

Seeing Double: Divisions of *eidê* and division of labor in Plato's *Republic*

Jens Kristian Larsen

Kristian.Larsen@ntnu.no

Norwegian University of Science and Technology

ORCID number: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4395-3664>

ABSTRACT

This article argues that Plato's *Republic* identifies division, as it is described in supposedly later dialogues, as a procedure that sets dialectic apart from quarreling and strife. It further argues that the procedure is crucial for establishing the ideal city of the *Republic*, since the correct assignment of various tasks to different types of human beings depend on it. Finally, it urges, division aids the philosopher in contemplating the forms and setting his or her soul in order: the forms are interwoven and division helps the philosopher recognize the order permeating the fabric of forms.

Keywords: *diairesis*, dialectic, ontology, *Republic*, eristic, sophistry.

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In¹ a crucial passage in the *Republic* (454a1-8) found within a discussion of women's role in the ideal *polis*, division in accordance with *eidê* is identified as necessary for dialectic. In this article I argue that a careful consideration of the way division is described here reveals that it closely resembles the procedure of division described in the *Phaedrus* and the *Sophist*² and that this procedure, when carried out correctly, is central to dialectic according to the *Republic*. Consideration of additional passages from *Republic* II and V further indicate, I argue, that division should be understood as a twofold procedure. It aims at 1) inspecting a particular entity by 2) dividing in accordance with *eidê*³; importantly, the act of dividing is not simply directed at the entity under consideration, but rather at eidetic aspects or forms that the entity inspected may be judged in accordance with⁴. Such forms include virtues and various types of human nature. Indeed, according to the argument of the *Republic*, the correct use of division for the purpose of distinguishing types of human natures or various virtues that to the untrained eye may look alike is necessary for the good political rule that gives to each human being in the *polis* its due. In general, correctly performed divisions help the dialectician bring into focus an entity under consideration in a kind of double-vision that reveals that entity as a concrete phenomenon that may exhibit participation in different *eidê* when considered from different points of view. What the *Republic* passage makes clear, in particular, is that human beings may be perceived both as biological beings with specific roles in human reproduction and as souls with natural aptitudes for specific tasks, and that the correct use of our ability to divide in accordance with forms is what is called for if we are to avoid conflating these two perspectives on one and the same entity.

I begin, in section 1, by analyzing the passage 454a1-8 in detail and argue that the fact that Socrates identifies the ability to divide in accordance with *eidê* as that which sets dialectic apart from quarreling or strife indicates that dialectic as it is discussed in the *Republic* strongly resembles dialectic as discussed in the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*. In section 2, I analyze the wider context of the passage and, in particular, the division of labor discussed in *Republic* II that it comments on. I argue that this wider context supports the suggestion that division in the passage 454a1-8 is used in a deliberately technical sense and further demonstrates that the ability to divide in accordance with *eidê* is important not just in order that one may avoid engaging in strife unintentionally, but also for establishing the ideal *polis* discussed in the *Republic*. In section 3, finally, I argue that division of *eidê* plays a crucial role in the argument at the end of *Republic* V that seeks to define the philosopher, since it underlines the difference between the dialectician and the lover of sights; the dialectician is characterized by the fact that he or she is awake and the ability to consider something while dividing in accordance with *eidê* is part of what it means to be awake.

1. DIVISION IN ACCORDANCE WITH *EIDÊ* AND DIVISION IN ACCORDANCE WITH NAMES

In the passage 454a1-8 in book V of Plato's *Republic*, located within what Socrates calls the "female drama" (see 451c1-3), Socrates highlights the way conversation contrasts with quarreling in consequence of a dilemma Glaucon and Socrates apparently face. The dilemma results once they assume that women should be allowed to take part in the tasks

that the male guardians perform and be given the same kind of rearing and education that the male guardians receive (451d4-e2). For this assumption, Socrates now suggests on behalf of certain unnamed opponents (see 452e3-453a5), seems to conflict with their earlier agreement (at 369e3-370b4) that different natures should perform different tasks; on the basis of this agreement one might argue that women, whose *physis* or nature differ from that of men (453b6-8), must perform other tasks than those performed by men (453b9-10).

In the passage 454a1-8 Socrates suggests that this apparently sound argument exemplifies the activity of quarreling (*erizein*) rather than of conversing (*dialegesthai*) and that it exhibits the power inherent in “the art of contradiction” (*hê antilogikê technê*). In fact, he claims, many people unwillingly, and while believing they are not doing so, end up quarreling, “owing to their inability to inspect what is said by dividing in accordance with *eidê*” (*dia to mê dynasthai kat’ eidê diairoumenoi to legomenon episkopein*);⁵ they then pursue opposition merely in accordance with the name (*kat’ auto to onoma diôkein ... tèn enantiôsin*), employing strife (*eris*) rather than discourse (*dialektos*).

As J. Adam remarks, the contrast between strife and discourse is “a common opposition” in Plato found also in e.g. “*Men.* 75c ff. and *Phil.* 17a” (Adam, 1902, note to 454a6),⁶ a fact that suggests that *dialektos* is used in our passage more or less as a technical term designating the expertise of dialectic. Socrates’ claim in the passage is, then, that the difference between discoursing, understood as an activity that employs dialectic, and quarreling, understood as an activity that employs strife and exemplifies the power of the art of contradiction, is to be found in the

fact that discourse depends on the ability to inspect what is discussed through divisions in accordance with *eidê*. We may leave aside, for the moment, the question what Socrates means by *eidê* and concentrate on the fact that the activity of dividing in accordance with *eidê* is contrasted with another way of considering a matter under discussion where one looks merely to the word or name (*onoma*), a manner of proceeding that employs strife and exemplifies the power of the art of contradiction.

Plato often highlights the difference between genuine conversation and eristic and between dialectic and the art of contradiction for the purpose of distinguishing philosophy from sophistry and rhetoric (see e.g. Kerferd, 1981, p. 59- 67; Nehamas, 1990; McCoy, 2008; Rodriguez, 2019).⁷ From dialogues such as the *Gorgias*, the *Protagoras*, and the *Sophist* it may even appear that Plato’s definition of philosophy depends to some extent on establishing this basic difference. It is therefore significant that Socrates in the passage under consideration indicates that the activity of quarreling (*erizein*) is something one may inadvertently end up being engaged in while aiming at conducting a conversation (*dialegesthai*), and that this activity somehow exemplifies the power inherent in the art of contradiction even if it is not itself a deliberate attempt at using that art. This suggests that strife or eristic is a deficient mode of speaking that is best understood when contrasted with the positive phenomenon it is not, namely, discourse that is aimed at inspecting the nature of a subject matter. It also suggests that the *power* of the art of contradiction (if it is an art) is something inherent in language itself, and not something that only accomplished rhetoricians or sophists have access to, since Socrates claims that one

need not engage in this activity deliberately in order to exhibit its power. The suggestion seems to be, then, that, even if words may be helpful in a dialectical inquiry where one attempts to inspect something while dividing in accordance with *eidê*, they may just as easily lead one to a merely verbal dispute if one divides only in accordance with them; in fact, unless one already aims at doing the former, one may not realize that one is, in reality, engaged in the latter.

If these considerations are to the point, it could even seem that Socrates is suggesting that rhetoricians and sophists, in so far as they are considered experts in contradiction and quarrelling, should be regarded as deficient dialecticians rather than as active opponents of dialectic or philosophy, that is, as people making their living from the fact that most of us, most of the time, fail to inspect the subject matter we discuss in accordance with correctly performed divisions of *eidê* and rather focus on mere names. Rhetoricians and sophists, when following such divisions through subtle distinctions between various meanings of words, could easily seem to be conducting dialectical investigations to one who does not know what they are doing.⁸

Socrates' claims about the importance of division in the passage we are considering gain further significance once we note that the expression "dividing in accordance with *eidê*" (*kat' eidê diairoumenoi*) is paralleled by expressions found in a number of passages from the *Sophist* and the *Statesman* where the expertise of the dialectician and the confusion characteristic of people untrained in dialectic are described (the parallel is noted in Adam, 1902, note to *R.* 454a5). In the *Sophist* it is said that it belongs to the science of dialectic to divide "according to kinds [*to kata genê diaireisthai*], (...) not

thinking either that the same form [*eidōs*] is different or, when it is different, that it is the same" (253d1-3; translation by Christopher Rowe, slightly modified). In the *Statesman*, people in general are said to throw things that are very different into the same category and to distinguish things that are really the same "because they are not accustomed to inspect things while dividing according to forms [*dia de to mê kat' eidê syneithisthai skopein diairoumenous*]" (285a4-8; translation by E. Brann, P. Kalkavage, and E. Salem, modified). These parallels and the fact that Socrates in the *Republic* explicitly states that the ability to divide in accordance with *eidê* is a prerequisite for engaging in conversation as an activity that employs dialectic suggest that "dividing" in the passage under consideration is used in a deliberately technical sense. Moreover, the distinction between only picking on names when considering a subject matter and being able to inspect it on the basis of divisions of *eidê* should be familiar to all readers of the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*. The inquiry of these two dialogues sets out from a distinction between merely "having a name in common concerning a given subject" (*toutou peri tounoma monon echein*) and deciding what that subject is (*ti pot' esti*) through an account (*logos*), and the method of division is introduced in order to help the interlocutors proceed from the former to the latter (see *Sph.* 218b6-219a2). In order to settle the question what the sophist is the interlocutors need to find out what kind of expertise, if any, he may be said to possess, and this, in turn, calls for divisions of the various types of expertise there are. The divisions, then, do not aim at dividing the sophist but the various *eidê* of expertise that are relevant for achieving a satisfactory perspective on the sophist.

2. DIVISION OF *EIDÊ*, DIVISION OF LABOR, AND THEIR IMPORTANCE FOR ESTABLISHING THE IDEAL *POLIS*

When read in isolation, the passage from the *Republic* does not tell us much about the ability to divide in accordance with *eidê*, and this may in part explain why few commentators regard it as referring to division in a technical sense, that is, to a procedure central to Plato's more general account of dialectic.⁹ A careful consideration of the way Socrates explains why the interlocutors now run the risk of engaging, unwillingly, in quarreling will help us flesh out what division is meant to accomplish according to Socrates and see more clearly the way division is important to the overall argument of the *Republic*. Socrates' explanation runs as follows. If the interlocutors now find it plausible, as the hypothetical objector Socrates has introduced does, that women cannot share in the activities of the male guardians, it is because they pursue opposition merely in the letter of their earlier agreement that different natures ought to perform different tasks (454b4-6); for they now fail to consider "what *eidôs* of diversity and identity of nature" they had in mind and "with reference to what" (*pros ti*) they defined (*horizesthai*) it when they initially assigned different practices to different natures (454b6-9).

The argumentative character of this passage resembles that of two other passages in the *Republic* where Socrates brings up certain hypothetical objectors, namely 436c10-e5 and 438a1-6. As Weiss (2007) argues, Socrates in these passages endorses the premises introduced by these hypothetical objectors, namely that something may in some sense stand still

while moving and that all human beings in some sense desire the good, while denying that the conclusion the hypothetical objector claims follows from this in fact follows, namely that the same thing can move and stand still at the same time without qualification, and that thirst is a desire for good drink without qualification. In the first case, the qualification is that the moving and standing still are done with different parts; in the second, the qualification is that the desired good need not also be good in the sense of beneficial. We may suppose that Socrates in the passage we are considering likewise accepts the two premises on which the hypothetical objector here relies, namely that different natures should perform different tasks and that women differ from men by nature, but that he denies that the conclusion follows because the nature in accordance with which they inspect the subject discussed is not the same in the two premises.¹⁰ For what he argues is that the conclusion only seems to follow because they now fail to ask in accordance with what *form* of different and same nature they advanced their earlier claim. This clearly indicates that something may be said to have the same nature in accordance with one form of nature, but a different one in accordance with another. Failing to realize that, one investigates the subject under consideration—what role women may be accorded in society—while pursuing mere verbal contradiction and not dividing in accordance with *eidê*. Let us now consider more carefully which divisions Socrates may be said to have performed in the course of their earlier assignment of different tasks to different human beings.

What Socrates had in mind when he introduced the suggestion that different natures should perform different tasks was that human beings differ in nature in so far as

some people are naturally suited for certain tasks while others are suited for other tasks (369e3-370b4, see also 374a5-e9), a point the importance of which he emphasizes by now reiterating it (at 454c7-d1).¹¹ In other words, when Socrates claimed (at 370b1-2) that none of us are born exactly alike, but that we differ by nature, he was thinking of “nature” in the sense of our suitability for various tasks. Due to their nature some people are more suited to performing the tasks of a farmer, others to performing the tasks of a shoemaker. Such natural differences, Socrates also argued (see 374b6-d6), become even more apparent once tasks such as guarding the city are introduced into the inquiry. The problem with the present claim is that it seems to assume without argument that the difference in nature between men and women that follows from the fact that women bear and men beget is relevant when it comes to the question which natures are suited to which tasks (see 454d9-e1), an assumption that seems to parallel the assumption that, since bald men differ by nature from longhaired men, the two are not suited to the same tasks. In other words, for the argument of the hypothetical objector to carry weight, it would have to be established that men and women also differ by nature when it comes to the question what tasks they are suited to perform (454d7-9), in particular the tasks concerned with organizing the city. But, Socrates argues, they do not, for there are no tasks that men or women are more suited to perform just because they are men and women; rather, women are as different as men when it comes to the question what tasks they will be suited to perform (455d6-e1), even if they will on the whole be inferior to men in performing them (455c5-d5). Thus, for every type of man suited to a particular task we will find a corresponding woman.¹²

On the basis of these considerations we may suggest that the quarrelsome argument displays a twofold inability to inspect a subject matter while dividing in accordance with *eidê*. On the one hand, it fails to consider the fact that there are different ways in which we may say that something has the same or a different nature—for instance with respect to the tasks they are suited to perform and with respect to their role in procreation. Difference itself differs in kinds when applied to nature and the answer to the question whether two things differ by nature depends on what nature we are talking about (see 454b6-8). On the other hand, it also fails to divide human nature into kinds in accordance with the different tasks that different men and women are suited to perform—the division that Socrates indicated at 369e3-370b4 is called for if we are to arrive at a well-ordered society. It is only when seen from the perspective of such divisions, one may argue, that it becomes apparent that men and women can be said to “have the same nature” if they are naturally suited to the same job (454d1-3)—even granted that they differ in their nature relative to some other activity incidental to this job (see 454d9-e1). In other words, in order to see that the difference between men and women relative to human reproduction is just one way we may speak of human beings having different natures, one needs to acknowledge that human beings, or human nature, may be divided in accordance with other differences as well.

The claim that women cannot perform the same tasks as men thus arises from too narrow an understanding of human nature—one that results from an insufficient grasp of the ways divisions may be applied to nature for the purpose of defining different types of human beings (on this point, see Friedländer, 1960, p. 95). We might also say that it results from

a one-dimensional understanding of human beings that fails to distinguish between the natural requirements of various activities, and that the cure for that mistake is a kind of double-vision that allows one to see that particular human beings that differ from each other naturally in one regard may nevertheless share a fundamental likeness in so far as they are naturally suited to similar tasks in another regard.

These considerations indicate, furthermore, that the ability to divide in accordance with *eidê* is important not just at this particular point of the argument for the purpose of avoiding engaging in mere word-fighting or eristic. It is also of great importance for establishing the ideal *polis* in *logos*. For the “construction” of this *polis* in words is based precisely on the claims that human beings differ by nature relative to various tasks and that the welfare of a community depends on correctly assigning to people the pursuits they are naturally suited to perform—especially when it comes to important pursuits such as guarding and ruling the *polis*. Dividing human beings correctly into kinds in accordance with their natural aptitudes is not only a theoretical task that helps us avoid quarreling rather than conversing, it is also a practical task of the highest importance. Much of the educational system discussed in the *Republic* is explicitly intended to make the rulers able to perform this task in a satisfactory manner.

But if division as discussed in the passages we have considered so far is directed primarily at kinds of human beings and the tasks that they are naturally suited to carry out, a critical reader might object to the suggestion advanced in the previous part of the article, that division as described in these passages resembles division as described in supposedly later dialogues. For, such a reader might object,

division in the later dialogues is performed on forms (whatever ontological status they are to be ascribed in these dialogues), not on kinds of human beings for which, it could be assumed, there are no forms. In other words, it might be objected that the expression *kat' eidê diairoumenoi* at *Republic* 454a6 only superficially resembles the expressions *kata genê diaireisthai* at *Sophist* 253d1 and *kat' eidê syneithisthai skopein diairoumenous* at *Statesman* 285a4-5, since the entities that are divided are radically different in the *Republic* and the supposedly later dialogues.

I believe a simple answer to this objection may be provided. For we may note that the *eidê* referred to in the famous passage 265e1-266b1 from the *Phaedrus* discussing division are first and foremost kinds of love, parts of the soul, and different kinds of human beings (see Larsen 2010 and 2020a), and that the *eidê* or *genê* in accordance with which divisions are carried out in the *Sophist* and the *Statesman* are first and foremost kinds of expertise.¹³ In other words, the procedure of division as exemplified in the supposedly later dialogues is primarily concerned with entities that many scholars would also be reluctant to think of as “Forms” or “Platonic ideas” for the very same reasons that they might be reluctant to identify the *eidê* mentioned in the *Republic* passage with forms.

We may sum up this consideration in a more general conclusion. Division, as described in the *Republic* passage, as well as in central passages from the *Phaedrus*, the *Sophist*, and the *Statesman*, is characterized first and foremost by the fact that it is concerned with kinds of things and with dividing them correctly; when seen from that perspective, the question what ontological status these kinds have is less important. For the purpose of understanding the significance of division

for Plato's conception of dialectic as contrasted with eristic and sophistry, it would therefore perhaps be better to avoid the claim altogether that division is preoccupied with "Platonic forms" or with "Forms", designated with a capital "F", as if such forms were clearly set apart in Plato from other types of *eidê*, and instead accept that division, when discussed in Plato in a technical manner, is described in Plato in a technical manner, is described as a procedure that is concerned with kinds in accordance with which particular things may, or may not, be inspected, kinds that, in some dialogues, are analyzed in greater detail as regards their ontological status and in others not.

3. DIVISION AND THE COMMUNION OF FORMS

There is another way in which the ability to divide in accordance with *eidê* is discussed in the *Republic* as a prerequisite for the philosopher's knowledge that is undoubtedly concerned with what many scholars are used to thinking of as "Platonic Forms", however, as a consideration of a passage found at the end of book V (especially 476a5-476d2) will make clear. Here Socrates sets out from the claim that the true philosophers (*hoi alêthinoi philosophoi*) are those who "love to contemplate the truth [*hoi philothamones tês alêtheias*]" (475e3-4) and proceeds to clarify what contemplation of the truth means in two consecutive steps important for understanding the significance of the procedure of division for the overall argument of the *Republic*. In the first step Socrates suggests that the beautiful and the ugly are opposites and therefore two (476a1) and, since they are two, that each is one (476a3). In the second step he states that the same account or argu-

ment (*logos*) concerns the just and unjust, the good and the bad and "all of the *eidê* [*peri pantôn tôn eidôn*];" each is one but, due to their communion (*koinônia*) with actions, bodies and "with one another" (*allêlôn*), they appear as many (476a5-8).

The first step contains a simple enumeration of *eidê* that we may regard as a rudimentary version of dialectical division or distinction. The reason the *eidê* can be counted is that they differ from each other but can be viewed together: if the beautiful was not something in itself and the opposite of the ugly, we would not be able to see each as unities that together constitute a duality. The second step, in turn, establishes that each *eidos* appears as many because it has communion with a) actions, b) bodies, and c) other *eidê*.

The fact that Socrates describes the *eidê* as unities suggests that the term *eidê* here explicitly refers to the kind of entities that most scholars are used to thinking of as "Platonic Forms," an impression that is confirmed by the discussion of the beautiful itself that follows; Adam thus claims that the passage contains "the first appearance of the Theory of 'Ideas' properly so called in the *Republic*" (1902, note to *R.* 476a2). The description also suggests that, in order to see clearly each form as the unity it is, one needs to be able to distinguish it both from the actions and bodily entities and from the other forms that it has communion with and may appear as conflated with.

That Socrates, in a passage where he stresses the unity of each form, explicitly states that a form may appear as a plurality because it has communion with other forms, importantly calls into question a widespread view of Plato's development, according to which he changed his understanding of forms from being self-identical, pure ontological

unities to being essentially interrelated ontological entities (see e.g. Stenzel, 1917, Prauss, 1966; Moravcsik, 1973). The passage suggests that forms, while being self-identical, have communion with other forms in such a way that it may be difficult to see the unity and identity of each form; a form may, because it has communion with other forms, appear as many rather than as one. For readers of the *Protagoras* and the *Meno* and the complex analyses of virtues contained in these dialogues, this should be no surprise – justice, for instance, may appear as many things because it often comes to light together with moderation or courage (on this point, see Friedländer, 1960, p. 444, n. 35). We may also note that it is a related problem that faces the interlocutors in the middle part of the *Sophist*; regardless whether or not the communion characterizing the great kinds discussed in that section of the dialogue is of a peculiar sort when compared to the communion of other forms, the problem the interlocutors are faced with in the central part of the *Sophist* is first and foremost to decide what sameness, difference, being, and non-being are, precisely because they are easy to confuse with each other in consequence of their communion with each other.

Building on his claim about forms, Socrates next explains that he divides (*di-airein*; 476a10) philosophers from lovers of sights on the basis of his distinction between *eidê*, actions, and bodily entities (476a10-b2). The distinction between philosophers and lovers of sight may therefore be regarded as a division that itself depends on a division in accordance with kinds, namely the two kinds a) forms and b) actions and bodily things (see Friedländer, 1960, p. 97; for the point that a) and b) are kinds of things that are, see *Phd.* 79a6). Only philosophers are able to approach

and see forms such as the beautiful itself, Socrates suggests, in contrast to the lovers of sights who appreciate only the many beautiful things (*R.* 476b4-10). The latter, because they do not recognize (*nomizein*) the beautiful itself and are unable to follow, should someone lead them toward the cognition (*gnôsis*) of it, live as if in a dream, since dreaming consists in believing that a likeness of something is the thing itself that it is like, not a likeness of it (476c1-5). The philosopher, in contrast, lives fully awake because he or she believes that there is something beautiful itself and is able to catch sight of it as well as of what participates in it (*ta ekeinou metechonta*), and “neither supposes the participants to be it nor it the participants” (476c7-d3).

The “waking life” of philosophy, we see, thus depends on the ability to distinguish a form from what participates in it and to see both clearly. It depends on a kind of double-vision that, while distinguishing form and participating entities, keeps both in clear sight and does not confuse one with the other. Moreover, since Socrates has just suggested that a form may have communion not only with actions and bodies but also with other forms, we may infer that the expression “what participates in it” (*ta ekeinou metechonata*) might refer both to actions or bodies, and to other forms. Relating this to our earlier discussion, we may then say that it is because the philosopher (or dialectician) is able to inspect human beings in accordance with *eidê*, and is able to divide these *eidê* correctly without confusing one with the other, that they are able to see human beings for what they are and avoid judging, like sleepwalkers, that men and women, since they have different natures in accordance with one understanding of nature, are naturally suited to perform different tasks in accordance with another.

If this inference is correct, the division that separates philosopher from sight-lover itself depends on a twofold ontological division, first a division that separates forms from what is only in so far as it participates in forms, then a division of forms the aim of which is to gain a clear view of them, both in their unique individuality and in their interconnection. Again, we see, there is a clear connection between the description of the philosopher in the *Republic* and the description of the dialectician found in for instance the *Sophist*—for according to the latter, the dialectician is the one who is able to divide forms “without thinking either that the same form is different or, when it is different, that it is the same” (253d1-3).

A critical reader might object, however, that a single reference to “communion” as regards forms is a far cry from the detailed analysis we find of the communion of forms in supposedly later dialogues, and that it is far from clear that the ability to divide forms is of real significance to the argument of the *Republic*. Some brief considerations of a couple of passages from books VI and VII may provide a basis for a preliminary answer to such an objection, an answer that may also serve as a conclusion to the present article.

In regard to the communion of forms, we may note, first, that Socrates at 500c3-5 describes the objects contemplated by the philosopher as “things that are set in a regular arrangement [*tetagmena atta*] and are always in the same condition—things that neither do injustice to one another nor suffer it at one another’s hands, but are all in proportion [*kosmôî de panta kai kata logon echonta*]” (translation by Bloom, slightly modified). That the forms are here described as being set in arrangement and to be ordered proportionally seems to reflect the earlier claim that forms commune with each other, as does the

claim that they do not act unjustly toward each other—a claim that may sound strange to a modern reader who thinks of forms as concepts. We find the same picture emerging in the passage 531c9-d1 where Socrates describes the inquiry (*methodos*) into all things, which is what the philosopher or the philosopher-as-ruler should be engaged in, as arriving at the community and relationship of these things and as drawing “conclusions as to how they are akin to one another” (translation by Bloom). The knowledge of the philosopher or the philosopher-as-ruler is not simply aimed at forms, but at the forms in their interconnection.

In asking what relevance the ability to see the way forms are connected has for the philosopher rulers, we may note that, when Socrates is confronted with the accusation that they would be doing injustice to the philosophers if they were to force them back into society, Socrates claims that they will be able to see “ten thousand times better” than the people dwelling in the cave (520c3-4); perhaps this ability depends on the ability to see things in due proportion. Put differently, we may suppose that the ability to see each form clearly for what it is, and to see how particular things, actions, and other forms may have communion with that form, is important not just for understanding the forms but also for understanding the sensible world we inhabit in all its complexity. To live life fully awake, we must be able to see universal types or kinds as well as particulars, and to understand how the two kinds of entities are related to, and differ from, each other. If we are not, we live the lives of sleepwalkers. And for those human beings who happen to be rulers of political communities, living such a life is not just a personal disaster – it is a disaster for the community as a whole.

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Notes

¹ I would like to thank Hayden Ausland, Vivil Valvik Haraldsen, Vasilis Politis, and Roslyn Weiss who all read and commented on earlier versions of the article. The article benefited from fruitful discussions at the *Amercian Philosophical Assosiation* meeting in Philadelphia in January 2020 and at the *Bergen Ancient Philosophy Society* meeting in May 2020.

² The fact that the passages discussed in this article contain examples of division has not gone entirely unnoticed, see e.g. Friedländer, 1960, p. 95-96, Hamlyn, 1955, p. 289, and McCabe, 2015, p. 101. To my knowledge, however, Socrates' claim in 454a1-8 that correctly performed divisions help set dialectic apart from eristic has not been discussed in any detail by critics to date. G. B. Kerferd correctly states that antilogic, as discussed in the passage 454a1-8, is set apart from dialectic by the fact that it "lacks ... the power to discuss on the basis of Division of things by Kinds" (Kerferd, 1981, p. 63-64), but he does not pursue the question what Socrates means by division, while A. Nehamas briefly touches on the passage and points out that dialectic, in contrast to mere verbal distinctions, "aims at the discovery of the real nature of things" (Nehamas, 1990, p. 11), but he does not discuss why the "discovery" of such natures should depend on division. Both Lukas (1888, p. 10) and Adam (1902, note to 454a5) connect the passage with the so-called method of division but they do not offer any detailed interpretation of it. El Murr (2020, p. 89-90) remarks briefly on the technical terminology of the passage but does not discuss division in any detail.

³ What entities the procedure of division is meant to be employed on – forms, particulars, general concepts – is a matter of controversy. For discussion, see Moravcsik 1973; Cohen 1973; and Muniz and Rudebusch 2018. For the view that division can be employed on various entities, and, in particular, on Forms as well as on participating phenomena, see Ionescu 2012; 2013; 2019, p. 1-30. While I do not seek to settle the question what ontological status we should accord the *eidê* discussed in 454a1-8, the reading I defend rules out that we are dividing "particulars"; what division aims at is to inspect particular entities by dividing *eidê* relevant for that inspection.

⁴ I thank Roslyn Weiss and Vasilis Politis for impressing this point on me, the full significance of which I had not realized in Larsen 2020a.

⁵ Many translators seem to presuppose that *to legomenon* is the object of *diaroumenoi*, supplying an "it" after "dividing"; I thank Roslyn Weiss for stressing to me the importance of the fact that it is not the target of the inquiry that is divided but rather the broader context in which it is located.

⁶ See also *Theaetetus* 146b3-4 where Theodorus states that he is unaccustomed to Socrates' *dialektos*, implying that it is Socrates' way of conducting investigations through questions and answers that he finds difficult to follow, that is, that he is unaccustomed to following dialectical investigations

⁷ Kerferd (1980) famously argued that Plato distinguished between *etistikê* and *antilogikê* and regarded the former in purely negative terms and the latter as a possible precursor to dialectic; as El Murr (2020) correctly points out, however, the present passage suggests that *etistikê* and *antilogikê* are on a par.

⁸ This suggestion seems partly corroborated by Socrates' later claim that the young are not corrupted by the sophists, since the sophists merely follow the opinions of the many about things praiseworthy and not (see 492a5-493c8); such opinions, one may argue, articulate the understanding of right and wrong encapsulated in everyday speech and the names we employ for things but do not thereby necessarily articulate correct divisions of reality that would allow us to see each thing for what it is.

⁹ Concerning this passage, J. Stenzel claims that "ein Blick auf den Zusammenhang zeigt, daß von dem Sinne der späteren Dialektik auch nicht im entferntesten die Rede ist" (Stenzel, 1917, p. 49); for, Stenzel claims, "einer so bewußten Theorie" as the one we find in the *Sophist* and the *Statesman* must be motivated by considerations quite different from those that Plato is concerned with in the *Republic* (1917, p. 50). This view also explains Stenzel's cavalier denial that the passage 476a5-476d2 from the *Republic* discussed below contains any reference to *koinônia* in the sense discussed in the central part of the *Sophist* (1917, p. 50). Notwithstanding the influence of this view on much later scholarship—one may compare Stenzel's claim with a related claim advanced by J. Moravcsik (1973, p. 158-159)—, this appears to be special pleading. Stenzel presupposes that the terms *diairesis* and *koinônia* mean something significantly different in the *Sophist* from what they mean in the *Republic* because they, on Stenzel's view, are introduced in this supposedly later dialogue as part of a solution to problems identified in the *Parmenides* that, again on Stenzel's view, marred the theory of ideas as expressed in for instance the *Republic*. In other words, if Plato already knew that Forms could take part in one another and that dividing them correctly was important, the whole point of the critique found in the *Parmenides* and the solution presented to that critique in the *Sophist*, as read by Stenzel, would be pointless (see Stenzel, 1917, p. 50). But this argument already seems to presuppose the view of Plato's development that Stenzel is arguing for. Worth noting is also that Stenzel presupposes a specific view of division in the later dialogues, according to which it constitutes a new method for providing essential definitions (the *logos ousias*,

see Stenzel 1917, p. 47), a method that points in the direction of Aristotle's later work on definitions. There is a clear parallel to present-day work on the *Sophist*. For critical discussion of Stenzel's view of the passages from the *Republic*, see Friedländer 1960, p. 444, n. 35. See also Hamlyn 1955, p. 289. For a critical discussion of the view that division in the *Phaedrus*, the *Sophist*, and the *Statesman* is meant to provide essential definitions, see Larsen 2020a and 2020b.

¹⁰ I thank Roslyn Weiss for pointing out these parallels to me.

¹¹ For further discussion of the way *physis* is used in Socrates' argument, see Burnyeat, 1992, p. 183-185 and Ferrari, 2013, p. 188-190; Ferrari points out, to my mind correctly, that Socrates by *physis* appeals to "the particular talents... of particular women" (Ferrari, 2013, p. 189, n. 1), not to something like the nature of women or to human nature in itself.

¹² A. Kosman claims that Socrates here "mounts a notorious argument for the equal access of women to the role of the guardian by means of the distressing premise that since women are inferior to men in every respect, there can be no significant difference between the two of them." (Kosman, 2007, p. 133; emphasis in the original). While essentially correct, it is important to note that Socrates uses this point not so much to emphasize that women are *inferior* to men in all respects, but rather to prepare for a conclusion to be drawn on the basis that they are inferior to men in *all* respects. In other words, the main point of Socrates' argument is that there are no specific tasks in which men excel as men or women as women, not that women are inferior to men; note also Glaucon's modification of the claim at 455d4-5.

¹³ See Adam who states that *εἶδη* in the expression *κατ' εἶδη διαιρούμενοι* "is not of course 'the ideas': but 'species', 'kinds'" (Adam, 1902, note to *Resp.* 454a4); he appears to justify this claim by referring, precisely, to the *Statesman* 285a and the *Sophist* 253d. Presumably he assumes that in these supposedly later dialogues, the expressions *εἶδη* and *γέννη* no longer refer to "the ideas" and that the similarity between Socrates' expression here and the expressions made by the Eleatic visitor justifies the claim that *εἶδη* in the current passage cannot refer to "ideas". My point is not that what is divided in the supposedly later dialogues are not "the ideas", simply that there are no good reasons to claim that what is divided in the *Republic* has a radically different ontological status from what is divided in supposedly later dialogues commonly seen as employing the so-called method of division. Adam helpfully points out that the passage we are considering has a parallel in Xenophon's description of Socrates' art of conversation, see *Memorabilia* IV 5.12.

