LOGICAL QUANTIFICATION AND PLATO'S THEORY OF FORMS

[QUANTIFICAÇÃO LÓGICA E A TEORIA DAS FORMAS DE PLATÃO]

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ABSTRACT: Contemporary philosophers find Plato's discussion in the Sophist about the problem of negation and falsity as interesting and difficult. It is interesting in the sense that in this dialogue, and others that are considered by Plato scholars to belong to the late period dialogues, we seem to find a Plato who makes less use of the theory of Forms (a distinguishing feature of the middle period dialogues). It is difficult in the sense that it invites us to use the notational convention of modern symbolic logic to provide a coherent picture of Plato's view. Charlton prefers a Platonizing Interpretation on the issue and quantifies over Forms (and not over concrete objects). Given this context, the paper inquires whether logical quantification is the correct (or at the very least, the best) route to pursue in order to better understand the Forms. It will also discuss the crucial role of Plato's theory of Forms in the middle and late period dialogues in relation to knowledge and its very possibility.
KEYWORDS: being, false statements, negation, Plato, possibility of knowledge, quantification, Sophist, theory of Forms

RESUMO: Os filósofos contemporâneos afirmam que a discussão de Platão sobre o problema da negação e da falsidade, no Sofista, é, ao mesmo tempo, difícil e interessante. Interessante porque, neste diálogo, e em outros que são considerados maduros pelos platonistas, encontramos um Platão que faz menos uso da Teoria das Formas (uma forma diferente dos diálogos médios). Difícil porque, neste diálogo, Platão nos convida a usar a convenção notacional da simbolização lógica moderna a fim termos uma visão fiel da análise de Platão. Charlton prefere uma Interpretação platonizante dos problemas e qualtificadores das formas (e não de objetos materiais). Tendo por base este contexto, investigamos neste artigo se a quantificação lógica constitui uma via correta a seguir (ou, pelo menos, uma melhor), a fim de bem entendermos a Teoria das Formas. Também discutimos o papel crucial da Teoria das Formas, de Platão, nos diálogos médios e maduros em relação ao conhecimento e sua real possibilidade.
PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Platão, conhecimento possível, quantificação, Sofista, Teoria das Formas.

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I.INTRODUCTION

In the *Sophist*, Plato offers us (1) an account of *what a sophist is* and (2) a *method* through which we can arrive at (1) if we pursue a sustained philosophical inquiry. It is a well-known fact that Plato has a negative picture of the sophists. For instance, at 268c-d of the aforementioned dialogue, the interlocutors (e.g. Theaetetus, the visitor from Elea) agree that a sophist is someone involved in a certain type of *imitation* (*mimesis*) "of the contrary-speech-producing, insincere and unknowing sort, of the appearance-making kind of copy-making, the word-juggling part of production that's marked off as human and not divine" (PLATO, 1997, p. 293). It is important to note that this picture of a sophist is the product of a *method* (i.e. one which involves *collection* and *division*). While it is true that in reading the *Sophist*, we usually focus on (1) and (2), it is worth noting that in the dialogue, Plato tackles a significant number of questions that contemporary philosophers find to be both interesting and unquestionably difficult. Some of these questions concern Plato's theory of Forms and whether or not Plato still attributes to the Forms the kind of importance and ontological status that he attributes to them in what is usually referred to as the *middle* period dialogues (e.g. *Phaedo, Republic, Phaedrus*). Other interesting and difficult questions explored by contemporary philosophers in the *Sophist* concern the proper analyses of negation (i.e. *that which is not* or any of its variants) and saying something *false*[1] (an offshoot of Theaetetus and the visitor's attempt to track and pin down what a sophist is).

In the *Sophist*, Plato offers us (1) an account of *what a sophist is* and (2) a *method* through which we can arrive at (1) if we pursue a sustained philosophical inquiry. It is a well-known fact that Plato has a negative picture of the sophists. For instance, at 268c-d of the aforementioned dialogue, the interlocutors (e.g. Theaetetus, the visitor from Elea) agree that a *sophist* is someone involved in a certain type of *imitation* (*mimesis*) "of the contrary-speech-producing, insincere and unknowing sort, of the appearance-making kind of copy-making, the word-juggling part of production that's marked off as human and not divine" (PLATO, 1997, p. 293). It is important to note that this picture of a sophist is the product of a *method* (i.e. one which involves *collection* and *division*). While it is true that in reading the *Sophist*, we usually

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It is with these sets of questions that William Charlton's work, *Plato's Later Platonism* aims to shed light on. Charlton maintains that Plato is a *realist* (or a *Platonist*) although not in the sense similar to what he takes to be William Van Orman Quine's definition of *Platonism*. In the aforementioned work, Charlton offers a very meticulous analysis of *existence claims* and *false statements* and favors what he calls a *Platonizing Interpretation* (henceforth PI) of quantification (i.e. quantification over Forms and not over concrete objects).

In this paper, I will analyze Charlton's preferred interpretation (i.e. the PI) and question whether or not logical quantification is the correct (or at the very least, the best) route to pursue to better understand the Forms in the dialogues such as the *Sophist*. Given the unquestionable complexity of the aforementioned dialogue, and the fact that Plato scholars agree that it is one of Plato's *late* period dialogues, it is plausible to maintain that there have been significant developments (or modifications) in Plato's mature thought especially in relation to the theory of Forms in the *middle* period dialogues. This observation, in itself, is uncontroversial, and it has been expressed already by a number of authors. At one point, Gilbert Ryle (1966), for instance, argues for the position that Plato abandoned the theory of Forms in the late period dialogues such as the *Theaetetus* and the *Sophist*. Considering that there is a *dearth* of subsequent works on the difficult issue that Charlton seeks to address, I hope that this paper can at least invite others to think on the intricate issues once more.

II. Charlton's platonizing interpretation

In this section, I will put Charlton's preferred analysis of negation and falsity in the *Sophist* in plain view. But first, let me point out an initial observation on some interesting aspects of Charlton's paper. It can be observed that Charlton begins and ends his paper with an allusion to Quine's ideas. This is understandable since Charlton's *PI* really focuses on the issue of logical quantification over concrete or abstract objects and Quine has a lot to say on the topic. In the introductory part of his paper, Charlton cites Quine's definition of *Platonism* as "the view that there are abstract objects" (CHARLTON, 1995, p. 113). While there is nothing problematic about Charlton's definition of Platonism (a definition which, according to him, he derived from Quine), there is a *minor inaccuracy* that needs to be mentioned. Here is the actual passage which Charlton cites from Quine:

> Realism, as the word is used in connection with the mediaeval controversy over universals, is the Platonic doctrine that universals or abstract entities have being independently of the mind; the mind may discover them but cannot create them (QUINE, 1961, p. 14).

It is clear that in the foregoing passage, Quine is defining *Realism* and not *Platonism*.[2] While it is true that for ordinary purposes, the difference is negligible, it is important to note that the "Platonic doctrine" which Quine speaks of in the quoted passage above (i.e. that abstract entities have being independently of the mind), is but *one* of the views associated with contemporary Platonism, for instance, in the philosophy of mathematics (although admittedly, it occupies a central position in the overall Platonist view). A contemporary philosopher who considers himself a Platonist, for instance, may not admit the entirety of the Platonic doctrine concerning *universals*. Thus, James Robert Brown, speaking about Plato's theory of Forms and everything that such a theory entails (e.g. recollection, immortal souls) maintains that "the essential ingredient" in contemporary mathematical Platonism is "*the existence and accessibility of the forms themselves, in particular the mathematical forms*, if not the others such as tallness and justice" (BROWN, 2008, p. 10).

At the end of his paper, Charlton mentions "Plato's beard" (a term christened by Quine which serves as a description of the problem of *nonbeing* in Plato). In my estimation, Charlton considers Plato to have taken the problem of nonbeing too seriously. Such being the case, he maintains that it is but natural to expect that from it will sprout, "if not a beard, at least some other bushy Platonic growth" (CHARLTON, 1995, p. 132). Another reason for Charlton's allusion to Quine stems from the observation that there seems to be a *weakening* of Plato's position on the issue of the existence of the Forms: "But in some supposedly later dialogues it may be wondered if Plato is even a Quinean Platonist" (CHARLTON, 1995, p. 113). It is important to note that on Charlton's view, *Quinean Platonism* is a weaker position than the *Platonism* in the middle or even in the late period dialogues. This is confirmed by the following remark: "I call Plato's realism here 'Platonism' because it seems to me excessive" (CHARLTON, 1995, p. 132). As to why it is excessive, it seems to me that on Charlton's view, to say that the Forms *are*, serves to highlight the fact that they are *objectivity-claims* (i.e. *claims whose truth are not merely up to us*). If this is correct, then Charlton's characterization of Platonism is a more *moderate* view compared to that which is usually attributed to Plato. Moreover, Charlton appears to be *skeptical* about seriously asking whether the Forms *literally exist*. These observations are confirmed in the following passage:

> But perhaps the best argument comes from more general considerations. What is the point of saying that Forms of just, equal, etc. are? Whatever else they may be, these are objectivity-claims. They say that whether this stone is equal to that, whether this penalty is just for that offence, are questions of fact that have an answer independently of our feelings. Nothing is gained by adding that Forms of equality and justice have a non-physical location 'above the Heavens' (CHARLTON, 1995, p. 122).

From the foregoing passage, it can be said that on Charlton's view, what we need to appreciate is the objectivity of Plato's Forms (e.g. questions of whether act *A* is *just* or not has answers independently of our feelings). On Charlton's construal of Plato's view, however, it can be said that Plato goes *beyond* objectivity-claims. One might therefore say that it is for this reason that Charlton considers Plato's realism as *excessive*.

Having considered Plato's realism to be excessive, it is important to note that Charlton's remark did not stop him from offering his own view on the proper analyses of negation and falsity and why he thinks that Plato is *reluctant* to quantify over concrete objects.

Let us begin with Plato's statement of the problem of negation and falsity in detail. At 236e of the *Sophist*, the visitor from Elea explains the problem to Theaetetus:

> Really, my young friend, this is a very difficult investigation we are engaged in. This appearing, and this seeming but not being, and this saying things but not true things – all these issues are full of confusion, just as they always have been. It's extremely hard, Theaetetus, to say what form of speech we should use to say that there really is such a thing as false saying or believing, and moreover to utter this without being caught in a verbal conflict (PLATO, 1997, p. 257).

When Theaetetus asked why, the visitor pointed out that the difficulty arises from "the rash assumption that that which is not is, since otherwise falsity wouldn't come into being" (PLATO, 1997, p. 257). These passages from the *Sophist* explain why it seems inevitable even for contemporary philosophers to delve into questions about ontology (or *being*) in discussing the concept of negation and what it means to say something that is false.

Charlton's *PI*, as we have said earlier, involves quantifying over Forms and not over concrete objects. His fully developed proposal employs the following logical notation: Let *f*, *g*, and *h* stand for Form variables, *F* and *G* stand for Form constants, *A* for a concrete-object constant, *X* for any arbitrarily selected concrete-object, and *m* (*metekhein*) for 'sharing in' (CHARLTON, 1995, p. 123). Using his proposed logical notation, Charlton offers the following symbolizations[3]:

1. Theaetetus is sitting: $(\exists f)\ (mfA\ \&\ f = F)$

2. Theaetetus is not sitting: $(\forall f)\ (mfA \rightarrow f \neq F)$

Charlton also uses *k* as a variable (ranging over *changes*), and *s* (as a variable ranging over *staying unchanged*):

3. Theaetetus is becoming seated: $(\exists f)$ $(kfA \ \& \ f = F)$

4. Theaetetus is in a state of being seated: $(\exists f)$ $(sfA \ \& \ f = F)$

Charlton also considers *affirmation* and *denial* as *forms of predication* (taking *i* from 'is' and *n* from 'not', he offers the following:

5. Theaetetus is sitting: $(\exists f)$ $(ifA \ \& \ f = F)$

6. Theaetetus is not sitting: $(\exists f)$ $(nfA \ \& \ f = F)$

Although Charlton *prefers PI* and quantifies over Forms as the foregoing list shows, it is important to note that he is *open* to the idea of quantifying over concrete objects. This is clear from what Charlton says in the following:

> It is one thing to say Plato does not require quantification over concrete objects for his analysis of negation or falsity, another to say he does not want it at all. If by 'quantifying over concrete objects' we mean no more than using words like 'all', 'some', and 'three' with nouns like 'ox' and 'finger', of course he does that. But do we ourselves have to quantify over concrete objects to make any of his analyses perspicuous? If the analyses of negation and falsity do not require this it will be hard to find any others that do (CHARLTON, 1995, p. 117).

For the most part, I think Charlton's openness to the idea is good news. Since Charlton is open to idea of quantifying over concrete objects, he adds the following to his proposal (See CHARLTON, 1995, p. 133):

7. Some birds fly: $(\exists x)$ $(mFx \ \& \ mGx)$

8. Some birds do not fly: $(\exists x)$ $(mFx \ \& \ (\forall f) \ (mfx \rightarrow f \neq G))$.

Let me end this section by summarizing the important points that we have shown so far. *First*, Charlton's allusion to Quine can be explained by the fact that Charlton seeks to provide a significant difference between: (1) *Platonism* in the Platonic dialogues and (2) what he refers to as *Quinean Platonism*. *Second*, for Charlton, when we say

that the Forms *are*, we highlight the fact that they are *objectivity-claims*. *Third*, the second point explains why Charlton considers Plato's realism as *excessive* (It is clear, at least on the orthodox view, that Plato goes beyond objectivity-claims since he attributes an *ontological status* to the Forms.). *Fourth*, Charlton is skeptical on questions about the *literal existence* of the Forms (and thus, he did not delve into that discussion.). *Fifth*, despite finding Plato's realism to be excessive, it did not stop Charlton from offering his own view on negation and falsity and why he thinks that Plato is reluctant to quantify over concrete objects. *Sixth*, on Charlton's view, saying that Plato is reluctant to quantify over concrete objects does not mean that he (i.e. Plato) disapproves of it and will not allow it. *Seventh*, although Charlton prefers *PI* (which, as we have said, quantifies over Forms), he can still make room for quantification over concrete objects. *Finally*, I think this is all made possible by (at least, if my interpretation of Charlton is correct) Charlton's view that what we need to appreciate in Plato's theory of Forms is the fact that they all involve objectivity-claims. In the following section, I will provide a critical appraisal of Charlton's proposal.

III. Platonizing interpretation revisited

In logic, in general, one is *free* to choose the more/most *expedient* logical notation to use. Thus, I will only say a few remarks on Charlton's preferred logical notation and focus on the more difficult aspects of his proposal: (1) whether or not the logical notation captures the intuition that it is supposed to capture (e.g. the Platonic Forms), and (2) whether or not Charlton's proposal better agrees with what we take to be Plato's view on the issue.

It is, of course, a well-known fact that we can quantify over *properties* in higher-order logic (e.g. second-order logic). Consider the following piece of reasoning (where *a* and *b* are individual constants, and *P* is the property of being intelligent):

9. *a* is intelligent and *b* is intelligent: $[P(a) \& P(b)]$

10. There is a property *P* that *a* and *b* both have: $(\exists P)[P(a) \& P(b)]$

In the foregoing example, the inference from 9-10 is valid *via* the application of the ∃ *Introduction rule*. More importantly, it quantifies over a *property* (and not over individuals or concrete objects) which is no different from the quantification over Forms that Charlton does in his *PI*. Since there is nothing fundamentally questionable about quantifying over properties in second-order logic (although it must be admitted that second-order logic suffers from its own set of difficulties, especially when we are dealing with *properties of properties*), and if this is Charlton's model for his *PI*, we can leave the matter at that. The only question pertinent to the issue on quantification over abstract objects is this: Does second-order logic sit well with the underlying *intuition* behind the Platonic Forms? Perhaps, another related question would be the following: Does Charlton's proposed strategy (i.e. *PI*) give justice to Plato's views, especially about the Forms themselves? Recall that in Charlton's *PI*, he makes use of *f*, *g*, and *h* to stand for Form *variables*, and *F*, *G* for Form *constants*, *A* for a concrete-object constant, *X* for any arbitrarily selected concrete-object, and *m* (*metekhein*) for 'sharing in' (CHARLTON, 1995, p. 123). It is plausible to maintain that there is a problem if we speak of the Forms this way (i.e. in terms of Form variables and Form constants). Would Plato accept such a distinction? I find the discussion at 104b in the *Phaedo*, a middle period dialogue, helpful in answering such a question:

> Consider three: do you not think that it must always be called by both its name and by that of the Odd, which is not the same as three? That is the nature of three, and of five, and of half of all the numbers; each of them is odd, but it is not the Odd. Then again, two and four and the whole other column of numbers; each of them, while not being the same as the Even, is always even (PLATO, 1997, p. 89).

In the foregoing passage, we are told that *three* is *odd* but it is not the same (or is not identical to) *the Odd*. In the same vein, *two* and *four* are *even* but clearly, they are not the same as *the Even*. In addition, we are told that it is the *nature* of numbers such as *three* and *five* that they are *odd* but they are not *the Odd*. In the foregoing discussion then, Plato reminds us that when we speak of the Forms (e.g. the Odd, the Even), we are speaking about the *nature* of a thing (e.g. number) and this nature is

uniform across the objects that share in it. In other words, while there are infinitely many even numbers, *the Even* itself is *one*. To further this point, consider the following:

11. Object *a* participates in Form *P*.

12. Object *b* participates in Form *P*.

13. If *a* participates in *P* and *b* participates in *P*, then *P* is a *common* property.

14. If *P* is a common property, then *P* is a property shared by some objects.

15. Whereas the objects which possess the property are more than one, the property itself is one.

Earlier, we said that the *Phaedo* is generally considered by Plato scholars as a middle period dialogue, and the *Sophist* as a late period dialogue. We also said that Charlton prefers quantification over abstract objects because for him, this is the more *Platonizing interpretation* (although he is open to the idea of quantifying over concrete objects as confirmed by the fact that his proposal includes it). However, if we take the discussions in the *Phaedo* seriously, it is plausible to maintain that we can avoid quantifying over the Forms *à la* Charlton's *PI* and proceed using the more natural way in which we make use quantifiers in modern symbolic logic (i.e. *to state how many*). After all, the discussions in the *Phaedo* lend support to the idea that the properties that we talk about are properties *in* (or *possessed by*) individuals (or concrete objects). Let us look at 102b-c of the *Phaedo*:

> If you say these things are so, when you say then that Simmias is taller than Socrates but shorter than Phaedo, do you not mean that there is in Simmias both tallness and shortness? – I do.

> But, he said, do you agree that the words of the statement 'Simmias is taller than Socrates' do not express the truth of the matter? It is not, surely the nature of Simmias to be taller than Socrates because he is Simmias but because of the tallness he happens to have? Nor is he taller than

> Socrates because Socrates is Socrates, but because Socrates has smallness compared with the tallness of the other? – True (PLATO, 1997, p. 88).

In the foregoing passage, we may say that it is by virtue of *participating in* (or sharing in) a Form that *Simmias is tall* (and not because *Simmias is Simmias* nor because it is in the nature of Simmias to be tall). If it does not bother Plato that he is talking about concrete objects (or individuals like Simmias, Socrates, and Phaedo) which do have (or possess) properties like *being tall*, then it would not be objectionable to allow quantification over concrete objects.

Would the foregoing approaches be correct? In my estimation, the Platonic doctrine that we have been discussing runs counter to (or at the very least, raises significant doubts to) the *liberal* treatment of the Forms and the employment of Form variables and Form constants *à la* Charlton's *PI*. I think there is a more *fundamental* question that needs to be addressed. In the first place, is logical quantification (whether over Forms or concrete objects) the correct route to pursue to understand the Forms and their crucial role in the dialogues such as the *Sophist*? Let me articulate the reason for this particular worry. Consider once more Charlton's proposed symbolization:

16. Theaetetus is sitting: $(\exists f) (mfA \; \& \; f = F)$

17. Theaetetus is not sitting: $(\forall f) (mfA \rightarrow f \neq F)$.

Recall as well that Charlton's PI makes use of Form variables and Form constants. From 16 and 17 above, it can easily be said that by employing Form variables and Form constants, Charlton's *PI* was able to maintain the *existence* of the Forms. Another way of putting it is that the notational convention of Charlton's *PI* is *committed* to the existence of the Forms. So far, so good. Plato, after all, ascribes an ontological status to the Forms.

At this juncture, let me offer an argument that might be raised against Charlton's *PI* and this argument is more *pragmatic* than formal. It is important to note that in logic, we use the quantifiers (e.g. $\exists$, $\forall$) to state how many. While the general outcome of Charlton's *PI* might be

said to be consistent with the orthodox view of the Platonic Forms, it is plausible to maintain that the notational convention that it employs neglects a very simple (but important) point about statements in ordinary language like 16 and 17 above. From a pragmatic standpoint, it can be said that 16 and 17 are statements *about* a certain individual: Theaetetus. The problem however is that the proposed symbolization for these statements in Charlton's PI does not make it seem like they have *Theaetetus* for their subject but rather something else (e.g. a Platonic Form). This appears to be the case since the quantifiers in Charlton's *PI* take Forms and not concrete objects for their values.

Ryle and other Plato scholars' arguments that Plato abandoned the theory of Forms stem from the apparent lack of importance that Plato attributes to them in his inquiries in the late period dialogues. In fact, the theory of the Forms has been the subject of the most potent criticisms in 249d of the *Sophist*. Charlton maintains that Plato remains to be a Platonist in the sense that the essential aspect of what it means to be a Platonist is to be committed to objectivity-claims. Earlier, we have said that on this issue, Charlton's position is a moderate one and in my estimation, the more plausible position to take than the view that Plato abandoned the theory of Forms in its entirety. In my estimation, if Plato abandoned the theory of Forms in its entirety, it would be difficult to explain why Plato still invokes the idea in 135c of the *Parmenides* (another late period dialogue):

> "Yet on the other hand, Socrates," said Parmenides, "if someone, having an eye on all the difficulties we have just brought up and others of the same sort, won't allow that there are forms for things and won't mark off a form for each one, he won't have anywhere to turn his thought, since he doesn't allow that for each thing there is a character that is always the same. In this way he will destroy the power of dialectic entirely. But I think you are only too well aware of that. "What you say is true," Socrates said (PLATO, 1997, p. 369).

On the question of whether or not Plato abandoned the theory of Forms in the late period dialogues, the *modest* response is this: Plato subjected the theory to various criticisms (and it is even possible that he had misgivings about it). Thus, it is not inconceivable that modifications

have been made as evidenced by Plato's discussions in the *Sophist* concerning the *Five Greatest Kinds* (e.g. being, change, rest, sameness, difference). Consider what Plato says at 252a of the *Sophist* about *change* and *rest* and if it is possible for either of them to *be* if they have no association with (or any share in) *being*:

> It seems that agreeing to that destroys everything right away, both for the people who make everything change, for the ones who make everything an unchanging unit, and for the ones who say that beings are forms that always stay the same and in the same state. All of these people apply *being*. Some do it when they say that things really are changing, and others do it when they say that things really are at rest (PLATO, 1997, p. 274).

Compare what Plato says in the foregoing passage about the Forms to what he says about it (through Socrates) at 78d of the *Phaedo*:

> Let us then return to those same things with which we were dealing earlier, to that reality of whose existence we are giving an account in our questions and answers; are they ever the same and in the same state, or do they vary from one time to another; *can the Equal itself, the Beautiful itself, each thing in itself, the real, ever be affected by any change whatever?*
>
> It must remain the same, said Cebes, and in the same state, Socrates (PLATO, 1997, p. 69).

It is important to note that while there may be modifications in Plato's treatment of the Forms in the middle period and the late period dialogues, these reasons are *not* enough to say that Plato abandoned the theory of Forms in its entirety as 135c of the *Parmenides* shows.

At this juncture, let me articulate some important points that I think would help further clarify the difficult issues that surround Plato's theory of Forms and its *status* in the late period dialogues. *First*, as 135c of the *Parmenides* shows, for Plato, the Forms serve a very important function in *explanations*. (The *Parmenides* is classified as a late period dialogue.) The idea that the Forms have crucial roles to fulfill in explanations is also present in the *Phaedo* (a middle period dialogue). In the *Phaedo*, we find "Plato's most explicit statement of the explanatory

23

role of the Forms" (STOUGH, 1976, p. 1). If the foregoing observations are correct, they suggest that there is *continuity* in the role of the Forms in the middle and late period dialogues. In my estimation, Plato needed the Forms to be able to *explain*, for instance, questions which pertain to *why* a certain thing is the way it is. Consider the very familiar way in which Plato explains what makes a thing (or why a thing is) beautiful in 100c-e of the *Phaedo*: It is beautiful because it partakes (or participates or shares) in the Beautiful (the Form of Beauty) (PLATO, 1997, p. 86). *Second*, if we take the Forms as performing an important function in *explanations*, it is plausible to maintain that for Plato, the Forms are *epistemically necessary* for there to be any sort of *knowledge* at all. *Third*, if the points that we have said so far are correct (or at the very least, plausible), they can help explain why Plato *still* invokes the Forms at 135c of the *Parmenides* (which as we have said is considered as a late period dialogue). *Fourth*, viewing the Forms as epistemically necessary can help explain why not admitting the Forms will *destroy* the power of dialectic (*dialegesthai*) entirely. *Fifth*, all these points show that Plato still has a significant *use* for the Forms even in the late period dialogues. *Finally*, more convincing arguments need to be presented by those who argue that Plato abandoned the theory of Forms in its entirety.

IV. CONCLUSION

While it is possible, as Charlton have shown, to quantify over Forms or over concrete objects, I raised an important question in regard how to view the Forms in Plato's late period dialogues. Is logical quantification the correct route to pursue to better understand the Forms? The proposal that I have been articulating so far is to view Plato's Forms as epistemically necessary in the sense that they have crucial *explanatory roles* to fulfill in Plato's account of knowledge and its very possibility. So instead of the issue concerning the employment of quantification to the theory of Forms, perhaps what we need is a *robust* explanation as to how a certain *X*, by virtue of *Y*, is an *F* (akin to the relation between the *explanandum* and the *explanans*) in what we may call *Platonic explanantia*. This is important since the Forms are also necessary for

what Plato considers to be the *method* of the philosopher: the method of *dialectic* (*dialegesthai*). Consider what the visitor from Elea says to Theaetetus at 254a-b of the *Sophist*. In the following passage, he (i.e. the visitor from Elea) compares the *sophist* and the *philosopher*:

> The sophist runs off into the darkness of *that which is not*, which he's had practice dealing with, and he's hard to see because the place is so dark…But the philosopher always uses reasoning to stay near the form, *being*. He isn't at all easy to see because that area is so bright and the eyes of most people's souls can't bear to look at what's divine (PLATO, 1997, p. 276).

Clearly then, Plato still believes that the Forms are related to *being* (or *that which is*) in a special way. The route by which the philosopher can possibly attain knowledge is through *reasoning* (and interestingly, while the passage above is considered as a late period dialogue, it is packed with the idea of the Forms in the dialogues of the *middle* period). At this time and age, where almost everything is a matter of *construction*, it is healthy for philosophers to be reminded once more of the kind of realism that Plato articulates.

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NOTES

1 This problem is introduced in 236e of the *Sophist*. See Plato, "Sophist," 257.
2 I think Charlton is aware of this. To be charitable to Charlton, I think it is best to put it this way: Charlton thinks it is alright to substitute *Platonism* with *Realism* since *Realism* = *Platonism*. See for instance, CHARLTON, 1995, p. 132. The *explicit* equation of *Realism* with *Platonism* in Quine's case may be found in § 48 of *Word and Object*.
3 In this paper, I will only include what I consider to be the central propositional forms in Charlton's proposal. For a full summary of Charlton's *propositional forms*, refer to the *Appendix* of Charlton's paper, 1995, p. 133.