

## Degrees of Reality in Plato: Part II<sup>1</sup>

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### 4. Criticisms of Fine's, Gosling's, and Vlastos' Interpretations

Fine clearly separates the objects of knowledge and opinion from the contents of knowledge and opinion.<sup>2</sup> Thus, according to her, Socrates' argument at the end of Book V of the *Republic* is concerned only with the contents of knowledge and opinion, distinguishes only pieces of knowledge from opinions, and allows pieces of knowledge and opinions to have the same objects. But is it true to Plato's text?

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<sup>1</sup> This paper was originally written as part of my Ph. D. dissertation to be submitted to the University of Texas at Austin; and about a half of the paper was read at the Ancient Philosophy Workshop held at the University of Oklahoma in Feb. '93, and about a third of the paper was read in Japanese at the Tohoku Philosophical Society, Sendai, in Oct. '93 and is published in the Society's *Nempo* (Proceedings), Vol. 10 (1994), pp. 15-27. The portion published here is the second part of the paper, the first part of which is published in *Aichi* (Philosophy) Vol. 10 (1993). I apologize to the reader for the inconvenience of this arrangement.

<sup>2</sup> A contents analysis of knowledge (and belief) is contrasted to an objects analysis by G. Fine. 'Knowledge and Belief in *Republic* V,' p. 124. An objects analysis takes *that* to which knowledge is related as an object of knowledge which is expressed by a noun in the accusative as in "knowing a house." A contents analysis takes *that* to which knowledge is related as the content of knowledge which is expressed by a *that* clause as in "knowing that the house is blue." G. Ryle, in his classical paper, 'Plato's *Parmenides*,' explains a contents analysis of knowledge as follows:

knowledge requires for its expression not just a name but a sentence or statement. And what a sentence or statement expresses always contains a plurality, at least a duality of distinguishable elements or factors. (p. 136)

Another name for contents is 'internal accusative' (I. M. Crombie, *An Examination of Plato's Doctrines*, vol. II, p. 57).

Both Fine and Gosling take a veridical reading of being, that is, a contents analysis of knowledge (and belief), and so their interpretations are considerably similar, especially in their criticisms of existential and predicative readings.

According to Fine, Socrates' application of his principle of individuation of faculties is uncontroversial. It simply states that knowledge has as its content a piece of knowledge, and opinion an opinion. Socrates cannot mean that knowledge and opinion are related to different objects. For husbandry and butchery, which accomplish different things, can be related to the same domestic animals.<sup>3</sup> Here I disagree with Fine. Read in terms of an objects analysis, Socrates' claim is uncontroversial. Socrates says that knowledge is related to the knowable, and opinion the opinable (478a10-b2).<sup>4</sup> Irrespective of whether the knowable and the opinable are taken as objects or contents, Socrates' claim is linguistically obvious.<sup>5</sup> Now the knowable (*gnōston*) and the opinable (*doxaston*) are what can be known and what can be opined, that is, what has the capacity to be known and what has the capacity to be opined. The knowable and the opinable are knowable and opinable respectively by their own capacity, and they do not become knowable and opinable depending on a human being who may know or opine them.

Second, Gosling is wrong in limiting the lovers of sights and the lovers of

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<sup>3</sup> This is Fine's counter example to an objects analysis of Socrates' claim. Fine, op. cit., pp. 128-9.

<sup>4</sup> Actually Glaucon says that the knowable and the opinable are different because knowledge and opinion are related to different things (478a12-b2). I understand that in Glaucon's reasoning, the conclusion that the knowable and the opinable are different gives an explication of what was said before, that is, that knowledge and opinion are related to different things. This is Thrasymacho-Socratic way of precise speaking. For example, butchery as butchery is not related to a domestic animal, because, even if butchery is exercised to a wild animal, it is still butchery. Precisely speaking, butchery as butchery is related to what can be made meat, or the butcherable, and husbandry as husbandry is related to what can be made useful animals, or the domesticatable.

<sup>5</sup> What is obvious is that the knowable and the opinable are different. For if the faculty of knowledge and the faculty of opinion are different because of their different accomplishments, the descriptions of their objects as the knowable and the opinable are also different. Theoretically speaking, it is still an open question whether there is anything which is knowable as well as opinable, but such a possibility is excluded later when the opinable is identified with what is and is not (478d5-12).

hearing to experts who attempt to define things. At 479d3 Socrates refers to the lovers of sights and the lovers of hearing as *hoi polloi*, which means “the many, the majority.”<sup>6</sup> Correspondingly, the opinions of the lovers of sights and the lovers of hearing do not need to be restricted to attempts to answer what X is.<sup>7</sup>

Further, as against both Fine’s and Gosling’s interpretations, Socrates says that the philosophers delight in and love that to which knowledge is related, and the lovers of sights and the lovers of hearing that to which opinion is related (479e10-480a1). Propositions are not likely candidates for the objects of love.<sup>8</sup> What we enjoy are music and beautiful scenes, and not propositions about them. So those to which knowledge and opinion are related are objects rather than propositions.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Liddel and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*. Or “the masses.” See F. C. White, ‘J. Gosling on *ta polla kala*,’ pp. 130-1. Glaucon says that the lovers of hearing are the strangest people to count as philosophers (475d3-4). But to call experts of crafts philosophers would not sound strange in Greek. Experts can discuss what their crafts are about, and the ability of discussion is a mark of philosophers. Socrates also contrasts the many, who think that the good is pleasure, with the more refined, who think that the good is prudence (505b5-6).

<sup>7</sup> Either *nomima* include other opinions than accounts, or *nomima* are only part of opinions of the lovers of sights and the lovers of hearing, or both. Cf. Fine, op.cit., p. 138. I am inclined to take *nomima* at 479d4 as the same as *polla ta kala* at 479a3.

<sup>8</sup> This intuition comes from a fact that propositions describe objects; so if we ever love propositions, it seems, we love them derivatively from our love of objects which they describe.

<sup>9</sup> The lovers of sights and the lovers of hearing are most likely the same people who are referred to as lovers of money (Book IX, 580d11-581a1). The lovers of money are those people who love pleasures of eating, drinking, sex, and their followers. They are called lovers of money, because their pleasures are most gained by means of money. In the case of lovers of eating, drinking, and sex, what they enjoy are clearly objects of their desires, or possibly the pleasurable sensation, but not propositions. Now there is a small difference between these two descriptions, “the lovers of sights and the lovers of hearing” and “the lovers of pleasures of eating, drinking, and sex.” One description uses the senses of sight and hearing, while the other description refers to the sense of touch.

According to Aristotle, the excessive delight in the sense of touch makes people self-indulgent, which is a vice, but the excessive delight in the senses of sight and

Although interpreters often focus on what is, and try to read “is” in its veridical or predicative use, what is the meaning of “what is not”? According to Vlastos, knowledge is related to what is F, opinion to what is and is not F, and ignorance to what is not F. “What is F” means what is dependably F. “What is and is not F” means what is F but is not dependably F.<sup>10</sup> Vlastos understands these in terms of necessity

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hearing does not (*Nicomachean Ethics*, III, 10). Incidentally and interestingly, Aristotle calls the pleasures of touch bodily pleasures while he does not seem to call the pleasures of eyes and ears bodily pleasures. Both Plato and Aristotle think that pleasures of eating, drinking, and sex are the process of replenishing some deficiency, that for this reason they are mixed with pain, but that there are other pleasures which are not accompanied by preceding pains, for example, pleasure of smell or sight (*Philebus*, and *Nicomachean Ethics*, VII, 11-4, X). These differences between the senses of sight and hearing and the sense of touch, however, do not suggest that the enjoyment of the senses of sight and hearing is limited to the more sophisticated among the many. For, as Aristotle says, everybody shares the enjoyment in the sense of sight and hearing (*Metaphysics*, I, 1, 980a21-4). So Plato’s two descriptions of the many are to be understood to focus on different aspects of the same people, depending on Plato’s specific interests in particular contexts. In Book V, Plato tries to differentiate the lovers of sights and the lovers of hearing from the philosophers, because they have a similarity: the lovers of sights and the lovers of hearing seem to enjoy learning. In Book IX, Plato characterizes the many by their most conspicuous feature (580e1-2). This allows the many to have other less conspicuous features. So, when the lovers of money are said to love pleasures of eating, drinking, sex, and their followers (580e3-4), “their followers” can include seeing and hearing. What is common to all these pleasures, those of touch, sight, and hearing, is that they can be bought by money. These pleasures are “external,” while the pleasures of the philosophers and the lovers of honor are “internal.” The philosophers and the lovers of honor cannot buy their pleasures. As a present-day evidence of the identity of the lovers of sights and the lovers of hearing and the lovers of pleasures of touch, note that advertisements of traveling, restaurants, concerts, and musicals come together.

Lastly, Plato says that the lovers of money pursue learning only insofar as they can make money out of it (581d1-3). For example, the lovers of money learn arithmetic only for the purpose of their business. People as the lovers of sights and the lovers of hearing, however, go to see a play for its pleasure’s sake. Then why do people run after plays from a theater to another theater? What is the difference between the nature of the learning of the philosophers and the nature of the learning of the lovers of sights and the lovers of hearing? This is exactly what Socrates tries to indicate in his argument at the end of Book V of the *Republic*.

and contingency. If X is necessarily F, it is always dependable to predicate F of X, and it is necessarily true that X is F. If X is contingently F, it is only sometimes dependable to predicate F of X, and it is contingently true, and possibly false, that X is F. According to such an interpretation, what is not F would be something which has no cognitive dependability. If X is not F without ever being F, it would never be dependable to predicate F of X, and it would be necessarily false that X is F. For example, if snow appears cold, its being cold is always a trustworthy appearance. If snow appears white, its being white is usually trustworthy, but not always. But if snow appears hot, this appearance, snow's being hot, is never trustworthy.

This interpretation, however, is untenable. For, according to this interpretation, an object, three, described by an always dependable proposition, for example, that three is odd would be the same as an object, three, described by a never dependable proposition that three is even. So objects of knowledge and objects of ignorance would collapse into the same group.

Is there any way to give a more charitable interpretation to Vlastos' interpretation? Vlastos' interpretation is most naturally taken to understand by "what is not F" what is not-F. And we took him as assigning necessarily true propositions to knowledge, contingent propositions to opinion, and necessarily false propositions to ignorance. Can Vlastos assign, for example, contingently true propositions to opinion and contingently false propositions to ignorance? Can "what is not F" mean what is F

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<sup>10</sup> Vlastos does not seem to distinguish being not F and not being F. He takes what is and is not F as what is F and not-F. See his 'Degrees of Reality' and 'Metaphysical Paradox.' This is only natural, since the point of Socrates' argument is that what is and is not is subject to contrary predicates, for example, beautiful and ugly. If "is not F" in "what is and is not F" is taken as "is not-F," what is not F, that to which ignorance is related, would most naturally be what is not-F. In other words, for Vlastos, in what is F, the connection between the subject and the predicate is a necessary connection: in what is and is not F, the relation between the subject and the predicate is a contingent connection: and in what is not F, the relation between the subject and the predicate is a necessary disconnection.

but not necessarily so? No. For such a new interpretation would reduce objects of ignorance into objects of opinion. Can it mean what is not-F but not necessarily so? No. There is no textual basis for this double appearance of “not” in “what is *not*-F but *not* necessarily so.” Can it mean what is not-F but possibly F? No. Such an interpretation again would reduce objects of ignorance into objects of opinion. And it goes wildly against the text. For the text means by “what is not F” what is not F simply, and contrasts it with what can both be F and not be F. So “what is not F” must mean what is not F without the possibility of being F.

Further, Socrates says that it is impossible to opine what is not (478b6-c2). Why is it impossible to opine what is not? This is a stumbling block for Vlastos’, Fine’s, and Gosling’s interpretations. How can they interpret the impossibility of opining what is not? What is not is a direct object of “to opine.” So, for Vlastos, “what is not” would be an object which necessarily is not F.<sup>11</sup> But it should be possible to opine an object, three, which necessarily is not even. For if one’s thought that three is even were not related to the same three, which necessarily is odd, how could it be necessarily false?<sup>12</sup> The reason why it is necessarily false that three is even is that the same three is necessarily odd.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> For he seems to think that those things to which knowledge and opinion are related are objects. However, for Vlastos, what is trustworthy, or not trustworthy, is primarily a proposition. So Vlastos keeps the ambiguity in Greek: “to know” or “to opine” can take an object noun in accusative and an object clause together.

<sup>12</sup> Socrates also says that it is impossible to know what is not (477a1). If “what is not” meant an object which necessarily is not F, Socrates would be saying that it is impossible to know an object, for example, three, which necessarily is not even. But certainly it is possible to know three, which is necessarily odd. So “what is not” cannot mean an object which necessarily is not F.

<sup>13</sup> Alternatively, Vlastos may mean by “what is not F” a necessarily false proposition that X is F. If so, Socrates would be saying that it is impossible to opine a necessarily false proposition. First of all, if a proposition is never trustworthy, it is a good reason for saying that one should not opine that proposition. But it does not follow that one cannot opine that proposition. Why is there any good reason to suppose that it is impossible to opine a necessarily false proposition? Certainly if one knew that X is not

For Fine, who interprets “what is” as what is true, and “what is and is not” as what is true and what is false, “what is not” would mean what is false. But then Socrates would be saying that it is impossible to opine what is false. If it is impossible to opine what is false, a set of opinions would contain only true members and no false members. This would make opinion no different from knowledge. So Fine actually takes a different interpretation.<sup>14</sup> Fine takes “what is not” as meaning what is very false, and assigns what is just false to opinion and what is very false to ignorance. If one thinks what is very false, for example, that justice is a vegetable, then one’s thought does not qualify as opinion, but it is rather ignorance. That is how it is impossible to opine what is very false.<sup>15</sup> This interpretation, however, is somewhat inconsistent with Fine’s viewpoint. For Fine did not distinguish knowledge and opinion by the difference of their propositional contents. If what is just false is opinion and what is very false is ignorance, why is it not that what is just true is opinion and what is very true is knowledge?

Further, according to Fine, “what is not” means what is just false, when it is found in “what is and is not”, and what is very false, when it is found in itself. But the same expression “what is not” is not likely to have different meanings, according as it is a content of opinion and a content of ignorance. For Socrates seems to define opinion in terms of the characteristics of the objects (or contents) of knowledge and ignorance. The objects (or contents) of opinion share one characteristic, is, with the objects (or contents) of knowledge, and another characteristic, is not, with the objects (or contents) of ignorance.

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F, it would be impossible to opine that X is F. For one would also know that it is false that X is F. But there are many things which people do not know, and some of what people think will be contingently false and some will be necessarily false. For example, one may think that five and seven are eleven (an example from the *Theaetetus*, 195e-196a). So it is possible to think a necessarily false proposition. It is very unlikely that Socrates means by “what is not” a necessarily false proposition.

<sup>14</sup> Fine, op.cit., pp. 130-1.

<sup>15</sup> So we may call Fine’s interpretation a degrees of falsehood interpretation (DF).

Lastly, Fine acknowledges degrees of falsehood between opinions and pieces of ignorance. But if pieces of ignorance are more false than opinions, it seems that opinions contain a grain of truth in comparison with pieces of ignorance, and that opinions are more true than pieces of ignorance. For example, if one thinks that tomato is sweet, this proposition is false. Nevertheless, the person who holds this proposition seems to know at least that tomato is a food. And in this regard the thought that tomato is sweet is cognitively better than a thought that tomato is 20 carats. In other words, if a false opinion is not totally false, it would be partially false, and if a false opinion is only partially false, it would be partially true. If so, opinion, for Fine, would contain partially true and partially false members as well as definitely true members. But if an opinion is partially true and partially false, this would be the natural meaning of “what is and is not”. This would lead to Gosling’s interpretation.

According to Gosling, the content of knowledge is what is true, and the content of opinion is what is partially true and partially false. Then what about the meaning of “what is not”? Gosling seems to have two thoughts in mind. In one paper, ‘*Republic* Book V: *ta polla kala* etc.,’ Gosling says, “Anyone who has not even got so far as the *philothemon*’s [the sightlover’s] interest [in a question, what X is] is of course in a state of *agnoia* [ignorance] on the question.”<sup>16</sup> Here Gosling seems to think that ignorance is characterized by the lack of interest in, and the lack of answer to, what X is. So “what is not” means what is not true, not in the sense that it is a *false* answer, but in the sense that it is not an *answer* at all. That is to say, an ignorant person has nothing to say in answer to what X is. In another paper, ‘*Doxa and Dunamis in Plato’s Republic*,’ however, Gosling says that ignorance is “getting something quite wrong rather than complete unawareness of the subject-matter.”<sup>17</sup> Here Gosling seems to mean that ignorance has a content of judgment. For example, someone who says, “Knowledge is a pair of spectacles,” says something, which is quite wrong about knowledge. But

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<sup>16</sup> Gosling, ‘*Republic* Book V: *ta polla kala* etc.,’ pp. 123.

<sup>17</sup> Gosling, ‘*Doxa and Dunamis in Plato’s Republic*,’ p. 125.



Gosling quickly doubts whether this is a judgment, and suggests that it is rather babbling.<sup>18</sup> In either case, an ignorant person has nothing to say, and “what is not” means what is not true, not in the sense of what is a *false* opinion, but in the sense of what is not a *judgment* at all. Then “what is not” seems to indicate the non-existence of judgment related to ignorance. That ignorance is related to what is not a judgment means that there is nothing (or no content) to which ignorance is related.

This consequence invites us to the existential reading of what is not. So let us see, more closely, the text of Socrates’ claim of the impossibility of opining what is not. Here is his conversation with Glaucon:

Then does it [opinion] opine what is not? Or is it also impossible to opine what is not? Think about it. Doesn’t the man who opines refer his opinion to something? Or is it possible to opine, but to opine nothing?

No, it’s impossible.

The man who opines, opines some one thing?

Yes.

But further, that which is not could not with any correctness be addressed as some one thing but rather nothing at all.<sup>19</sup> (478b6-c2)

Here Socrates contrasts what is not with some one thing, and equates what is not to nothing. A question, “Does the man who opines opine something or nothing?” is the same as a question, “Is there something, x, such that the man who opines opines x, or nothing?” This is a question which asks about the existence or non-existence of the object of opining.<sup>20</sup> So “what is not” here means what does not exist. If “what is

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 127.

<sup>19</sup> The translation is that by A. Bloom, unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>20</sup> Fine says that an existential reading of “to be” goes naturally with an objects analysis of knowledge while a veridical reading goes naturally with a contents analysis (op. cit., p. 124). Gosling, too, moves immediately from the rejection of an objects analysis of knowledge to a veridical reading of “to be” (op. cit., pp. 119-22). Thus they seem to think that what exists is an object whereas what is true is a proposition, and they would find it not natural to say that an object is true or that a state of affairs expressed by a proposition exists. Although I do not agree with, and shall argue against, Fine’s and Gosling’s clear separation of, on the one hand, an existential reading of “to be” and an objects analysis of knowledge, and, on the other hand, a

not” means what does not exist, the claim that it is impossible to opine what is not makes clear sense. It is impossible to have any opinion or thought about that which does not exist. For we cannot refer to it. There is nothing there which we can refer to, and, even if we try to refer to it, our attempts to refer to it would just disappear into nothing.<sup>21</sup> If that is the case, our description could not refer to, and be related to, that which does not exist, either. Socrates means by what is not what in no way is (477a3-4). What in no way is, as Socrates says, is in every way unknowable (477a4). No description or predication can refer to that which does not exist. So no description or predication is true of that which does not exist. That is why what is not is in every way unknowable.<sup>22</sup>

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veridical reading and a contents analysis, I have to admit that an existential reading goes naturally with an objects analysis. The reason for this naturalness is: an object apparently belongs to the so-called external world, and so an object either exists or does not exist; on the other hand, a “content” means a cognitive content, which is a proposition, and all propositions, both true ones and false ones, exist insofar as there are cognitive contents, but, if so, it does not make much sense to say that a content either exists *or does not exist*.

Lastly, Vlastos’ predicative reading of “to be”, although it is classified as congenial to an objects analysis of knowledge and that is how Vlastos sees his interpretation, seems to be in between, or both, an objects analysis and a contents analysis of knowledge. For, as Fine phrases it (op. cit., p. 124), “to know something that is F” involves an element of a contents analysis as well as an element of an objects analysis, since predicating F of something in fact makes a proposition.

<sup>21</sup> What happens to propositions about objects which do not exist? Take Russell’s example: the present king of France is bald. When analysed as a subject-predicate sentence, this sentence does not make sense. For the meaningfulness of a whole subject-predicate sentence seems to presuppose the existence of the subject; but this presupposition is not met. When analysed as an existential sentence, Russell’s example becomes: there is something, x, such that x is the present king of France and is bald. This sentence is simply false.

<sup>22</sup> Socrates’ formula that what is entirely, is entirely *knowable*, while what in no way is, is in every way *unknowable* (477a3-5), suggests that what is and is not is halfway, or imperfectly, *knowable*. This is a suggestion that opinion is an imperfect kind of knowledge; that is to say, the objects of opinion are somehow knowable, but such a cognition is not really knowledge.

## 5. The Unity of the Three Uses of Being

We just saw that “what is not” means what does not exist. What does not exist does not have any property, and so no predication is true of it. That is why what is not is in every way unknowable. If “what is not” means what does not exist, “what is” means what exists. Then how can the existential reading of “to be” make sense of the passages which suggest the predicative or veridical reading?

The way in which I approach this question is to challenge the distinctions among the three uses of “to be”. I assert the unity of the three uses of “to be” in such a way that the existential use is the primary use while the predicative and veridical uses are derivative. One important thing to note is that predicate is an ontological notion, rather than an epistemological one, for Plato. Predication is not just a matter of some person’s connecting a predicate with a subject. “Predicate” rather means property. First, if something exists, it is something F. In other words, if something exists, it should have some property, a mode of existence in which it makes itself appear, and if something does not have any property, it cannot be said to exist. If something is F, something F exists. Certainly, even if someone thinks that something is F, it does not follow that something F exists. But if something is F, it follows that something F exists.<sup>23</sup> So the existential use and predicative use of “to be” imply each other. Secondly, if something is F, then it is true that it is F. Again, even if someone thinks that something is F, it does not follow that it is true that it is F. But if something is F, then it follows that it is true that it is F. If it is true that something is F, then it is F. This is clearly so, insofar as we are talking about reality in using “true”. This commits us to a correspondence (or realist) theory of truth. A correspondence theory of truth is something which Plato shares with us. For Plato is discussing matters of sciences about the real world, and not

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<sup>23</sup> This is nothing mysterious. That something is F implies that there is something F. This is how “something is F” is translated into a quantified logic.

matters within a fictional story, and when Plato says that something is true, the objective reality is the ground for his truth claim. So the predicative use and veridical use of “to be” imply each other.<sup>24</sup>

Consequently, something F exists if and only if it is F if and only if it is true that it is F. The existential, predicative, and veridical uses of “to be” are equivalent to one another.<sup>25</sup> According to Kahn, all the three readings of “to be”, existential, predicative, and veridical, are required for the full understanding of Plato’s text.<sup>26</sup> Kahn, however, does not think that the existential use of being is the primary use among the three. First, he thinks that, linguistically, the predicative use of “to be” is primary whereas the existential and veridical uses are “secondary and in a sense parasitic on the predicative use of the verb.”<sup>27</sup> Kahn seems to mean that the existential and veridical uses of “to be” are sentence-operators.<sup>28</sup> Thus first comes a basic sentence, “X is F.” Then a sentence-operator is processed on this basic sentence: “There is X which is F,” or “It is true that X is F.” This is Kahn’s linguistic claim. What do these existential and veridical sentence-operators do?

Second, Kahn writes, “as a fact in the history of philosophy, the idea of truth (and falsehood) associated with the veridical uses is the primary notion for the

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<sup>24</sup> That is to say, it is true that something is F if and only if it is F. This is the same as Tarski’s convention T. Cf. A. Tarski, ‘The Semantic Conception of Truth.’

<sup>25</sup> Certainly, since the three uses of “to be” are syntactically different, they cannot be equivalent in the sense of direct substitutability. By equivalence I mean mutual *mutatis mutandis* implication, and by *mutatis mutandis* implication I mean that one who uses one use of “to be” in a sentence is obliged to accept another use of “to be” in an appropriately modified sentence.

<sup>26</sup> C. Kahn, ‘Some Philosophical Uses of “to be” in Plato,’ pp. 105, 109, 111-2. There Kahn actually adds the static aspect of being to these three uses of being. In another paper, ‘Linguistic Relativism and the Greek Project of Ontology,’ Kahn also says that “existence, predication, and truth -- belong together in any ontology or in any metaphysical scheme” (p. 22).

<sup>27</sup> C. Kahn, ‘On the Theory of the Verb “To Be”,’ in *Logic and Ontology* ed. by M. Munitz, p. 2.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6

development of the metaphysical concept of Being in Plato and Parmenides.”<sup>29</sup> Exactly in what sense is the veridical use of being primary? In a note of one paper, Kahn suggests “that, for both Parmenides and Plato, the veridical *esti* and *to on* (‘what is the case’) be understood as a conjunction of ‘X exists’ and ‘X is F’, for unspecified values of X and F.”<sup>30</sup> Kahn seems to mean that the veridical use of “to be” is a synthesis of the existential and predicative uses which works for the purpose of philosophy. What does the veridical use of “to be” do for philosophy? The veridical use of “to be” “makes general and explicit the truth claim which is implicit and particularized in every elementary use of the copula.”<sup>31</sup> It “separate[s] off the truth claim as a distinct idea [from the content of a sentence], to talk about it.”<sup>32</sup> This is important for philosophy: philosophy focuses on the truth claim of a sentence. For philosophy, as Kahn conceives, is an inquiry,<sup>33</sup> and hence asks a question: Is it true?

Similarly, the existential use of “to be” brings into the focus an essential element implicit in a basic declarative sentence: the existence of a subject. Kahn calls the use of “to be” in the following type of sentence the existential copula: there is an X which is F.<sup>34</sup> According to Kahn, the pure existential use of being is a variation or development of this existential copula.<sup>35</sup> When the predicate is unspecified, the existential copula becomes pure existential: there is X.

Now to ask a question “Is it true that X is F?” is not essential for philosophy. Philosophy can ask the same question: Is X F? What is essential for philosophy is the truth claim. According to Kahn, the veridical use of “to be” has primary importance

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<sup>29</sup> C. Kahn, ‘Linguistic Relativism and the Greek Project of Ontology,’ p. 23, note 4.

<sup>30</sup> C. Kahn, ‘Some Philosophical Uses of “to be” in Plato,’ p. 130, note 18.

<sup>31</sup> C. Kahn, ‘On The Theory of the Verb “To Be”,’ p. 13.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> See Kahn, ‘Linguistic Relativism and the Greek Project of Ontology,’ pp. 21, 25, 26 *et passim*.

<sup>34</sup> Kahn, ‘On The Theory of the Verb “To Be”,’ pp. 13-5.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

for philosophy, because it brings forth the truth claim of a sentence. What is the truth claim? Let us take a sentence: it is true that X is F. This sentence claims the truth of the original sentence that X is F. What does “truth” mean, according to a correspondence theory of truth? “Truth” means correspondence with reality, and reality is what there is. So what our sentence claims is the existence of a state of affairs expressed by the original sentence: there is a state of affairs such that X is F.

Both the existential and veridical uses of “to be” as sentence-operators do not add anything new to an original sentence. They are “superfluous”<sup>36</sup> in a sense. What they do is to make explicit what is going on in an original sentence but is obscured in it. What is going on and is made explicit is the existential claim in a case of the existential use, and the truth claim in a case of the veridical use of “to be”. The truth claim, however, is an existential claim of some sort; that is, existence of a state of affairs expressed by the sentence. So the existential claim is something common to all the three uses of being. This is why the existential use of being is primary.

If we take the existential reading of “to be”, in 479a5-d6, Socrates seems to move from an admission that the many F’s are F and are not F to a conclusion that they exist and do not exist. Cross and Woozley think, and are accused by Fine of simply assuming, that Plato confused the existential use and the predicative use of “to be”.<sup>37</sup> My task is to understand why Socrates does not distinguish the existential use from the predicative use of “to be”. First of all, Socrates does not move, for example, from an admission that Simmias is not tall to a conclusion that Simmias does not exist. As far as I am aware of, none of the commentators pays attention to the exact words of Socrates at that point. Socrates says that the many F’s are F and are not F. The peculiarity of Socrates’ words is that the subject and the predicate are both F. So

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 8. Just as truth is sometimes said redundant, because every sentence claims its truth.

<sup>37</sup> Cross and Woozley, *Plato’s Republic: A Philosophical Commentary*, pp. 161-4. Fine, op. cit., p. 134, note 18.

Socrates does not conclude from the negation of one predicate of a subject the non-existence of the subject. What kind of judgment is “An F is F” or “An F is not F”? What suggests itself is that Socrates has primarily in mind, not a subject-predicate judgment, but what I call a judgment of recognition (or discovery).<sup>38</sup>

A judgment of recognition<sup>39</sup> takes the existential use of “to be”. When we open a box, for example, we find a pen in it, and we say: there is a pen. An element of the predicative use of “to be” is also involved in it. For we recognize what we find there as a pen. So “there is a pen” is analyzed as: there is something which is a pen. When this sentence is forced into a subject-predicate form, it becomes: a pen is a pen.<sup>40</sup> This sentence sounds a bit strange, but it is what is going on when Socrates says that an F is F: we predicate a pen of what we recognize as a pen. But when it turns out not to be a pen, we can and should say: there is not a pen.<sup>41</sup> That is how the denial of a predicate leads to the non-existence of what is recognized under the predicate.

In a judgment of recognition, the existence of a subject and the validity of a predicate are one and the same. Further, since the subject is not different from, but is recognized by, the predicate, the existence of a state of affairs that an F is F is the same as the existence of an F. So there is an obvious connection between the existential use and the veridical use of “to be”.

There is a reason for thinking that a judgment of recognition is prior to, and more fundamental than, a subject-predicate judgment. For if we are to make a subject-predicate judgment, we have to recognize a subject and a predicate first.<sup>42</sup> And just as a

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<sup>38</sup> J. McDowell points out in his commentary on the *Theaetetus* that Plato has in mind a judgment of identity in his discussion of the possibility of false belief in the *Theaetetus*. J. McDowell, *Plato, Theaetetus*, and also ‘Identity Mistakes: Plato and the Logical Atomists.’ Although Plato first recognizes a subject and a predicate as distinct elements of a judgment in the *Sophist*, the discussion in the *Theaetetus* reveals what Plato took as the fundamental type of judgement before the *Sophist*.

<sup>39</sup> Ontologically, a judgement of recognition is an appearing of a property.

<sup>40</sup> Or what is a pen is a pen.

<sup>41</sup> Whether there is something else instead is another issue.

judgment of recognition is prior to a subject-predicate judgment, the existential use of “to be” is so to the predicative use of “to be”. Then how did Plato view a subject-predicate judgment, which must have been quite common? Socrates in the *Phaedo* analyzes “Simmiias is tall” as: there is tallness in Simmiias.<sup>43</sup> So, for Plato,<sup>44</sup> whether a subject X is a predicate F or not, is a matter of whether X has F or not, which is a matter of whether there is F in X or not. This is a commonsensical rephrase of an ordinary subject-predicate sentence, and does not require a theory of Forms. If something is F, it should have that property F, that is to say, there should be that property F in it. Thus if a subject-predicate sentence is reduced to an existential sentence of a predicate, the truth of the sentence depends on the recognition of the predicate. For example, if we recognize tallness in Simmiias, Simmiias is tall, but if we are mistaken in recognizing tallness, then there is not tallness in Simmiias.<sup>45</sup>

This analysis of a subject-predicate sentence assumed the correct identification of Simmiias. We may, however, be erroneously taking Cebes for Simmiias. If that is the case, “Simmiias is tall” would be false again. Thus for “Simmiias is tall” to be true, we have to recognize Simmiias as Simmiias and tallness as tallness. So the correct recognition of a subject and a predicate is prior to the truth of a sentence.

## 6. The Degrees of Reality

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<sup>42</sup> For an evidence that Plato thought so, the *Cratylus* 385c1-d1, where Plato argues that for a sentence to be true, each part of it has to be true. Also cf. B. Russell, ‘Logical Atomism,’ p. 337: “I confess it seems obvious to me (as it did to Leibniz) that what is complex must be composed of simples.” If what is complex is to be known, the simples have to be known. Russell called the latter knowledge knowledge by acquaintance. The role of knowledge by acquaintance for Russell is to link our description of the world to reality.

<sup>43</sup> The *Phaedo* 100d-102e.

<sup>44</sup> At least in his middle dialogues.

<sup>45</sup> That is, the truth of a matter depends on whether we recognize a predicate (property) correctly or not. This may explain Socratic interest in the definition.



Another passage which seemed to pose a difficulty to the existential reading of being was 477a6-b2, where Socrates' dialogue with Glaucon is as follows:

Now if there were something such as both to be and not to be, wouldn't it lie between what purely and simply is and what in no way is?

Yes, it would be between.

Since knowledge depended on what is and ignorance necessarily on what is not, mustn't we also seek something between ignorance and knowledge that depends on that which is in between, if there is in fact any such thing?

Most certainly.

Fine thinks that the existential reading of this passage violates the condition of noncontroversiality,<sup>46</sup> for the existential reading "separates the objects of knowledge and belief [opinion], and consigns the objects of belief [opinion] to the realm of 'halfexistent'."<sup>47</sup> But, in the passage just quoted, Socrates does not say anything about opinion. Therefore he cannot be making a controversial assumption here. Just before the quoted passage, Socrates and Glaucon agreed that knowledge is related to what is, and that ignorance is related to what is not (476e7-477a5). Socrates is now adding: if there is something such as to be and not to be, it is between what is and what is not, and something between knowledge and ignorance is related to it. This is not controversial. For, given that knowledge is related to what is and that ignorance is related to what is not, Socrates' claim that something between knowledge and ignorance is related to that which is between what is and what is not, is formal, and linguistically obvious. Further, Socrates' claim is conditional on the existence of something such as to be and not to be, and he is non-committal as to the existence of such a thing.

At 478d3-4 Socrates says that opinion is between knowledge and ignorance.

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<sup>46</sup> The principle that Socrates' argument here cannot assume controversial premises unacceptable to the lovers of sights and the lovers of hearing is called the condition of noncontroversiality by Fine, *op. cit.*, p. 123. About the condition of noncontroversiality, see also J. C. Gosling, '*Doxa and Dunamis in Plato's Republic*,' pp. 120-2.

<sup>47</sup> Fine, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

This is the second major step in his argument. But here Socrates does not just introduce this step: he argues for it (477b3-478d2). The last major step in his argument is 479a5-d2, where Socrates finds something such as to be and not to be. Actually what he finds both being and not being, are the many F's which the lovers of sights and the lovers of hearing recognize and love. Thus he can conclude that the lovers of sights and the lovers of hearing are concerned with the opinable and that their thought is opinion (479d3-e6). Is it, however, a controversial assumption that the many F's which the lovers of sights and the lovers of hearing recognize and love are F and are not F?

Gosling writes, "it is far from obvious why opponents [the lovers of sights and the lovers of hearing] should accept the statement that every just act also appears unjust."<sup>48</sup> But we should listen to Socrates first. Socrates asks:

Of these many fair things, is there any that *will* not also appear ugly<sup>49</sup>?  
(479a5-7)

Exactly how are the many F's not F? Socrates' claim is temporal: every one of the many F's *will* cease to be F sooner or later.<sup>50</sup> Now just one use of the future tense does not force this interpretation. But let us contrast the many F's with the F itself. Before the question, Socrates addresses the lovers of sights and the lovers of hearing:

Let him answer me, that good fellow who does not think there is a beautiful in itself or any idea of beauty in itself remaining *always* the same and unchanged. (478e7-479a3)<sup>51</sup>

The contrast with the description of the beauty itself makes the temporal aspect of the many F's prominent. So Socrates is saying that the many F's will cease to be F. Such

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<sup>48</sup> Gosling, '*Republic* Book V: *ta polla kala* etc.,' p. 119.

<sup>49</sup> Interestingly, Plato does not distinguish "ugly" from "not beautiful".

<sup>50</sup> This is not the only way in which the many F's are F and not F. The *Symposium* mentions the four ways in which the many F's are F and are not F: in different respects, at different times, relative to different things, and at different places (210e6-211a4).

<sup>51</sup> This is P. Shorey's translation.

a claim seems obvious. The lovers of sights and the lovers of hearing will not object to the claim that the many F's which they love, since they came to be, will also go away.<sup>52</sup>

Then Socrates seems to move from the admission that the many F's will cease to be F to a conclusion that they are not F now. Is he justified? Granted that the many F's will cease to be F, what does it mean? It means that the many F's are not F by their nature, even when they are F. They do not stand on their own. If their nature were sufficient for being F, there would be no reason for them to cease to be F.<sup>53</sup> Socrates, however, does not say much about the nature of the many F's. Glaucon says:

the many are also ambiguous, and it's not possible to think of them fixedly as either being or not being, or as both or neither. (479c3-5)

The many F's are not the same as what is. Nor are they the same as what is not. Nor can they be what is and what is not at the same time. And yet it is impossible for them neither to be nor not to be. They are in between what is and what is not, and they somehow share being with what is, and not-being with what is not.

So in a sense the many F's do not have a nature in themselves. But in a way they have a nature derivatively from the F itself. They are not nothing, and they are not unknowable. They can be known in a sort of defective way, which Plato calls opinion. They show us a glimpse of the F itself, and then disappear. They are like mirages. They frustrate the philosophers who recognize the F itself. But people who do not recognize the F itself, just run after the many F's. These are all that the lovers of sights

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<sup>52</sup> This is one reason why the lovers of sights and the lovers of hearing are busy running around from one fair thing to another.

<sup>53</sup> Actually my view here is very similar to Vlastos' view in his 'Degrees of Reality,' pp. 68-70. In this connection, see also his 'Reasons and Causes in the *Phaedo*.' The example which he has in mind, however, is different from mine. His example is: Simmias is tall not because of being Simmias. The example which I have in mind is: What is tall is tall not because of being what it is. At least, this is the case for the many tall things. The underlying principle is: if what is F is F because of being what it is, it will not cease to be F. My example, unlike Vlastos' example, does not appeal to Simmias.

and the lovers of hearing can see.

That is the temporal aspect of existence: the many F's<sup>54</sup> are transient, while the F itself is forever. Thus there are at least two kinds of existence: one is transient, while the other is forever. They are not just two different kinds of existence, like mind and body in Descartes. One is superior to the other. In a sense, the many F's and the F itself are of the same kind: they share the same predicate F, and are different from G's and H's. But the F itself shows a property F in a superior way than the many F's. The F itself is F by nature, while the many F's show F only temporarily. The many F's do not stay there, but will disappear. This indicates that their existence is already threatened by nothing. The many F's are like one side of a coin, the other side of which is nothing. Such a coin can show the other side up at any time. For example, we do not know when a human being is going to die. The many F's, since they are threatened by nothing, make us feel the pain and horror of nothing. But the F itself is not threatened by nothing, and lasts forever. This is one way in which the F itself is superior to the many F's.<sup>55</sup>

So this is one sense of the degrees of existence: the F itself lasts much longer than the many F's. The following are my suggestions toward the understanding of the degrees of existence. First, the above sense of the degrees of existence can be applied for the many F's. Among the many F's, some F's, which last longer than other F's, exist more than them. A candle which lasts longer contains more existence of candle as candle, which is the power of lighting. As a candle burns in time, its power of lighting, its existence, diminishes, and at the end it is extinguished. A well which has more water lasts longer, while a well which has less water will be exhausted sooner. Here the existence of a well is its supplying water, and when a well does not supply water any more, there is no well.<sup>56</sup> Thus things can last according as they contain existence. As I

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<sup>54</sup> "What is F"(*to on*) does not mean *that* something which is F, but it should mean what is F insofar as it is described as F.

<sup>55</sup> This is not the only way. See note 50 above.

said in the above, F things which will cease to be F are not really F even when they are F. But there are degrees to which they are more or less genuinely F. As Plato writes in the *Symposium*, time is the good touchstone for things.<sup>57</sup> For example, courage is tried in many challenging situations, and if it proves itself through a long time, it is genuine, but if it fails, it only shows that the being of courage was merely an appearance. So if an appearance of courage lasts longer, it is more genuinely courage, and the true courage of a human being will last throughout his/her entire life. Further if an F is more genuine, it exists more. For an F which is not genuinely F, does not exist as F. If an F is not genuinely F, its existence is not genuine. So, if an F is not genuinely F, we cannot really say that it exists. What do I mean by existence?

As I pointed out earlier,<sup>58</sup> for Plato, to be is to be something. That is to say, existence is always the existence as something. This implies that there is not a bare existence<sup>59</sup>, and that predicates (properties) are all that there are. Then the existence is always the existence of a predicate (property). So a predicate F exists exactly to that extent to which it is F. If it is not F, the predicate F does not exist, and if it is more F, the predicate F exists more.

Perhaps, another more appropriate expression for the degrees of existence among the many F's, is the degrees of appearances. For they are not really existences, but they are all more or less appearances. So the many F's appear to different degrees. What does it mean? Since the existence of the F appearances are derivative from the F itself, the F itself is actually appearing in the F appearances.<sup>60</sup> That is to say, only insofar as the F itself shows itself, the F appearances appear. So the F itself shows

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<sup>56</sup> Another case is: a life which lasts longer contains more power of life.

<sup>57</sup> The *Symposium* 184a6-7. Although this is part of Pausanias' speech, the thought is a common sense wisdom, which Plato would endorse gladly.

<sup>58</sup> In pages 11-12.

<sup>59</sup> At least in the middle dialogues. The Being in the *Sophist* requires another investigation.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. 476a4-7.

itself to different degrees in different F appearances. When the F itself shows itself more, an F appearance is more F, and a more F appears. But the many F's appearances will be exhausted, whereas the F itself is never exhausted.<sup>61</sup> The F itself is unexhaustibly rich. Thus the sun is the appropriate simile for the Form of the Good.

If we keep the expression "existence" for the many F's, the more appropriate adjective for describing the existence of the F itself and the many F's might be heavy/light rather than more/less<sup>62</sup>. Thus some existence is heavier, rather than more, than another existence. For example, we could say that Socrates' courage is heavier than a coward's apparent courage. The heavier things have a kind of gravity, which attracts us. So we love the heavier existences, Forms, and the Form of the Good is the heaviest existence of all.

What does it mean that the F itself shows itself more in an F appearance? The F appearance is more F, and it is closer to the F itself, which is F to the highest degree. As the F appearance is closer to the F itself, it is more perfectly F, and so is more perfect. The highest Form is the Form of the Good. Every appearance, insofar as it appears, derives its existence directly or indirectly from the Form of the Good. So every appearance appears insofar as it is good. So an F which is more perfectly F is more perfect. Thus the degrees of existence are at the same time the degrees of perfection. For Plato, light is the appropriate simile for the Form of the Good, while darkness for nothing: the former exists while the latter does not exist.

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<sup>61</sup> This is a point where the relation of the many F's with the F itself as partaking or participation is misleading. Even though an F appearance shares in the F itself, the F itself does not lose anything.

<sup>62</sup> Plato's Greek for the comparative of existence is "*mallon on*"(e.g., 479d1, 515d3, 585d7). The heavy/light metaphor is suggested by Plato's characterization of the many F's as changeable and the F itself as unchangeable.

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