ANNA PAVANI

Names and Methods

The Language of Dialectic in Plato's *Sophist* and *Statesman*

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Anna Pavani

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Note to the Reader

The *Sophist* and *Statesman* are cited from the edition of E. A. Duke, W. F. Hicken, W. S. M. Nicoll, D. B. Robinson, and J. C. G. Strachan, Oxford Classical Text series, 1995. The few discrepancies are marked.

Unless stated otherwise, translations are my own. Since language is the focus of this book, I considered it not just appropriate, but also necessary to provide my own reading of the Greek text. I hope the reader will gain in transparency what got lost in elegance.

There is a twofold exception to this principle. On the one hand, I have not translated crucial terms such as *technê* and *paradeigma.* In both cases, I considered the transliteration less confusing than the familiar but misleading translations. I discuss at page 85 and 186, respectively, why both "art" and "expertise," "example" and "model," fall short of the Greek terms they are supposed to render. On the other hand, I have reluctantly translated *onoma* as "name," which is by no means an adequate equivalent, as I explain in Chapter 1. In this case, I esteemed readability over accuracy.

Introduction

Xenos: "And what in turn about our inquiry on the statesman? Is it set before us more for the sake of the statesman or for the sake of our becoming more dialectical about everything?

Young Socrates: That too is clear: it is for the sake of our becoming more dialectical about everything."
(*Stm.* 285d4–7)

Dialectic is the copingstone for all learnings (*thrigkos tois mathêmasin* at *Resp.* VII 534e2–3) and the counterpart of eristic (*Men.* 75c8–d7). Dialectic is the "science of free men" who are nothing less than the true philosophers (*Sph.* 253c), and becoming "more dialectical" is the reason why – as the passage quoted above shows – the search for the statesman is carried out at all (*Stm.* 285d). If dispensing with Forms – as claims old Parmenides in the eponymous dialogue – what one would utterly destroy is precisely "the power of Dialectic" (*dynamis tou dialegesthai*) (*Parm.* 135b5–c4).[1] It is with reference to "conversing," "discussing" (*to dialegesthai*) that Plato named what he viewed as the highest *technê.* As the Socrates of the *Cratylus* asserts, indeed, the dialectician is the one "who is able to ask and answer questions" (*Crat.* 390c10–11), the most important of which is the *ti-esti* question. For, as we learn from the *Republic*, only the dialectician "tries through argument and apart from all sense perceptions to find the being itself of each thing" (*Resp.* VII 532a5–b1) in order to give an account of the essence of each thing (*Resp.* VII 534b3–6). Dialectic is "the method which endeavours in every case to apprehend concerning each thing what it really is" (*Resp.* VII 533b1–2).[2]

The dialogues present us readers with various ways through which the interlocutors aim to provide a satisfactory answer to the *ti-esti* question. For Plato called Dialectic the "ideal method, whatever that may be"[3] to reach and explain

1 I adopt Kahn's rendering; Kahn (1996: 297).

2 Vlastos' rendering; Vlastos (1999: 36 n.3).

3 Robinson (1953: 70). Against Robinson, Kahn (1996: 300) has argued that there is more consistency than it might appear. See also Dixsaut (2001: 8).

the essence of things.[4] Across the centuries, scholars have mostly considered the conception of Dialectic as portrayed in the so-called "early" and "middle" dialogues, leading to a neglect of the Late dialogues.[5] To borrow Van Ophuijsen's expression, "there never was a *Plato's Later Dialectic* to supplement Robinson's *Plato's Earlier Dialectic*."[6] While much more is needed to fill such a gap, the present study moves in this direction.

An allegedly brand-new Dialectical method is usually said to be introduced with great emphasis in the *Phaedrus*. It is in the *Phaedrus*, to speak with Hackforth, that "Plato for the first time formally expounds that philosophical method – the method of dialectic – which from now onwards becomes so prominent in his thought, especially in the *Sophist*, *Statesman* and *Philebus*."[7] There, Socrates calls "dialecticians" those who master two procedures, which are referred to as "Division" (*diairesis*) and "Collection" (*synagôgê*) respectively (*Phdr.* 266b3–4). Collection and Division are basic operations of our thinking and, as such, they accompany human beings since the beginning of time. For his part, Plato considers collecting and dividing throughout his work, though this interest becomes more explicit in the Late dialogues. In this book, I shall limit myself to analyzing the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*. Moreover, I consider them in the light of each other. There are two main reasons for this delimitation. Firstly, there is, as I will show in Chapter 2, a closer bond between the *Sophist* and *Statesman* than arguably between any other Late dialogues.[8] Secondly, although Plato clear-

4 The indisputable relevance of Platonic Dialectic has been recognized by almost any philosopher after Plato. See, e.g., Hegel's remarks in his *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, i.e., *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, (1996: 21–36). On Hegel's *Auseinandersetzung* with Plato's Dialectic, see Düsing (1980).

5 By "late," I simply mean after the *Republic*.

Of scholarly research of the past century, which began with Rodier (1905), Robinson's study about Dialectic (1953), although restricted to the early dialogues, is still considered the leading one. Ackrill's *In Defence of Platonic Division* (1970), which reacted to Ryle's attack in *Mind* (1939) and in his book *Plato's Progress* (1966), was crucial in re-opening a serious debate on Plato's Late Dialectic. Besides the monographies by Stenzel (1931) and Stemmer (1992), more recent works on the Late Dialectic include volumes, such as Lane (1998), Sayre (2006), Delcomminette (2000a), and Gill (2012), as well as a wider range of articles, such as Philip (1966), Moravcsik (1973b), Wedin (1987), Brown (2010), Gill (2010), Henry (2011), Franklin (2011), and Muniz and Rudebusch (2018), not to mention the "new" perspectives on Platonic Dialectic contained in the homonymous volume by Larsen, Haraldsen, and Vlasits (2022).

6 Van Ophuijsen (1999: 297 n.22).

7 Hackforth (1952: 134).

8 Precisely such a strong bond justifies the exclusion of the *Phaedrus* and the *Philebus* from the present analysis. Surely, the *Phaedrus* (*Phdr.* 265c8–266c8), where Collection and Division get allegedly defined, and the *Philebus*, where Dialectic is considered a gift of the gods (*Phlb.* 16c5), are both extremely relevant to an assessment of Plato's understanding of Dialectic in his late works. Whereas I shall briefly refer to the *Phaedrus* in §5.2, the *Philebus* would require an

ly designed the *Sophist* and *Statesman* as a pair, "the task of interpreting the two dialogues together" has been, as Lane rightly remarks, "oddly neglected."[9] This book aims to fulfill as much as possible such a desideratum.

The *Sophist* and *Statesman* are tightly connected from a dramatic, thematic, and methodological point of view. From a dramatic point of view, the *Statesman* is meant to continue the conversation that was begun in the *Sophist*. This conversation, to which the *Statesman* refers repeatedly,[10] is led by an unnamed character who appears only in these two dialogues, namely the *xenos* ("guest-friend") from Elea. Obvious as it might sound, I take the *Sophist* and *Statesman* not to be "treatises in disguise," but actual dialogues, in which the contributions of the interlocutors are crucial.[11] The overarching aim of the discussants is to distinguish three target-terms from each other: the sophist, the statesman, and the philosopher, as is stated at the outset of the *Sophist* and re-stated in the same terms at the beginning of the *Statesman*. Precisely to achieve this goal, the interlocutors will employ the method of Collection and Division.

As has been rightly remarked, our understanding of the *Sophist* and *Statesman* hinges on the way we interpret the dialectical method employed in the respective inquiries.[12] Each of the two inquiries, indeed, deals with one of the three *terms* Socrates asks for in the prologue of the *Sophist*. There, the unnamed *xenos* from Elea is asked whether people in his hometown considered sophist, statesman, and philosopher to be one, two, or three kinds, just as the names for them are three (*Sph*. 217a7–9). By asking whether there are as many kinds as names, such that a *genos* can be attached to each name, Socrates is ascribing the highest relevance to names (*onomata*). This is a crucial feature of both subsequent inquiries, as we shall see.

Sophist, statesman, and philosopher are surely distinct, but it is not a small nor an easy task to determine clearly what each of them is, as the *xenos* candidly admits (*Sph*. 217b1–4) and as we readers will also come to acknowledge along the way. To fulfil this task, the interlocutors employ a method that has caused almost no sympathy across the centuries. "Plato's predominant logical fancy of

extensive treatment that exceeds the limits of the present study. As Di Lorenzo (2021: 118–120) argues, the dialectic section of the *Philebus* (*Phlb*. 13e9–17a7) is built upon peculiar metaphysical and ontological assumptions that must first be investigated on their own.

9 Lane (1998: 8). Required is the "fuller interpretation of the *Sophist* and the *Statesman* as a pair."

10 See, for example, *Stm*. 258b6–7, 266d5, 284b7, 286b10, and 291c3–4. I discuss these cross-references in §2.1.

11 I borrow the phrase "treatises in disguise" from Frede (1992: 219). *Pace* Stenzel (1931: 76–8), I agree with Gill (2012: 130 n.2) that the dialogue form of the *Sophist* is not merely an external trapping. I shall show that the same holds for the *Statesman* as well.

12 See, e. g., Ionescu (2013: 41).

the last years"[13] has been considered to be inaccurate, incomplete, and ineffective.[14] For a deflationary account of the method of Collection and Division, we do not need to wait until the merciless and still influential judgement of Ryle, who wrote that the *Sophist* "consists queerly of a stretch of highly abstract and sophisticated philosophical reasoning sandwiched between some division-operations which presuppose no philosophical sophistication whatsoever."[15] The comic poet Epicrates already satirized the students of the Academy – he depicts them as saying unutterably weird things in their attempt to distinguish the genus of the pumpkin by applying what is usually identified with the method of Collection and Division. Even if the actual employment of the method, with its long and elaborated chains of Divisions, might strike the reader as "arbitrary, whimsical, or designed to make a particular point,"[16] it seems quite unlikely that Plato developed them at such length for parody only.[17] Therefore, it seems more appropriate to try to make sense of the method rather than to dismiss it, as scholars like Ryle do. Along these lines, I side with Chappell, who writes that "the long divisions with which the *Sophist* and the *Statesman* open can seem both tedious and self-parodic to us. They do not seem so to Plato; he believes that, in a familiar phrase, it is the task of the philosopher "to divide nature at the joints (*Phdr.* 265d–266a). […] In doing so – if we do it correctly – we are recovering the structure of reality."[18] This book intends to show that many aspects turn the "pages of pedantic hair-splitting"[19] into a much more appealing dialectical tool. The first aspect to appreciate about this dialectical tool is its pedagogical function.

Both dialogues constitute, in my view, a view for which my analysis as a whole constitutes a defense, pedagogical devices. As such, they intertwine theory and practice. This is the reason why I refrain from a running commentary on each step of Division and Collection undertaken in the dialogues, and instead focus on the interweaving of actual Divisions and Collections with methodological reflections. I contend that not only the *Statesman*, with its long methodological "Digressions," but also the *Sophist* contains pieces of advice that help us to understand how the method works. One aspect is immediately evident. Employing the method is difficult. It therefore comes as no surprise that one can get it wrong. What does come as a surprise is the number and proportion of mistakes the dialogues contain. I take trial and error to provide the opportunity for theo-

13 Grene (1950: 182).
14 Pellegrin (1991: 402 and 406). See also Stenzel (1931: 48).
15 Ryle (1966: 139).
16 Brown (2010: 157).
17 As, e. g., Scodel (1987) holds.
18 Chappell (2011: 344).
19 Grene (1950: 181).

retical reflections that are otherwise missing. Along the way, mistakes and *aporiai* play a pivotal role. It is to correct the previous mistakes that the myth and, later, the model of weaving are introduced in the *Statesman* (at 268d5 and at 279a7, respectively), and it is Theaetetus' state of *aporia* after the first six Divisions that enables him to see what makes the sophist so difficult to catch (*Sph.* 231b9–c2). Furthermore, resorting to models is crucial for the learning process: by means of a model (*paradeigma*) Theaetetus can start practicing (*Sph.* 218d2 ff.), and Young Socrates can make a fresh start after the previous mistake (*Stm.* 277d1 ff.). For only by getting it wrong can the young interlocutors improve, and only by reflecting on their mistakes can they (and we readers) understand how the method works.

To account for the method of Collection and Division, scholars have focused on three entangled questions. The first question concerns the *objects* that are divided and collected; the second, the exact way in which Division and Collection are performed; and the third, the *goal.* On these three questions, we are left, as I shall show in the detailed state of the art of Chapter 1, with the history of mutually exclusive answers. Specifically, the method has been confined to taking either Forms or particulars as its objects; to operating either analytically or taxonomically; and to either reaching or missing the alleged target, which either corresponds to or differs from a definition. My own answer aims to provide a clue to overcome the one-sidedness of the above-mentioned views by focusing on the role that is accorded to language and, more specifically, to names.

Whereas it is unanimously recognized that Plato conceives language as fundamental to (his) philosophy,[20] what has not been seriously attempted so far is to comprehensively analyze its specific role within Plato's Late Dialectic. Apart from the one exception of the *barbaros*-passage of the *Statesman* (*Stm.* 262c8–263a3), where the *xenos* famously connects the existence and the lack of denominations to right and wrong ways to divide human beings and numbers, names are usually said to play a peripheral role.[21] A more central role has been acknowledged by only a few scholars.[22]

20 See, e. g., Sedley (2006: 214): "Plato's worldview thus places an altogether pivotal importance on the gift of spoken language: as the basis of dialectic, it is a privileged means to philosophy, and thereby to the soul's salvation." On how fundamental language is to Plato's philosophy, see also Silverman (2002: 139). On the constitutive role of language in Plato's epistemology, see Mojsisch (1998: 22).

21 To quote the most recent statement I found in the secondary literature, naming is said to be "the only step that the Stranger ever explicitly describes as unnecessary." Muniz and Rudebusch (2018: 404).

22 Moravcsik (1973a: 169), Lane (1998: 25–26 and 31–33), Notomi (1999: 74–76), Balansard (2001: 36), Franklin (2011: 16), Henry (2011: 250–1), and Fossheim (2012: 95).

Notably, we do find a double definition of "name" in the final part of the *Sophist:* Names are defined, more generally, as "means of making known the essence with the voice" (*Sph.* 261e5), and more specifically, as the "means of making known the essence with the voice" referring not to the actions, but to those performing the actions (*Sph.* 262a6–7). Yet, these definitions usually go unnoticed, since verbs (especially the verb "to be"), rather than names, are considered of pivotal importance in the *Sophist.* Moreover, a definition and a proper discussion of what a name accomplishes are generally sought in another dialogue, namely the *Cratylus.* Within the framework of the tool-analogy, Socrates defines the name (*onoma*) as a "distinguishing tool" (*diakritikon organon*) of the essence (*Crat.* 388b13–c1). My main contention in this book can be summarized as follows: what is enunciated in the *Cratylus*, is performed in the diptych. In other words, the application of the Method of Collection and Division in the *Sophist* and *Statesman* demonstrates *in actu* that the name both is and functions as an instrument and that its principal function as such is to distinguish the essence of things. The critical function ascribed to the name is further specified through a technical comparison (*Crat.* 388b13–c1): Just as the *kerkis* (a kind of "comb") is used to differentiate the warp threads from each other, so the *onoma* is used to differentiate the *ousia* of one thing from the *ousia* of something else.[23] This function is closely connected with the other determination of the name as instrument by means of which we teach one another (*didaskalikon organon* at *Crat.* 388b13). My entire analysis shall show how seriously I take the pedagogical dimension of the application of the Method of Collection and Division in the diptych.

Remarkably, the scholars who have acknowledged the role of names have mostly limited it to Division. On its collecting function – the function which is considered complementary to the distinguishing function in the *Statesman* – nothing is explicitly said.[24] Furthermore, it is indisputable that the little attention paid to the method of Collection and Division has focused almost exclusively on Division.[25] Fortunately, scholars of more recent times have recognized this oversight, with the result that Collection is undergoing a sort of scholarly "rehabilitation."[26] This book also contributes to the growing emphasis on Collection, which is necessary to restore the balance between Collection and Division that has been missing so far.

23 The name is defined within the framework of a still puzzling tool-analogy, which I analyzed in Pavani (2022: 91–101). One of the merits of the carefully crafted analysis of Meißner's Auseindersetzung with the *Cratylus*, especially Meißner (2019: 75–340), is that it restores to this analogy its centrality.

24 See *Stm.* 282b6–7.

25 See Henry (2011: 229).

26 See, e. g., Hayase (2016), Iwata (2019), and Muniz and Rudebusch (2018).

In this sense, I take the rehabilitation of Collection to go hand in hand with the rehabilitation of the Method of Collection and Division as a whole. First of all, this implies the acknowledgment of the variety of ways in which the method of Collection and Division is carried out and discussed in the *Sophist* and *Statesman*. The explanations of the method of Collection and Division offered so far have failed precisely because they attempted to distill the various applications into a single method to be applied to all cases.[27] Far from confronting us with the same formula to solve different problems, both dialogues offer various applications of a set of strategies, which are applied in a similar fashion to solve highly different puzzles. The path leading to the statesman has to differ from the path travelled to catch the sophist. In both cases, I contend that true progress does not necessarily require the target to be finally pinned down. In other words, we do not need fully flagged definitions to consider the inquiries as successful. Far from offering us a last word on the essence of the sophist and the statesman, the dialogues teach both the young interlocutors and us readers how to distinguish between the two of them and, as I am going to argue, also how to view both, that is the sophist and the statesman, in relation to the philosopher. This result alone should suffice to earn more readers for the part of the *Sophist* in which the search for the sophist is carried out, as well as for the *Statesman*, a dialogue which has not only been particularly despised, but also remarkably disregarded.[28] Like other recent works, this book aims to reverse this trend.[29]

To conclude this introduction, I shall sketch the progress of my argument through the five chapters of this book. In Chapter 1, I address the three fundamental questions one needs to answer to characterize what has been labeled as Plato's "Late Dialectical method:" what gets divided and collected, how it gets divided and collected, and for the sake of what it gets divided and collected. In

27 According to the standard interpretation, which I refer to and discuss in §5.2 as the "one-method interpretation," there is the same Method all across the Late dialogues. See, for example, Cherniss (1962: 47 n.36) and Hackforth (1952: 134).

28 The *Statesman* has been considered to be merely ironical, parodic, and playful (see Rosen (1995: 36), Scodel (1987: 18), and Skemp (1952: 18). See also Taylor (1961: 250), who speaks of a "magnificient failure" and Ryle (1966: 285), who goes so far as to claim that the *Statesman* "does not also tackle interesting philosophical issues."

29 As White (2007: vii) and El Murr (2014: 27) observe, the *Statesman* has enjoyed a Renaissance of recent scholarship. Besides monographs such as Delcomminette (2000a), El Murr (2014), Sayre (2006), and D. White (2007), see the collections of essays edited by Havlicek, Jirsa, and Thein, by Sallis, and by Robinson and Bossi as well as by Dimas, Lane, and Meyer (in 2013, 2017, 2018, and 2021, respectively). They can be rightly seen as sequels to the seminal collection of contributions on the *Statesman* edited by Rowe in 1995, which had the merit of reopening the debate on a dialogue which, as Rowe explains in the Preface, had not received the attention it deserves. By contrast, it is hard to keep track of all commentaries on Plato's *Sophist*, the most recent of which is, to my knowledge, Zaks (2023).

surveying the interpretations put forward so far, I attempt to show that all answers prove to be flawed. In my view, the flaw lies in their principle of mutual exclusivity. I conclude Chapter 1 with a brief sketch of the premises of my own answer. In Chapter 2, I defend the need to limit my investigation to the *Sophist-Statesman*, which can rightly be considered a diptych. The bond that links the two dialogues is at once dramatic, thematic, and methodological, as I show by also taking the *Theaetetus* and the *Parmenides* into account. I argue that this is a necessary move in order to make sense of the many peculiarities of the diptych, not least Socrates' eclipse in favor of an unnamed *xenos* from Elea. Chapters 3 and 4 deal with the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*, respectively. After a discussion of the complex structure and the main subject (*skopos*) of each dialogue, each chapter develops a textual analysis in its own terms, whereas a comparative assessment of the employment of the methods of Collection and Division and the method of *paradeigmata* in both dialogues is deferred to Chapter 5. Chapters 3 and 4 contend that the diptych presents us with what Lane called the "Janus-faced account of names."[30] Names play a pivotal role in the inquiries conducted through Collection and Division, but also prove to constantly mislead the interlocutors. The close textual analysis in Chapters 3 and 4 demonstrates the variety of methods employed in the inquiry. This issue is addressed in Chapter 5, together with a comprehensive discussion of the role of names in the method of Collection and Division.

Names – this is the thesis I defend throughout this book – both help and hinder the development of the inquiry. It is the reflection on the name "sophist" that makes sense of Theaetetus' progress, whereas it is by digging into mistaken and correct ways of naming and dividing reality that Young Socrates can detect and correct a major mistake in the search for the statesman. Names fulfill different dialectical functions. Names serve to bring many items under one head, thus proving how crucial Collection is. For it is by searching for the fitting name that Division advances, thus advancing the whole inquiry. Furthermore, the way in which the interlocutors name what they are doing brings to light the underlying conception of the method that Plato employs to distinguish the sophist, the statesman, and the philosopher.

Finally, the consideration of both dialogues together leads us readers to the question regarding the last term Socrates asked for: after the sophist and the statesman, how can the true philosopher be marked off? As is well known, the third term was only heralded but never made into an object of investigation in an eponymous dialogue.[31] It is by prompting us to dwell on this question, as to

30 Lane (1998: 32).

31 It has been argued that Plato intended to write a dialogue entitled *Philosopher* in which he would have defined the philosopher, but then abandoned this project for reasons on which scholars strongly disagree. It has also been argued that Plato *never* intended to write such a

how to distinguish the philosopher, that Plato wants to train us in the most philosophical task of all.[32] Finding out what distinguishes the philosopher is at one with asking what philosophy itself is. Asking this very question, we are already doing philosophy, or what Plato called Dialectic. There seems to be no better question for us to deal with, if we want to become "more dialectical about everything" (*Stm*. 285d5–6).

dialogue. This position has also been defended in different ways. Some scholars try to identify the *Philosopher* with various existing dialogues, whereas others identify the philosopher with what Plato says in various dialogues. Among the dialogues that allegedly portray the philosopher, scholars tend to privilege the *Sophist*, where the main speaker in the search for the sophist claims to have stumbled upon the philosopher instead (*Sph*. 253c6 ff.). More on this issue in footnote 125.

32 See Monserrat Molas – Sandoval Villarroel (2013: 33).

Chapter 1. Plato's Late Dialectical Method

1.1 Platonic Dialectic and the Late Dialectical Method

The Late *Dialectical* Method

Plato's "method of argument which aims at the discovery of the real nature of things"[33] ranges from the Socratic cross-examination, to the highest science that distinguishes the Philosopher-Kings, to the "formal" method of inquiry which is employed in the Late dialogues. They are all referred to by a term Plato himself coined and institutionalized, namely "Dialectic."[34] Notoriously, Robinson maintained that:

> the word "dialectic" has a strong tendency in Plato to mean "the "ideal method, whatever that may be." In so far as it was merely an honorific title, Plato applied it at every stage of his life to whatever seemed to him at the moment the most hopeful procedure. […] This usage, combined with the fact that Plato did at one time considerably change his conception of the best method, has the result that the meaning of the word "dialectic" undergoes a substantial alteration in the course of the dialogues.[35]

As Robinson acknowledges, the great difficulty that each study on Platonic Dialectic has to cope with is the fact that, although the terminology remains fixed, the scope of this term's meaning changes. At any time, Plato calls his preferred philosophical method to answer the *ti-esti* question "Dialectic."

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33 Nehamas (1990: 11).

34 As Sedley (2003: 69) rightly remarks, the term Dialectic was first brought into currency by Plato himself. Already Diogenes Laertius (III. 24) regarded the word *dialektikê* as Plato's coinage. This is confirmed by the philological study conducted by Müri (1944: 152). The adjective *dialektikê* (whose suffix *-ikê* suggests already that we are dealing with a *technê*, as Roochnick (2013: 133) notes) is derived from *dialegesthai*, "to converse," "to discuss." Much has been written on what Kahn calls the "emergence of dialectic" (Kahn (1996: 292), i. e., on the fact that Dialectic has its beginning in and rests fundamentally on the questions and answers paradigmatically exemplified by Socratic conversations. See Müri (1944: 160) and Sichirollo (1966: 68).

35 Robinson (1953: 70). Against Robinson, Kahn (1996: 300) has argued that there is greater consistency that might initially appear; greater continuity is stressed by Benson (2006: 85) as well.

The *Late* Dialectical Method

To map different conceptions of Dialectic, which would undergo changes and development, scholars tend to keep to the standard three-fold chronological distinction:[36] (i) In the so called aporetic dialogues, Dialectic is identified with the practice of the Socratic *elenchus*;[37] (ii) in the "middle period," it is identified with the knowledge (*epistêmê*) of Forms;[38] and (iii) in the late works, Dialectic is mostly identified with the method of Collection (*synagôgê*) and Division (*dihairesis*).[39] Because Dialectic transforms in order to adapt to the changing needs of Plato's inquiry, some scholars speak of a "metamorphosis" within Plato's Dialectic.[40] Since this interpretation falls short of identifying the thread running through the three "stages," I prefer to work with a model of "stratification."[41] I understand this model in two ways.

On the one hand, the late Dialectic still contains, to some extent, the crucial components of other "stages" of Dialectic: Just to mention the most evident one, the method is "still" embedded in a dialogue, whose primary aim is to provide a satisfying answer to the *ti-esti* question. Not only the persistence of the dialogical framework, but also the employment of "earlier" procedures, such as the *elenchus*, testify to the continuity with the previous "forms" of Dialectic which

36 I refer to "early," "middle," and "late" dialogues for the sake of familiarity only. My argument does not build on a thoroughly developmental interpretation of Plato's works. For an approach "liberated from the narrow constraints of developmentlism," see Larsen, Haraldsen, and Vlasits (2022).

37 In the early dialogues, Socrates tests the interlocutor's answer to his *ti-esti* question through the *elenchus*, usually rendered as "refutation," "test," or "cross-examination." For a detailed discussion of the Socratic elenchus, see §3.1.3.

38 See the fixed terminology which in *Rep.* 511d-534e refers to the highest science: *hê tou dialegesthai dynamis* (511b4), *hê tou dialegesthai epistêmê* (511c5), *dialektikê poreia* (532b), *hê dialektikê methodos* (533c), and *hê dialektikê* (534e3). The scholarly literature concerning this crucial passage of the *Republic* is too extensive to be treated here. On the characterization of Dialectic after and beyond its propaedeutic *mathêmata*, see at least Vegetti (200: 927–931) and Mittelstrass (2001: 186–190). On the relationship between *dianoia* and *noêsis,* see Bickmann (1996).

39 On the paucity of research on the method of Collection and Division, see Henry (2011: 229 n. 1). A necessary addition would be the method of hypothesis in the second part of the *Parmenides.*

40 For Dixsaut (2001: 7–12), Plato's Dialectic undergoes a "metamorphosis."

41 The only notable exception is Delcomminette, who offers a unifying definition of dialectic which is valid for all "figures": "la dialectique est une science (la science supreme), qui est en même temps la vertu, et qui consiste en l'entretien par questions et réponses suscité par une interrogation de la forme "qu'est-ce que?" et se basant sur l'hypothèse des Ideés, c'est-à-die posant que la réponse à cette question doit être la definition de ce que la chose interrogée est en soi, ou encore de son essence;" Delcomminette (2000b: 42).

Plato developed.[42] In the same dialogue, different conceptions of Dialectic can coexist. It is precisely their coexistence that shows that the late Dialectic cannot be reduced to the method of Collection and Division. The method of Collection and Division is indeed not exhaustive of Dialectic, since it is not self-sufficient for dialectical inquiry.[43] The late Dialectic extends further than the mere application of the method of Collection and Division, although this procedure is undeniably one of its distinguishing features.

On the other hand, it is important to acknowledge that the early and middle dialogues already contain *in nuce* what will be only later labelled as "collection" and "division."[44] An embryonic form of the method of Collection can already be found in the *Euthyphro*, the *Meno*, the *Gorgias*, and the *Theaetetus*;[45] whereas an early version of the method of Division is already to be found in the *Gorgias*.[46] The *Republic* also hints at both procedures.[47] The above-mentioned passages speak, in my view, decisively against the traditional reading that the *Phaedrus* signals a fundamental shift in Plato's conception of Dialectic.[48] Going further back, one could wonder whether Plato himself invented the Method of

42 The *xenos*, who is (ironically?) introduced as an "elenctic god" (*Sph.* 216a6), considers the *elenchus* the greatest and principal form of purification (*Sph.* 230d6–8). More on this issue in §2.2.1. A further crucial reference to the *elenchus* is contained in the highly debated sixth characterization of sophistry, i. e., the "sophistry of noble art," which some interpreters take to depict Socrates' own philosophical practice. More on this issue in §3.1.3.

43 *Pace* Ryle (1939), Collection and Division are not exhaustive of the dialectical process. Henry (2011: 242) and Trevaskis (1967: 119) both argue that Plato does not equate the method of Collection and Division with Dialectic.

44 *Pace* Pellegrin (1991: 393–7), who claims that acknowledging embryonic forms of the method of Collection and Division is a way of reducing its theoretical importance, which consists in marking a clear discontinuity in Plato's thought.

45 *Euth.* 5d8–e2 and 6d-e, *Men.* 71e1–72a5, 72a–74b (See Santa Cruz (1990: 159) and 81c–d (See Sayre (2016: 84), *Gorg.* 464b–d, and *Tht.* 146c7–d3. For more on *Tht.* 146cff., see §2.1.

46 *Gorg.* 450c7–e2 (see the close affinity of this division of arts requiring or avoiding speech with *Stm.* 258d4-e5) and 464b–466a (see the close affinity of the fourfold division of the care of the soul and the care of the body with *Sph.* 226e-229a). *Pace* Santa Cruz (1990: 159), who holds that the early and middle dialogue display only a unifying, but not a differentiating procedure; the *Gorgias* contains *in nuce* both procedures, as Delcomminette (2000b: 49) rightly remarks.

47 Collection seems to be alluded to at 531d1–2 and 537c7, and Division at 532b–535a and 454a6. On this parallel, see the cautious remarks of Hackforth (1952: 135 n. 1) as well as Kahn (1996: 298), Sayre (2016: 82), and Larsen, Haraldsen, and Vlasits (2022: 8).

48 According to the standard view exemplified by Hackforth (1952: 134), the passage *Phdr.* 265c5–266c1 represents "Plato's first announcement of a new discovery to which he attaches the highest importance." For a detailed discussion of this view, see Pavani (2023: 197–201).