis. By setting out that the next step is the next step ("ta heksês ekeinois"), Socrates is establishing that what follows is not also part of the hypothesis, but is rather something he has set down as true because it symphonises with the hypothesis. What follows is Socrates' belief, "if anything is beautiful besides absolute beauty it is beautiful for no other reason than because it partakes of absolute beauty; and this applies to everything."(Ph 100c)¹²

The relation of this second step to the original hypothesis is not that of logical deducibility, as the orthodox interpretation requires. The hypothesis that forms exist does not entail that things have their qualities only by partaking of the appropriate forms. Consequently, neither is this second step mutually convertible with the hypothesis, as Sayre's interpretation requires. Rather, the second step simply coheres with the hypothesis. It shares a common

element with the hypothesis (ie. forms)(therefore providing relevance), but rather than containing some of what the hypothesis does and nothing else (implication), or all that the hypothesis does and nothing else (mutual convertibility), the second step adds something the hypothesis lacks. That forms exist does not carry with it that such forms have (Vlastosian) causal efficacy.¹³

One way commentators have tried to circumvent this difficulty (the non-entailment of Socrates' second step by his first) is to claim that the causal efficacy of the forms is part of Socrates' hypothesis. It may be that after propositions are judged to symphonise with a hypothesis they are then treated as part of the new, expanded hypothesis. Thus, references after this point to causal efficacy as part of the hypothesis would not be a difficulty. But, such causal efficacy is clearly not a part of the original hypothesis, and cannot be treated as part of the hypothesis until its addition to the hypothesis has been adequately accounted for. As noted, a reading of sumphônein as either entailment or mutual convertibility fails to account for setting the causal efficacy of forms down as true from a starting hypothesis of the existence of the forms. The reading of sumphônein as relevantly consistent does meet this need, for the second step is both relevant to and consistent with the first. To simply posit the second step

as part of the first, as the orthodox interpretation requires, is to ignore the text.

Although only the passage at 100b-101d is expressly referred to as an application of the method of hypothesis, earlier in the dialogue Socrates provides three other arguments for the immortality of the soul. As the Phaedo is a literary whole, it is reasonable to consider analyses of these arguments as possible further evidence of Socrates' method of reasoning, although references to why Socrates reasons as he does are unlikely given that these arguments precede his statement of method.¹⁴

The first argument for the immortality of the soul is the cyclical argument(Ph 69e-72e). Socrates proposes that a sufficient proof that disembodied souls exist would be, "if it should really be made evident that the living are born only from the dead"(Ph 70d). This argument contains two main steps. The first step is that everything which has an opposite is generated from its opposite and from it only (Ph 70e). The second step is that there are between pairs of opposites what may be called two kinds of generation, from one to the other and back again from the other to the first(Ph 71a-b). Socrates then applies these views to the soul, suggesting that living and being dead are generated from each other(Ph 71c), and that the corresponding processes of generation are coming to life and dying(Ph 71e-72a).

Each of these steps leads to the conclusion that the living are generated from the dead and the dead from the living (Ph 71d-e, 72a).

The two steps here are recognisably two distinct steps. After establishing his first proposition, that all things are generated from opposites, Socrates next goes on, "Now then" ("ti d' au"), where au ('further', 'moreover', 'besides'(LSJ)) clearly indicates the introduction of something over and above what precedes it. As in the application of method at 100b-101d, the second step here is not deducible from the first (for logically there could be more, or less, than two kinds of generation). Rather, the second step symphonises with the first; that is to say, it coheres with it. While the first step is not identified as a hypothesis (the term 'hypothesis' is not used in the dialogue until 92d), it is treated as the beginning of the line of reasoning, and therefore consideration of the relation of other accepted propositions to it is relevant here.

It is important to note that the fact that Socrates gives further reasons for the second step does not undermine the interpretation I propose here. Socrates is trying to convince Cebes of the second step, but Socrates' own reason for accepting it need not be the ones he offers Cebes. The personal nature of dialectical discussion requires that Socrates offer reasons convincing to his interlocutor.¹⁵

This is in contrast to the method described at 100a, where Socrates is describing the method by which he himself reasons, and not the method by which he convinces others. Socrates may thus accept the second step because it symphonises with his first, and yet feel required to provide Cebes with additional reasons.¹⁶

The second argument for immortality is the recollection argument(Ph 72e-78b), which is discussed briefly above (III.ii). This argument ties together recollection, the forms, and the immortality of the soul. While proving that learning is actually recollection, Socrates concurrently argues that the existence of the forms and the pre-natal existence of the soul stand or fall together.

This argument also has two initial steps, the development of the argument as a whole being an elaboration of the second step. Socrates first suggests that they all agree, "if anyone is to remember anything, he must know it at some previous time"(Ph 73c). He next verifies agreement on a second point: "Then do we agree to this also, that when knowledge comes in such a way, it is recollection?" (Ph 73c) This is clearly offered as an additional point in need of separate agreement: "Then do we agree to this also" (my emphasis)("ar' oun kai tode homologoumen"). This second point gives further information about how someone recollects.

When one by perceiving one thing has a perception of some other thing, "the knowledge of which is not the same but different", then the process of acquiring the second perception is recollection. Thus recollection is a process of acquiring a perception, and this process is itself stimulated by some other perception.¹⁷ This second step is again coherent with, but not deducible from, the first, making the recollection argument also compatible with the interpretation of method proposed here.

The third argument for immortality is the affinity argument(Ph 78b-84b). This argument resembles the method used in the Meno, of introducing a third component in trying to answer a question. There the question was, 'what kind of thing must virtue be in the class of mental properties, so as to be teachable or not', where the 'kind of thing' is taken to be knowledge. In the affinity argument Socrates proceeds similarly. Responding to Simmias's fear that the soul disperses at death, thus ending one's existence, Socrates replies,

What kind of thing naturally suffers dispersion, and for what kind of thing might we naturally fear it, and again what kind of thing is not liable to it? And after this must we not inquire to which class the soul belongs and base our hopes or fears for our souls upon the answers to these questions?(Ph 78b)

The "kind of thing" in this case is taken to be compositeness: "is not that which is compounded and composite naturally liable to be decomposed, in the same way in which it was

compounded? And if anything is uncompounded is not that, if anything, naturally unlikely to be decomposed?"(Ph 78b-c)

Having linked "incompositeness with indestructibility", Socrates next links "constancy with incompositeness" (Gallop 1975, p137). He suggests, "it is most probable that things which are always the same and unchanging are the uncompounded things and the things that are changing and never the same are the composite things"(Ph 78c). This second proposition sets up the 'constancy implies incompositeness implies indestructibility' link that Socrates is about to employ. The second proposition coheres with the initial proposition that anything incomposite is unlikely to decompose, but it is not deducible from it. The propositions merely symphonise.

After suggesting that forms remain the same and never admit of change, Socrates employs reasoning again based on coherence rather than deducibility. He assumes, first, "two kinds of existences, one visible, the other invisible", and next, "the invisible is always the same and the visible constantly changing"(both Ph 79a). These steps are also related by coherence and not deducibility.¹⁸

Thus in all three arguments Socrates employs reasoning in which steps are related by coherence. Each second step is not deducible from the first, but rather symphonises with it. In no case is the second step a logical consequence of the first, as application of the method of

hypothesis under the orthodox interpretation leads one to expect. Rather, the second steps simply cohere with the first steps, as the interpretation of method proposed here leads one to expect.

III.iii.c) Statement of Method at 101d-e

After discussing why participation in forms is the safe causal reason, Socrates provides an extended further statement of method:

and if someone were to hold on to the hypothesis itself, you would disregard him and you would not reply, until you examined whether the things that proceed from that [hypothesis] to you agree or disagree with another; and when you needed to give yourself a reason for that [hypothesis] itself, you would give [a reason] in like manner, hypothesising once more another hypothesis, the one which of those above appeared best, until you came to something sufficient, but you would not mix [these steps] up at the same time speaking about the beginning and the things proceeding from that [beginning], if indeed you wished to discover something of the realities. (Ph 101d-e) (my translation)

ei de tis autês tês hupotheseôs ekhoito, khairein eôês an kai ouk apokrinaio, heôs an ta ap' ekeinês hormêthenta skepsaio, ei soi allêlois sumphônei ê diaphônei: epeidê de ekeinês autês deoi se didonai logon, hôsautôs an didoiês, allên au hupothesein hupothemenos, hêtis tôn anôthen beltistê phainoito, heôs epi ti hikanon elthois, hama de ouk an phuroio hōsper hoi antilogikoi peri te tês arkhês dialegomeno kai tôn eks ekeinês hōrmēmenôn, eiper bouloio ti tôn ontôn heurein. (Ph 101d-e)₁₉

Socrates establishes two separate procedural steps at this point. First, one examines whether the things that proceed from the hypothesis agree or disagree with each other.

Second, the hypothesis is itself grounded by appeal to a sufficient higher hypothesis. The steps are not to be mixed if one hopes to discover something real.

The passage is a resumption of the description of method begun at 100a. One can only compare the things which proceed from the hypothesis after having had things proceed from it, and this is a reference to the propositions which are set down as true by virtue of symphonising with the hypothesis, as described at 100a. Also, the reference that a reason for the hypothesis itself is given "in like manner" can only refer to 100a, where one hypothesises the soundest logon. Just as the first passage, "taken by itself, can hardly be said to indicate a method at all"

(Hackforth 1952, p139), and thus relies on the second passage for completion, so too the second passage cannot stand without being complemented by the first passage.

The first step indicated at 101d is to "examine whether the things that proceed from that [hypothesis] to you agree or disagree with another". Plato here again shies away from indicating that he means logical consequences deduced from the hypothesis. He does not refer to sumbainonta, or things resulting from inference, but rather to hormêthenta, or things which 'proceed from' the hypothesis. hormêthenta symphonise with the hypothesis (it is by virtue of this that they are hormêthenta), but they are not deducible from it. Plato has the language to indicate deducibility and chooses not to use it.²⁰

The instruction to examine whether hormêthenta agree or disagree (sumphônei ê diaphônei) with each other sheds further light on the nature of sumphônein. An interpretation of sumphônein as meaning deducibility is here unlikely; as Sayre notes, "Only rarely, if ever, would the consequences of a dialectician's argument entail each other, and there is no reason Plato might have for thinking that they ever should." (Sayre 1969, p20n23) Defenders of the orthodox interpretation agree that consistency is the intended meaning here. Plato (it is alleged) is suggesting that the consistency of the system be verified because if the consequences of the hypothesis "involve any contradiction or absurdity ... the hypothesis is ipso facto destroyed." (Burnet 1911, p113)

This explanation of the procedure leads to a demand for its justification, for "no single proposition can logically entail consequences that do, in fact, contradict each other" (Gallop 1975, p189), and thus the step seems without purpose. Robinson defends the procedure by noting two cases of how consequences may be inconsistent: either "The hypothesis may be a whole of parts, and one of them may be latently inconsistent with another" (Robinson 1953, p132), thus generating inconsistent consequences, or consequences may conflict with "some of our permanent beliefs", and it is actually with these beliefs that the consequences are checked.

Robinson's second case is a reasonable additional suggestion, but it does not match the text. Plato indicates that the hormêthenta are to be compared with one another, not with any external beliefs. Thus only Robinson's first case remains, but it only applies if the hypothesis happens to be a malformed complex. This suggests that Plato is presupposing an inability to form a self-consistent hypothesis by building in a safeguard, an unwarranted implication.²¹

Interpreting sumphônein as 'to cohere' provides a more natural reading of this step. As is noted above, it is not only possible but likely that mutually inconsistent propositions will cohere with a given hypothesis. It is obviously unacceptable to allow all such propositions to stand as true. Therefore Plato instructs that propositions found to cohere with the hypothesis must next be examined to determine if they cohere with one another. When this is not the case, the more sound proposition is retained and the less sound one rejected. The step is now meaningful, and applies to all hypotheses.

One result of interpreting sumphônein as 'to cohere' is that one of the most basic assumptions of the orthodox interpretation, that hypotheses generating inconsistent hormêthenta must be rejected, is denied. Most, if not all, hypotheses will generate inconsistent hormêthenta. This is not a mark of inadequacy of the hypothesis, for it is in the

nature of the method which reasons by means of hypothesis to produce such outcomes. The examination of the hormêthenta is not an attempt to treat a hypothesis as the self-refuting thesis of the (misunderstood) Socratic elenchus, for, as is noted above, the elenchus refutes a thesis by deducing its negation from other premises, not from its own consequences. If a hypothesis is inconsistent with other firmly held premises and thus would fail an elenctic examination, then it is not the soundest logon, and is not hypothesised in the first place. The soundest hypothesis is the one already compatible with firmly held beliefs which most appeals to intuition.²² It is no mark against such a hypothesis that mutually inconsistent propositions will cohere with it, and Plato does not say that a hypothesis generating inconsistent hormêthenta must be rejected. All that is necessary is that the hormêthenta be themselves brought into a coherent state before higher reasons are sought. Otherwise, mutually inconsistent hormêthenta might be allowed to remain, a possibility which would eventually lead to the incoherence of the system as a whole.

Once the hormêthenta of the hypothesis have been examined and necessary deletions made, the next step is to give a reason for the hypothesis itself in a like manner, by hypothesising whichever higher hypothesis appears best, until a sufficient one is reached. Given that this is

"in like manner" to the procedure described at 100a, the best 'higher' hypothesis will simply be whichever new hypothesis seems soundest while having the original hypothesis as one of its own hormêthenta.

Socrates' suggestion that the process of hypothesising a higher reason continue "until you might come to something sufficient" has been a source of considerable speculation regarding how "sufficient" the reason accepted must be. Awareness that the ultimate sufficient reason, the unhypothetical beginning, is discussed in the Republic leads some commentators to speculate that the present reference is an allusion to such a beginning. There is no indication that Plato's goal here is so high. The sufficiency required is simply the sufficiency required for any traditional dialectical discussion, and that is that it is acceptable to those involved in the discussion. Socrates' hypothesis that the forms exist is accepted by all concerned, and is therefore "sufficient". There is no indication that this hypothesis is the ultimate beginning, and if it were then Socrates' statement about finding a higher reason, which comes after he hypothesises that the forms exist, would be extremely misleading.

At the conclusion of the final argument for the immortality of the soul Socrates adds a last comment on reasoning by means of hypothesis. He advises Simmias:

our first assumptions ought to be more carefully examined, even though they seem to you to be certain. And if you analyse them completely, you will, I think, follow and agree with the argument, so far as it is possible for man to do so. And if this is made clear, you will seek no farther.
(Ph 107b)

This advice of Socrates' looks both forward and backward in terms of the development of Plato's dialectic. Emphasis on the fact that "first assumptions", even assumptions about the forms, must be carefully examined foreshadows the upward path described in the Republic, the path to that which not only seems certain but is certain. At the same time, Socrates' suggestion that if the initial hypotheses are completely analysed then Simmias will fully grasp (and accept) the argument recalls Socrates' comment in the Meno that if the slave boy repeatedly goes over the questioning he experienced then "he will have in the end as exact an understanding of [the matter at issue] as anyone." (M 85c-d)

In the Phaedo all the components of Plato's middle period dialectic are present. The forms are indicated to be reality, the object of apprehension by reason. In theory they are only recollectable. In practice Socrates reasons about them by means of hypothesis. The connection between such reasoning and the stimulation of recollection has been noted.

The view that the method of hypothesis reasons by joining coherent propositions fits well with a view that hypotheses are provisional notions of forms, for the world

of forms is likely itself coherent. Such a view of the method of hypothesis also fits the description of method given in the Phaedo. While the orthodox interpretation requires numerous explanations for difficulties (eg. why sumphônein and not-sumphônein are different logical relations, why sumphônein means deducibility at 100a and consistency at 101d, how inconsistencies can be deduced from a single hypothesis, why Socrates' application of method at 100b-101d doesn't fit the interpretation), the interpretation of sumphônein as coherence resolves all such difficulties.

IV

DIALECTIC IN THE REPUBLIC

The two related central questions of the Republic are, 'What is justice?' and 'Is justice better than injustice?'.¹ In order to better see the answers to these questions, Socrates enlarges the size of the model for examination from the just individual to the just state. The just state is to be ruled by the most suited individual, the philosopher-king, and the education and abilities of such an individual are given special attention. The key attribute of a wise ruler is aptitude in the capping-stone of all studies, dialectic.

Each of the Meno and Phaedo include both methodological statements on use of hypotheses and philosophical applications of hypotheses. The discussion of dialectic in the Republic provides neither of these. Rather, the two specific passages on dialectic(R 509d-511e and 531d-535a), and the broader section in which they occur(R 503b-540c), provide only hints of the nature of dialectic. These passages discuss movement between hypotheses and the nature of hypotheses, as well as shedding further light on the nature of the forms. The Republic also contributes by introducing the ultimate goal of upward movement through hypotheses, the unhypothetical beginning which grounds all reality.

Two main sets of issues arise from the Republic passages on dialectic. The first deals with hypotheses (and, correspondingly, forms)--what is their nature, and how are they related (ie. how does one move between them)? The second deals with the unhypothetical beginning--what is its nature, and how is it reached (ie. how does one move from hypotheses to the unhypothetical beginning)? Although the passages are vague at best, much of value can be gleaned from a careful examination of them. The information provided is not only consistent with the general interpretation of Plato's middle period dialectic proposed here, but further supports the roles of coherence and recollection which that interpretation assigns. The unhypothetical beginning grounds the system of coherent hypotheses developed through reason, and is itself recognised by an intuitive burst of direct recollection.²

IV.i) Hypotheses and Forms

The section on dialectic presupposes two classes of objects, the seen and the intellected. The first class, which is "seen but not intellected", consists of the many particular sensory objects, the "many fair things, many good things, and so on for each kind of thing"(R 507b). This class is in turn subdivided into two segments. The more obscure segment of the seen class consists of images, these being "first shadows, then appearances produced in water and

in all close-grained, smooth, bright things, and everything of the sort"(R 509e-510a). The more clear segment of this class consists of "that of which this first [segment] is the likeness--the animals around us, and everything that grows, and the whole class of artifacts."(R 510a)

The second class, which is "intellected but not seen", is the class of the truly real, the ideas, or forms: "we also assert that there is a fair itself, a good itself, and so on for all the things that we then set down as many. Now, again, we refer them to one idea of each as though the idea were one; and we address it as that which really is."(R 507b)³ The intellected class is also subdivided, in such a way that,

in one part a soul, using as images the things that were previously imitated [ie. animals and plants and artifacts], is compelled to investigate on the basis of hypotheses and makes its way not to a beginning but to an end; while in the other part it makes its way to a beginning that is free from hypotheses; starting out from hypothesis and without the images used in the other part, by means of forms themselves it makes its inquiry through them.(R 510b)

This statement is not sufficiently understood by Socrates' interlocutor Glaucon, and so elaboration is provided.

The first part of the intellected class investigates using as images the whole class of sensible particulars (ie. animals and plants and artifacts); this is the realm of the sciences ("geometry and its kindred arts"⁴). The sciences are considered inferior to dialectic for two reasons. First, the sciences make use of images in their

reasoning, while pure reasoning makes no use of such pseudo-sensory tools. Second, and perhaps more important, the sciences either do not recognise or do not acknowledge the hypothetical nature of their hypotheses. Hypotheses are provisional starting points which are later grounded by being found to symphonise with higher hypotheses. While the sciences do use their hypotheses as starting points, they do not act on their need to be further grounded. Instead,

the men who work in geometry, calculation, and the like treat as known the odd and the even, the figures, three forms of angles, and other things akin to these in each kind of inquiry. These things they make hypotheses and don't think it worthwhile to give any further account of them to themselves or others, as though they were clear to all. Beginning from them, they go ahead with their exposition of what remains and end consistently at the object toward which their investigation was directed. (R 510c-d)

It is by treating their hypotheses as known and not thinking it worthwhile to give any account of them that the sciences fall short. No genuine adequate grounding has yet been found for their hypotheses, and, most importantly, none is sought. This is in contrast to the dialectician, who recognises the need for all hypotheses to be grounded.

It is sometimes questioned just what sort of grounding is possible for such hypotheses as "the odd and the even, the figures, three forms of angles, and others akin to these". No higher hypothesis from which these can be logically deduced seems possible. This impossibility simply serves to support the reading of symphonise as

coherence. Plato appears to have realised that although there is no higher hypothesis from which such hypotheses can be deduced, there are higher hypotheses with which they can cohere. It is in this way that such hypotheses can be given a "further account".

Socrates makes clear that dialectic does recognise that hypotheses themselves need to be grounded, stating that dialectic alone treats hypotheses as "really hypotheses--that is, steppingstones and springboards"(R 511b). Socrates is here not talking about using hypotheses as steppingstones downward to an ending, as the sciences do. Rather, he is talking about using them as steppingstones upward to the ultimate grounding. The second part of the intellected class is that which:

argument itself grasps with the power of dialectic, making the hypotheses not beginnings but really hypotheses--that is steppingstones and springboards--in order to reach what is free from hypothesis at the beginning of the whole. When it has grasped this, argument now depends on that which depends on this beginning(R 511b)[.]

The affirmation of the intimate relation between forms and hypotheses also supports the reading of symphonise as coherence proposed here. Plato says interchangeably, "starting out from hypotheses and ... by means of forms themselves [a soul] makes its inquiry through them" to "a beginning that is free from hypothesis"(R 510b), and, the soul, through the power of dialectic, uses hypotheses as "steppingstones and springboards" in order to reach "what is

free from hypothesis at the beginning of the whole"(R 511b). The soul may proceed either by means of forms or by means of hypotheses because hypotheses are hypotheses about forms. Just as the world of forms is likely coherent, so too the system of propositions built by the method of hypothesis, which reflects the nature of that world of forms, is similarly coherent.

It is the ability to justify any hypothesis by providing a further account of it (ie. by providing the higher hypothesis with which it coheres) which is the mark of the dialectician.⁵ The sciences fall short because "they use hypotheses and, leaving them untouched, are unable to give an account of them."(R 533c) Only a full account which connects to the unhypothetical beginning will be sufficient to ground genuine knowledge. Nothing less will do, for, as Socrates asks, how can something known be built from what is unknown: "When the beginning is what one doesn't know, and the end and what comes in between are woven out of what isn't known, what contrivance is there for ever turning such an agreement into knowledge?"(R 533c)

Socrates follows this criticism of the sciences with a reaffirmation of the uniqueness of dialectic, claiming, "only the dialectical way of inquiry proceeds in this direction, destroying the hypotheses, to the beginning itself in order to make it secure"(R 533c).⁶ The sense in which dialectic proceeds by "destroying"(anairousa) hypotheses is

perhaps not obvious, for it seems a stronger assertion than the earlier statements that dialectic proceeds 'by means of' hypotheses. But if a hypothesis is a provisional starting point to be later grounded, then the very process of grounding it removes its status as a starting point, and hence 'destroys' its status as a hypothesis. This is the sense of anaireô as to 'annul' something (LSJ).

But what is it, by proceeding in this way, which dialectic makes secure, and in what sense is it secured? The word here translated 'secure' is bebaiôsêtai, also commonly translated as 'confirm'. Plato uses this form of bebaioô only one other time in the dialogues⁷, at Protagoras 348d. The sense there is also one of to confirm: "but if one observes something alone, forthwith one has to go about searching until one discovers somebody to whom one can show it off and who can corroborate [ie. confirm] it." ("mounos d' eiper te noêsê, autika periiôn dzêtei hotô epideiksêtai kai meth' hotou bebaiôsêtai, heôs an entokhê.") (Pr 348d) Plato is asserting that the very act of reaching "the beginning itself" (the unhypothetical beginning) confirms something, or verifies its accuracy.

In order to determine the referent of this confirmation, the statement above must be considered in context. As noted, this statement follows directly after the criticism of the sciences for not grounding their hypotheses:

[The sciences] do dream about what is; but they haven't the capacity to see it in full awakesness so long as they use hypotheses and, leaving them untouched, are unable to give an account of them. When the beginning is what one doesn't know, and the end and what comes in between are woven out of what isn't known, what contrivance is there for ever turning such an agreement into knowledge?

None, he said.

Then, I said, only the dialectical way of inquiry proceeds in this direction, destroying the hypotheses, to the beginning itself in order to make it secure(R 533b-c)[.]

It is the agreement, the coherent system consisting of the starting hypothesis and those other propositions woven out of it, which the sciences cannot turn into knowledge. This is because the sciences fail to ground the hypothesis which generates the system. It is this agreement which dialectic succeeds in turning into knowledge by making it secure, or confirming it. This is accomplished by grounding the hypothesis through developing its connection to the unhypothetical beginning. In this way the agreement, or coherent system tentatively constructed through reason, is found to be not just internally consistent, and hence a possible reflection of reality, but is in fact confirmed as an accurate reflection of reality.

Plato's wording in summing up the failure of science to lead to knowledge ("When the beginning is what one doesn't know, and the end and what comes in between are woven out of what isn't known, what contrivance is there for ever turning such an agreement into knowledge?") provides another clue into his conception of the nature of the agreement between

a hypothesis and other propositions. Socrates says that such propositions "are woven out of what isn't known"(eks hou mê oide sumpeplektai). At the least, there is no indication that such propositions are deduced from the hypothesis. Plato has the terminology to reflect logical consequences if that is his intention; here it is not. Rather, the very process of weaving is, as Plato describes it in the Statesman, "a kind of joining together"(St 281a) of existing things. The only new product of weaving is the creation of a coherent whole from the previously disconnected materials.⁸ In a similar manner one weaves the hypothesis together with those other (existing) propositions which are coherent both with it and with each other; the new product of the process is a coherent system, or agreement. The metaphor of weaving therefore aligns well with a reading of agreement as coherence.

Bloom's translation of "eks hou mê oide sumpeplektai" as "are woven out of what isn't known"(my emphasis) is potentially misleading. eks, translated by Bloom here as 'out of', might seem to suggest the sense of 'origin', of 'producing materials' ("out of or of which things are made" (LSJ)). This would suggest that further propositions are made out of the hypothesis. But, as noted above, weaving does not involve producing things; rather, weaving involves arranging things, moving them. This suggests that a better reading of eks here is the sense of 'place', of 'motion

out of', 'forth from'(LSJ). The scientist weaves by starting with the hypothesis and moves forth from there, first combining propositions directly coherent with the hypothesis, and then, farther out, propositions coherent with those propositions, until, at the farthest point away, the end toward which the investigation was directed is reached. In this way the scientist weaves a coherent system ek (from) the (unknown (ie. ungrounded)) hypothesis by conjoining the hypothesis with appropriate other propositions.

The term Plato uses for the agreement formed by the system woven from the hypothesis is homologian. This term, formed from the combination of homos ("common, joint") and logos ("explanation"), suggests a joint explanation or account. The implication that the substance of the agreement consists of a joint contribution from the hypothesis and other propositions belies the suggestion that the hypothesis is the sole source of content, while the other propositions, being (under the orthodox interpretation) deduced from it, are nothing but elaborations of the hypothesis with no additional content of their own to contribute. A joint explanation implies a multiple contribution of content, and hence denies the deducibility of all subsequent propositions from the hypothesis. Rather, the agreement is one between propositions and a hypothesis which are mutually coherent but, to at least a certain extent, independent with regard to content.

The passages here examined thus indicate that the essential nature of a hypothesis is to be a provisional starting point. Failure to ultimately use a hypothesis as a steppingstone to higher reasoning is to fail to treat it as really a hypothesis. A hypothesis can be a temporary beginning for 'downward' reasoning, but must at some point be accounted for by means of a higher explanation.

While the relation between a hypothesis and related propositions is not explicitly discussed, some relevant insight has been possible. The weaving analogy suggests the conjoining of appropriate propositions, a treatment which suggests coherence. An interpretation which sees coherence as the key relational nature also resolves the difficulty of how the hypotheses of geometry ("the odd and the even, ...") can be grounded, why either forms or hypotheses can be used on the upward path, and how the components of an agreement provide a joint explanation of something. These features serve to support the interpretation of dialectic proposed here.

The most important original contribution of the Republic to Plato's dialectic is the claim that dialectic, properly practiced, leads to apprehension of an unhypothetical beginning which grounds all reality. The nature of such a beginning, and the nature of its apprehension, are the Republic's most important dialectical issues.

IV.ii) The Unhypothetical Beginning

Only two passages in the Republic directly mention the hypothetical beginning. These passages, both of which are discussed above, are:

[the soul] makes its way to a beginning that is free from hypotheses; starting out from hypothesis and without the images used in the other part, by means of forms themselves it makes its inquiry through them. (R 510b)

and

the power of dialectic [makes] the hypotheses not beginnings but really hypotheses--that is, steppingstones and springboards--in order to reach what is free from hypothesis at the beginning of the whole. When it has grasped this, argument now depends on that which depends on this beginning. (R 511b)[.]

The difficulty is that neither of these passages is particularly informative with regard to the aspects here at issue. While (as noted above) it is claimed that the hypothetical beginning is reached by means of forms/hypotheses, how it is reached, how one reasons from the top hypothesis to the hypothetical above it, is not discussed. With regard to the nature and power of the hypothetical, all that is said is that once it has been reached, argument will depend upon it.

Another passage, also noted above, discusses the beginning, although explicit reference to this beginning as hypothetical is not made. This passage carries the claim that the beginning secures the agreement formed by hypotheses and appropriate propositions:

only the dialectical way of inquiry proceeds in this direction, destroying the hypotheses, to the beginning itself in order to make it secure (R 533c)[.]

This passage again affirms that the (unhypothetical) beginning grounds reasoning, but fails to describe the manner in which it does so.

Further insight into the unhypothetical beginning must come from Plato's description of its alter ego, the good. The identification of the unhypothetical with the good is evident in the following passages, which relate the limit of the knowable (the unhypothetical beginning) to the good:

in the knowable the last thing to be seen, and that with considerable effort, is the idea of the good; (R 517b-c)

when a man tries by discussion--by means of argument without the use of any of the senses--to attain to each thing itself that is and doesn't give up before he grasps by intellection itself that which is good itself, he comes to the very end of the intelligible realm (R 532a-b)[.]

The equating of the good with "the last [knowable] thing to be seen" and with "the very end of the intelligible realm" can only be reconciled with the passages quoted above discussing the unhypothetical beginning if the good is acknowledged to be identified with such a beginning.⁹ This in turn opens up new passages which discuss the nature and power of the unhypothetical beginning.

Plato makes three principal claims regarding the power of the good. These are that the idea of the good (i) "provides the truth to the things known" (R 508e),

(ii) "gives the power [to know] to the one who knows" (R 508e), and (iii) is responsible for the presence of existence and being in the things known(R 509b). The nature of the good is alluded to in the claims that the good is "something different from ... and still fairer than" knowledge and truth(R 508e), and that the good "isn't being but is still beyond being, exceeding it in dignity and power." (R 509b) An interpretation of these claims in the abstract would be difficult and likely inconclusive. As these claims are not methodological, and methodology is the central concern of this thesis, discussion of these claims is here limited to a demonstration of their compatibility with the interpretation of dialectic proposed here.

The good (or the unhypothetical beginning), whatever its nature in itself, is the starting point for all reality. It alone demands no further account. It is for just this reason that it is not hypothetical; it is a permanent starting point, not temporary, because no appeal need (or can) be made to a higher grounding. This unique quality makes the good logically prior to all other forms, both ontologically and epistemologically. Further, the dependence of all other hypotheses on the unhypothetical for justification, and hence truth, is paralleled by the dependence of all other forms on the good for being, and hence knowability.

The 'downward' relation of the good to the forms is parallel to the downward relation of a hypothesis to appropriate propositions, one of coherence. Just as the truth of lower hypotheses derives from their coherence with the unhypothetical (and hence their correspondence to reality), so too the forms owe their existence and being to their coherence with the good. To have existence and being is to be real, and without the quality of reality which accompanies coherence with the good, the forms would lack true being and hence not 'really' exist. It is in this way that "existence and being are in them ["the things known", the forms] as a result of it [the good]"(R 509b). The good provides "the truth to the things known" in similar fashion. Only the 'real' possess truth or can be known. It is by conferring reality on the forms due to their coherence with it that the good provides them with truth and knowability.

The good also "gives the power [to know] to the one who knows". The power to know is the latent knowledge one possesses which it is possible to recover through recollection. Socrates specifically notes, "education is not what the professions of certain men assert it to be. They presumably assert that they put into the soul knowledge that isn't in it, as though they were putting sight into blind eyes."(R 518b-c) Education is rather the process of directing the soul to 'look' in the right way so as to exercise the vision which it (latently) already possesses,

and recover the knowledge which is already in it. The good is the source of this power to know, for it is the good which is responsible for reality, the world of forms. It is as a result of its pre-natal encounter with the forms that a soul possesses the power to know, a power which in this life is exercised through recollection. The method by which one in this life is steered to 'look' in the right direction is the method of hypothesis. It is by reasoning in the right way that one awakens knowledge already held. Socrates notes that the art of stimulating discovery of knowledge "takes as given that sight is there [in the soul]"(R 518d), and concerns itself only with ensuring that the attention of the soul is directed correctly. This art, dialectic, guides reasoning to stimulate recollection.

The good is beyond knowledge, truth, and being. As a form, the good is itself knowable and possesses truth and being. However, it is logically prior to and the grounding for all other forms. It is by virtue of their coherence with the good that all other forms (including the forms of knowledge, truth, and being) partake of reality, and only because of this that they partake of knowability, truth, and being. Being logically prior, the good possesses the qualities of knowability, truth, and being independently of their respective forms. Rather than the good having these qualities by virtue of its relations to those forms, those forms have reality by virtue of their relation to the good.

It is in this way that the good is "fairer than" knowledge and truth and "beyond" being.

IV.iii) Recollection

While the doctrine of recollection is not raised explicitly in the Republic, it is implied in important ways. As noted above, the power to know is 'in' the human soul, a power best explained by recollection. Similarly, the 'upward path' of dialectic "presupposes a power of intuition which Plato, presumably, could not have explained otherwise than as anamnêsis [recollection]." (Bluck 1961, p51) This upward path is that of the Phaedo, a dialogue where recollection is expressly affirmed. The doctrine is also explicitly raised in a dialogue generally accepted as later than the Republic, the Phaedrus. There Socrates says,

every soul of man has by the law of nature beheld the realities, otherwise it would not have entered into a human being, but it is not easy for all souls to gain from earthly things a recollection of those realities Few then are left which retain an adequate recollection of them(Pd 249e-250a)[.]

The doctrine of recollection is not repudiated in the Republic. Rather, the doctrine is both implied by the Republic and asserted in dialogues before and after the Republic. It is thus reasonable to include recollection in the explanation of how the good gives the power to know to the one who knows.

While the passages examined here are clearly compatible with the interpretation of dialectic I propose, they add little to it in terms of providing new information. But even these passages surpass Plato's discussion of how the unhypothetical beginning is itself grasped, for on this latter matter Plato says nothing. The method he has provided to reason upward by means of hypothesis has nothing to say about how one grasps the top rung, the unhypothetical beginning itself. Consideration of this matter, however, reveals it to be misdirected.

How one discovers the unhypothetical beginning is no more (and no less) mysterious than how one discovers any justifying hypothesis, for the relation between the highest hypothesis and the unhypothetical beginning is identical to that of any hypothesis and its justifying higher hypothesis, one of coherence. The real issue is how one knows that what has been reached is the unhypothetical beginning (which needs no further justification) rather than simply another hypothesis (which does need further justification). How does one who grasps the unhypothetical beginning recognise that it is in fact the unhypothetical beginning?

The answer here is the same as it was when Meno first posed the question--recollection. One recollects not only what the unhypothetical beginning is, one recollects that it is such a beginning. Although Plato does not explicitly affirm this, it is the most plausible answer given the material

he provides. As Robinson suggests, it simply dawns on the dialectician that the highest hypothesis "is no longer an hypothesis but an anhypotheton", where "the last event, the 'dawn', is something like what was afterwards meant by the doctrine of intuition"(Robinson 1953, p173). Robinson adds (correctly, I believe),

the dialectician on the upward path is gradually strengthening his mental vision until he can apprehend not merely the effects with which he had to start but also the cause of these effects; but he is not demonstrating the existence of that cause except in the sense in which the raising of the curtain demonstrates the existence of the stage.(Robinson 1953, p174)

It is the method of hypothesis, guided by recollection, which strengthens one's "mental vision" until the time the curtain is raised and the good is itself recollected.

The nature of this 'curtain raising' is not described in the Republic, but there are allusions to it in two other sources. In the Symposium Diotima describes to Socrates a stepwise mental ascent similar to that of the method of hypothesis. At the final step, after having passed from view to higher view,

suddenly [one] will have revealed to him, as he draws to the close of his dealings ... a wondrous vision, beautiful in its nature; and this, Socrates, is the final object of all those previous toils. (§ 210e)

This sudden wondrous vision is comparable to that described in Plato's discussion of philosophy in Epistle VII:

as a result of continued application to the subject itself and communion therewith, it is brought to birth in the soul on a sudden, as light that is kindled by a leaping spark, and thereafter it nourishes itself. (VII 341c)

Plato claims in Epistle VII that the secret of philosophy "does not at all admit of verbal expression like other studies" (VII 341c); it is likely for this reason that the ultimate goal of rational thought remains a mystery, not to be found described in the dialogues.

Robinson observes, "Plato in the Republic claims the possibility of certainty for the dialectician without having any more method at his command than the Phaedo gave him." (Robinson 1953, p172) This is correct. However, if I have interpreted correctly, then the method at Plato's command in the Phaedo, which is a method for recollection, is sufficient for its task.

V

CONCLUSION

There is no question that Plato does not explicitly endorse the interpretation of dialectic I am proposing here, and no such claim is being made. What is in question is what interpretation of dialectic Plato does endorse. He does not tell us in so many words. Instead, he leaves us a jigsaw puzzle of statements, demonstrations, and allusions, and it is for us to fit the pieces together.

The first task is to determine which are the pieces. I suggest above that Plato's middle period dialectic has three principal components: the theory of forms, the doctrine of recollection, and the method of hypothesis. The forms constitute the object of dialectic, recollection and reasoning by hypothesis its method. Both recollection and reasoning by hypothesis play significant roles in the dialogues in which they appear, roles which attest to their place in Plato's epistemology.

In the Meno the study of virtue comes to a halt with Meno's objection that perhaps learning is impossible. Socrates' response is to contend that 'learning is wholly recollection', and he subsequently demonstrates that doctrine, via a slave boy, showing that one starting with

a few basic pieces of knowledge can, with proper questioning, learn/recall other related pieces of knowledge. As a result of this proof of the possibility of learning, the study of virtue resumes. Socrates suggests at that point that the method they employ in their effort to gain knowledge of virtue be reasoning 'from a hypothesis'. In the Phaedo the doctrine of recollection is reaffirmed in its original form. Additionally, it is given an elaboration which explains how the first pieces of knowledge are obtained. It is by the stimulation of perception of similar sensible particulars that one recognises the true essence of the similar quality. As such a perfect essence is not encountered in this life, it is known by recollection of a pre-natal encounter. The doctrine of recollection is considered sufficiently strong to form the basis for a proof of the immortality of the soul. Socrates' hypothesis for the final proof, that forms exist, must also be based on recollection, for it would be by recollection that Socrates is aware of the forms. Socrates' method of reasoning beyond this initial assertion is the method of hypothesis. In the Republic inquiry by means of hypotheses is said to lead to knowledge. The ability to reason in this way is a power in the soul, presumably recollection.

If the components of dialectic are accepted to be the forms, recollection, and reasoning by hypothesis, then the next task is to provide an account of how the three

relate. As I have argued above, the forms, which are truly real, are the objects of knowledge. Knowledge of these objects is apprehended by the soul prior to birth and then forgotten at birth, although it is retained latently in the form of true opinions. The first recollection of knowledge is the recollection of particular forms stimulated by the perception of sensible particulars (Phaedo-recollection). This knowledge is expanded by working out relations between forms (Meno-recollection). Such latter recollection is stimulated by proper dialectical questioning. As Socrates demonstrates later in the Meno, the method guiding such questioning is to reason from a hypothesis. The resulting knowledge recollected is initially foggy and uncertain. Only further reflection on the causal reasoning will lead to a full and tethered grasp of such knowledge.

The Phaedo account of the method of hypothesis gives further detail about the process of dialectical reasoning. One begins by hypothesising the soundest logon, or reason. One's ability to judge which reason is soundest can only be explained by appeal to intuition, where intuition is one's recollection of reality. As recollection is a gradual process, intuition is fallible. Nonetheless, it is the best guide available to one. A system of explanation is then built beginning from the hypothesis by setting down as true what symphonises with it. Where mutually contradictory

views can all symphonise with it, the soundest of them is retained and the others rejected. While such an interpretation is not fully explicable in logical terms, it fits the text. The orthodox interpretation, while logically defensible, does not correspond to what Socrates does. Thus, recollection guides reasoning and reasoning stimulates recollection. It is because the nature of recollection is to come to one slowly that this long process of hypothesising and recollecting is necessary.

In the Republic Socrates claims that this process eventually leads to a firm foundation for knowledge. As the only firm foundation for knowledge of the forms is the recollection of one's pre-natal encounter with them, the apprehension of the unhypothetical beginning and the vision of the good can only be explained as the point at which recollection is fully accomplished. With a sudden wondrous vision one recollects reality previously seen, and all hypothetical views about such reality are justified.

The dependence of this interpretation of Plato's middle period dialectic on a mysterious intuition to fill methodological shortcomings will not appeal to some. Remythologising Plato by employing such an intuition, instead of demythologising him by providing an adequate logical account, is likely not a popular modern approach. However, I defend this approach, and the interpretation which has followed from it, by asking two questions. First,

if the doctrine of recollection is a serious Platonic epistemological doctrine, and I believe I have given sufficient evidence to make such a view reasonable, then what is its role in Plato's dialectic, if not the one I have assigned? The orthodox interpretation chooses to ignore the doctrine, but the legitimacy of this move in light of the prominent role the doctrine plays in the Meno and Phaedo is questionable, to say the least. Some explanation of its role is surely required. Second, if the interpretation I propose is wrong, then how is Plato's dialectic, and especially Socrates' demonstrations of it, to be explained? The orthodox interpretation simply does not fit with what Socrates does. Socrates does not hypothesise one thing and then deduce from it what he needs. The method of hypothesis is no more a method of deducing a proof from a single hypothesis than is the elenchus a method of deducing a refutation from a single thesis. Rather, both methods are concerned with sets of propositions, and with the relations between the propositions in those sets. I am not claiming that my interpretation is right, just that it fits. I believe the orthodox interpretation cannot say as much.

I believe that the pieces Plato leaves us of his middle period dialectic cannot be fully accounted for logically. As I noted above, one result of the scope of philosophy which Plato explores is that he sometimes

discusses matters about which it is not possible to be precise. . Sometimes being vague or being silent are the only options. Although the secret of philosophy, or 'love of wisdom', "does not at all admit of verbal expression like other studies", Plato has yet provided hints of it. If these hints, and the secret behind them, are not fully explicable in logical terms, so be it. I prefer Plato without logic to logic without Plato.

ENDNOTES

Chapter I:

1. In the dialogues examined in detail below the central questions are 'Is virtue teachable?'(Meno), 'Is the soul immortal?'(Phaedo), and 'What is justice?' and 'Is justice better than injustice?'(both Republic).

2. Robinson's classic study Plato's Earlier Dialectic does not even have 'recollection' listed in its index.

3. Others besides Robinson interpreting the method of hypothesis as deductive include Burnet(1911, p109), Hackforth(1952, p139), Taylor(1960, p201), and Guthrie (1975, pp352-53).

4. This summation is Waterfield's(1989, p44).

5. This is the form of the direct elenchus. The indirect elenchus does employ the thesis as a premise in the refutation, but as the other premises employed are "elicited from the interlocutor without any reference to [thesis] p and not deducible from it"(Vlastos 1983, p30), the overall effect is the same.

6. There is no general agreement in the literature over what 'coherence' consists in. As Walker notes, "Sometimes it has been taken to be simply consistency with the basic principles that characterize the system of beliefs. Sometimes, at the other extreme, it has been held to require mutual entailment by all the propositions in question: p will cohere with q and r only if p, q and r all entail one another. Sometimes, again, it has been left thoroughly vague what coherence is supposed to amount to." (Walker 1989, pp4-5) As indicated above, by 'coherence' I mean not only consistency, but also "being connected in some special way"(Rescher 1973, pp32-33). The obvious feature of this special connection is relevance, or possession of a common element. Further features of the connection cannot be adequately defined.

7. Here and throughout this thesis I take views expressed by Socrates as representative of Plato's own views.

8. All quotes from Plato are from the appropriate Loeb translations, except quotes from the Republic, which are from the Bloom translation, and except where indicated 'my translation', which are my own translations.

9. This description of elenctic 'verification' parallels Socrates' description in the Meno that recollection makes true opinions "fast with causal reasoning" (M 98a).

10. A view which sees coherence as the nature of truth claims: "for a proposition to be true is for it to cohere with a certain system of beliefs ... that coherence, and nothing else, is what its truth consists in." (Walker 1989, p2) I deny Plato holds such a view.

11. In his own example of this aspect of the method of hypothesis, Socrates first proposes a hypothesis about the nature of forms in general, that they have the property of existence (Ph 100b-c). This step is followed by the positing of a further proposition about the nature of such forms, where this further proposition coheres with the first; Socrates suggests that forms have causal powers, that things which share qualities with forms do so by partaking of those forms (Ph 100c).

12. Experience stimulates initial recollection of individual forms, but reason alone discovers the relations between forms.

13. Robinson, standard-bearer of the orthodox interpretation, admits, "the hypotheses from which we start have to be chosen somehow; and ... there is nothing to do but choose those that commend themselves to intuition" (1953, p109). His sense of 'intuition' is likely meant to be less significant than my own.

14. While this interdependence of recollection and reason may seem tenuous, its occurrence in common situations serves to belie such criticism. One faced with solving a problem previously solved and then forgotten will likely reconstruct a solution through both recollection of parts of the original solution and reasoning of how those parts fit together. In such a case each successive success at one serves to facilitate the other. Such a process is not different in kind from reconstructing a view of reality similarly known but forgotten.

Chapter II:

1. An example of such an ambiguous reference is Meno's remark at 89c, "it is clear, Socrates, on the hypothesis, if indeed virtue is knowledge, that it is teachable." (my translation) The hypothesis could be either the entire if-then clause 'if virtue is knowledge, that (ie. then) it is teachable' or the antecedent only, 'virtue is knowledge', where the consequent, 'virtue is teachable', is literally a consequence, or conclusion. As the Phaedo-Republic version of the method of hypothesis follows a different and more fruitful line, the Meno issue is here left unresolved.

One interesting observation, however, is that if the hypothesis is indeed 'virtue is knowledge', then at least the first part of the Meno method followed aligns well with the Phaedo account of the method. Socrates would be first postulating one logon, 'virtue is knowledge', to produce the answer 'virtue is teachable'. He then hypothesises the 'higher' hypothesis 'virtue is good' and demonstrates that 'virtue is knowledge' follows from 'virtue is good', thus justifying the original hypothesis by appeal to an adequate 'higher' hypothesis. (This method is discussed in detail in the next chapter.) As Socrates here describes as his methodological model a geometrical method which does not mention this procedure, the significance of this similarity should not be exaggerated.

2. Summaries of proposed solutions are found in Bluck(1961, pp441ff) and, more briefly, Thomas(1980, pp166ff).

3. My understanding of the forms of the following arguments has been greatly aided by Thomas's analyses of them(Thomas 1980, pp171-84).

Chapter III:

1. Depending upon how one divides the arguments, estimates of their number range from one to seven (Archer-Hind 1894, pxvi). I follow Gallop(1975) in taking there to be four arguments.

2. Although Socrates does go on to give an alternate argument that the harmony theory should be rejected, this is not because the original ground for its rejection, the doctrine of recollection, is inadequate. Rather, Socrates is simply offering "another way of looking at" the matter.

3. See Hackforth(1952, pp127-31) for discussion of whose views these may be.

4. The topic of dialectic and employment of images is further discussed in the Republic(510b(ff)).

5. This interpretation is influenced by my rejection of the ontological assumption (ie. that only existent objects have properties), as I do regard existence as a property (or quality) of an object.

6. Bluck argues that logon here means 'definition'. (Bluck 1955, pl3, ppl64-66) This position involves seeing the clarification of method Socrates provides at 100b-101d as an application of what follows it at 101d-e rather than of what precedes it at 100a, for the reason Socrates hypothesises at 100b is not definitional. Bluck wishes to contrast 'Socratic' logoi at 100a with 'Platonic' hupotheseis at 101d-e. This interpretation can be rejected on (at least) two grounds. Socrates at 100a discusses hypothesising a cause, and definitions are not causes (despite Bluck's claim that they can be, if properly understood(Bluck 1955, pl3)). Also, Socrates precedes his application by stating that he wishes to explain in order to make what he is relating 'more clear' (saphesteron); thus the application is intended to clarify his statement thus far (100a), and therefore his (qualitative) hypothesis is an example of the logon mentioned there. This hypothesis is not a definition.

7. Robinson himself recognises this (Robinson 1953, pl09).

8. Robinson seemingly concedes this point by his valiant attempt to make either of his two available interpretations stand on their own.

9. In this section sumphônein is referred to as sumphôn- in order to indicate that the root word is used, if not the particular -ein (present active infinitive) ending.

10. All references to (LSJ) are to Liddell-Scott-Jones's A Greek-English Lexicon (9th ed. 1940, rev. 1968)

11. I here mean 'coherence' in the sense outlined in chapter I.

12. This point is acknowledged by Hackforth: "It is the existence of Forms that is assumed, but nothing beyond that. That there is a relation between Forms and sensibles, a relation which involves causality, is not part of the

(12 cont'd) hypothesis, but rather regarded as an immediate and inescapable consequence of their existence." (Hackforth 1952, p143) Robinson also recognises (Robinson 1953, pp126-27) that the hypothesis is that forms exist and nothing more, yet goes on to claim, "'what comes next' [= "the next step"] seems to mean 'what logically follows', and the 'conclusion' seems to be the logical conclusion." Just how 'there is a causal relation between forms and sensibles' is the "logical conclusion" of 'forms exist' is not at all clear.

13. All references below to the 'causal efficacy' of forms are meant in the sense of Vlastos's 'reasons', not in the sense of forms as active causes.

14. The purpose of these analyses is to examine Socrates' initial steps in reasoning, and not to determine whether or not the arguments he develops are ultimately sound. For this reason the arguments are not discussed at length.

15. See Gorgias 472b-c for evidence of this.

16. In the original illustration of method at 100b-101d Socrates also gives additional reasons for his second step, although avowedly he accepts the second step because it symphonises with his hypothesis. Socrates there follows his statement that things have their qualities only by partaking of the appropriate forms by giving reasons why other explanations are not as good. (Ph 100c-101d)

17. Socrates applies this point by arguing that one's perception of apparent but imperfectly equal particulars stimulates perception of equality in the abstract--the form of equality. True equality is never perceived by the senses, so human cognisance of it can only be recollection of knowledge of it gained prior to human birth. Hence the soul must exist prior to birth.

18. At this point Socrates ties the argument together. The soul is invisible, and hence, like the forms, uniform and constant, and thus incomposite and indestructible.

19. The Greek term ekhoito ("hold on to") in line 1 is in Burnet's edition, and is an amendment of the Loeb text (based on that of Schanz), which indicates ephoito. The manuscripts support Burnet.

20. Robinson notes, "There appears to be no place in Plato where hormêthenta means logical consequences as technically and unmistakably as sumbainonta can" (Robinson 1953, p129).

21. At 93a-94b Socrates argues for the rejection of the hypothesis that the soul is a harmony. Gallop describes this argument as "evidently an application of the 'hypothetical method' described at 100a and 101c-d." (Gallop 1975, p166) As Gallop notes, the hypothesis does not itself generate inconsistent consequences, but rather generates a consequence which conflicts with an "independent assumption". Gallop's assessment that the argument is an application of the method of hypothesis is based on his acceptance of Robinson's view that the checking process described at 101d includes checking consequences with such "standing assumptions". This view is rejected here because, as is noted above, Socrates mentions comparing the hormêthenta of the hypothesis to each other and nothing else. The introduction of such a further checking process is not included in Socrates' description of the method of hypothesis, and hence Socrates' argument here is not an application of the method.

An obvious alternative interpretation of his refutation of the hypothesis that the soul is a harmony is that Socrates is employing the method of Socratic elenchus. As Vlastos notes, in elenctic arguments where Socrates refutes hypothesis p, "The premises from which Socrates deduces not-p generally do not include p; and even when they do, there are others in the premise-set, elicited from the interlocutor without any reference to p and not deducible from it." (Vlastos 1983, p30) The "independent assumption" noted by Gallop is the other premise which is not deducible from the hypothesis, and which is the key component by which the Socratic elenchus proves inconsistent premise-sets rather than self-contradictory hypotheses. The hypothesis that the soul is a harmony is shown to be inconsistent with the additional premise that some souls are good, and others bad (Ph 93b-c). For this reason, by the elenctic method the hypothesis is rejected. (The particulars of this difficult argument are analysed in some detail by Gallop (1975, pp157-66).)

22. It is certainly the case that one could form a hypothesis which seems to be soundest, but which does conflict with other firmly held beliefs (though this is not yet realised). Such a hypothesis is refuted when the conflict between it or its logical consequences and such beliefs is brought to light. This refutation is simply the elenchus. If it is only the hormêthenta which conflict with each other (or even with such beliefs), such hormêthenta must be denied, but this does not concurrently demand that the hypothesis also be denied.

Chapter IV:

1. This latter question includes considerable limitations put on Socrates by his interlocutors as to how he may attempt to prove his answer. See R 357a-367e.

2. The Republic does not lend itself as well to the 'Objects of Knowledge-Recollection-Hypotheses' divisions as the Meno and Phaedo do. For this reason the divisions in this chapter differ. Particularly, the relation between forms and hypotheses leads to a joint treatment of their roles here.

3. This assertion that each form "really is" demonstrates Plato's continued acceptance of the forms as having "true being"(Ph 78d).

4. The sciences are determined (R 522b-531c) to be calculation, plane geometry, solid geometry, astronomy (movement of solids), and harmony.

5. This is clear from Socrates' contrast between the dialectician, "who grasps the reason for the being of each thing", and the non-dialectician, who "isn't able to do so, to the extent he's not able to give an account of a thing to himself and another"(both R 534b).

6. This idea of 'securing' reasoning to make it knowledge is reminiscent of the statement in the Meno that knowledge transcends right opinion "by its trammels [ie. its bond]"(M 98a).

7. According to Brandwood's A Word Index to Plato (Brandwood 1976, pl54).

8. In the Statesman Plato distinguishes weaving from the production of the tools for weaving(St 281d). The production of the material used by the weaver is not itself part of weaving.

9. This does not mean that the good need be identical to the unhypothetical beginning. As the good is a form, if the unhypothetical beginning is a proposition or logos, then such a proposition would be about the good rather than identical to it.

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