

Linguistic (and Ontological?) encounters between Plato and Karl Popper

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In this study, I attempt to shed light on whether some passages from the Platonic dialogue *Cratylus* that deal with language correspond to Karl Popper's theory on the third world. Specifically, I attempt to prove that Plato's third world contains both divine and human properties, something that is provided through language, that is, through the human rational and developing in objective terms construction. In the four subchapters of my study, I basically investigate the relationship between the thinking subject and the noumenon as well as the role of the coiner of names and the dialectician with respect to the scientific foundation of the names. The most important conclusion drawn is that according to Plato these two are responsible for connecting a thinking subject with a noumenon by adding objective certainty to the meaning of everything is said. I also investigate how Plato's archetypal Ideas could be considered to be the third world.

Introduction

In the following study, we shall attempt to approach some of Plato's views on language in a special interpretative perspective. Specifically, we shall elaborate the introductory and conclusive passages from his dialogue entitled *Cratylus*, aiming at identifying whether and to what extent they correspond to K. Popper's theory on the "third world". According to this modern European philosopher, in the frame of the gnoseological activities of human being a sort of knowledge with an objective meaning grows, which is formed by questions, theories and arguments, which are investigated per se. This kind of knowledge is completely independent from the impression of any man that he actually knows. So, it is knowledge that is not originally defined by the subject that knows. This knowledge is strictly scientific and belongs to what is called third world, which is formed by that human spiritual activity which is expressed in an objective way. The third world is sufficiently independent, despite the fact that human being constantly intervenes –with his greatest scientific performances– in its content and, conversely, accepts its interventions. It follows its own formation terms although it comes from human activity and its results have great certainty impact on human consciousness. K. Popper suggests that the world of human language belongs to this expanded and coherent system of objective knowledge. The most

important functions of language are for him the descriptive and argumentative, which relate one another in a successive sense. The descriptive one is the source to produce the regulatory idea of truth, that is, a description idea that is adjusted, exactly as far as possible, with anything that takes place. This is a somehow meta-language, which founds the argument and the rational critique and will obviously produce strictly categorized cognitive products. It should be mentioned parenthetically that K. Popper considers the world of natural phenomena to be the first world, whereas the world of the subjective and without objective proof knowledge to be the third world. The philosopher also mentions that through his theory on the archetypical metaphysical “Ideas” Plato not only discovered the third world, but he also identified some of its effects on human consciousness. In addition, he understood the human attempt to conceive these “Ideas” and to make them the great exegetical foundations of the reality. K. Popper, however, points out that Plato’s third world is divine, unchangeable and, by extension, true, while his is a human creation, changeable and, therefore, disprovable.¹ What we shall attempt to prove is that Plato’s third world contains, apart from divine, human properties as well, which is provided by the language, which is considered to be a rational and changeable construction of both the individuals and collective schemata, provided that its functions are performed in an –we could add, as far as it is possible– objective way. The main persons of the dialogue under investigation are Socrates, Hermogenes, Cratylus and Euthydemus, each of whom has a particular idea on the language, either with few or extreme differences one another, which are defined by the principles which they adopt.

A. The origin “by nature” or “by position” of the names

The first comment of Hermogenes is that Cratylus contends that within every being is naturally placed –that is, it is an inherent and not an accident quality of it– the appropriate name, which is independent from human interventions. In this sense, a name is neither the product of a conventional agreement between human beings to communicate nor does it depend on their subjective interpretative attitude. From this natural determination it arises that the accuracy of the names –as far as possible– is naturally the same for all human beings, regardless of the culture that they have developed or the geographic place of their residency:

¹ Cf. Popper, Karl, “Epistemology Without a Knowing Subject”, in: *Objective Knowledge – An Evolutionary Approach* (Oxford 1981), ch. 3.

«Κρατύλος φησὶν ὅδε ὀνόματος ὀρθότητα εἶναι ἐκάστῳ τῶν ὄντων φύσει πεφυκυῖαν, καὶ οὐ τοῦτο εἶναι ὄνομα ὃ ἂν τινες συνθέμενοι καλεῖν καλῶσι, τῆς αὐτῶν φωνῆς μόριον ἐπιφθεγγόμενοι, ἀλλὰ ὀρθότητά τινα τῶν ὀνομάτων πεφυκέναι καὶ Ἑλλησι καὶ βαρβάροις τὴν αὐτὴν ἄπασιν».²

“Cratylus, whom you see here, says that everything has a right name of its own, which comes by nature, and that a name is not whatever people call a thing by agreement, just a piece of their own voice applied to the thing, but that there is a kind of inherent correctness in names, which is the same for all men, both Greeks and barbarians”.³

Hermogenes, however, raises *ab initio* the question of whether and to what extent a name, like that of the persons, corresponds to the truth, namely, to what each one of them actually is as a particular being:

«Ἐρωτῶ οὖν αὐτὸν ἐγὼ εἰ αὐτῷ Κρατύλος τῇ ἀληθείᾳ ὄνομα ἐστὶν ἢ οὐ».⁴

“So I ask him whether his name is in truth or not, Cratylus”.⁵

And this –proving or possibly disproving– evaluation becomes in any case necessary, since the linguistic code used by someone to express himself and communicate in daily life can prove whether human beings attribute names in an objective way. The validity of this proof depends on whether objectivity here means a match to the natural specification or something different. For instance, what a collectivity decides to use for practical, functional or utilitarian, family or hereditary reasons. Therefore, the possibility a name to have no correspondence to the person to whom it is given is strong, at the same time as a number of persons may have the same name. According, however, with K. Popper’s distinction with

² *Cra.* 383a.4-b.2. Here the accuracy is somehow defined as the requirement of the identity of a) the signifier with the signified and b) all the signifiers –for the same signified–, regardless of their phonological differences. Thus, in this passage the third world is presented according to K. Popper’s view, namely, in the sense that its main quality is objectivity and that it is a human product. Nevertheless, the question that directly arises is the following: is it possible to find who formed a name and when he did it? Or the formation is to be fully arisen in future, when the scientific reading of an object will be completed? Moreover, how many will take part in this completion and what their national-racial origin would be? According to the explicit textual justifications, these human beings can be everybody, regardless of their origin. Cf. Leroy, Maurice “Sur un emploi de φωνή chez Platon”, in: *Revue des Études Grecques* 80 (1967), pp. 234-241.

³ The translation of all the passages is from H.N. Fowler’s edition under the title *Plato VI. Cratylus, Parmenides, Greater Hippias, Lesser Hippias* (London-New York 1926), p. 7.

⁴ *Cra.* 383b.2-3. Having in mind the previous comment, the subject here is about the specialized application-verification. However, in this passage, the third world is placed in K. Popper’s view that it can be subject to disproof. In fact, the possibility of its disproof is due to the fact that it is a human invention, each time under special circumstances, without any doubt on the primary integrity of this attempt.

⁵ H.N. Fowler, *Plato VI. Cratylus, Parmenides, Greater Hippias, Lesser Hippias*, p. 7.

respect to the three worlds, a person can be part of all, since he is a natural being that can receive on a case-by-case basis a name for superficial or extremely thoughtful reasons.

On this basis, the following arise: Cratylus adopts in the process of naming the a priori of the object but not the a posteriori of the subject and in this way he manages to limit – or self-limit– sensible experience and its logical elaboration. So, between the object and the subject a parallelism has to be established, so that the conclusion of the latter to be true. The question however is still how it is possible human beings with a different origin to understand in the same way the nature of the names. In one respect, Cratylus possibly projects the case of the transcendental subject, which in its formulation is independent from any definition or relation and is capable of discovering a truth. But, this subject is not an insignificant problem. What is its essence and how does it survive during the natural and historical development and scientific progress of human thought, parameters of a change which affect, more or less, the process of naming and the use of the names? Is it universal logic that should characterize every human being, regardless of the surrounding accidents? Or, maybe he does not mean every human being but only that which is responsible due to its inherent knowledge and its integral applications?

Socrates' first reaction is quite sober and relies on the required skepticism before drawing any final conclusion. So, he says that the *episkepsis* of the names, that is, the analysis of their accuracy and use, is an extremely difficult subject-matter, since it belongs to the category of those which are nice, namely, which are positively rated:

«Χαλεπὰ τὰ καλά ἐστὶν ὅπῃ ἔχει μαθεῖν· καὶ δὴ καὶ τὸ περὶ τῶν ὀνομάτων οὐ μικρὸν τυγχάνει ὄν μάθημα».⁶

“Knowledge of high things is hard to gain; and surely knowledge of names is no small matter”.⁷

Without doubt, what is here stressed is the aesthetic dimension of the topic, but the dominant thing is to point out its seriousness, so that to avoid circumstantial and superficial interpretations. This is a kind of knowledge or a special lesson and this is why dogmatism and univocal decisions or any approach that would cause execration or a negative critique through its thoughtlessness should be excluded.

⁶ *Cra.* 384b.1-2. Cf. *Hp.Ma.* 304e; *R.* 435c.7-8 and 497d.9-10. At this point the third world is presented under the criterion of a strict scientific basis, since both its autonomy from the subjective world of references is stressed and the difficulty of knowing it is justified.

⁷ H.N. Fowler, *Plato VI. Cratylus, Parmenides, Greater Hippias, Lesser Hippias*, p. 9.

Hermogenes' second comment reflects his own point of view and it is quite the opposite to that of Cratylus'. Socrates' interlocutor points out that the names arise according to the circumstances and due to a mutual agreement, which adds sociocratic and historical definitions to the subject-matter and introduces the parameter of relativity. That is to say, he contends that a name is formed according to the law and customs of a region, namely, the system of the statutory and institutionalized terms or those communicative references as well. He also says that we can change or replace the names of a thing and each and every one of them is correct:

«Ὅτι δύναμαι πεισθῆναι ὡς ἄλλη τις ὀρθότης ὀνόματος ἢ συνθήκη καὶ ὁμολογία. Ἐμοὶ γὰρ δοκεῖ ὅτι ἂν τις τῷ θῆται ὄνομα, τοῦτο εἶναι τὸ ὀρθόν· καὶ ἂν αὐθίς γε ἕτερον μεταθῆται, ἐκεῖνο δὲ μηκέτι καλῆ, οὐδὲν ἦττον τὸ ὕστερον ὀρθῶς ἔχειν τοῦ προτέρου... Οὐ γὰρ φύσει ἐκάστῳ πεφυκέναι ὄνομα οὐδὲν οὐδενί, ἀλλὰ νόμῳ καὶ ἔθει τῶν ἐθισάντων τε καὶ καλούντων».⁸

“I cannot come to the conclusion that there is any correctness of names other than convention and agreement. For it seems to me that whatever name you give to a thing is its right name; and if you give up that name and change it for another, the later name is no less correct than the earlier [...] for I think no name belongs to any particular thing by nature, but only by the habit and custom of those who employ it and who established the usage”.⁹

According to this, the process of naming is released from ontological and naturalistic –in fact non-approachable and provable directly – determinations. Human being preserves a sort of autonomy with respect to the referent –and anything he intends to know– and presents his own predicates, which however are not ordinary, univocal and necessary conceptual schemata, for they are found under a constant modification. Therefore, traditional schemata from the past are excluded, since they do not correspond to the new terms –or even the new needs– of life. The dynamic tendency of the anthropological and social givens as well as the historical time-space relativism constitute the main, if not the exclusive, criteria for the truth of the names. So, it is indirectly pointed out that the cultural, in the broad sense of the term, development of a region causes crucial repercussions on the language, which has to follow

⁸ *Cra.* 384c.11-e.1. The case here is about a projection and a comparison of the two forms of a predicate, the natural one that is discovered and the personal one that is given. Hermogenes' position is the opposite to that of K. Popper's, since he presents the third world, here in the field of language, as defined by the subject that makes the cognitive reference and forms the cognitive product. Moreover, we could not suggest that Cratylus' extreme realistic approach is completely compatible with K. Popper's positions, since the main protagonist of the Platonic dialogue insists on a natural origin of a name, which in the frame of realism is clearly more valid than any supreme spiritual performance. However: who is capable of discovering this natural origin? This is a question that the interlocutors will deal with latter. Possibly this question is the most crucial for defining the third world according to Plato. On the condition of the use of a name, cf. Aristotle, *Int.* 16a.19-21.

⁹ H.N. Fowler, *Plato VI. Cratylus, Parmenides, Greater Hippias, Lesser Hippias*, pp. 9&11.

anything that takes place in the general frame of which is a part. Language as a system of names is strictly considered as a cultural product as well. Unquestionably, these estimations benefit a dynamic scientific development, which constantly needs or forms a new linguistic material to express its accomplishments. It is not, however, clear whether Hermogenes' positions includes science. Possibly, it does not. This skepticism is based on some gaps in his reasoning. The validity of the social agreement is not investigated, whether it relies or not on proof resulted from an essential and responsible approach of the question of naming. It is possible that in such a case either superficiality or the support of the temporary circumstances dominate, at the same time as we have to keep in mind that the language can be also used in a metaphorical, for any temporal purpose, sense. But, a consideration of the things under circumstantial terms raises the question on the constant and without the criteria of objectivity interchange of the names. At this point a questionable with respect to the value and accuracy nominalism arises.

Verily, Socrates expresses his doubts on the validity and truth of Hermogenes' view, since it can result in that every object is named in a particular way by every human being. The question to be raised will come from the formation of specialized linguistic codes, which possibly will be particularly different from each other, since the inner procedures and the external effects in which human beings operate are different from case to case. The concern here focuses not only on what takes place in a –geographical or cultural– region but also on the possibility that the system of names is formed according to what takes place individually in consciousness or in the logical procedures of every human being as one of its members. Therefore, two repercussions are indirectly heralded: a) confusion in communication and b) logical and factual impasses in finding the truth. Socrates attempts immediately after to put under examination the second case by emphasizing the distinction between truth and falsehood. Combining Gnoseology with Ontology, he contends that the reason which suggests that the beings do exist is true, while that which supports that they do not exist is false. This position directly results from the adoption of ontological realism, that is, the radical autonomy of “being” over “thought”, without mentioning any further details here on the matter of accuracy of the predicates. What is more, through this indirect acceptance the Athenian dialectician draws together with his interlocutors the conclusion that a true reason is true both as a whole and in its parts:

«...Ἄρ' οὖν οὗτος ὃς ἂν τὰ ὄντα λέγη ὡς ἔστιν, ἀληθής· ὃς δ' ἂν ὡς οὐκ ἔστιν, ψευδής; - Ναί... -Ὁ λόγος δ' ἔστιν ὁ ἀληθής πότερον μὲν ὅλος ἀληθής, τὰ μέρη δ' αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἀληθῆ; - Οὐκ, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ μέρη».¹⁰

“-Then that speech which says things as they are is true, and that which says them as they are not is false? – Yes. [...] - But is true speech true only as a whole, and are its parts untrue? - No, its parts also are true”.¹¹

What is described here is basically a logical demand, but it should be also mentioned that breaking truth would break down reality, even within human brain. Without doubt, discussing the truth indirectly aims at excluding subjective arbitrariness and fantasies. Ontological realism defines the truth of the process of naming as well. The given of existence ensures any kind of movement of the spirit. Finally, referring to the position that anything that is true for the whole is also true for its parts has logical and factual foundations and mostly intends to annul contradictions in the process of forming syllogisms or even elementary deconstructions that a consciousness may theoretically cause in the inside of an object.

Explaining the above, it is claimed as a clarification that the name is the smallest part of speech:

«Τὸ ὄνομα σμικρότατον».¹²

“The name is the smallest”.¹³

Obviously, it is considered in the sense of a concept, which is the core and the first cell of the judgments and syllogisms, the beginning of a brief theoretical presentation of reality, which easily can be evaluated as a great accomplishment. We need however to pay attention in that in this discussion there is no reference to name, but to “reason”, which possibly refers to a syllogism, the parts of which are obviously many –short– names. So, another question raised is about the accuracy or not of a sentence.

¹⁰ *Cra.* 385b.5-c.3: The “οὐκ ἔστιν” may not indicate non-existence but the lack of ontological stability. In this passage there is a combination of K. Popper’s extreme worlds: the first one (that is, the world of natural phenomena) and the third one. Beings are a necessary given for human consciousness, which is challenged to function exactly under this requirement. Cf. Robin, Léon, *Platon* (Paris 1988), 49.

¹¹ H.N. Fowler, *Plato VI. Cratylus, Parmenides, Greater Hippias, Lesser Hippias*, 11&13.

¹² *Cra.* 385c.9. In this passage, under the given that the principles of objectivity are applicable, name is equal to the descriptive language according to K. Popper, which is the start line for the critical argumentation, which, however, is placed within the boundaries of a syllogism.

¹³ H.N. Fowler, *Plato VI. Cratylus, Parmenides, Greater Hippias, Lesser Hippias*

B. *The thinking subject and the noumenon object*

Elaborating his rationale, Hermogenes suggests a usage of the name by the subject, in fact an extreme one, since he accepts that it is possible to express different names for the same object, each of which comes from whoever expressed them. He also contends that every name is proper –that is, it is true– with respect to the personal or collective or cultural subject from which it comes and is expressed:

«Οὐ γὰρ ἔχω ἔγωγε, ὦ Σώκρατες, ὀνόματος ἄλλην ὀρθότητα ἢ ταύτην, ἐμοὶ μὲν ἕτερον εἶναι καλεῖν ἐκάστῳ ὄνομα, ὃ ἐγὼ ἐθέμην, σοὶ δὲ ἕτερον, ὃ αὐτὸ σὺ. οὕτω δὲ καὶ ταῖς πόλεσιν ὀρῶ ἰδίᾳ [ἐκάσταις] ἐνίοις ἐπὶ τοῖς αὐτοῖς κείμενα ὀνόματα, καὶ Ἕλλησι παρὰ τοὺς ἄλλους Ἕλληνας, καὶ Ἕλλησι παρὰ βαρβάρους».¹⁴

“Yes, Socrates, for I cannot conceive of any other kind of correctness in names than this; I may call a thing by one name, which I gave, and you by another, which you gave. And in the same way, I see that states have their own different names for the same things, and Greeks differ from other Greeks and from barbarians in their use of names”.¹⁵

It should be mentioned that in the level of defining general principles or a general consideration, this position, at least in the open terms of the formal Logic in its particular applications, is accurate, since the existing social pluralism founds the linguistic one. However, this foundation is extremely mechanistic, since it projects similarities without investigating the special nature of the reference-comparison fields. It needs to be taken into account that the social pluralism in its mature projection does not suggest multi-division, vertical separations and an unlimited projection of dissimilarity. It does not simplify otherness. Moreover, the question on the elementary communication of the human beings would be automatically raised once again and any discussion about the objective truth would be pointless. The risk of an extreme relativism is here obvious as well, which allows every individual to move freely, or rather arbitrarily, in the process of naming. The extension to the level of scientific knowledge is obvious. Which name will be more appropriate to express objectively scientific knowledge? And what would be the respect and recognition of behalf of

¹⁴ *Cra.* 385d.7-e.3. At this point, culture appears as an accomplishment or formation different from nature, with a distinction between the historical “becoming” and the historical “being”. In this passage there is a position that corresponds to the main, according to K. Popper, view of the traditional epistemology, which, since it refers to the second world or the knowledge with a subjective meaning, adds them priority over beings obviously exclusively in the cognitive process. In his estimation, this view has nothing essential to add in the study of the scientific knowledge.

¹⁵ H.N. Fowler, *Plato VI. Cratylus, Parmenides, Greater Hippias, Lesser Hippias*, p. 13.

the public opinion to a scientist, if he gets no recognition for the validity of the truth of the names that he uses?

To point out the repercussions caused by this position, Socrates immediately broaches a view of Protagoras the Sophist, namely, the criterion for what things truly are with respect to their ontological composition is not their natural origins but exclusively every human being in particular.¹⁶ Before this extreme relativism he first of all raises the question of whether the nature of things is permanent and independent from the, scientific or interpretative or even axiological, attitude of human being. So the subject-matter arisen is the great one on the distinction of the object into *esse* (existence per se and independent from the approaches of the human consciousness) and *percipi* (content of consciousness and defined by its categorical schemata) at the same time as the degree of their correspondence is indirectly posed for investigation.¹⁷ Under this given, Socrates next specifies the risks that arise if priority is given to “appearing” over “being”, that is to say, he examines possible repercussions that would arise if we expressed judgements for the things relying on an evaluation and attitude by the subject (that is to say, when we move in K. Popper’s second world). And the risk in relation to the precise expressions becomes bigger if we consider that some human beings are prudent while some others are imprudent. Exactly at this point, two problems arise: first of all, in what sense a prudent can claim for obvious elements of truth, since there is a logical contradiction between imprudence and truth? Secondly, how imprudent are possible, since the process of naming performed by any human being is true, even according to his own criteria? :

«Καὶ ταῦτά γε, ὡς ἐγῶμαι, σοὶ πάνυ δοκεῖ, φρονήσεως οὔσης καὶ ἀφροσύνης μὴ πάνυ δυνατόν εἶναι Πρωταγόραν ἀληθῆ λέγειν· οὐδὲν γὰρ ἂν που τῇ ἀληθείᾳ ὁ ἕτερος τοῦ ἑτέρου φρονιμώτερος εἴη, εἴπερ ἂ ἂν ἐκάστῳ δοκῆ ἐκάστῳ ἀληθῆ ἔσται».¹⁸

¹⁶ On the theory of Protagoras the Sophist, cf. for instance, Kirkos, Vasileios, *Αρχαίος Ελληνικός Διαφωτισμός και Σοφιστική* (Athens 1992), pp. 115-60. Robin mentions the following: «En face de la thèse de Protagoras, pour qui l’être d’une chose consiste dans la représentation que s’en fait tel sujet, et toujours par rapport à des circonstances individuelles et contingents, le *Cratyle* en affirme la permanence, l’unité et l’identité» (*Platon*, 77). It should be mentioned here that a question that research has faced is whether Protagoras’ expression refers in human being in general or in every human being in particular.

¹⁷ On the relation of *esse* with *percipi* and their distinction, cf. for instance, Nagel, Thomas, *The view from nowhere* (New York-Oxford 1986), pp. 90-99; Papanoutsos, Evaggelos, *Γνωσιολογία* (Athens 1962), pp. 15-51.

¹⁸ *Cra.* 386c.1-d.1. The development of the reasoning attempted here is a direct extension of Protagoras’ views. Essentially, the contradictions resulted from his positions are stressed. If K. Popper

“And you are, I imagine, strongly of the opinion that if wisdom and folly exist, it is quite impossible that Protagoras is right, for one man would not in reality be at all wiser than another if whatever seems to each person is really true to him”.¹⁹

It should be also mentioned that insisting on “appearing” not only does not involve the natural substrate of an object, but also remains in a condition that is easily changeable, evolvable, provable and perishable. At the end of this rationale Euthydemus’ position is not accepted, according to which all the objects are –or must be–similar for all human beings, both in a particular time point and repetitively in future:

«Ἀλλὰ μὴν οὐδὲ κατ' Εὐθύδημόν γε οἶμαι σοὶ δοκεῖ πᾶσι πάντα ὁμοίως εἶναι ἅμα καὶ ἀεὶ· οὐδὲ γὰρ ἂν οὕτως εἶεν οἱ μὲν χρηστοί, οἱ δὲ πονηροί, εἰ ὁμοίως ἅπασιν καὶ ἀεὶ ἀρετὴ τε καὶ κακία εἴη».²⁰

“But neither do you believe with Euthydemus that all things belong equally to all men at the same time and perpetually, for on this assumption also some could not be good and others bad, if virtue and its opposite were always equally possessed by all”.²¹

This point of view is dialectically opposite to the former one. But, it obviously faces the risk to be refuted for exactly the opposite reasons in comparison to the former ones. Whoever supports it does not take into account the subjective and racial particularities as well as the composition of the objects, according to which they are subject to every kind of development. Especially the last comment is binding, since in different time moments an object suffers differentiations, either due to internal reasons or external interventions. Therefore, a new image is presented each time, a differentiation that in each case presents a particular empirical material, which necessarily also defines a relevant cognitive approach of it. Nevertheless, under particular requirements –such as for instance the fact that some scientific principles or findings do not change– Euthydemus’ approach could be placed in the perspective of the transcendental epistemologically subject. However, accepting this explicitly requires an a priori, which would provide the independent from the circumstances terms for actualizing this very condition.

evaluated this passage, he would suggest that it sheds light to the impasses to which the second world is led when operating autonomously.

¹⁹ H.N. Fowler, *Plato VI. Cratylus, Parmenides, Greater Hippias, Lesser Hippias*, p. 17.

²⁰ *Cra.* 386d.3-6. Here the gnoseological and onomastic subject-matters extend to ethics as well, with the applied inflexibility being rejected here as well. Considering the question under investigation, this is a position partially opposite to K. Popper’s third world, for it projects the property of unchangeability. We could argue that this is Plato’s world of Ideas, provided that the word “πάντα” refers to these metaphysical archetypes.

²¹ H.N. Fowler, *Plato VI. Cratylus, Parmenides, Greater Hippias, Lesser Hippias*, p. 17.

At the beginning of the next syllogism a more appropriate to reality way of investigating is introduced. Specifically, it is taken into account that human beings approach in different ways the same object. But, it is stressed that this pluralism exactly as such does not present the objects in an appropriate to the truth way, since they originally own a permanence, both natural and essential, which is not affected by the cognitive approaches of the human beings. Apart from this, it is also mentioned that the activities or act projections of the objects, which as projected representations are a property of their nature, remain also unaffected by these approaches. Exactly this natural inherent condition of “being” and “acting” should human beings have in mind, in order to be accurate and valid in their cognitive activities.

«Τὰ ὄντα αὐτῶν οὐσίαν ἔχοντά τινα βέβαιόν ἐστι τὰ πράγματα, οὐ πρὸς ἡμᾶς οὐδὲ ὑφ’ ἡμῶν ἐλκόμενα ἄνω καὶ κάτω τῷ ἡμετέρῳ φαντάσματι, ἀλλὰ καθ’ αὐτὰ πρὸς τὴν αὐτῶν οὐσίαν ἔχοντα ἥπερ πέφυκεν... Κατὰ τὴν αὐτῶν φύσιν καὶ αἱ πράξεις πράττονται, οὐ κατὰ τὴν ἡμετέραν δόξαν».²²

“Things have some fixed reality of their own, not in relation to us nor caused by us; they do not vary, swaying one way and another in accordance with our fancy, but exist of themselves in relation to their own reality imposed by nature [...] Then actions also are performed according to their own nature, not according to our opinion”.²³

Provided that the approaches here follow the principle of objectivity, this is about understanding a natural unity with its distinctions, which do not separate it, but project its plethoric presence. The ontologically remarkable is that the energy-action is determined by the nature, or essence, which indicates that the former reveals the nature of the latter, unless they are used indiscriminately. By extension, the process of naming the actions should not result from the predicates of the thinking subject. It is however interesting here for the development of the reasoning that, through the projection of the action according to nature, “appearing” now reveals, at least to a point, “being”, at the same time as “being” presents its dynamic side. So, this is an “appearing” that comes exclusively from natural terms, from what actually exists, which in this way is not overlapped.

As stressed next, this is exactly the rule to be applied by a human being in every case in which he intends to express his thoughts. And this syllogism relies on that the process of naming is a natural function of the linguistic expression or on that the expressions make

²² *Cra.* 386e.2-8. Here the artificial world of imagination is clearly differentiated from the natural one. However, according to K. Popper, the natural, as the first world, shows its independence from the latter and contributes to the objectivity of the third one, provided that the precise terms for approaching are followed.

²³ H.N. Fowler, *Plato VI. Cratylus, Parmenides, Greater Hippias, Lesser Hippias*, p. 17.

obvious their objectivity when they come from a natural, which is considered to be accurate, use of the names. At this point, it is clarified that every name is a sort of energy of the inner capability of human being of expressing himself. And this capability gains validity of presence and function only if human being follows the natural predeterminations:

«Ἐὰν μὲν ἦ πέφυκε τὰ πράγματα λέγειν τε καὶ λέγεσθαι καὶ ᾧ, ταύτη καὶ τούτῳ λέγει, πλέον τε τι ποιήσει καὶ ἐρεῖ· ἂν δὲ μὴ ἐξαμαρτήσεται τε καὶ οὐδὲν ποιήσει. -Οὕτω μοι δοκεῖ ὡς λέγεις».²⁴

“-Or will he succeed in speaking if he speaks in the way and with the instrument in which and with which it is natural for us to speak and for things to be spoken, whereas otherwise he will fail and accomplish nothing? - I think the way you suggest is the right one”.²⁵

Therefore, the property that results from the capabilities and accuracies according to nature is defined by the thinking subject, so we can refer to an absolute naturalistic control of the names. The concept of a priori dominates, but the question is who provides it or preserves it and how is this possible to be apparently detected. The pre-empirical foundations of the process of naming –which are obviously confirmed through their appropriate application on the sensible world– raise the question on the conceptual tools of consciousness, which can easily bring the entire discussion back to the epistemological position of Plato in the dialogues *Meno*, *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus*. But, it is possible that this is a special judgment for a physicalism, in the sense that, just like things works, the analogous happens with the human intellectual energies.

Subsequently, it is briefly explained in what prospect the names are used. First and foremost, this use aims at a mutual communication and briefing, apparently during the activities of social life. However, in this frame, what needs to be explained is what the natural condition of the objects for which we speak is:

«Τοῦ λέγειν μῶριον τὸ ὀνομάζειν. Διανομάζοντες γὰρ πού λέγουσι τοὺς λόγους».²⁶

“Now naming is a part of speaking, for in naming I suppose people utter speech”.²⁷

²⁴ *Cra.* 387c.1-4. The descriptive function of the language, which is the source of the apodictic, comes once again to the fore. By consequence, this is a combination of the first with the third world.

²⁵ H.N. Fowler, *Plato VI. Cratylus, Parmenides, Greater Hippias, Lesser Hippias*, p. 19.

²⁶ *Cra.* 387c.6-7. Reason, as an intentional, according to a context, composition of names is clearly something more general from a name attribution. It is a syllogism. It should be mentioned however here that K. Popper, discussing the third world, believes that language is something more than a means of communication.

²⁷ H.N. Fowler, *Plato VI. Cratylus, Parmenides, Greater Hippias, Lesser Hippias*, p. 19.

So, combining these comments with the former ones we come to the estimation that communication comes through the identification of the natural givens. It is a way of relationship between human beings, which however faces the natural origins, both their won and the objects, and brings to the surface what actually exists. The original condition of the objects regulates the development of dialectics and the process of informing, since it gives evidence for the validity terms in which names and complex syllogisms are expressed and for their confirmation.

C. The coiner of names or the scientific foundation of names

In order the discussion to develop, it is once again stressed that the name which is used appropriately can identify the nature per se of the objects.²⁸ This retraction, which shows the refutation of any subjective approach of the subject-matter, is not accidental. It is the basis to contend that the names are structured by an expert, a rare one, the coiner of names:

«Οὐκ ἄρα παντὸς ἀνδρὸς ὄνομα θέσθαι ἐστὶν ἀλλὰ τινος ὀνοματουργοῦ. Οὗτος δ' ἐστίν, ὡς εἰκεν, ὁ νομοθέτης, ὃς δὴ τῶν δημιουργῶν σπανιώτατος ἐν ἀνθρώποις γίγνεται».²⁹

“Then it is not for every man, to give names, but for him who may be called the name-maker; and he, it appears, is the lawgiver, who is of all the artisans among men the rarest”.³⁰

In this sense, all the rest social factors for producing a valid name code are excluded. The question is now placed in the prospect of the scientific research and the specialized responsibility.

While elaborating the subject-matter the coiner of names is describes as a legislator – that is, a public person with authentic reputation–, who is responsible to investigate which sounds and which syllables he can choose to create a name that would describe the natural condition of the objects. However, it is explained that in every land a coiner of names uses

²⁸ *Cra.* 387d.4-9. In the context of the general methodology which dominates in the positions under investigation repetition defines the special direction that the argumentation will follow. This is the same position, but with a broader or narrower function, since the syllogism is now in a new level compared to the original data.

²⁹ *Cra.* 388e.-7-389a.3. Cf. Wolff II, David F., “Names, Nominata, the Forms and the Cratylus”, in: *Philosophical Inquiry XVIII* (1996), pp. 29-31. Here the distinction between that which is “by law” and that which is “by nature” is annulled. The third world of Plato appears with two properties: a) it is a human construction and b) it is unchangeable. This combination reflects Plato’s intention to bring metaphysical unchangeability in the sensible data, something which K. Popper would not accept.

³⁰ H.N. Fowler, *Plato VI. Cratylus, Parmenides, Greater Hippias, Lesser Hippias*, p. 25.

special phonetic symbols and this how we draw the conclusion that the names are geographically-culturally defined.

«Ἄρ' οὖν καὶ τὸ ἐκάστῳ φύσει πεφυκὸς ὄνομα τὸν νομοθέτην ἐκεῖνον εἰς τοὺς φθόγγους καὶ τὰς συλλαβὰς δεῖ ἐπίστασθαι τιθέναι, καὶ βλέποντα πρὸς αὐτὸ ἐκεῖνο ὃ ἔστιν ὄνομα, πάντα τὰ ὀνόματα ποιεῖν τε καὶ τίθεσθαι, εἰ μέλλει κύριος εἶναι ὀνομάτων θέτης;... Ἔως ἂν τὸ τοῦ ὀνόματος εἶδος ἀποδιδῶ τὸ προσῆκον ἐκάστῳ ἐν ὁποιασοῦν συλλαβαῖς, οὐδὲν χεῖρω νομοθέτην εἶναι τὸν ἐνθάδε ἢ τὸν ὅπουοῦν ἄλλοθι;».³¹

“Then, must not the lawgiver also know how to embody in the sounds and syllables that name which is fitted by nature for each object? Must he not make and give all his names with his eye fixed upon the absolute or ideal name, if he is to be an authoritative giver of names? [...] so long as he gives to each thing the proper form of the name, in whatsoever syllables, to be no worse lawgiver, whether here or anywhere else, will you not?”³²

However, searching for the phonetic elements as a general regulatory principle defines a natural predetermination in the acoustic dimension of naming as well. Note also that the question is approached in a clear pragmatic perspective as well, since there is a clear reference to precise adjustments at the same time as the racial relativism is not directly introduced, the generation causes of which, however, are necessary to be detected. Why the sounds and the syllables are different from region to region? This question, regardless of the answer, would redefine the question on the natural specifications of the names. We could actually contend that there is a semantic identification between different sounds, the difference of which is possible due to aesthetic reasons, namely, what satisfies and attracts the sense of hearing, so in a second level its mechanistic function is considered as a plain reception of information. We should, however, keep in mind that what is meant here is first of all an archetype of name («ὃ ἔστιν ὄνομα»), which works as a paradigm and principle with respect to the names that are to be constructed. And this name is obviously not a human construction but a divine one. The coiner of names is responsible to see it, with the participle “βλέποντα” leading to intuition. But, he then speaks of «εἶδος προσῆκον ἐκάστῳ», which specifies the predicate. Possibly the latter expression appears as an application of the former.

³¹ *Cra.* 389d.4-390a.8. We could argue that the unity of the natural condition does not necessarily lead in the identity of the technical means as well. Here a sort of reconciliation is attempted between the necessity imposed by the givens of nature and the freedom of human choice. Nevertheless, language does not appear in its descriptive dimension, but in the sense of the rigorous foundations of unchangeability, within a specialized cultural system, which has gained its integrity, provided that they correspond to what can be considered to be authentic, which according to the formal Logic is not inflexible. Cf. Aronadio, Francesco, “Il *Cratilo*, il linguaggio e le sintassi dell *eidos*”, in: *Elenchos* 8 (1987), pp. 329-362.

³² H.N. Fowler, *Plato VI. Cratylus, Parmenides, Greater Hippias, Lesser Hippias*, p. 27&29.

Extending those mentioned before, it is stressed that the process of naming is greatly difficult, the responsibility of which cannot be taken by any human being. This is because the mission of the coiner of names is to discover those names which belong to the things in a natural way. That is to say, the capabilities attributed to the coiner of names are those of scientific knowledge and research expertise. Therefore, he is indirectly recognized to have the property and the duty of a natural scientist, actually in greater extend, since he is assigned to discover not only the natural appearances but also the natural specifications. Not only he describes how things are, but he also penetrates to the deepest core of their being, to the reason of their “essence”. The conclusion of the discussion is easily drawn: a reliable and authentic creator of names is the researcher who discovers the natural names and is capable of composing letters with syllables. However, it is indirectly indicated that it is strongly possible to create –and actually they are created– many names, defined by many factors. But, the truth depends on the precise sense of the objective reality, regardless of the special nature of the thinking subject who creates the names. It is obvious on this grounds that a coiner of names conceives the meaning and seeks for those linguistic sounds that will express it. This means that the sounds have both a phonological and a semantic dimension, which is revealed after their combination and the resulted name. The somehow exegetical criterion, as a meta-analytical one, on the use and combination becomes mandatory. This is why Socrates adds that a legislator needs a dialectician, who will provide the necessary criteria for each case, since he is the anatomist of reality with a philosophical background. So, indirectly though clearly, Socrates recognizes that a coiner of names is partially insufficient and that is why he suggests drawing his inspiration from a dialectician, who in this way is considered to be the greatest scientist and expert.

«Νομοθέτου δέ γε, ὡς ἔοικεν, ὄνομα, ἐπιστάτην ἔχοντος διαλεκτικὸν ἄνδρα, εἰ μέλλει καλῶς ὀνόματα θήσεσθαι... Κινδυνεύει εἶναι οὐ φαῦλον ἢ τοῦ ὀνόματος θέσις, οὐδὲ φαύλων ἀνδρῶν οὐδὲ τῶν ἐπιτυχόντων...καὶ οὐ πάντα δημιουργὸν ὀνομάτων εἶναι, ἀλλὰ μόνον ἐκεῖνον τὸν ἀποβλέποντα εἰς τὸ τῇ φύσει ὄνομα ὄν ἐκάστῳ καὶ δυνάμενον αὐτοῦ τὸ εἶδος τιθέναί εἰς τε τὰ γράμματα καὶ τὰς συλλαβάς».³³

³³ *Cra.* 390d.5-e.5. For a systematic approach on this, cf. Anagnostopoulos, Georgios, “Plato’s *Cratylus*: two theories of the correctness of names”, in: *Review of Metaphysics* 25/4 (1972), pp. 691-736 [which has been also published in Greek under the title «Πλάτωνος Κρατύλος. Οι δύο θεωρίες της ορθότητας των ονομάτων», in: *Πλάτων. Τιμητικός τόμος για τον Καθηγητή Δ. Ζ. Ανδριόπουλον*, v. Β’, (Athens 2017), pp. 595-659]. In this passage, a dialectician is the regulatory scientist who evaluates the descriptive and argumentative use of language according to a third world which claims for authenticity criteria. This authenticity apparently includes the knowledge of the precise use of the names, which corresponds to the authentic knowledge of reality. Note here that there is a reference to

“The work of the carpenter, then, is to make a rudder under the supervision of the steersman, if the rudder is to be a good one [...] Then, the giving of names can hardly be, as you imagine, a trifling matter, or a task for trifling or casual persons [...] and that not every one is an artisan of names, but only he who keeps in view the name which belongs by nature to each particular thing and is able to embody its form in the letters and syllables”.³⁴

In the context of the physiocratic definition of the names, Socrates next contends that gods they are given by gods, in an actually precise way that cannot be questioned, since they correspond, in this sense, to their natural origins:

«Μέγιστα δὲ καὶ κάλλιστα ἐν οἷς διορίζει ἐπὶ τοῖς αὐτοῖς ἅ τε οἱ ἄνθρωποι ὀνόματα καλοῦσι καὶ οἱ θεοί... Δῆλον γὰρ δὴ ὅτι οἷ γε θεοὶ αὐτὰ καλοῦσιν πρὸς ὀρθότητα ἅπερ ἔστι φύσει ὀνόματα». ³⁵

“But chiefly and most admirably in those in which he distinguishes between the names by which gods and men call the same things [...] For clearly the gods call things by the names that are naturally right. Do you not think so?”³⁶

The reference to gods and the clear statement on a metaphysical foundation do not refute physiocracy, since the common thing of both the interpretations is the investigation of an original and unchangeable type. Moreover, this twofold approach works for human beings as well, since the context reveals that the natural is a reflection of the metaphysical. A special type of pantheism arises, at the same time as the case of a priori, namely, the pre-empirical bases of the names, should not be ignored, but without this indicating that the theory of recollection is actually repealed. The divine defines how archetypes will work at the same time as it regulates and sets the limits of the human consciousness, which is asked to act analogously.

It is then accepted by the interlocutors that those who are skilled in a field can construct and give names with a high degree of precision compared to those who are not. Thus, it is further supported that expertise is defined as an epistemological requirement of the process of naming. It is, however, pointed out that sometimes a name or a meaning is given according to people’s semantic positions. We could, however, contend that according to the

name which describes the form of a thing but not the form of a name. So, we could combine these two deliveries and suggest that the intention is to identify complete integrity.

³⁴ H.N. Fowler, *Plato VI. Cratylus, Parmenides, Greater Hippias, Lesser Hippias*, p. 31.

³⁵ *Cra.* 391d.4-e.1. Cf. Vlastos, Gregory, *Πλατωνικές μελέτες*, trans. Iordanis Arzoglou (Athens 1994), p. 383. The metaphysical foundation and confirmation of the third world by Plato has already begun. Its validity has to be ensured in any way through its unchangeability. Its empirical appearances are not eradicated, but it is now full of divine origins. In this sense, the empirical must be an original reflection of the metaphysical, a requirement that need to be followed by both the coiner of names and the dialectician.

³⁶ H.N. Fowler, *Plato VI. Cratylus, Parmenides, Greater Hippias, Lesser Hippias*, p. 35.

context it is stressed that this attribution is not safe, for it involves a high degree of temporality and subjectivity. It is not a coincidence that to justify this, a primary position is recalled, that a name provides the most safety when it describes accurately the objective condition of a thing or a person. In fact, some examples of such a precise description are mentioned.³⁷ So, skepticism before the precision of the meanings is obviously due to the fact that they rely on the positions or receptions of the meaning of a thing by subject. But, with respect to human beings the following question could be raised on whether individuals who act in different periods and have different behaviors can bear the same name. Or, else, the question is about the hereditary rather than the precise attribution of a name. It is also stressed that, if two names are given to the same person, they should reflect two of their properties correspondingly, which are so closely combined, so that to constitute a –appositive or apparently synthetic– meaning.³⁸ So, this is not a contradiction or confusion but a correspondence to the pluralism of the personal properties, which have a common essential or ontological basis, regardless of the special way in which they appear. The relationship of the pair “one-many” arises, according to which the many are the ways in which the one appears, or the one manifests its inner dynamism through the many.

Considering the external formation of the names, there is an agreement in that the elements of the alphabet are the basis of any relevant attempt. The phonetic and notional attribution of an element-letter is accomplished with the addition and the combination of other elements-letters as well. During, however, the attribution of the names the use of the letters and the number of the syllables are quite important. Quantity is not so important, or at least it depends of quality. And this condition of relationships is due to the fact that, even though there are many different names with respect to the grammatical elements, the syllables and the sound, they do mean the same thing, for they hold identical power. It is, though, explained that when it comes to the natural generation, the same name should be given:

³⁷ *Cra.* 392a.1-e.5. Cf. Bestor, Thomas, “Plato’s Semantics and Plato’s Cratylus”, in: *Phronesis* 25 (1980), pp. 306-30. The third world, as authentic and completely objective, must be totally untouchable for any arbitrary intervention. An appellative name describes in precision what the person to whom it is attributed is in nature and actions. We should also keep in mind that even activity is included in the physiocratic descriptions.

³⁸ *Cra.* 393a.4-b.4. Once again, the objectivity of the third world arises in an open way and in this way the interventions of the thinking subject are not crucial. It is also important to mention that human beings, as natural beings and acting subjects, are also included in the third world indirectly, provided that they behave in terms of integrity, which will also define the name attributed to them. Cf. Vandeville, Pol, “Le statut de l’étymologie dans le Cratyle”, in: *Les Études Classiques* 55 (1987), pp. 137-150.

«Εἰ πρόσκειται τι γράμμα ἢ ἀφίρηται, οὐδὲν οὐδὲ τοῦτο, ἕως ἂν ἐγκρατῆς ᾗ ἡ οὐσία τοῦ πράγματος δηλουμένη ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι... Οὕτως ἠπιστήθη καλῶς θέσθαι τοῖς γράμμασι τὰ ὀνόματα... Καὶ ἕτερα ἂν ἴσως συχνὰ εὔροιμεν ταῖς μὲν συλλαβαῖς καὶ τοῖς γράμμασι διαφωνοῦντα, τῇ δὲ δυνάμει ταῦτὸν φθεγγόμενα... Τοῖς δὲν δὴ κατὰ φύσιν γιγνομένοις τὰ αὐτὰ ἀποδοτέον ὀνόματα».³⁹

“If a letter is added or subtracted, that does not matter either, so long as the essence of the thing named remains in force and is made plain in the name [...] he knew so well how to give names to letters [...] and we might perhaps find many others which differ in syllables and letters, but express the same meaning [...] To those, then, who are born in accordance with nature the same names should be given”.⁴⁰

Obviously, the case here is about the original condition of beings, before their externalization through actions or their appearance through properties. If this is precise, then something quite interesting appears. It will be essentially suggested that there must be a common primary vocabulary for all human beings with no exception and which works in declaratory terms. This vocabulary will not depend on the general cultural or geographical particularities. But, latter these particularities take their place and this is how multiple linguistic codes are developed. Nevertheless, two are the questions: first of all, how is it possible a common naming basis –essentially an archetype– between people in a distance? Secondly, if this is possible, what happens or what factors cause subsequently differentiations? What will then be the meaning of the expression «τὰ αὐτά», which is translated as “the same”? The same compared to what? Is it to their steady repetition or to the things that they name?

It is then explained that an appellative name may include different properties of a person. It is, however, stressed that during the attribution of the proper names the factor of the the racial or parental origin should be taken into account. In addition, it is pointed out that the public opinion studies the way of living of a human being and analogously gives him a name. That is to say, it remains strictly to the personal characteristics, in order to correspond to what actually is observed and in order its reference through a name to be easily defined and authoritatively confirmable. This name is essentially a definition. In fact, quite a lot of times more than one name is attributed to a person, since his action presents many levels of reference and interference, relationships and provisions. That is to say, the attribution relies

³⁹ *Cra.* 393d.3-394d.3. Once again, the natural unity of a being does not exclude a polyphonic naming. So, at this point the Platonic third world appears as having a resilience over the phonological interventions that take place during the time evolution, depending on the case. The possibility of disproof suggested by K. Popper is not an option for Plato’s theoretical positions, provided however once again that there is a precise correspondence between phonemes and objects.

⁴⁰ H.N. Fowler, *Plato VI. Cratylus, Parmenides, Greater Hippias, Lesser Hippias*, p. 41.

on how its energies are manifested, within an appearing that is considered to have reliable guarantees of objectivity. It is also stressed that a number of names attributed to ordinary human beings and heroes can deceive, for they result from the names of their ancestors, but there is no investigation on whether they correspond to their idiosyncrasy and energies:

«Τὰ μὲν οὖν τῶν ἡρώων καὶ ἀνθρώπων λεγόμενα ἴσως ἂν ἡμᾶς ἐξαπατήσειες. Πολλὰ μὲν γὰρ αὐτῶν κεῖται κατὰ προγόνων ἐπωνυμίας, οὐδὲν προσῆκον ἐνίοις».⁴¹

“Now the names of heroes and men might perhaps prove deceptive; for they are often given because they were names of ancestors, and in some cases [...]”⁴²

So, attributions in this case rely on proofs of origin and tradition but not on personal characteristics, so anything created is truly violated either by the ancestors or the decedents.

D. Epistemological aspects in the relation subject-object

At the end of the introductory remarks of the dialogue a basic theoretical question is raised: what data do we need to rely on to prove the accuracy of the names given to those beings which are by their nature eternal? Another question have these names been given by a god or by human being?

«Εἰκὸς δὲ μάλιστα ἡμᾶς εὐρεῖν τὰ ὀρθῶς κείμενα περὶ τὰ ἀεὶ ὄντα καὶ πεφυκότα. ἐσπουδάσθαι γὰρ ἐνταῦθα μάλιστα πρέπει τὴν θέσιν τῶν ὀνομάτων ἴσως δ' ἔνια αὐτῶν καὶ ὑπὸ θειοτέρας δυνάμεως ἢ τῆς τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐτέθη».⁴³

“But we are most likely to find the correct names in the nature of the eternal and absolute; for there the names ought to have been given with the greatest care, and perhaps some of them were given by a power more divine than is that of men”.⁴⁴

The topic needs to be investigated, in order to prove the transcendent capabilities of human consciousness, in fact independently of the sensible experience. In other words, in order to detect any possible metaphysical specifications of it. Nevertheless, it is necessary to

⁴¹ *Cra.* 397b.1-4. At this point, indirectly though clearly, there is a critique of the social convention and, possibly, superficiality. By consequence, in the field of the third world the description of the acts of important persons is also included, which should be approached like the natural phenomena, namely, responsibly and accurately.

⁴² H.N. Fowler, *Plato VI. Cratylus, Parmenides, Greater Hippias, Lesser Hippias*, p. 51

⁴³ *Cra.* 397b.8-c.3. Here, Plato adopts the theory of the third world, including beings and names, as divine. The creator of this world holds unchangeable properties, which indirectly are presented to be necessary during the name function, in order to be able to describe in an objective way unchangeable objects. In addition, with the term «πεφυκότα» he refers to the first world.

⁴⁴ H.N. Fowler, *Plato VI. Cratylus, Parmenides, Greater Hippias, Lesser Hippias*, p. 51.

investigate first and foremost whether human being is able to identify a divine creation of the names and whether this possibility holds true or can be proved.

In the epilogue of the dialogue the question is mostly investigated epistemologically. First of all, the theory of expertise is accepted, that is to say, that the person who defined the primary names functioned as an expert. Definitely, the most spontaneous skepticism that would be expressed before such an unfounded epistemologically sentence would focus on the timing of this definition. When did this take place? In addition, in these early, for instance archaic times who would be an expert like that and what tradition would have he followed to the process of naming? Independently of these justifications, Socrates raises the question of knowing or discovering things through names, provided that the primary names have not been yet created; in this way, he emphasizes the clear impasses of such an approach. His concern focuses on the axiom that it is not possible for human being to include in his cognitive horizon the things, unless he first of all knows their names or species, what they originally or essentially are.

«Ἡ καὶ τὸν τὰ πρῶτα τιθέμενον εἰδὸτα φῆς τίθεσθαι; -Εἰδὸτα. -Ἐκ ποίων οὖν ὀνομάτων ἢ μεμαθηκῶς ἢ ἠύρηκῶς ἦν τὰ πράγματα, εἴπερ τὰ γε πρῶτα μήπω ἔκειτο, μαθεῖν δ' αὖ φαμεν τὰ πράγματα καὶ εὐρεῖν ἀδύνατον εἶναι ἄλλως ἢ τὰ ὀνόματα μαθόντας ἢ αὐτοὺς ἐξευρόντας οἷά ἐστι;».⁴⁵

“-And you say that he who gave the first names also knew the things which he named? - Yes, he knew them. - But from what names had he learned or discovered the things, if the first names had not yet been given, and if we declare that it is impossible to learn or discover things except by learning or ourselves discovering the names?”⁴⁶

The second requirement –on the pre-existence of a primary name– possibly refers to the metaphysical “form” of the things as well, an aspect which fits with Plato’s thought on the epistemological relation of the metaphysical world with the natural-empirical level. This relation gives priority to the pre-empirical foundations of knowledge.⁴⁷ Before a temporal interpretive impasse it is subsequently assumed that to reach the absolute truth on a subject-matter, we need to accept that a superior to man being gave the primary names to the things,

⁴⁵ *Cra.* 438a.5-b.2. The question elaborated here is clear with respect to the priorities established. In our investigation the possibility a name of an object to be a requirement for knowing it is quite interesting. In this sense, the system of names as the third world is objective and intervenes actively, or rather reactively, to the human consciousness. From a pragmatic point of view, however, this is not possible.

⁴⁶ H.N. Fowler, *Plato VI. Cratylus, Parmenides, Greater Hippias, Lesser Hippias*, p. 183.

⁴⁷ Cf. for instance the dialogues *Men.*, *Phd.* and *Phdr.*, where the famous theory of the early Plato is discussed that knowledge is recollection. Cf. Brès, Yvon, *La psychologie de Platon* (Paris 1973), pp. 148-173; 243-258. Cf. Luce, J. V., “The Theory of Ideas in the *Cratylus*”, in: *Phronesis* 10 (1965), pp. 21-36.

and, according to a necessity that results from metaphysical specifications, they were the right ones. Yet, the answer to the multiple questions is not given. It is, though, contended that if a god defined in the first place the names, he would not actually act against himself. Therefore, it is indirectly concluded that back then the names were the appropriate ones, since obviously in the intellect of a god every movement or energy of his reveals eternal and unchangeable truths. Nevertheless, this metaphysical given does not automatically solve the problems on which meanings are true: those which indicate movement or those which show standstill. The suggestion-solution that necessarily arises is we need a factor, apart from the names, as a criterion of a comparative correspondence between “being” and “naming”, which will reveal, without their interference, which of them are true. Such a revealing will be accompanied by the revealing of the true conception on things. If these are true, the interlocutors agree that knowing things is in a first level possible without the interference of the names:

«Οἶμαι μὲν ἐγὼ τὸν ἀληθέστατον λόγον περὶ τούτων εἶναι, ὃ Σώκρατες, μείζω τινὰ δύναμιν εἶναι ἢ ἀνθρωπεῖαν τὴν θεμένην τὰ πρῶτα ὀνόματα τοῖς πράγμασιν, ὥστε ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι αὐτὰ ὀρθῶς ἔχειν... Δῆλον ὅτι ἄλλ' ἅττα ζητητέα πλὴν ὀνομάτων, ἃ ἡμῖν ἐμφανιεῖ ἄνευ ὀνομάτων ὀπότερα τούτων ἐστὶ τάληθῆ, δείξαντα δῆλον ὅτι τὴν ἀλήθειαν τῶν ὄντων».⁴⁸

“I think the truest theory of the matter, Socrates, is that the power which gave the first names to things is more than human, and therefore the names must necessarily be correct [...] It is plain that we must look for something else, not names, which shall show us which of these two kinds are the true names, which of them, that is to say, show the truth of things”.⁴⁹

Nevertheless, it remains to be seen how a god provides with his –metaphysical– authority knowledge and accuracy to human beings. One could contend that at this point a compelled Metaphysics arises, since there is a reduction to the divine not in the sense of a strictly coherent syllogism but a necessity.

Immediately afterwards, it is suggested that it is possible to lead ourselves in the knowledge of things not according to some external factor of theirs, but by investigating them in relation to one another or themselves. This comparison will reveal either the different or the opposite that holds true for a thing but not for itself, so, only the question of identity and

⁴⁸ *Cra.* 438b.8-d.6. The third world here appears to be independent from the thinking subject. Since the names do not express the truth we need to look for something else as a cognitive requirement. It is possible that emphasis is given on that the immediacy of intuitive knowledge is prior to the intermediate one, with respect actually to something that has been revealed by a supreme power. This aspect, however, is not found in K. Popper’s theoretical horizon.

⁴⁹ H.N. Fowler, *Plato VI. Cratylus, Parmenides, Greater Hippias, Lesser Hippias*, p. 183.

otherness comes to the fore, both from an ontological and logical point of view, according to the basis that the frame or the broader content of it is quite necessary for any assertion. And this is where the question on the relation of the epistemological assertions with the ontological data is raised, which relies on that the names that have been appropriately defined admittedly present some similarities with the things which they describe and are their representations. So, if it is possible things to be known both through the names and themselves another question is raised on the relation of the image with reality, the answer to which will reliably face the question of the precise definition of truth. So, a question of epistemological priority arises:

«Τὰ δὲ ὀνόματα οὐ πολλάκις μέντοι ὁμολογήσαμεν τὰ καλῶς κείμενα εἰκότα εἶναι ἐκείνοις ὧν ὀνόματα κεῖται καὶ εἶναι εἰκόνας τῶν πραγμάτων;».⁵⁰

“Did we not more than once agree that names which are rightly given are like the things named and are images of them?”⁵¹

According to the first aspect, the question raised next is whether an image provides the requirements of the accuracy of the way in which it reflects reality and, by extension, of the knowledge of truth that it represents. According to the second one, the question is as follows: is truth enough to know a thing and find out whether its representation is appropriate? Maybe, the first aspect represents epistemological empiricism, while the second one epistemological idealism, but this is not an easy assumption. The term that prevents us from this is “truth”, the nature of which here is not epistemological but ontological. Finally, the second is acceptable, but in a way that leaves no room for precise epistemological comments with respect to how it was at originally represented. And this is because it is mentioned that the source of knowledge is not the names but the things:

«Ἐκ τῆς ἀληθείας μοι δοκεῖ ἀνάγκη εἶναι».⁵²

“I think it is certainly better to learn from the truth”.⁵³

⁵⁰ *Cra.* 438e.9-439a.1. The entire argument here relies on the principle that a name imitates a thing. The onomatopoeic third world receives the property of a strict science. There is no possibility to be disproved, since it is an authentic reflection of reality.

⁵¹ H.N. Fowler, *Plato VI. Cratylus, Parmenides, Greater Hippias, Lesser Hippias*, p. 185.

⁵² *Cra.* 439b.1. Extending the reasoning elaborated on the main text, we need to raise the question on what sense an object is defined as a thing. It is highly possible that what is meant, with the information to this point, is that which has been already done by nature. It should be also mentioned that the priority of a thing puts strict provability limits to the thinking subject, so the possibility of an intervention in the second world is not provided.

So, human being has to focus on the nature per se of the things to know them. Although this per se condition is actually placed in a non-empirically conceivable level, the reference is something that cannot be ignored. Yet, emphasis is given on that the way in which knowledge or discovery of things is accomplished exceeds human powers, an element which introduces a moderate agnosticism or indicates that a consciousness approaches the external world not as with respect to its essence but with respect to its energy. The latter, however, maybe would not be generally accepted by Plato:

«Ὅντινα μὲν τοίνυν τρόπον δεῖ μαθάνειν ἢ εὐρίσκειν τὰ ὄντα, μείζον ἴσως ἐστὶν ἐγνωκέναι ἢ κατ' ἔμὲ καὶ σε», and the syllogism is completed as follows «πολὸν μᾶλλον αὐτὰ ἐξ αὐτῶν καὶ μαθητέον καὶ ζητητέον ἢ ἐκ τῶν ὀνομάτων».⁵⁴

“How realities are to be learned or discovered is perhaps too great a question for you or me to determine; but it is worth while to have reached even this conclusion, that they are to be learned and sought for, not from names but much better through themselves than through names”.⁵⁵

These epistemological approaches are then extended. Using the theory on the archetypal “Ideas” or “Forms”, Socrates says that the archetype per se does exist, which holds true in any empirical case particularly:

«Φῶμεν τι εἶναι αὐτὸ καλὸν καὶ ἀγαθὸν καὶ ἐν ἑκάστων τῶν ὄντων οὕτω».⁵⁶

“Shall we assert that there is any absolute beauty, or good, or any other absolute existence, or not?”⁵⁷

The question that immediately arises as a proof of those mentioned before is whether human consciousness can characterize something in an appropriate way, if this is found under constant changes. In addition, another question is how is it possible to exist, if it is never found in the same condition. The question receives a clear ontological dimension and is included within the perspective of the pair “being - non-being”. It is explained that if

⁵³ H.N. Fowler, *Plato VI. Cratylus, Parmenides, Greater Hippias, Lesser Hippias*, p. 187.

⁵⁴ *Cra.* 439b.2-4. We could contend that a part of the syllogism is part of the epistemological position called essential apophatism. In this way, a huge field for a total metaphysical definition of the third world opens before us.

⁵⁵ H.N. Fowler, *Plato VI. Cratylus, Parmenides, Greater Hippias, Lesser Hippias*, p. 187.

⁵⁶ *Cra.* 439c.6-7. Cf. Boudouris, Konstantinos, «Ο Πλάτων και ο ορισμός δείξεως», in: *Γλώσσα και πραγματικότητα στην Ελληνική Φιλοσοφία* (1985), pp. 128-129. The third world has now received an authentic metaphysical dimension, which analogously defines the sensible world or the world of natural phenomena. So, we could argue that two are the levels of the third world from now on: a) the unchangeable metaphysical and b) the whole of the human concepts or names that describe it, in fact in a steadily objective way.

⁵⁷ H.N. Fowler, *Plato VI. Cratylus, Parmenides, Greater Hippias, Lesser Hippias*, p. 187.

something remains in the same condition, at this very moment it does not suffer any change. If this integrity is true, it is not possible to change and move away from its archetypal “Idea”, for it preserves its properties irreducible:

«Πῶς οὖν ἂν εἴη τὶ ἐκεῖνο ὁ μηδέποτε ὡσαύτως ἔχει;».⁵⁸

“How, then, can that which is never in the same state be anything?”⁵⁹

The conflict between Parmenidism and Heraclitism appears quite intense⁶⁰, since, indirectly though clearly, the question raised is whether we should recognize that “non-being” has ontological validity or not.

That being said, it is now suggested that, if all things appertain to changes and nothing remains stable, a cognitive result is not possible. In this case, knowledge is subject to a constant process, and, by consequence, it is not, actually in any sense, knowledge. In addition, no cognitive subject and no cognitive object are possible, in the sense of something absolutely authentic and unchangeable. Before this impasse, Socrates says that, if we could provide stability to the cognitive subject and cognitive object and if archetypal “Ideas” exist then all these are not compatible with change and movement.

«Εἰ δὲ ἀεὶ μεταπίπτει, ἀεὶ οὐκ ἂν εἴη γινῶσις, καὶ ἐκ τούτου τοῦ λόγου οὔτε τὸ γνωσόμενον οὔτε τὸ γνωσθησόμενον ἂν εἴη. Εἰ δὲ ἔστιν μὲν ἀεὶ τὸ γιγνώσκον, ἔστι δὲ τὸ γιγνωσκόμενον, ἔστι δὲ τὸ καλόν, ἔστι δὲ τὸ ἀγαθόν, ἔστι δὲ ἐν ἕκαστον τῶν ὄντων, οὐ μοι φαίνεται ταῦτα ὅμοια ὄντα, ἃ νῦν ἡμεῖς λέγομεν, ῥοῆ οὐδὲν οὐδὲ φορᾶ».⁶¹

“If it is always changing, there will always be no knowledge, and by this reasoning there will be neither anyone to know nor anything to be known. But if there is always that which knows and that which is known—if the beautiful, the good, and all the other verities exist—I do not see how there is any likeness between these conditions of which I am now speaking and flux or motion.”⁶²

Epilogue

⁵⁸ *Cra.* 439d.11-12. Vlastos, *Πλατωνικές μελέτες*, pp. 112 and 434. Here the concept of “non-being” does not suggest non-existence, but the world of becoming, the non-stability. So, in order human intellect to avoid any disproof, it must refer only to what is characterized by permanence. This is the only way to gain the provability of its assertions.

⁵⁹ H.N. Fowler, *Plato VI. Cratylus, Parmenides, Greater Hippias, Lesser Hippias*, p. 189.

⁶⁰ To understand this conflict, cf. Kirk, Geoffrey S. – Raven, John. E. - Schofield, Malcom, *Οἱ Προσωκρατικοί φιλόσοφοι*, trans. Demosthenes Kourtovic (Athens 2006), pp. 190-220 and 246-70.

⁶¹ *Cra.* 440b.1-7. Anything we mentioned in note 32 re here is confirmed. In addition, the second world, the world of the energies of the subjective consciousness is noticeably limited with respect to its domain. A spirit of strict objectivity dominates, which forces the thinking subject to restrict itself even more to be lead in self-adjustments.

⁶² H.N. Fowler, *Plato VI. Cratylus, Parmenides, Greater Hippias, Lesser Hippias*, p. 189&191.

At the beginning of our final judgements for everything we mentioned, we shall quote George B. Kerferd's following thoughts: "Plato's solution however was neither that of renouncing, but rather the manufacture of a "Third World", that of the Platonic *Forms*. These Forms are as it were deliberately devised to satisfy the requirements of being satisfactory objects of linguistic meaning and reference. But while in one way they may be described as deliberately devised, of course in another sense this is false – they are for Plato real entities, the ultimate constituents of reality. The Platonic Forms were thus intended to serve as the primary designates or references for names. Perceptible objects in relation to which these same names tend to be used in everyday speech about the world constitute a kind of secondary or derivative realm of reference"⁶³. Therefore, the third world has human properties, even if they do not play according to Plato a key role for its definition. Or, more correctly, in order its empirical dimensions to be true they need to be authentic representations of the metaphysical ones.

In addition to these, we should mention the following:

1. Plato intends to ensure the identity of the content of a concept or name to protect it from semantic misunderstandings. He bases that on his attempt to add objective certainty to the meaning of anything mentioned. And since this is not a simple capability, he assigns it to the coiner of names and the dialectician. In this way, he somehow introduces the necessity of a strict law, a consistent and inviolable system of principles of rationality, in the sense that he adopts it.

2. Plato thoroughly presents the relationship of a thinking subject with a noumenon through the use and attribution of a predicate. He essentially does not refuse the world of becoming. Besides, its presence cannot be ignored. Instead, he discovers the impasses in which as a contributing to changes factor leads to, at the same time as he looks for supreme ultimate and unchangeable certainties. This is where we could identify what is called as a cultural leap. He stress how necessary is to discover those epistemological principles and natural and supreme realities, which would lead together human thought to that universal science that would be totally valid. So, he aims at a science of the final times, to a structural parallel term-by-term between "being" and "thought". If that was the case, human spirit, after having passed through and overcome its weaknesses, would have in a theoretical sense completely acquired the natural principles of "being". It would be also theoretically right to

⁶³ *The sophistic movement* [Cambridge-London (et. al.) 1981], p. 76.

suggest that the Athenian philosopher makes an effort to reconcile or to familiarize in an absolute degree human being and everything around him.

3. So, inevitably Plato turns to the theory of Ideas. Although they are metaphysical realities, in his thought they are presented as being included, to a point, in the horizon of the human cognitive accomplishment. Since human intellect is capable of approaching them in a cognitive way, identifying and describing them, it is unquestionably valid –or, else, capable for something like that– with respect to its conceptual definitions. Consequently, not only scientific research is ensured but also the validity of its results. Knowing an Idea is essentially about knowing the supreme ultimate and unchangeable principles of the field that corresponds to it. And the knowledge of the principles is the foundation for a rational and coherent structure of the details of this field. Plato’s intention is to include the possibility of disproof in a scientific phase –possible the last one. Therefore, the third world that he constructs is not necessarily unchangeable, just because it is divine. The Athenian philosopher’s main concern is to define this world by unchangeable divine archetypes. If this metaphysical requirement will be possible, the third world, even if it is sensible, will be eternally true. And since this is mostly suggested by the names, Plato’s intention is to build a linguistic system that would relate to the region of the ideal perfectness, which for him is not a utopia but the final phase of a hard process. Therefore, he attempts to form a linguistic system that will reflect the non-subject to becoming sensible reality, a condition that within the cosmological field will ontologically arise when the sensible beings will assimilate, in their own terms actually, the metaphysical integrity.

4. At his point, however, K. Popper identifies a basic difference between him and Plato. He emphasizes that the Athenian philosopher mostly insists on concepts and conceptual systems. These are epistemological factors that cannot be identified with what he considers to be the content of the third world, that is, the theories and theoretical systems. He also contends that the concepts are modes of standardizing and summarizing a theory and, by consequence, they are ancillary. Therefore, they constantly appertain to the prospect of being replaced by other concepts. Also remarkable is K. Popper’s estimation that the third position of the famous theory on universals: “*universalia ante rem*”, “*in re*” and “*post rem*”, is found on the other side of the third world and attempts to explain the language as an expression. But, the first one, which is the most Platonic, is basically the one which is closely connected with the third world.

Comment: As we have already stressed in the introduction, our intention was to investigate the Platonic views on language in a special perspective. But, the discussion does not end here, since the passages that we elaborated need multiples further approaches. For a more systematic and broader consideration of these positions, we choose indicatively the following from the long bibliographical list:

1. Robinson, Richard, “The Theory of **Names** in Plato’s *Cratylus*”, in: *Essay in Greek Philosophy* (Oxford 1966), pp. 100-117.
2. Partee, Morris, “Plato’s Theory on Language”, in: *Foundations of Language* 8/1 (1972), pp. 113-132.
3. Fine, Gail, “Plato on Naming”, in: *Philosophical Quarterly* 27 (1977), pp. 289-301.
4. Canto, Monique, “Le σημεῖον dans le *Cratyle*”, in: *Revue de Philosophie Ancienne* 5 (1987), pp. 9-25.
5. Ackrill, John Lloyd, “Language and Reality in Plato’s *Cratylus*”, in: *Studi di filosofia antica* 27 (1994), pp. 9-24.
6. Kentrotis, Georgios, *Πλάτων Κρατύλος* (introduction-translation-comments), Athens 2013.

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