

## Three Aspects of the Linguistic Communion (*Koinōnia*) in Plato's *Sophist*: Articulation of Letters, Predication of Names and Accord (*Homologia*) of *Logoi*

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**Resumen:** En el *Sofista*, Platón presenta la posibilidad de la separación de las cosas entre sí sobre la base de la comunión (*koinōnia*) al interior del *lógos*. En este estudio, discuto la comunión lingüística revelada en el diálogo al iluminar tres aspectos fundamentales suyos: (1) la articulación de las letras de los nombres como una comunión en el nivel sintáctico, (2) la predicación de los nombres en los *lógoi* como una comunión en el nivel semántico, (3) *homólogoi* de los *lógoi* como una comunión final del lenguaje. Por tanto, concluyo que estos tres aspectos lingüísticos son interdependientes.

**Palabras clave:** Sofista; *lógos*; *koinōnia*; articulación; predicación; *homología*

**Abstract:** In the *Sophist*, Plato presents the possibility of the separation of things in relation to each other based on the communion (*koinōnia*) of *logos*. In this study, I discuss the linguistic communion revealed in the dialogue by illuminating its three fundamental aspects: (1) Articulation of letters in names as communion on the syntactic level, (2) Predication of names in *logoi* as communion on the semantic level, (3) *Homologoi* of *logoi* as the ultimate communion of language. I thus conclude that these three linguistic aspects are interdependent.

**Keywords:** Sophist; *logos*; *koinōnia*; articulation; predication; *homologia*

In this article, I will investigate the linguistic meaning of the concept of *koinōnia* (communion) in Plato's *Sophist*, which consists of three aspects: Articulation of Letters, Predication of Names and Accord (*Homologia*) of *Logoi*. Before starting, I would like to remark on a point about the conception of "linguistic". It is not that communion has several meanings and that the linguistic meaning of communion is merely one among its many meanings. On the contrary, due to the central position of language (*logos*) in Plato's thought, the linguistic sense of the concept allows us to attain the main idea of communion. At consulting lines 259e and 260a of the *Sophist*, we can see that *logos* is depicted as a *genos*/kind/family that connects other *genē* to each other. In this sense, *logos* is the first concept that should be consulted to get an idea of everything (*to pan*) as it connects the whole (*holon*) together<sup>1</sup>. So, when we discuss the linguistic meaning of *koinōnia* in Plato, we should consider *logos* in this context. In this regard, in the *Sophist*, Plato establishes an ontology in which *logos* is the equivalent of other philosophers' everything (*to pan*) or whole (*holon*). *Logos* functions by bringing together all kinds (*ta genē*) to ensure the unity of *to pan*. In this way, we can conclude that linguistic (*logos*) communion is not about a specific sense of communion but about the communion of everything.

This study finds its starting point in the distinction between syntax and semantics. In modern formal language theory, the establishment of language is carried out in the following stages:

1. Establishing the symbols: Identifying the elements of the language (an alphabet and punctuation marks as symbols)<sup>2</sup>.
2. Syntactic level: Producing formulas according to well-formed formula rules (a limited selection of symbols in an order without assigning a sense)<sup>3</sup>.
3. Semantic level: By collecting these produced formulas in two sets, establishing a function structure with the hypothesis that an element

216

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<sup>1</sup> I refer to the concept of *to pan* with the word "everything" and the concept of *holon* with the word "whole".

<sup>2</sup> Marcus, R., *Introduction to Formal Logic*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2018, pp. 22-23.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 43-45.

in one set can 'signify' another element in the other set (assigning a signification to words composed of letters)<sup>4</sup>.

According to this theory, the first level to emerge is the symbols, then the syntactic level, and last the semantic level. In this context, I discuss whether Plato too constructs linguistic relations in this way, or whether he points to a system in which there is no syntactic level without a semantic level, and symbols are not possible without a syntactic level. Through this problematization, I try to explain the linguistic meaning of *koinōnia* in Plato.

Firstly, to understand Plato's approach to language, I want to refer to the discussion of the letters (Plato uses both *stoicheion* which means "element" and "letter" and *grammata* which means "drawn" and "letter") in the *Theaetetus* which provides the context of the *Sophist*. In passage 163b, Plato uses the example of letters: "Socrates: ...are we going to say that before we've learned their language, we don't hear non-Greeks speak, or that we both hear and know what they're saying? Again, if we don't know our letters, will we claim that we're not seeing them when we look at them, or insist that we do know them, if indeed we're seeing them? Theaetetus: What we'll say we know, Socrates, is exactly what we see and hear of them: the shape and the colour, we'll say, we both see and know in the case of the letters, while in the other case we both hear, and at the same time know, the high or low pitch of the voices. But as for what schoolmasters or interpreters teach about them, we'll say we don't perceive that by seeing or hearing it and we don't know it either"<sup>5</sup> (*Theaet.*, 163b).

Socrates observes that when we look at the letters of the sentences of a language that we do not know, we see their colors and shapes and hear their high or low pitch, but we do not know what they mean. When we look at the letters of a language that we know, we become aware of things beyond these physical features. Using this example, Plato points out the possibility that the perceptible objects can have an imperceptible relationship with each other beyond the perceptible. From this point of view, at the end of the text, Plato inaugurates a discussion about the "whole" (a type of totality which is beyond its parties), "sum" (a totality which can be reduced to its parties) and "parts" as letters (204a-205a). This section discusses whether the act of *knowing* can be explained by a process going either from the parts to the whole or the sum,

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 46-47.

<sup>5</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all translations of passages from the *Theaetetus* and the *Sophist* are taken from Rowe, C. (ed.), *Plato: Theaetetus and Sophist*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015, with minor modifications indicated by square brackets.

or from the whole or the sum to the parts. At the end of the discussion, it is concluded that the whole cannot be known from the parts because the absence of sub-parts of the parts makes it impossible to know the parts. Furthermore, due to *petitio principii*, the parts cannot be known from the whole or the sum because the whole is irreducible to its parts, and the sum, which is nothing more than the merger of its parts, cannot be explained by the merger of its parts which is identical to the sum. Thus, Plato chose the letter analogy in this discussion precisely because letters as we have just mentioned, besides being perceptible objects, have references that cannot be reduced to a perceptible object, and this reference emerges in a kind of merger. For example, the signification of the word “good” cannot be reduced to any parts of the word, namely the letters “g”, “o”, “o”, “d”, nor to their unification, no matter whether the word is accepted as a whole or as a sum<sup>6</sup>.

Based on formal language analyses and the possibilities and problematizations that Plato captures when discussing letters, we can now consider the main part of our discussion: Plato developing a linguistic *koinōnia* view in the *Sophist*.

In the dialogue, Plato establishes his ontology from the main idea that an ontology, which expresses itself in the language/*logos*, must make the idea of the *logos* possible rather than denying or neglecting it. Before constructing the ontology, he shows the dilemmas within three types of basic ontologies that make *logos* impossible:

1) The Parmenidean hypothesis of the absolute unity of being as a rejection of multiplicity (244b-245a). This idea can be seen as the absolutization of the principle of identity underlying every thought and reality. The statement “Socrates is human” could not represent reality since “Socrates” and “human” are not identical<sup>7</sup>. If we take “being” in the sense of absolute identity, this leads

<sup>6</sup> Galligan (1983) also establishes the discussion of the community of letters and *logoi* in the *Sophist* based on the whole-part discussion in the *Theaetetus*. See Galligan, E. M., “Logos in the *Theaetetus* and the *Sophist*”, in: *Anton and Preus*, (1983), pp. 267-269.

<sup>7</sup> This discussion, which was presented in the Parmenidean paradigm, is discussed in the literature on the concept of late learners (ὀψιμαθέσι) at 251a-c. Ackrill, J. L., “Plato and the Copula: *Sophist* 251-259”, in: *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, v. LXXVI, 1 (1957), pp. 1-6; Crivelli, P., *Plato’s Account of Falsehood: A Study of the Sophist*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, pp. 103-109; Brown, L., “The *Sophist* on statements, predication, and falsehood”, in: Fine, G. (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Plato*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019, pp. 312-315. Plato is thought to refer to Antisthenes or Euthydemus and Dionysodorus with this expression. See Crivelli, P., *Plato’s Account of Falsehood: A Study of the Sophist*, 2011, p. 104. The discussion is about whether Plato makes a distinction between the identity sentences and the predications. I think that this discussion cannot find its proper place in the dialogue without connecting it to the

us to the following formula, which we would express transitively: “Being is being”, that is, “Is is is”. The last instance removes the transitivity and predicative structure of language and leads “being” to have a stand-alone identity without predication. We will later see how Plato, in response to this problem, states that the transitive structure of the mixture of kinds of being and non-being constitutes the essence of language. Moreover, he lets *logoi* (such as “Socrates is human”) emerge by departing from the idea of absolute identity and allowing the harmonic pairing of two names through a slight shift (Παρασπᾶω (241c) from this position of absolute identity (since we necessarily match two non-identical things (“Socrates” and “human”) in *logoi*).

2) The multiplicity as *eidē*, which remains the same without interactions nor changes, is generally attributed to Plato. This idea supposes that names, universals, and concepts can be alone isolated from others. I discuss this hypothesis again in the *logos* chapter by trying to demonstrate that this hypothesis, which I call “pseudo-Plato”, does not belong to Plato but to Aristotle. In the *Sophist*, this hypothesis is mentioned in lines 252a: “...or for those who reduce the things that are to forms (*eidē*) that remain forever exactly as they are...” (*Soph.*, 252a).

3) Multiplicity as a mixture of everything, where no element can maintain its proper identity (252d). According to Plato, such unification is not possible because if the elements do not preserve their identity in a unification, there would no longer be a unification since there is nothing to mix up.

After criticizing these hypotheses, Plato presents his ontology as an interactive multiplicity in which many *eidē* can enter communion (κοινωνεῖν) with others while preserving their identity.

### *1. Articulation of letters*

Having thus described the frame of the *Sophist's* discussion, I can begin the examination of the passages concerning letters, nouns and *logoi*. Immediately after exposing the dilemmas in his opponents' arguments (253a), Plato speaks of a form of communion that at first glance appears to be simply

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Parmenidean paradigm, which rejects the idea of the communion of multiplicity. Brown (1999) is against the idea that solving the dilemma of late learners needs to distinguish the predicative usage of “to be” from its existential usage. See Brown, L., “Being in the Sophist: A Syntactical Enquiry”, in: Fine, G. (ed.), *Plato 1: Metaphysics and Epistemology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999. Teisserenc (2008), instead, opposes the predicative and existential use of being and highlights the distinction between *auto kath'auto* and *pros ti*. See Teisserenc, F., «Platon a-t-il distingué différents emplois du verbe «être»? » in: *Philosophie antique*, v. VIII (2008), pp. 153-188.

an analogy for his new ontology, namely, the communion of letters (γράμματα): “Visitor: So, if some things will mix and some won’t, it will be pretty much with them as it is with the letters of the alphabet. These too have the feature that some of them fit together in one way or another, while others don’t. Theaetetus: Of course. Visitor: But the vowels, now: they differ from the other letters, running through them all and serving like a bond between them, so that without a vowel it’s impossible for any of the others to fit together either” (*Soph.*, 253a1-6).

At first glance, the passage may seem like an analogy, but the analogy takes a different turn when considering the dialogue’s context, which is about discovering the *logos* to capture the sophist. When, in a text about *logos*, the letters, which are parts of the *logos*, are used as analogies to explain *logos*, the analogy goes beyond merely being an analogy. In this respect, these passages are not only an analogy but also inform us about the reality of *logos* and letters<sup>8</sup>. Plato, who criticizes the paradigms in which things stand alone without mixing with each other and everything is intermingled endlessly, first resorts to the example of letters when starting to develop his own ontology as an alternative to these: some letters can be together, while others cannot. Socrates develops this in the text as follows: Letters can come together thanks to the vowel, which functions as a link by establishing a connection between them. How should this be understood? Indeed, vowels become a continuous phoneme without consonants, in which each letter loses its unity, or the multiplicity disappears into a whole, as in the Parmenidean hypothesis, or the parts of the multiplicity become inseparable in absolute mixing, as in the absolute mixing hypothesis. Moreover, consonants cannot be pronounced without vowels, as in the second hypothesis of the plurality without interaction (pseudo-Plato’s hypothesis).

In his article *Letters and Syllables in Plato*, Ryle<sup>9</sup> comments on the passage that assumes that consonants cannot be pronounced without vowels but rather emerge together with vowels (in this sense, I need the vowel “e” to

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<sup>8</sup> Teisserenc (2007) too interprets the *eidē* relations in the *Sophist* based on the letter model. See Teisserenc, F., «Consonnes et voyelles : Les Fonctions de l’Être et de l’Autre dans le Sophiste de Platon (251a-259e)», in: *Dialogue*, v. XLVI, 2 (2007), pp. 231-264. But since he does not take the dialogue based on *logos* discussion, but based on *eidos*, he does not ask the question of whether we can look for a function beyond mere being analogy. For other approaches which base their lecture on the letter model, see Trevaskis, J. R., “The μέγιστα γέννη and the vowel analogy of Plato, *Sophist* 253”, in: *Phronesis*, v. XI, 2 (1966), pp. 99-116; Crivelli, P., *Plato’s Account of Falsehood: A Study of the Sophist*, 2011, pp. 115-116. My lecture differs from the others by asserting that the letters model can’t be taken as a mere analogy in a text on *logos*.

<sup>9</sup> Ryle, G., “Letters and Syllables in Plato”, in: *The Philosophical Review*, v. LXIX, 4 (1960), pp. 434-435.

pronounce the letter “b”). At first glance, this commentary seems reasonable but, as Gallop<sup>10</sup> states in his article which is a response to Ryle’s article, the etymology of *gramma* is related to the meanings of “drawing” and “that which is written”. Gallop shows that Plato uses this for the written characters in his various texts by criticizing Ryle’s interpretation. As a second counterargument, Gallop says that we can represent the letter “b” in writing without needing a vowel. In addition, we can contribute to this critical lecture by pointing to a third group of letters in Greek, namely semi-consonant letters –neither vowels nor consonants– which cause issues in this regard (*Poetica*, XX, 1456b). So, how should one interpret the question of letters not appearing without commonality?

I try to answer this question by suggesting that the concept which Plato is trying to point out in this passage is the articulation of letters and that letters can only appear as letters in an articulated structure. Plato expresses this in passage 253a with the sentence “But the vowels, now: they differ from the other letters, running through them all and serving like a bond between them, so that without a vowel it’s impossible for any of the others to fit together either” (*Soph.*, 253a). Thus, according to Plato, letters in human language can be articulated to produce multiple names because they are differentiated into vowels and non-vowels. Therefore, letters can only be letters if they are articulated in a harmonic communion and can only form names with groups of letters that can signify the multiplicity within *to pan*. Instead, sounds that are not articulated do not consist of letters.

At this point, I would like to cite and discuss an important use of *graphō*, which has the same root as *gramma* in Aristotle’s *De Interpretatione*, who kept using Plato’s conceptualization of *gramma* and *stoicheion*. Aristotle states, “That which is in sounds are signs of *pathēmata* in the soul, and that which is written are signs of that which is in sounds”<sup>11</sup> (*De Interpretatione*, 1, 16a3-4). This statement basically asserts that the *pathēmata* are formed by the things, we signify them with what is in the sound, and we signify what is in the sound with *grammata*. Giorgio Agamben<sup>12</sup> comments on this in his book *Infancy and History* by consulting to the ancient commentaries: “Aristotle’s ancient commentators had asked why the philosopher had introduced the *gramma* as the fourth ‘hermeneut’ alongside the other three (voice, *pathēmata*, things) which

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<sup>10</sup> Gallop, D., “Plato and the Alphabet”, in: *The Philosophical Review*, v. LXXII, 3 (1963), pp. 364-365.

<sup>11</sup> The translation is mine.

<sup>12</sup> Agamben, G., *Infancy and History: The Destruction of Experience*, London: Verso, 1993, p. 8.

explain the circle of linguistic signification. So they attributed the particular status of the *gramma* to the fact that, unlike the other three, it is not just a sign, but also an element (*stoicheion*) of the voice, as articulation”.

According to this interpretation, things, their *pathēmata* in the soul, and that which is in sound as elements of the circle of signification, are completed only when they can be symbolizable in writing, i.e., have the possibility to be articulated<sup>13</sup>. In his commentary on *De Interpretatione*, Boethius remarks on this structure as follows: Thus, that which is in sounds (*onomata* and *rhēmata*) indicate thoughts that correspond to things; while not every sound (*vox*) can be an *onoma* and a *rhēma*, that which is in sounds only is written/represented by letters, the linguistic circle is completed, and one may assign a sense to this utterance (*locutio*) (42,15-30). In passage 5.1-5 of the same commentary, Boethius comments that a sense is not assignable to every sound (*vox*) but only to the articulated utterance (*locutio*). He states, “The components of utterance are letters, which when joined create one conjoined and combined spoken sound which is called utterance”<sup>14</sup> (Boethius, *On Aristotle On Interpretation*, 5.9-10).

We could interpret Boethius’ idea as a retroactive movement in which only the sounds having the power to be symbolized by letters can be assigned meaning since only the parts of these sounds can be decomposed and captured as units in relation to each other. This means that the sounds must be presented in a unification model in such a way that the letters can be captured separately from each other, which is what we call articulation.

I think that we can explain Plato’s evaluation of “Letters combine because some letters function like a bridge bonding others” using a reading of *De Interpretatione* that is parallel to the approach in these commentaries. In the *Sophist*, Plato uses the concept of *gramma*, which is connected to the etymology of drawing and that which is written, instead of using the concept of *stoicheion*, which means both the elements and the letters as used in the *Theaetetus*. However, given the context, the etymology of *stoicheion* is much more suitable for discussion.

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<sup>13</sup> Aygün (2017) shows that Aristotle’s account of the combination of letters in a phrase is not merely an agglomerate of elemental sounds but rather an articulation of letters. Cf. Aygün, Ö., *The Middle Included - Logos in Aristotle*, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2017, pp. 155-166.

<sup>14</sup> I use Smith’s (2010) translation. Cf. Smith, A., *Boethius. On Aristotle On Interpretation 1-3 (Ancient Commentators on Aristotle)*, London: Duckworth, 2010.



In this regard, considering 1) the ancient commentaries on Aristotelian *gramma*<sup>15</sup>, 2) Plato's choice of the concept of *gramma* instead of *stoicheion*, 3) his articulative model of the communion of letters, and 4) his ontological position in which everything (*to pan*) is possible only in a measured way of the communion of things, we can develop the following idea about Plato's approach to letters and therefore *logos*: articulated sounds emerge only if they are capable of being symbolized by singular letters in writing even though they are not practically symbolized. In this sense, we can say that Plato thinks that each of the *grammata*, which is part of the *logos*, preserves its singularity, but at the same time the *grammata* come together in an articulated way, and hence, each one is kept as a letter. Thus, the activity of putting them in communion while grasping them separately is the reason that we have articulated symbols, i.e., letters.

When a human cries and inanimate objects or animals make noises, they are not composed of letters even though they look like articulated sounds, since their parts cannot be grasped as singular symbols. By this, I mean that the ability to grasp symbols as entities allows us to make words to which we can assign a sense once they are assembled. For example, a wolf can howl, or a human can groan in pain. The noises that the wolf makes when howling cannot be represented by letters articulated in writing, and therefore in sounds, since the noise contains an inseparable continuity. That is, the parts of these noises cannot be grasped as a singular symbol<sup>16</sup>. From Plato's point of view, howls and groans can be taken as an analogy of both Parmenidean ontology and of the extreme mixture hypothesis (in which the parts lose themselves in an absolute mixture) by seeing their implications as identical because they do not let the letters emerge as singular symbols in a kind of unification. In this sense, the Parmenidean position, as the holistic position that rejects the multiplicity, and the extreme mixture hypothesis, in which the mixture of the multiplicity leaves no separable singularity, can both be seen as a wolf howl as opposed to Plato's articulated *logos*. Thus, letters can only be letters when captured as

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<sup>15</sup> The fact that Aristotle, in *Historia Animalium*, positions the concept of ἀγράμματα as opposed to the concept of διάλεκτον, which means language having an articulation, shows us that ἀγράμματα indicates non-articulative sounds (*HA*, 1.1., 488a32-36). Thus, this also shows that γράμματα signifies articulated sounds according to Aristotle.

<sup>16</sup> The grasping of discrete units in the continuity of language distinguishes human speech from other sounds in contemporary linguistic theory too, as expressed in since Hockett's (1960 article *The Origin of Speech*. Cf. Hockett, C. F., "The Origin of Speech", in: *Scientific American*, v. CCIII, 3 (1960), pp. 88-97; Fromkin, V., Robert, R., Hyams, N., *An introduction to language*, Australia: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2014, pp. 16-17).

interconnectable singularities and meaning can only be assigned to names that emerge from their communion. Here we can refer to the distinction between abstractable and extractable developed by Ryle: An abstractable element cannot be captured from the whole but can still be considered separately, while an extractable one can be captured by separating it from the sum<sup>17</sup>. According to this distinction, we can qualify letters as abstractable but not extractable. I continue to justify this claim by referring to how it is similarly sustained in the *Sophist*, in which the predication of names and the accord of *logoi* are parallel to the letters.

## 2. Predication of names

After explaining his ontology, which is based on the letters model and established with the communion of *eidōs* or *genos*<sup>18</sup> while still preserving their identity, Plato begins to explain how the *logos* mechanism work: “Visitor: So come on, let’s use the same approach again as we did in relation to forms and letters, this time asking about names... Visitor: Well now, no speech is ever formed from names alone being uttered one after another, and neither is it if verbs have been strung together without names... Visitor: For example, ‘walks runs sleeps’, and the other verbs that signal actions – even if someone says all of them in succession, it won’t make them the slightest bit more into speech (*logos*)... Visitor: Then again, if one says ‘lion stag horse’, and all the names there are of things that do the actions, that collection of words doesn’t yet constitute speech (*logos*) either...” (*Soph.*, 261d-262c1).

Plato explains the structure of *logos* by taking two types of communions as a model: *eidē* and letters. As we said at the beginning, *logos*, which is presented as a *genos* that connects *ta genē*, is surprisingly the same kind as the things that it unifies, that is, *genos* or *eidōs*. Therefore, the communion of *eidē* is beyond that of an example because it is *logos* itself. Although Plato uses other analogies (e.g., the harmony of notes in music) to ground his ontology, other than *eidē* he only refers to letters when constructing *logos*. These choices reveal that Plato sees continuity between the two structures: letters and *logos*.

When examining the passages, it is clear that the *logos* consists of an *onoma* and a *rhēma*<sup>19</sup>. However, when a *rhēma* is predicated on an *onoma*,

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<sup>17</sup> Ryle, G., “Letters and Syllables in Plato”, 1960, p. 439.

<sup>18</sup> I use these terms (*eidōs* and *genos*) synonymously.

<sup>19</sup> Narrow use of *onoma* indicates the name as a subject in a *logos* whereby broad use of *onoma* indicates the word which includes *onoma* and *rhēma*. Cf. Crivelli, P., *Plato’s Account of Falsehood: A Study of the Sophist*, 2011, p. 223.

a *logos* emerges, in which we find the second linguistic meaning of *koinōnia*: the predication of names. In this sense, *logos* would not emerge if *onomata* and *rhēmata* were not combined in the form of predication. Alongside this idea, Plato hides a more interesting idea in these passages: *Onoma* and *rhēma* acquire meaning only within the *logos*. If we look closely at the text, we see that Plato states that although we may put *rhēmata* in succession/*ephexēs* (walksrunssleeps), they do not necessarily form a *logos*. Likewise, three *onomata* do not form a *logos* when we put them together continuously/*synexēs* (lionstaghorse). Thus, he states that if *onoma* and *rhēma* are not posited together in an expression, they cannot signify neither “*praxis*” nor “*a-praxis*”, neither being of “what is” nor “what is not”.

If we pay attention to these passages, we can see that Plato distinguishes the group of *rhēmata* from the group of *onomata* by persistently using the expression *ephexēs* for the group of *rhēmata* (262b) while using *synexēs* for the group of *onomata* (262a, 262b, 262c). To make sense of this, we can make use of Aristotle's distinction between these two concepts in *Physica* and *Metaphysica*. According to Aristotle, continuity indicates inseparable unity, while succession points to the repetition of the same kind of thing, that is, to separable objects (*Physica*, VI 1, 231a20-5). In this context, we can interpret Plato's characterization of names as continuous, as they do not denote a judgment by falling into an inseparable unity, since they do not form *logos* without a verb, and thus do not indicate a *praxis* or being.

We can think of this in parallel to the example of a wolf howling since, in both situations, the parts lose their identity in the unification. On the contrary, the verbs in succession can very well have meaning since every verb refers to *praxis* and since Greek, unlike modern English, allows for a *logos* only with a *rhēma* and without any *onoma*. Then, where there are three *rhēmata*, there must also be three *logos*. So why does Plato, who is aware that a *logos* can be formed with only one verb in Greek, say otherwise? The answer is hidden in the phrases just after the examples: “...since no more in this case than in the other does what has been voiced indicate action, or lack of action, or the being of something that is, or of something that is not, nor will it until someone starts blending the verbs with the names. Then they fit together, and their first interweaving is at once speech...” (262c1-5).

These groups of words do not indicate *praxis* and being or their absence unless they are a mixture of nouns and verbs. So, only in the case of unity do these parts gain meaning. This does not mean that we cannot make a phrase

with only a verb. So, what can it mean? To fully understand this statement, we must accept the condition that every *logos* must be about something, which Plato expresses in lines 262e6-7. Plato states two conditions of *logos*, which can be seen as an activity of judgment that predicates a *rhēma* to an *onoma*: 1) There must be a subject to be predicated; 2) there must be a *praxis* or being to predicate to the subject, either positively or negatively. So, we can say that *onomata* and *rhēmata* have a meaning only in as much as they are a subject and predicate in a communion of predication<sup>20</sup>. This is what we called Plato's transitive structure of language before. If we follow Ryle's conceptualization of letters here, we can say that *onomata* and *rhēmata* can be abstracted but not extracted as they originally belong to judgments<sup>21</sup>.

At this point, we can refer to the idea of the concept (*begrifflichkeit*) developed by Immanuel Kant in his *Critique of Pure Reason*: "We can, however, trace all actions of the understanding back to judgments, so that the understanding in general can be represented as a faculty for judging. For according to what has been said above it is a faculty for thinking. Thinking is cognition through concepts"<sup>22</sup> (KrV, A68/B93). Kant, who defines concepts as functions of judgments, constructs them in such a way that we can only understand them in the correlations of judgment that have a synthetic structure. Thus, it is not possible to grasp concepts without functions of judgments (KrV, A68/B93; B128). Parallel to Kant, Plato also puts forth an idea of "name" that functions as a *logos* and is always found in *logoi*. Plato's tendency to only position names in judgments is also clearly revealed in the search of the sophist which is the main issue of the dialogue: "...we seek what the sophist is and make him visible in a *logos*. In fact, for now, our communion is only in his name. But the function (*ergon*), that we call by it, is perhaps different for each of us. However, for everything, it is always necessary to agree on (*synomologeîn*) the *pragma*

<sup>20</sup> Crivelli (2019) interprets these lines (262c2-4) in a similar way by developing the concept of the predicative elliptical use of "to be". See Crivelli, P., "Plato's Philosophy of Language", in: Fine, G. (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Plato*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019, pp. 481-506.

<sup>21</sup> I think that lectures, such as Hoekstra and Scheppers (2003), that assume that *onoma* and *rhēma* precede *logos* cannot explain the implication that meaningful elements combine to form meaningless *logoi*. Cf. Hoekstra, M., Scheppers, F., "Ὄνομα, ῥήμα et λόγος dans le Cratyle et le Sophiste de Platon. Analyse du lexique et analyse du discours", in: *L'antiquité classique*, v. LXXII (2003), pp. 55-73.

<sup>22</sup> All translations of the *Critique of Pure Reason* belong to Guyer, P. & Wood, A., (ed.) *Kant, Immanuel. Critique of Pure Reason*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

(thing, that which has been done, act) itself through *logos* rather than a name alone without a *logos*<sup>23</sup> (218c-d).

At the beginning of the *Sophist*, Stranger, who puts forward the problem, aims to find the name of the sophist wrapped with a *logos* but not “without *logos*”. In doing this, he desires to arrive at the activity (*ergon*) that the name sophist carries. An *ergon* can only be captured in a *logos* since the communion of a subject and *praxis* only occurs in a *logos*. At the end of the text, Stranger achieves this goal by providing a *logos* that captures the activity of the sophist (*Soph.*, 268c5-d4).

Thus, *onomata* and *rhēmata* are seen as such only when they function as a correlation and are surrounded by a *logos*; they are located in a web of correlation<sup>24</sup>. In this regard, our subsequent separates use of them separately should be seen as an abstraction, not an extraction. This approach is opposed to classical Aristotelian logic and substance theory. According to Aristotle, there is a drastic distinction between what is said separately and what is said together, the latter being composed of the former (*Categoriae*, 1a15-19).

What is said separately emerged initially from the first universals (*proto katholou*) that are produced from the *pathēmata* left in the soul by the separated substances (*ousiai chōristes*), to which everything is predicated in nature (*Metaphysica*, Δ 8, 1017b25-26; *APr.*, I 27, 43a25-43a36). *Nous* (reason) draws them through the process of *epagōgē* (induction). Then, these universals are used as elements/principles of the *logos* and later of the syllogisms as they are part of the *epistēmē*. The synthetic *epistēmē* level, which works with the predicate system, is based on these isolated universals, which precede the predicate system. So, these universals owe their independent individuality and origin to the entities that exist on their own, that is, to substances (*APo.*, II 19, 100a-100b15).

In this sense, we can position Aristotelian thought in the second ontological hypothesis (pseudo-Plato): The entities as individuals that do not mix with each other. On the contrary, according to Plato, everything (composed of all kinds) is caught in communion by *logos*. Parallel to this idea, *onomata* and *rhēmata* are only found in *logos*. Instead, Aristotle defines the *logos* not as a predication of *names*, but as the sound that is meaningful on its own when divided into parts (*De Interpretatione* 4, *Poetica* 20). With this definition, which is strange at first glance, Aristotle allows the *logos* to be groups of names

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<sup>23</sup> The translation is mine.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. *Cra.* (387c-387d), where naming is defined as *ergon*.

without copula, apart from the judgments bearing copula. As the *Poetics XX* shows, Aristotle did not limit the definition of *logos* only to the communion of *onoma* and *rhēma* as predication but expanded it to *onoma* groups, since the definitions (*horos*) that do not carry predicate or copula are also *logoi*. The definitions are then *logoi* that the names point to, and they are not judgments. This Aristotelian idea is the opposite of Plato's ontology of communion of *genē*, in which the *logoi* conjoin *genē*. The idea assumes that the names that are not caught in the judgments still refer to objects captured as fixed extractable entities in the outside world, which has been the dominant philosophical view for centuries and the basic assumption of substance metaphysics. However, according to Plato, things gain their singularity and identity in relation to each other. Plato clearly states this structure of the *logos* in the following passage of the *Sophist*: "Visitor: Yes, my friend, for certainly trying to separate off everything from everything not only strikes the wrong note in other respects, but above all is the mark of a completely uncultivated (*amousikos*) and unphilosophical (*aphilosophos*) person. Theaetetus: Why so? Visitor: If one separates each thing off from everything, that completely and utterly obliterates any discourse (*logos*), since it is the interweaving of forms that gives us the possibility of talking to each other in the first place" (259d-e).

Plato states in the passage that we would be both *amousikos* and *aphilosophos*, and would have worked against harmony, if we had not had the connection of *logos*, which connects things in a synthetic relationship and captures them as one in this relationship. He states that he will lose the title of *mousikos*, which signifies the activities that make humans human, and that without *logos*, man will leave his humanity and will not be able to catch the harmony of *to pan*. Thus, he will not be able to capture individual things and the relations between them, which basically means that there will be no knowledge. Kant expresses this point in the Critique of Pure Reason as follows: "If every individual representation were entirely foreign to the other, as it were isolated and separated from it, then there would never arise anything like cognition, which is a whole of compared and connected representations" (KrV A97). By comparing this with the aforementioned passage of the *Sophist*, we can see that Kant admirably translated in modern language what Plato meant by *amousikos* and *aphilosophos*. In other words, both philosophers believe that things cannot be known in isolation and without the relation of *logos*, as in this case there would be no knowledge. This idea is entirely parallel to the communion of articulation that we defined in the letters. Just as letters can

only come together in names through articulation and can be thought of as one by abstraction, names too can only emerge in judgments but can be grasped as isolated ones through abstraction.

### 3. Accord (*homologia*) of *logoi*

The research on the communion of letters as articulation in names, and the communion of names as predicates in *logoi*, can only be completed by considering how the communion of *logoi* takes place. To examine this communion, we will consult Plato's very interesting concept of *homologia*. The concept of *homologia* is so important to the dialogue that the *Sophist's* opening sentence begins with it (216a), and it is repeated frequently throughout the text (241e, 249e, 260a). It has several aspects.

1.- First aspect: While the *logoi* separate and combine ideas, they do it in accord/agreement with their nature (*Crat.*, 387c-390e)<sup>25</sup>, for which Plato often uses the concept of harmony. This also necessitates the successive *logoi* to be homologous/harmonic with each other. Since *kinds* (*ta genē*) preserve their identity only in harmonic communion with each other, *logoi* can remain harmonic to kinds that they connect only in such an agreement<sup>26</sup>. In this sense, each *logos* finds its meaningful place only when the whole of the language is connected to in a harmonic and homologous way. Plato explains this side of *logos* in passage 253: "So then given that we've agreed that kinds too mix in such ways as these must a person not have some sort of expertise to progress in his arguments (*logos*) if he is going to show correctly which sorts of kinds are in harmony with which and which are not receptive to each other, and further, whether there are some that hold them together, running through them in such a way as to make them capable of mixing; and again, in cases where they divide off, whether there are others similarly running through them all that cause the division?" (253b9-c3).

The function of the *logos* here can be seen as closer to consciousness or mind –which makes conceptual distinctions and separates objects as we position them today– but, in a way, without subjectivity<sup>27</sup>. The *logos/onoma*

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. Sedley, D., *Plato's Cratylus*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 55-58.

<sup>26</sup> We should understand it as a radical ontological coherence, but not as a dianoetic coherence as Ferrari (2019) classifies it. See Ferrari, F., "Homologia e dialettica in Platone", in: Serra, F. (ed.), *Antiquorum Philosophia: An International Journal*, v. XIII (2019), p. 41.

<sup>27</sup> In his article, Moravcsik (1960) also characterizes the non-subjective nature of the connection of *eidōs* as follows: "It says, rather, that discourse becomes possible for us on account of the interwovenness of the Forms. What we human beings do is the interweaving of speech-elements.



system, which enables us to capture a human as an individual, gives, on the one hand, the possibility of separating/associating the concept of human from/with other concepts, and, on the other hand, of separating this singular human from those objects and keeping it in relation to them.

To further explain the first sense of *homologia*, we can refer to Plato's conceptualization of the dialectics or *epistēmē* of free people, that is, philosophers: "Visitor: Are we not going to claim that dividing according to kinds, and not thinking either that the same form is different or, when it is different, that it is the same, belongs to expertise in dialectic?... Visitor: The person who can (*dynatos*) do this is then surely well enough equipped to see when one form is spread all through many, each of them standing separately, or when many forms that are different from one another are embraced from the outside by one; or again when one is connected as one through many forms, themselves wholes, or when many forms are completely divided off and separate. This is all a matter of knowing how to determine, kind by kind, how things can or cannot combine... Visitor: And this matter of dialectic you'll not, I think, attribute to anyone but the philosopher, with his pure and justified love of wisdom (253c5-e5)".

In these passages, a dialectician is defined as a person having the power (*dynatos*) to separate those things that are separate, keep those same things together and create relations between these entities. Therefore, dialectics is defined as this power (*dynamis*). To shed light on this definition, we can ask the following question: How is *dynamis* defined in the *Sophist*, and in what way is it used?

In the dialogue, Plato defines "being" as having *dynamis* and "having *dynamis*" as affecting (*poiein*) or being affected (*pathein*; 247d-e). In parallel, in passage 248e, Plato defines knowing as affecting. Based on the definition of *epistēmē* as power and power as affecting and being affected, we will try to understand *epistēmē* through the concepts of affecting and being affected. If we accept that *epistēmē* has two aspects, one active and other passive, we must keep in mind that, contrary to this, Plato generally states in his other texts that the activity of knowing is a passive process in which the soul is affected by the *eidē* (*Phaid.*, 79d; *Polit.*, 511d, *Phil.*, 39a). Instead, we can see that in the *Sophist* Plato has added an active meaning to the concept of knowing and has not limited it to a passivity. The activities of separating the existents and

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The interwovenness of the Forms is hardly the result of our efforts; it is rather a condition which makes our efforts possible". See Moravcsik, J. M. E., "ΣΥΜΠΛΟΚΗ ΕΙΔΩΝ and the Genesis of ΛΟΓΟΣ", in: *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, v. XLII, 2 (1960), pp. 117-129.



gathering them together in their relations in terms of *logos* are seen as an active activity in this text.

This is where the meaning of the *logos* comes into play: presenting the singularities of the whole as harmonically in relation to each other, separating the different and combining the identical. In this sense, dialectics is not a special, local or technical knowledge: it is the knowledge of the things that are the basis of all knowledge as it relates to itself. We can see it as equivalent to the *epistēmē* that Aristotle establishes in *Metaphysics' Gamma*, which knows being as being, since this *epistēmē* examines not being as a specific aspect of being but as being itself. Both *epistēmai* aim to function as the most general and non-localized knowing, providing us with the basis of knowing. Consequently, dialectics, namely the *epistēmē* of the free people, makes *logoi* and names homologous to the harmony and segmentation of *pragmata*. Therefore, the meaning of the first aspect of *homologia* is having made *logos* harmonic to *pan*, which is composed of *ta pragmata* through the power of *epistēmē*.

2.- The second aspect of *homologia* is advancing both sides in a conversation and reaching a mutual agreement (*synomologia*), since the basic function of the *logos*, the language, is the agreement of reciprocal sides. Agreement of the sides can mean two things. On the one hand, it can occur as a person talking to himself, as Plato defines thought (which is intertwined with the first aspect of the concept; *Theaetetus*, 189e-190a). On the other hand, it can occur as sides that are in agreement/homologous at the moment of dialogue, which also allows dialectics to be realized.

As we said, the *Sophist* starts from *homologia* and ultimately aims to agree on the *logos* of “sophist”. In this sense, the condition and *telos* of dialectical dialogue is *homologia*<sup>28</sup>. At the end of the text, the concept of sophist wrapped in *logos* is placed harmonically with its *ergon*, and the parties agree on this. In this sense, the dialogue takes the *homologia* itself (216a) as the *telos* (241e, 249e, 260a).

This *homologia* is provided not by the personal positions of the parties but by the activity of the name that is surrounded by *logos*. To explain the second aspect of *homologia*, we need to refer to the *Gorgias* 487d-e: “And that you are indeed able to be outspoken and not to feel shame, you yourself assert, and the speech (*logos*) that you were making a little while ago agrees with (*homologeîn*) you. So this is how it stands now about these things: when you

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<sup>28</sup> See Mouze's (2019) commentary of the *Sophist*. Cf. Mouze, L., *Platon. Le Sophiste*, Paris: Le Livre de Poche, 2019, p. 200.

agree with (*homologeîn*) me on something in the speeches (*logos*), this will at last have been sufficiently tested by you and me, and there will be no further need to carry it back to another touchstone. For you would never have conceded it either through a lack of wisdom or through an excess of sense of shame, nor again would you concede it to deceive me; for you are a friend to me, as you yourself say. Your and my agreement, therefore, will really at last attain the goal (*telos*) of truth"<sup>29</sup> (487d-e).

Dialectically written dialogues work on the principle of mutual *homologia*/agreement since language is what provides mutual understanding. In this regard, we can talk about the political role of the *logos* as it is employed by the citizens of the *polis*. The *logos* attains genuine *homologia* in people's external and objective agreement in mutual dialogue, rather than in one person thinking alone<sup>30</sup>. In this regard, the first sense of *homologia* constitutes the basis of the second and final sense of agreement/*homologia*. This is because, in the Platonic position, *homologia* cannot be reached by departing from subjective positions but can only be reached by departing from an objective position that corresponds to the harmony of *to pan*. Therefore, attaining the *homologia* through *logos* will permit us to reach the *homologia* through dialogue<sup>31</sup>.

As a result, we can say that the third aspect of linguistic *koinōnia* is *logos* gaining its singularity and meaning in *homologia*/accord/consensus. This initially occurs when the *logoi* attain harmony with one another and with everything/*to pan* and ultimately occurs as the real meaning of language: mutual agreement in dialogue as *synomologia*.

#### 4. Conclusion

To conclude, I would say that, according to Plato's *Sophist*, the three aspects of linguistic *koinōnia* –the articulation of letters, the predication of names, and the *homologia* (accord) of *logoi*– share similar whole-part dynamics

<sup>29</sup> Translations of the *Gorgias* are taken from Nichols, J. H., *Gorgias and Phaedrus: Rhetoric, Philosophy, and Politics*, New York: Cornell University Press, 1998, with minor modifications indicated.

<sup>30</sup> Declaring that he left all kinds of knowledge aside and obeyed the order to know himself, in the same dialogue Socrates tells his interlocutor "Oh Phaedrus, if I don't know Phaedrus, I have forgotten even myself" (*Phaedrus*, 228a). This can also be interpreted as a principle of *homologia* as the knowing can happen thanks to a reciprocity between the interlocutors in a dialogue but not within an individual soul or within a consciousness by itself.

<sup>31</sup> We can call the latter *synomologia* since *synomologia*, by containing the prefix *sun* (with, together), means agreement with one another. For occurrences of the concept throughout the dialogue, see 218c, 221a, 248a, 249e, 262b et 263c.

which have the same synthetic structure. Unlike formal languages, the Platonic *logos* cannot be established from its parts or from its totality but can only be discovered as a system already working and including all its whole-part relations. The three different levels of *koinōnia* in language can only happen thanks to each other, and none of them can precede the other, neither logically nor ontologically. Thus, unlike modern formal logic, all these levels of linguistic *koinōnia* necessarily require each other<sup>32</sup>.

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