

# The Ontology of Knowledge and Belief in Republic V

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## Introduction

Knowledge, says Plato in *Republic V*, is ‘a power, the strongest of them all’ (477d9), comparing it to the other mental powers, which ‘enable us to do whatever we are capable of doing’, e.g. opinion, sight, hearing, etc. (c1-3) Plato makes the astonishing claim that knowledge is a different power from belief (b5-6), in the way, for example, that sight is different from hearing. I will argue that this is a fundamentally different conception of knowledge and belief, unique in the history of philosophy, showing them to have a high level of independence from each other.

The power-analysis of knowledge is different from the positions Plato explores in his earlier and later works. Specifically, it is a one-off experiment that is sharply in contrast with the positions he considers in the *Meno* and in the *Theaetetus*. These positions are attempts to analyse knowledge in terms of true belief plus an external condition that distinguishes it from mere true belief. But on the *Republic V* account, knowledge is not a species of belief, any more than sight is a species of hearing. By contrast, the *Republic V* position on knowledge can be thought of as compatible with the *Meno/Phaedo* account of learning as recollecting our knowledge of the Forms. Whether we think of such knowledge of the Forms as innate knowledge, or as a special apprehension the soul has of the Forms before

birth, this conception does not invite the analysis of knowledge into true belief with an account.<sup>1</sup>

I will further show how knowledge of the Forms, according to Plato in *Republic V*, enriches our understanding in the realm of belief. By contrast, even if belief, on the recollection account, triggers the occurrence of pre-existing knowledge, belief does not enrich our knowledge.

Treating knowledge and belief as distinct powers of the mind which operate differently from, and independently of one another did not take root in philosophy after Plato, which may be because of the enormous impact of the *Theaetetus* on later epistemology. It may also be that philosophers associated the power-analysis of knowledge to knowledge of the Forms, so if it is to be found anywhere in the generations of philosophers that followed, it would be limited within the circles of influence of Platonic metaphysics, which is much narrower than the impact of Plato's later epistemology. Furthermore, although the epistemological position is succinctly delineated in Book V of the *Republic*, it is overshadowed by the impact that this argument had on subsequent generations of philosophers as an argument for ontology. Philosophers who visited the Book V knowledge-belief argument became preoccupied with the doctrine of the degrees of reality, which was the focus of attention even within the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Platonic exegesis about the argument.

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<sup>1</sup> I will not explore here the relation of the *Republic V* account of knowledge and the accounts of the later books of the *Republic*. Allan Silverman, *The Dialectic of Essence*, Princeton University Press, 2002, pp. 65-78, finds associations here between the present account and those of the three similes, as well as the account of the argument from perception of *Republic VII*. I will not discuss the relation of these accounts here.

Plato did not explore the implications of knowledge's ontological and functional independence from belief in his *Republic V* account. Nor has subsequent epistemology explored the explanatory possibilities afforded by the status of knowledge as an independent mental capacity from belief. It is only the developments in recent epistemology that have resulted from Williamson's theory of the primitiveness and priority of knowledge<sup>2</sup> that have sharpened our sensitivity to the explanatory potential of not analysing knowledge in terms of belief. My hope is that highlighting and examining this strand of Plato's thought in *Republic V* will generate a broader search for the lineage of the position in Plato's works and in the works of his followers.

What Plato experiments here on is what follows if belief is a different power than knowledge, with different objects and different operation from knowledge. Belief in the present context is like a multiply fractured mirror, reflecting inadequately in a fragmented way what reality is like, so that e.g. instead of seeing the desk with books on it, we see bits of brown, blue and white surfaces. Knowledge has a different access to reality than belief does, such that what is accessed by knowledge is different from what belief can access. This may seem contrary to common sense, but the idea behind it is not – what one unearths depends of her excavation method. The content of a scientist's knowledge that friction produces heat is very different from the belief content of an uneducated person that friction produces heat. Plato's

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<sup>2</sup> Williamson, T., *Knowledge and its Limits*, OUP, 2000.

power-analysis of knowledge is a first attempt to explain this difference.

Knowledge reaches the roots of the phenomena around us, and the roots in their turn play a role in the re-individuation and the re-identification of the phenomena.

In the present account, Plato says that knowledge and belief operate differently, the first infallibly and second fallibly. This has invariably been taken to mean that knowledge is always true while belief is sometimes true and sometimes false. But this is not what Plato tells us in this argument. On the reading I propose here, all knowledge is true, while *every* belief is *both true and false*. This is the sense in which belief is fallible. This aspect of Plato's theory remained latent in the scholarly tradition because we adopted the 'justified true belief' conception of knowledge, from which it immediately followed that true belief is the common denominator between knowledge and belief. On such an understanding, knowledge and true belief share the same content, which requires some beliefs to be only true, not true and false. This became axiomatic in our conception of belief for two and a half millennia. Plato's conception of belief in *Republic V* is antithetical to it; belief falls short of capturing the content of knowledge, and in the content it does capture it always falls short of capturing unadulterated truth. Belief is fallible in that every belief captures only impure truths.

In this paper I will be concerned with two tasks. The one is to examine the problem of the ontological status of the objects of knowledge, belief, and ignorance, as described in the argument of *Republic V*. This has been a source of intense

controversy in the literature because of demands that appear to make inconsistent claims about the objects of the cognitive powers. I argue that we can make sense of the recalcitrant passages that have defied a consistent reading under the existential, the veridical, and the predicative interpretations of the argument. My second task is to delineate with as much exactitude as is afforded by Plato's descriptions the ontological status of, and relations between knowledge and belief. This becomes more challenging because of the metaphorical descriptions Plato resorts to frequently in this passage, which resist precision. Nevertheless, I will try to show that there is enough philosophical content in this argument for an outline of an account of knowledge and belief.

### **The Consequences of Lacking Knowledge**

The Knowledge-Belief Argument of *Republic V* begins with Plato's concern to distinguish the cognitive state of the philosopher from that of a person of culture who is confined to experiential stimulation alone. The significance of this distinction is to describe the level of knowledge and understanding that will be reached by the guardian who is successfully educated and trained to rule the city. In the process, Plato brings together his epistemology and his ontology, correlating epistemic states to ontological domains. The preliminary discussion of the argument lays the foundation for the distinctions that follow and is telling for the reading of the argument I am putting forward here.

Plato describes the cognitive state of the cultural connoisseur, whom he calls a sight lover, as that of 'living in a dream'. He says three things about her. The first two describe the ability and the cognitive achievement of the sight lover, as:

someone who believes in beautiful things, but doesn't believe in the beautiful itself and isn't able to follow anyone who could lead him to the knowledge of it? Don't you think he is living in a dream rather than a wakened state?  
(476c2-4)

The sight lover does not have a conception of the Form of Beauty, but only of the beautiful things around her. Secondly, the sight lover is not capable of having even a conception of the Form of Beauty – presumably because of her lack of appropriate training and education. She does not have the capacity to abstract away from the instances of Beauty and conceive of Beauty itself. Plato describes this state as living in a dream. This description is rather surprising, because one would not have thought that we would describe someone's state as dreamlike just because they are unaware of some portion of reality or lacking some knowledge. This would hardly exclude anybody from being in a dreamlike state. The surprise is reinforced by the continuation of the characterisation which offers a rough explanation of dreaming:

Isn't this dreaming: whether asleep or awake, to think that a likeness is not a likeness but rather the thing itself that it is like?  
I certainly think that someone who does that is dreaming. (476c4-7)

This conception of dreaming, namely taking what is not the case to be the case – in this instance by mistaking one thing for another – it is not what Plato called dreaming in the previous sentence (476c2-4, quoted above) which the current sentence purports to explain. The second case of dreaming is not deemed dreaming because one lacks some knowledge, as was the case in the first example; it is

deemed dreaming because of making a mistake – taking an instance of Beauty for the Form of Beauty. This latter state contains confusion and error. Yet, in the previous example it was the lack of a concept and the inability to acquire it that had been described as an instance of dreaming, which is not a confusion or an error. How then can Plato describe dreaming in such incompatible terms within the same context?

To understand the relevance of the two explanations of dreaming to each other we need to look at the consequence of the incapacity of the sight lover to acquire the conception of the Form of Beauty. The implication must be that it is not an innocent absence of knowledge. The lack of the concept of the Form of Beauty has an impact on her conception of the beautiful things around her: the sight lover does not have the capacity to see these beautiful items *as* instances of the Form of Beauty. It is a short step then to the type of mistake that the sight lover commits in the second example, namely mistaking the instances of Beauty for Beauty itself. If she cannot see the instances of Beauty for the *instances* they are, the implication must be, she comes to think of them as all the beauty there is, and so, as Beauty itself. Hence, and this is what is of significance for understanding the state of dreaming, lacking the concept and knowledge of the Form of Beauty leads to a misconception about the instances of Beauty. One's grasp of the many beautiful things is altered when one conceives of them as instances of a Form. So the sight lovers, not only lack the cognitive capacity of knowledge, but due to this lack their other cognitive function, belief, operates deficiently. The many instances are

misidentified and miscomprehended, and this is the best that the sight lover can do.

Plato says that, by contrast:

someone who ... believes in the beautiful itself, can see both it and the things that participate in it and doesn't believe that the participants are it or that it itself is the participants. (476c9-d4)

In this case, one's knowledge informs one's system of beliefs. The result is a re-identification of their contents.

### **The Objects of Knowledge, Belief, and Ignorance**

The main part of Knowledge-Belief Argument is the sub-argument for the distinctness of the cognitive powers from each other, and the correlation of each to its objects. Plato gives as a principle for the identity of powers two conditions: what the objects of a power are, and what the operation of the power on its objects is (477c9-d).

The object of knowledge is that which completely is (477a3, 7). The object of belief that which is and is not, which participates in being and in not being (478d6, e1-2, 479c7, d4-5). Finally the object of ignorance is what in no way is (477a3-4, 7). Before discussing the ontology of the objects of the cognitive powers, and the nature of each of these powers, I will make a brief comment about ignorance.

Plato does not discuss or describe ignorance in the detail that he devotes to knowledge and opinion. Because of this, most commentators assume that he drops ignorance soon after introducing it, and in consequence they do not discuss in any

detail the ontological status of the object of ignorance, namely what in no way is. It is true that Plato may have introduced ignorance for symmetry, to use it towards the demarcation of the objects of belief as between being and non-being, rather than because he deems it a cognitive power in its own right. Nevertheless, he reckons it such, as is clear from his language when he talks of the objects that knowledge and ignorance are set over (478c3-4). But the legitimacy of countenancing ignorance as a power is a different matter from the significance of the objects of ignorance for ontology presented in this argument, to which we shall come to presently.

Plato says the following for the identity conditions of a power:

In the case of a power, I use only what it is set over and what it does, and by reference to these I call each the power it is: What is set over the same things and does the same I call the same power; what is set over something different and does something different I call a different one (477c9-d5).

It follows that different powers have different objects. But there is a textual ambiguity here in the expression ‘something different’. Are different things distinct, in the way that colours are from sounds, or can they overlap while still being different, like fours year olds and boys? The difference between the two is important because if there is an overlap between the objects of knowledge and the objects of belief, then there could be items we can believe or know, such as true beliefs. This is the reading of the passage favoured by Gail Fine.<sup>3</sup> Despite the fact that the text never becomes explicit about this, I find that there are powerful considerations in favour of the non-overlap of the objects of knowledge and the objects of belief, to which we shall come in what follows.

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<sup>3</sup> Fine, G. *On Ideas*, OUP, 1995, pp. 58-59, 91-95, 130.

The question of the objects of the three cognitive powers in the present argument has attracted much attention in the literature. The key question is the way in which one is to understand the Greek expressions for 'being' and 'not being' (*on*, being; *esti*, is; *me on*, not being; and *ouk esti*, is not). Three main interpretations have been discussed in the literature, the existential, the veridical, and the predicative one. According to the *existential* interpretation, 'is' and 'is not' are to be understood as claiming that something exists, does not exist, while 'being' and 'not being' are to be understood as the existent and the non-existent. Such a reading is thought to commit Plato to varying degrees of existence, with the Forms being at the highest level, the many things in the perceptible world being at the intermediate level – existing to a lesser degree – with the scale ending at the non-existent. According to the *veridical* interpretation, the four expressions above would correspondingly be understood as asserting that something is true, not true, and describing the true and the non-true. Both interpretations face difficulties with the text of the argument in *Republic V*, which have been described in detail and criticised by Julia Annas, who has offered convincing reasons why they should not be upheld.<sup>4</sup>

The third interpretation of the knowledge-belief argument is the predicative one, according to which 'is' and 'is not' are understood as incomplete occurrences of predications of the form 'is *f*' and 'is not *f*', where *f* stands for such terms as 'good',

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<sup>4</sup> Annas, J., *An Introduction to Plato's Republic*, OUP, 1981, pp. 190-216.

'beautiful', etc. 'Being' and 'not being' are to be understood as referring to that which is *f* in every sense, and that which is in no way *f*. Annas argues for this interpretation and offers a reading of the knowledge-belief argument by understanding the terms in question in the predicative sense.<sup>5</sup>

Although certain sections of the knowledge-belief argument are rendered readily intelligible on the predicative reading, I believe that we run into serious difficulties if we try to understand the whole argument along these lines. The major difficulty that faces an overall predicative interpretation is that it results in assigning the very same entities as objects of knowledge and ignorance. As we have seen, Plato holds that two capacities that are different exercise different powers and have different objects. He has further argued that knowledge and ignorance are different, and hence, have different objects (477e9-478a5). The object of knowledge is that which fully is, while that of ignorance that which in no way is.

To see that on the predicative interpretation knowledge is assigned the same objects as ignorance, we should look at Annas' account of knowledge and ignorance in some detail.

She says:

Knowledge, then is of what really is whatever it is. Knowledge without qualification is of what is what it is without qualification. ... Ignorance, the opposed state, is of what is not in any way -- that is, completely lacks the feature ascribed to it. ... To be ignorant of something is to miss the mark completely. (p. 201)

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 198-203.

So in knowledge, the characteristic we ascribe to  $x$  is possessed by  $x$  in every way. Thus, the form of Beauty is beautiful in every sense of the term, under any circumstances, from all perspectives. On the other hand, in ignorance, the characteristic we ascribe to  $x$  is not possessed by  $x$  in any way. If it is possessed in some way, then  $x$  will be an object of belief, since "belief involves having something right about its object". (p. 201) Inevitably, then, the objects of ignorance must be such as to be capable of not possessing a characteristic in any sense, under any circumstances, from any perspective. Annas does not offer any examples of objects of ignorance, but it follows that the Forms are the only objects qualified for it, since they do not possess the opposites in any way; saying that the Form of Beauty is ugly completely misses the mark. Annas's criterion for the objects of ignorance is explicit about this: "Something is the object of my ignorance if it totally lacks the quality I predicate of it, just as it is the object of my knowledge if it has that quality in a way excluding error about it" (p. 201). But the objects of knowledge need to be different from the objects of ignorance, since the knowledge-belief argument clearly requires this (477a3-5).

My reading of the ontology of the objects of the three powers combines the existential and the predicative interpretations. The easiest way to describe it is to compare the objects of each power to sunlight. Sunlight is composed of rays of different bands of wavelength. When all the bands are present, we have what we call natural sunlight. If some bands are filtered away the remaining light acquires different colorations. If all the bands are filtered away, nothing remains. What is

interesting about the sunlight paradigm is, on the one hand, that it is possible for all the bands of wavelength to be compresent or to be separated. This corresponds, for example, to all the senses of beauty being compresent in the form of Beauty, which the argument requires of the object of knowledge by contrast to the objects of belief. On the other hand, in the sunlight paradigm ontological differences are reflected in qualitative differences, so that filtering away bands of rays diminishes ontologically the constitution of the sunlight, but at the same time it changes the colour of the light. Let us now consider beauty. About the object of knowledge, Plato says that it is what is completely, while for the object of belief he says that it is what participates in both being and not being (477a3, 479a1-c5). Taken existentially, without adopting the degrees of existence reading of it, one can think of them as follows: the object of knowledge has a full constitution, like the natural sunlight, while the object of belief has a depleted constitution, like e.g. blue light. Both of them are, but the object of belief is missing ontological constituents which are present in the object of knowledge. And this makes it qualitatively different from the object of knowledge. But what constituents could these be that somehow thin-out the object of belief by their absence?

These constituents that differentiate the object of belief from the object of knowledge could not be any chance features that the object of belief does not happen to possess. Every entity fails to possess features possessed by other entities, and will always do so since many features are mutually incompatible. But we have an indication from Plato what the relevant features are. In the sub-argument about

the object of belief, Plato first tells us that the object of belief *is* and *is not* (478d5-e10), and it ‘participates in both being and not being and cannot correctly be called purely one or the other’ (478e1-3). He then proceeds to show that the many things around us are and are not *what we take them to be* (478e7-479c5), and concludes that the many are indeed the objects of belief, in between being and non being (479c6-d10). So the key aspect of this ontology that concerns us here is the sense in which the many are and are not.

Plato tells us the following:

Of all the many beautiful things, is there one that will not also appear ugly? Or is there one of all those just things that will not also appear unjust? Or one of those impious things that will not also appear impious?

There isn’t one, for it is necessary that they appear to be beautiful in a way and also to be ugly in a way, and the same with the other things you asked about. (479a5-8)

We should not assume that the use of the verb ‘appear’ indicates that what is and is not does not concern the constitution of each thing but only its appearance.

Because immediately after this passage Plato concludes in purely ontological terminology:

So, with the many bigs and smalls and lights and heavies, *is* any one of them, any more the thing someone says it is than its opposite?

No, each of them always *participates* in both opposites.

*Is* any one of the manys what someone says it is, then, any more than it *is* not what he says it is? [my emphasis] (479b6-10)

So, the many beautiful things are beautiful and ugly, and the many just things are just and unjust. This is what it is for them to be and not to be, and this is what places them in between being and non being:

can you find a more appropriate place to put them than intermediate between being and not being?  
they are rolling around as intermediates between what is not and what purely is. (479c6-d5)

So a thing that is beautiful is also not beautiful because it is ugly as well. What the thing is missing is some features of beauty, and so in these respects it is ugly. By contrast, the Form of Beauty is not missing any of that. It is beautiful in every respect and has no trace of ugliness within it. So, from this point of view, the Form of Beauty has all the features or ways of being beautiful, while any one of the many beautifuls lacks several of these features. Extrapolating on the same line of thinking, starting from the Form of Beauty and taking away all the features of being beautiful that constitute the ways that the Form of Beauty is beautiful, it makes sense to assume that one is left with nothing. I believe this is the reasoning that that Plato follows in this passage: a Form  $F$  consists of all the features of being  $f$ , in every sense and respect of  $f$ -ness; the  $f$  things in the world possess  $f$ -ness in some respects of  $f$ -ness, but not in every respect; they therefore lack, in their constitution, some of the features that make up the Form  $F$ , which is why they are also *not*  $f$ ; finally, if all the features of being  $f$  that constitute the Form of  $F$  are lacking, then there is total absence of  $F$ -ness.

Is there a confusion here between non- $f$ -ness and nothingness? No; that such a confusion is avoided can be seen if we think of the above along the following lines: Consider a world in which *what there is* are the Forms. Assume that there are Forms only for positive characterisations – however we demarcate them; for example, there is a Form of Beauty, of Justice, of Heat, but not of Ugliness,

Injustice, Cold, etc. Finally, the things in that world are composed of partakings in the Forms, only that each thing, by partaking in a Form  $F$ , acquires only some features of the features of the Form, and in that sense they become  $f$  but also not- $f$ , because they lack some of the features of  $f$ -ness. So, each thing could be thought of as being composed of the *partial presence* of each of several Forms in it. Thus, there are entities, namely the Forms, each of which consists in the full presence of what there is; and there are the things which are composed of the partial presence of what there is – the many things, each of which is made up of aspects of each Form. Thinking of the world in these terms, one can describe the two realms as the full presence, and the partial presence of the characters that Forms embody. Taking a further step in the same direction, from full presence to partial presence of a Form, and from partial presence to eventual absence, by depletion of its constitution if none of the features that compose each Form are present. This latter would be the third realm, of complete non-being.

Such a world makes sense of the claims that Plato is putting forward in the Knowledge-Belief Argument. It shows that Plato is not confused about being non- $f$  and non-being in the existential sense. He is putting forward a conception of the world that may be captured in terms of the presence, the partial presence, and the absence of characters. There are two rules in that world. First, there are no opposite characters; second, partial presence of a character is possible only when several characters combine together. The first rule tells us that given any character, there is no character opposite to it. Rather, to be non- $f$  is to lack some of the

features of character  $F$ ; but this can be the case only when character  $F$  is partially present, and hence only when the character is present in combination with other characters. Therefore, importantly, only combinations – i.e. the many things – can be non- $f$ . So in this world, there is no character of Ugliness, and only the many can be ugly, because of the partial presence of Beauty in them. Finally, although partial absence of a character results in the thing being non- $f$ , stripping away all the features of a character  $F$  from  $F$  results in nothingness, not the opposite character – non- $F$ -ness. So there are three ontological realms: that of the full presence of Forms; that of the partial presence of Forms; and that of the absence of Forms. Every Form  $F$  is  $f$  in every way of being  $f$ ; while the many things are composed of the partial presence of Forms, and are  $f$  in some respects, for each partially present Form  $F$ , but they are also not- $f$  in other respects.

### **The Fallibility of Belief**

We have so far explained the challenging combination of Plato's claims that the many are each beautiful and ugly, and that *because of this* they lie in between complete being and nothingness. This enables us to now understand the *fallibility* of belief. The many are the objects of belief; knowledge and belief operate differently on their objects:

A moment ago you agreed that knowledge and opinion aren't the same.

How could a person with any understanding think that a fallible power is the same as an infallible one? (477e4-7)

Why is belief fallible? How does it go wrong? It is the nature of the objects that will show us this. Since it has been established that no one ‘of the manys [is] what someone says it is any more than it is not what he says it is’ (479d9-10), it follows that in *every predication* the speaker *gets something wrong*. Every characterisation we make of the many objects, say that the house is beautiful, is partly wrong, because there are always senses of the predicate term which are not true of the subject. This is the sense in which belief is fallible: every such statement about the many is partly true and partly false. *There are no true, or even false beliefs*, as such. All beliefs are partly true and partly false.

It might be thought that the fallibility of belief could be avoided by simply claiming in every predication about the many, that a thing is and is not *f*; the house is and is not beautiful. We should expect that this statement would be true, and the corresponding belief, also. But Plato anticipates this and precludes it: the many are ‘like the ambiguities ... and one cannot understand them as fixedly being or fixedly not being or as both or as neither’ (479b9-c5). Why are the many not simply *both* being and non being, e.g. being just and unjust? There are two factors that could be at play here, depending on how we understand the term ‘*pagiōs*’ in 479c4. If we follow the translator<sup>6</sup> here, and understand it as ‘fixedly’, then the answer would be that Plato seems to be making the assumption that the many are in constant flux, which would be a familiar Platonic position for the world of experience. On this reading, Plato is saying that the many are not *fixedly* being or

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<sup>6</sup> I have been using the Grube translation revised by Reeve in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John Cooper, Hackett, 1997.

fixedly not being, since nothing is fixed in one state. This reading could be extended to the case of the many being both being or not being, or neither, if we take the scope of 'fixedly' to include the remainder of the sentence. In this sense, the many would not be fixedly being and not being, nor fixedly neither, because they are in flux. This reading is reinforced by Plato's describing the many as '*rolling around* as intermediates between what is not and what purely is' (my emphasis, 479d3-5). This seems to suggest that he conceives of the many as being in constant flux with respect to the possession of a property.

Although this reading might be part of the intended meaning, it cannot be the whole explanation of the fallibility in the way of belief operates, as it derives the fallibility without any reference to the way belief does what it does, but only in terms of the ontology of its objects. But if we take '*pagiōs*' to mean what Liddell and Scott give as its meaning for this occurrence, and a second one at *Republic* 434d2, namely as meaning 'without reservations', then a second reading is possible. With this meaning, the passage reads as follows: 'one cannot understand them [the many] as being or not being, without reservations, or as both or as neither' (479c3-5). This allows for the reservations not to be stemming only from the ontological state of flux of the many, but also from the way that belief operates.

What suggests this second consideration is the following statement:

Is any one of the manys what someone says it is, then, any more than it is not what he says it is?

No, they are like the ambiguities one is entertained with at dinner parties ... (479b9-11)

Here Plato is reflecting on the way a statement relates to the thing it is about: what someone says about something, and how what he says relates to the way the thing is. He seems to have the intuition that language cannot capture with precision what is the case in the world of the many. Language cannot carve out a predicate so as to capture just what is true about something in the world and exclude what is not true.

We cannot describe precisely what is beautiful about Nefertiti and what is not.

Language is not complex enough, and probably our cognitive capacities are not discriminating enough either to be up to the task. It follows that the way that our statements relate to the world of the many is by making broad contact with it, attributing characterisations in brush strokes which do not match precisely what is the case, but spreading over whole the whole of each of the many, indiscriminately applying to truth makers and falsity makers within it.

But the poor fit between language and the world of the many is not a result of the inadequate design of language. Language is well designed, but for the world of the Forms, not the world of the many. The poor fit is between the world of the Forms and the world of the many, because the Forms are fully present in the one and only partially present in the other. Language describes each Form as just, beautiful, pious, etc., respectively, without any reservations about applicable senses of the terms. In consequence, language cannot serve to describe the many, since the Forms are only partially present in that world and language does not possess appropriately modified terms.

## Conclusion

Plato distinguishes between knowledge and belief as different powers that operate in different ways on their objects. He does not develop the theory enough to show how each power operates, and hence does not explain how their operation makes the one infallible and the other fallible. What is significant about the treatment of knowledge and belief in *Republic V* is the intuitions about these concepts that Plato reveals in it. The first is that knowledge and belief are *powers*. This is very different from the craft analogy of the earlier dialogues for moral knowledge, which I will not discuss in the present paper. The second intuition is that they are *different* powers, and the one can operate *independently* of the other. Hence neither is analysable through the other. The third intuition is that knowledge and belief have *different objects*, as sight and hearing do. This is the most alien element of the theory to our own conception of the objects of knowledge and belief. One can begin to find it acceptable only if one thinks of the object of knowledge as being individuated by the process through which knowledge reaches it. This is not to suggest that knowledge creates the world, but that different mining methods extract different materials, even if the difference is in the degree of purity. Finally, knowledge can affect belief by placing the objects of belief in a different ontological perspective.