

Contemporary Relevance of Plato's Analysis of the Problem of Knowledge (Praha 2007)

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Plato is said to be the founder of the metaphysical tradition according to which the world is divided into two parts: the first containing firmly defined, unchanging, and hence really existing objects called Ideas, and the second representing their incessantly whirligig and shimmering reflections and shadows that in truth form the ungraspable labyrinth of things that we everyday immediately meet and, in some way, master but have difficulties to decide if they really in the eminent sense are. The Platonic tradition thought that the task of a philosopher was to climb, by means of reason, from this dark labyrinth cave to the resplendent meadow of Ideas lit by the sun of the Good and learn at last how the things in our cave in fact are, what they are reflections of. On the basis of such a throughout positive knowledge, it had to be possible to set obligatory rules for human conduct and establish the perfect political regime. Christianity took over this model. The new science born in its womb thought the Good Lord would allow us to know not only His own work, i.e., Nature and Man with his history but also Himself as far as the meaning of His work is concerned, and what is the role of Man in it. When these expectations fell short and Immanuel Kant showed that human reason cannot entertain hopes like this, i.e., that rational theology, the science of God, is impossible, then reason – supported by the immense success of its natural science – tried to manage without God and to make projects aiming at achieving the perfect arrangement of human things on its own. As soon as this also turned out to be illusory and states, believing that they are marching successfully forwards to this goal, started to tumble down like houses of cards, it was reason that was accused of this failure. These accusations were extended to include also Plato, the alleged inventor of the concept of the united, by the Good governed world that can be learned through universal reason.

But is it really like this in Plato? Is it not precisely this concept that Plato endeavors to unmask in his dialogues and to show as unsustainable? Just this is exactly what I want to argue for.

Some of Plato's dialogues are called aporetic. It is meant to say that the topic of these dialogues starts always with some question that the partners of the discussion are analyzing thoroughly, but never succeed at finding a satisfactory answer, hence the dialogue ends in an aporia. Other dialogues are supposed to present Plato's own views, such as, how to arrange a perfect state, etc. But neither the first nor the second concept seems to me to really explain what happens in the dialogues. I think that in both types of dialogues the point is identical, namely, to engage the reader in the fictive debate, to engage him in the process of thinking and to provoke him to realize how he, himself, can deal with the presented problem, what he thinks is a possible solution and what it could be good for. Neither Socrates nor anybody else is the mouthpiece of Plato. His dialogues are masterpieces in which Plato presents different questions and answers without indicating what is the final solution that one could simply adopt, learn by heart and put into practice. Rather, he teaches us how to think. He provokes our thinking and contemplation concerning the thing in question, forces us to consider reasons that we ourselves adopt or reject while reading them. I shall try to show this through my reading of the dialogue called *Theaetetus*. Its subject matter is the question of what is knowledge, *episteme*.

The dialogue *Theaetetus* begins with the discussion between Euclid and Terpsion. In between the lines, their discussion shows a sort of scale of possible intellectual abilities of different people.

Terpsion, an average citizen who comes to the agora to chat with friends, occupies the lowest step in thinking. He is passive in thinking but knows that debates with Socrates are somehow important. He just returned from the countryside where he worked and so he is happy to enhance his leisure time by listening to a philosophical dialogue.

A bit higher stands Euclid, who later founded the Megaric philosophical school. He is depicted here as a non-resident student of Socrates. A long time ago, Socrates described to him a marvelous discussion he had with Theaetetus and Theodorus from Cyrene precisely about knowledge. And although this dialogue was aporetic and, in the end, the question of what is knowledge was not answered, Euclid made the effort to remember it and after coming home he wrote it down as literally as he could. However, he was not able to remember everything. From time to time, when he met Socrates, he asked him to fill in the missing passages. Apparently, he was not able to fill them in alone. He needed help from outside, from Socrates.

Socrates is at the top of the scale of intellectual abilities because he remembers the whole dialogue even after a long time. We can assume that it is so because he understands the whole matter from within. Certainly it was he who initiated the steps of the dialogue and who is explicitly aware of the extreme difficulty concerning the question of knowledge.

It is up to us to recognize that Terpsion and Euclid are not the right readers of the dialogue. They let the dialogue be recited to them by a servant and do not interrupt it at all. We cannot but assume that they had a good nap while listening.

On the scale between Socrates and Euclid there is Theaetetus himself who was the partner of Socrates in the dialogue. Already at the time of the original discussion 30 years before, Socrates predicted a glorious future for him, in amazement over Theaetetus' talent.

In the Greek text, the word *fysis* is used here and we still use the Latin translation of this Greek term when we speak of the good or bad nature of different people. Nevertheless, when saying that somebody has a talent for something we are also able to say that somebody else does not have this aptitude. And it seems that when we are speaking about a talent, we speak of it as if it were some kind of thing. As if to have or not to have this "thing" is meant in an absolute sense. But it is possible to derive from the Greek word *fysis* that it is something that human beings always have if they are really born as full-fledged humans, in the same sense as one of course has eyes to see and legs to carry him. The idea here is that a full-fledged human being is always born with reason. People differ from each other by its measure or quality. So it is, to be sure, with the whole *fysis* of humans. Someone sees better, another one sees worse, someone does not have a lot of wit, another, like Theaetetus, is *eu pefykos*, smart and clever, he has a good memory, "advances toward learning and investigation smoothly and surely and successfully, with perfect gentleness, like a stream of oil that flows without a sound" (144b). Together with these abilities there are others enumerated. Above all, there is courage, but also "the discrete, generous spending of inherited money" (144d). The only thing Theaetetus is missing is a nice face. In this he resembles Socrates. However, as far as knowledge is concerned, this circumstance is negligible. The important thing is that Theaetetus resembles him in the rest. Hence, as shown, the first presupposition of knowledge is the appropriate aptitude, nature, *fysis*.

In the dialogue about knowledge, it is significant that the partners of Socrates are two important mathematicians of that time: Theaetetus and Theodorus. Yet, mathematical knowledge is not much discussed in the dialogue. On the other hand, we should remember

that over the entrance to Academy was the inscription: “No entry for those uneducated in mathematics”. So, who else should Plato have chosen for the dialogue on knowledge?

Yet, in the beginning of the discussion seeking the answer to the question of knowledge, Theodorus, the old, experienced, and famous expert and teacher of mathematics, geometry, astronomy, theory of music, “and in general an educated man” (145a), is reluctant to be a partner of Socrates. Likewise later, when he finally joins the speech, he does not really know what to do with Socrates’ inquiries. There seems to be a basic difference between the realm of mathematical knowledge and the realm dealing with questions asked in philosophy. Theodorus has knowledge and his student, the young Theaetetus, is gradually acquiring knowledge from him. Besides, Socrates “knows about these things quite well” but, unlike these two mathematical experts, he is troubled by something that they could not see: Socrates is asking what it is, after all, to learn, to be learned, what learning, knowledge, wisdom is (*manthanein, episteme, sofia*, 145d-e).

We are looking for what knowledge is and, as usual in the beginning of Plato’s dialogues, also here, the naive partner answers by enumerating several instances of the sought after thing. Of course, this is not a correct answer to the question. Socrates is not asking for a list of whatever can be called knowledge, but rather what it means to call anything knowledge. Nevertheless, the naiveté of the partner is not insignificant. This naiveté is already somehow informed because it indicates that he understands what is being spoken about. Hence he knows, in some way in advance, what knowledge is. He has some experience with knowledge, he can distinguish it from other things we do not call knowledge. Apart from the higher knowledge of mathematicians we have already spoken about, all crafts and arts, called *technai* in Greek, belong to knowledge. Socrates indicates – when telling his beloved story about his midwife art – that the preliminary experience like this is of a basic importance for seeking and acquiring knowledge.

Socrates compares his whole life vocation to what midwives do (149-151). So as midwives help young women to bear children, the fruit of the body, so Socrates helps young men to bear the fruit of the soul, i.e., knowledge.

This comparison contains, first of all, the thought that knowledge is something that needs to be brought to the world, i.e., something that originally is not there. We usually keep saying: I must find it, I must discover it – as if this ‘new’ which we want to know were already somewhere here, as if waiting for us until we dig it out to reach it. But we also say, I must figure it out – as if it were an achievement depending only on our power, our abilities. And still we feel that perhaps the most appropriate idiom is: it occurred to me, it flashed across my mind, the idea came to me – as if knowledge comes to us in a miraculous way that is not completely in our control.

So what does Socrates mean with this metaphor? Some young men are pregnant with knowledge and it belongs to Socrates’ midwifery to recognize in the discussion who they are. But how does a young man get pregnant? How does the conceiving happen in his soul? How does knowledge begin to develop and how does it take some form? This is also possible to grasp from this comparison. In similar ways as midwives, who “are the most skillful of matchmakers, since they are very wise in knowing what union of man and woman will produce the best possible children” (149d), so Socrates, seeing that a young man is not pregnant, „acts with perfect goodwill as match-maker and, with God’s help, he guesses successfully about with whom they can associate profitably“ (151b). Hence, the conceiving of knowledge happens by “association”, *syngignomai*, being together with older wise men. Should this mean that this learning is only from the giving and receiving of knowledge? We must strictly refuse this inference that would lead to a vicious circle. The task is to conceive

and later bear new knowledge. The young man has to grasp knowledge that neither he nor anybody else has known before. It has to be something that neither those wise men, his teachers, nor he has known before.

We can see that the structure of the becoming of knowledge is not simple. Apart from the usual Platonic allusion to the, then, popular homosexual eroticism, it has to be understood here that being together with the teachers means taking up knowledge that has been accumulated before. Socrates does not send the young men to associate with the dull and thus barren men but rather sends them to the wise, *sofois*, and we read even *thespesiois*, the inspired (151b). They are exactly those who speak like gods, who are saying things that are normally unspeakable, things that only god is able to say (*theos + espon, eipon*). I consider this place in the dialogue to be not only an ironical allusion to the allegedly wonderful abilities of sophists, but also the passage that contains something serious. Knowledge is something mysterious, divine, so, as we read, it is the god who compels Socrates to act as a midwife (150c).

Perhaps we can afford to say that by being together with the wise men, i.e., by speaking and acting together with them, we have an experience with knowledge that is not yet knowledge itself, but that is indispensable for acquiring it. Using the metaphor of the midwife, Socrates says explicitly that acquiring knowledge (*epistémé*) or art (*techné*) presupposes experience. Artemis, the goddess of Nature, who's special province is to care for childbirth, "did not allow barren women to be midwives, because human nature is too weak to acquire an art which deals with matters of which it has no experience" (149b/c). In this regard, there is a bit of a problem with Socrates, because he says explicitly: "the god compels me to act as midwife, but has never allowed me to deliver" (150c). Hence, unlike midwives who must have had experience with childbirth when they were young, Socrates has no experience of his own with bringing knowledge forth – he insists repeatedly he does not know anything himself, he has never born any knowledge – yet he can still assist with the birth of knowledge. In this respect – that he can be instrumental as a midwife without having his own experience with a delivery – he surpasses human nature and is therefore godlike. He is like Artemis from our metaphor. She assists women in the delivery of their children, although she is a virgin and has never given birth to a child.

But the question is why Plato has introduced such a disorder into this metaphor. He could have easily let Socrates acquire some knowledge when being young to get this type of experience. It seems to me that this distinction between the delivering of knowledge and the assistance with this process is of crucial importance. Note what the metaphor says about Artemis: "she gave the office to those who on account of age were not bearing children, honoring them for their likeness to herself" (149c). If the matter was just to have experience with bringing forth, she could have allowed every young mother to be midwife. But she wanted to honor their likeness to herself. Should this not mean that the ignorance of Socrates is an honor awarded to him by god? Is this not an allusion to an essential problematicity of knowledge?

So what shall we do with this? What is the symbolic meaning of the proverbial ignorance of Socrates? Let us have a look at what else belongs to Socrates' midwife art. He "can test in every way whether the mind of the young man is bringing forth a mere image, an imposture, or a real and genuine offspring" (150c). And Socrates goes on to say: "those who associate with me, although at first some of them seem very ignorant, yet, as our acquaintance advances, all of them to whom the god is gracious make wonderful progress" (150d). But it is again stressed that "they do this, not because they have ever learned anything from me, but because they have found in themselves many fair things and have brought them forth" (150d). The discussion of Socrates with young men has a double function. In this discussion, thoughts are both provoked and examined. So, it is easy to understand that the less gifted are angry

with Socrates and “are actually ready to bite him, if he takes some foolish notion away from them, and they do not believe that he does this in kindness” (151c). Nevertheless, the more gifted ones, like Theaetetus, are extraordinarily encouraged by this examination of knowledge that forces them to think further.

It seems to me that in stressing the fact that Socrates does not bear any knowledge, Plato wants to indicate the manifold structure of knowledge. He wants to say, first, that knowledge cannot be taken over from teachers, but rather knowledge must be found inside man himself. Second, that the emergence of knowledge, and knowledge itself, is a process or a complex act. It comprises examination, evaluation whether an idea is good or bad, i.e., whether it can or cannot be accepted as real knowledge. And third, that although this evaluating ability belongs in some way to knowledge, it is itself wonderful and mysterious, as if superhuman. The fact that Socrates is characterized by such a one-dimensional ability has to be understood, then, as an attempt to single out and underline this structural moment. This art of leading the discussion, *dialegethai*, within which new thoughts emerge and are evaluated – this art is Plato’s famous dialectic.

Let’s sum up now what the structure of the genesis of knowledge is as derived from the allusions at the beginning of the dialogue Theaetetus.

- (1) First, it is necessary to have a bit of wit, a natural aptitude.
- (2) Second, knowledge cannot be acquired without preliminary experience with the area in question. It is accumulated through association with other people who already somehow know their things.
- (3) Third, knowledge cannot be taken over from teachers, the seeker of knowledge must pay attention to what flashes across his mind and be keen in formulating it. In other words, he must concentrate his attention on, so to say, the centre of his mind, i.e., he must think.
- (4) Fourth, he must examine his new thoughts in order to evaluate them and refuse false knowledge. This examination can best succeed in dialectical discussion with others.

However, we are still far from the end of our research. It is not enough to refute false knowledge but we also have to recognize genuine knowledge. We would like to add some points to this structure that would guarantee that the thought submitted to examination is really knowledge. But be careful! Let’s be aware that we are still necessarily at stage (2), i.e., in the stage of preliminary understanding. For if we do not know what knowledge is, what characterizes the thought that is to be labeled and accepted as knowledge, we, in fact, do not know if what we say about knowledge is really knowledge. We are in a sort of vicious circle. But let’s not despair! Let’s have a look once more at our preliminary experience with knowledge.

We know there are many experts in many things, masters in their arts, who have the appropriate knowledge. All arts and crafts belong here, and, above all – as we saw in the beginning – higher education in mathematics. Theaetetus begins the dialogue by giving an example of mathematical knowledge: namely, he was able to express all irrational roots by a single and short definition, so it was easy to see the correctness of this definition, although the number of such roots is infinite.

We would like to have a similar answer to the question of what is knowledge; to cover all instances of what we call knowledge by a single and simple definition, and be it an infinite number of them, so that we would immediately see that the definition is correct.

Also later in the dialogue Socrates makes an inconspicuous allusion to mathematical knowledge as the paradigm for knowledge when he reproaches his partners by saying: “but

you do not advance any cogent proof whatsoever; you base your statements on probability. If Theodorus, or any other geometrician, should base his geometry on probability, he would be of no account at all” (162e).

According to what is explicitly said in the dialogue, and according to the traditional interpretations, Theaetetus presents three attempts at a simple and all embracing definition of knowledge:

- (1) Knowledge is perception.
- (2) Knowledge is true opinion.
- (3) Knowledge is true opinion accompanied by definition.

Socrates refutes all three attempts and the dialogue ends without any result.

But let's try a different approach. Looking closely at each of these attempts we can say that their presentation repeats on a higher level what we already saw when Theaetetus, at the beginning of the dialogue, answered the question of what is knowledge by enumerating different arts, crafts, etc.

(1) Perception is knowledge. When I feel gusts of wind and say it is cold, it is of course because I know I feel cold regardless of the fact that somebody else is quite fine with this wind: I know how I am and I put on my sweater. And yet Socrates is right, when convincing Theaetetus at the end of the first part of the dialogue to draw the conclusion that “knowledge is something other than perception” (186e). However, this result does not contradict what we have just said, namely, that perception is knowledge. What Theaetetus refuted with the help of Socrates was the thesis that was meant as an answer to the question of what is knowledge as such. For the task was to answer the question of what is knowledge as knowledge, meaning that we demand the same type of answer as the one given by Theaetetus when defining the irrational roots with one sentence. Knowledge as such – what is it?

(2) Likewise, true opinion is a sort of knowledge. Theaetetus cannot say how it differs from the false one, but this is apparently because he still cannot say what knowledge is in general: “It is impossible to know (*gnonai*) false opinion until we have adequately comprehended (*prin an tis epistemen hikanos labe*) the nature of knowledge (*ti pot' estin*)” (200d).

Through this assertion, Socrates revealed that from the very beginning he somehow knew what knowledge is. For him, to know something means: *hikanos labein ti pot' estin*, i.e., literary: “sufficiently grasp what it is”. However, the trouble is that, in this context, we do not exactly know what every single word of the definition means. We do not know what it means “sufficiently”, what it means “to grasp”, we do not know what it means “to be”.

(3) Now Theaetetus comes with the third suggestion: “... knowledge is true opinion accompanied by definition” (201c). Yes, let's accept that to sufficiently grasp means to give definition, i.e., to fixate by language, to formulate in a sentence what something is. This leads, of course, to the problem of the form of definition and its parts, to the problem of parts and the whole, to the problem of genus and species, etc. Plato indicates all these problems through the mouth of Socrates and in doing this he projects a program of a universal systematic research, he devises the blue print for European rational civilization.

In our dialogue it soon turns out that we are again in a vicious circle: certainly, a *good* definition is knowledge of what something is. But when is the definition good? When it is knowledge. Together with Theaetetus we are totally ridiculed, because we say truly, but empty: knowledge is knowledge. And here the dialogue comes to its end.

The question remains: Can we find the way out of this aporia? And is such a way, perhaps, indicated in our dialogue? I have promised, to be sure, that we would learn something about knowledge from there.

To do so, we have to return to the beginning of the dialogue and take a new look at what we have missed. The first thesis of Theaetetus that knowledge is perception is refuted by

Socrates like this: He first identifies this thesis of Theaetetus with the famous thesis of Protagoras that “man is the measure of all things, of the existence of the things that are and of the non-existence of the things that are not” (152a). Then he reformulates this into a sensualistic form as if Protagoras would mean by his thesis: “individual things are for me such as they appear to me and for you in turn such as they appear to you” (152a). A contradiction follows because we suppose that what appears different to different people is true knowledge of the things in themselves. Socrates attempts to get rid of the contradiction by adding the Heraclitean thesis that “nothing whatever is one, either a particular thing or a particular quality; but it is out of movement and motion and mixture with one another” (152d). Hence the things themselves are changing all the time and the relativistic thesis of Protagoras is valid. But about what? If everything is only becoming and incessantly changing and nothing stands still, there are no things in themselves. So, perhaps the Protagorean thesis is valid about phenomena.

A phenomenon somehow comes into being as a result of mutual impingement of the movement of the thing upon the movement of the organ of perception. For example the phenomenon of color is neither in the thing itself nor in the eyes nor at any other special place but rather becomes by the impinging of the movement of the eyes upon the movement of the thing and is, so to speak, “something between” (*metaxy ti*, 154a). Today we might say: in a kind of neutral phenomenal field (neutral because it is neither purely objective nor purely subjective).

But this does not save the relativistic reformulation of the thesis of Protagoras. Phenomena are also incessantly changing because even he to whom the things appear “is never exactly the same” (154a). And here Theaetetus starts to be at a loss with his thesis that knowledge is perception. To make his trouble even worse, Socrates shows him that even in the region of quantity, i.e., in the province where the mathematician feels to be at home, we are not in contact with the things themselves because they become big or small depending on the scale we choose to measure them. And now when Theaetetus seriously starts to wonder (155c), Socrates praises him for this and utters the famous sentence that is always quoted when speaking about the origin of philosophy: “this feeling of wonder shows that you are a philosopher, since wonder is the only beginning of philosophy“ (155d).

There is nothing fixed in the world, “nothing exists as invariably one, itself by itself, but everything is always becoming in relation to something, and ‘being’ should be altogether abolished” (157a). And “we ought not, the wise men say, to permit the use of ‘something’ or ‘somebody’s’ or ‘mine’ or ‘this’ or ‘that’ or any other word that implies making things stand still, but in accordance with nature we should speak of things as ‘becoming’ and ‘being made’ and ‘being destroyed’ and ‘changing’; for anyone who by his mode of speech makes things stand still is easily refuted” (157b). But even to obey this prescription would not be enough because also speaking about things as ‘becoming’ and ‘being made’, etc., would make things stand still. All words make things stand still, otherwise the words could not mean anything. It follows that if it is not possible to make things stand still, then it is impossible to speak.

Therefore Socrates “wishes to have a look at our thoughts in themselves what they are and see whether they harmonize with one another or not at all” (154e). Quite surreptitiously he moves the search from the whirling of the outer things through the neutral region of phenomena to the realm of thought (*ta ton frenon*, 154d/e). He wants “to consider again what are these appearances within us” (155a). He says that the matter of thought is “something else than what can be grasped firmly with the hands” (155e), that it is invisible and yet it is not correct to “deny their participation in being” (*hos en ousias merei*, 155e). And surprisingly enough we learn that even all the concepts – like becoming, happening, whirling, acting, suffering, etc., that we use when speaking about the things around us – have their origin in the soul.

For to speak means to use words, to give names “both to particular things and collective designations” (157b). For example, to speak of “man and stone and every animal and class” (157c) means to make any whirling stand still, and to say about anything whether and what it is or whether it is not.

Precisely this is the task of the soul. Different bodily organs of perception are only kinds of instruments through which we perceive, not that by which we in fact perceive. For different sense perceptions must be in some way evaluated, compared, and it must be established what they have in common, i.e., the thing to which they belong. It would not be possible to do this without “stretching all perceived together and unite it all in one something whether we should call it soul or something else, by which we perceive” (184d). It must be “something within ourselves that is all the time one and the same power by which we perceive black and white through the eyes, and again other qualities through other organs” (184d). “But through what organ,” Socrates asks now, “is the faculty exerted which makes known to you that which is common to all things..., that which you call being and not-being..., and likeness and unlikeness, and identity and difference, also unity and plurality..., and the odd and the even and everything else that is in the same category” (185c-d).

Now, Theaetetus himself finds out that “there is no special organ at all for these notions, as there are for those others; but it appears to me that the soul views by itself directly what they have in common” (185d). Hence, strictly speaking, soul is that which perceives. Only because the soul is all the time the same it can learn what is common to all perceptions, and “reflect within itself upon the past and present” (186a). And, based on this reflection, hence by itself and through itself, “in the process of reasoning about sensations” (*en tó peri ekeinó syllogismó*, 186d), it can set up the thing, i.e., to say whether it is or not, whether it is beautiful or ugly, good or bad, etc. (186a). Therefore, we can also be aware that something is changing, and say that the change is. This means, as a matter of fact, to make the change stand still and yet let it be a change.

Hence we can say that the original thesis of Protagoras is valid. It is in his soul that man is the measure of all things; it is by the acts of his soul that man decides whether a thing exists or not. These decisions are, of course, not arbitrary and there is no simple, perceptual relativism in it, precisely because here the dialectic – the Socratic art of discussion – comes into play. In this discussion we reflect upon the past and present and compare causes and effects with one another, etc. By means of reasoning, in this dialectical discussion we examine what crosses our minds together with the bodily sensations. Only “with difficulty and slowly, if at all, through many troubles” (186c) we manage to remove all the contradictions in our speech and to see by the soul itself that all the parts of our speech really harmonize, coincide and match with one another. Only now, seeing this harmonious matching in front of the eyes of our soul, we can call this speech a definition and have a good feeling that we have acquired knowledge about something which exists.

Now we also understand why, in the beginning, Theaetetus proposed that knowledge is perception. As he was used from his geometry, the proof of a geometrical proposition can be accepted as valid only when it is connected with a clear insight that the geometrical figures in question really coincide and match each other. The problem was that he was not able to realize that this insight is not a sensation, a perception made by our physical eyes, but rather by the soul itself.

And only now we can also understand why Socrates is at a loss as far as his knowledge is concerned. Now, we understand his own learned ignorance. For is it really possible to consummate, to crown the discussions about non-mathematical things by immediate intuition of the coincidence of all parts of the problem, by direct insight into the harmony of them, so that we can really say that we have reached knowledge? Is not it rather so that concerning the non-mathematical things it is necessary, in a new situation, to deliver

our meaning about things repeatedly to the scrutiny of a dialectical discussion so that our attempt in acquiring the spiritual insight of the harmonious matching would again actualize? And is not it just in Plato where to learn the highest art of hermeneutics?