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BRATISLAVA INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF LIBERAL ARTS

The Problem of Perception in Platonic and Kantian Thought

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Declaration of Originality

I declare that this Bachelor Thesis “The Problem of Perception in Platonic and Kantian Thought” is my own work and has not been published in part or in whole elsewhere. All used literature and other sources are attributed and cited in references.

Bratislava, 30 April 2012

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Abstract

Title of the Thesis: The Problem of Perception in Platonic and Kantian Thought
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This thesis will examine the problem of perception in Platonic and Kantian thought. The purpose of this work is to explore the problem of perception in the accounts of these two authors, with the intention of showing that Plato's ideas may challenge Kant's teaching on the subject.

First of all, Plato and Kant cannot be treated as being in direct opposition. They obviously lived in totally different eras and had been influenced by different things, but it is still possible to discuss their respective accounts and their solutions, as well as to point out differences between them. The synergy of those two understandings can give us a new, better look on the studied topic.

In the second part, Plato's account on perception shall be presented and explained. This part will include a discussion of Plato's *Republic*, as well as a discussion of his other work, *Theaetetus*. *Theaetetus* will be very important, because Plato dedicates this dialog almost exclusively to the perception problem. After this part, Plato's *Republic* will be discussed, which will serve to depict Plato's solution to the problem.

In the third part, Kant's understanding will be explained. Works serving to depict Kant's account will be his *Prolegomena*, which presents the basics of his account. But to describe the specifics of his account, it will be necessary to use his *Critique of Pure Reason*, where his ideas originate.

In the following part, the main similarities and differences will be discussed and the final section will be dedicated to implicit criticisms found in both accounts based on the account of the other author. This part will try to prove the thesis, that Plato's ideas may challenge Kant's understanding. Plato's understanding stands its ground and does not produce inconsistencies, like the Kantian account does. Moreover, Kant

forgets to mention some serious aspects that go to the heart of the problem, and though these aspects may seem irrelevant to some, they are not for Plato and rightfully so.

Abstrakt

Názov práce: Problém zmyslového vnímania v učení Platóna a Kanta.

Meno: Tomáš Beniak

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Stupeň odbornej kvalifikácie: Bakalár (Bc.)

Táto práca sa bude zaoberať problémom zmyslového vnímania v učení Platóna a Kanta. Zámerom tejto práce bude študovať problém zmyslového vnímania v kontexte učení týchto dvoch autorov a následne sa bude snažiť dokázať, že Platónove myšlienky môžu poukázať na chybné argumenty v Kantovom systéme.

Je dôležité si uvedomiť, že Platón a Kant nemôžu byť braní ako priama opozícia k sebe navzájom v danej téme, samozrejme žili v rozličných časoch a boli ovplyvnení rozdielnymi vecami, ale stále je možné tieto dva pohľady prediskutovať a ukázať, aké mali k danému problému riešenia a následne poukázať na ich vzájomné nezrovnalosti. Nakoniec môže štúdium tejto témy a týchto dvoch autorov ponúknuť nový širší pohľad na študovanú tému.

Druhá časť sa bude venovať Platónovmu vysvetleniu danému problému. Táto časť bude obsahovať diskusiu o Platónovej Republike, rovnako ako diskusiu o Platónovom dialógu Theaetetus, ktorý bude veľmi dôležitý pretože v tomto dialógu sa Platón venuje hlavne problému zmyslového vnímania. Ďalšia časť bude venovaná Platónovej Republike, na základe ktorej bude vysvetlené Platonové riešenie hlavného problému.

Tretia časť sa bude zaoberať Kantovým chápaním problému. V tejto časti budú použité Kantové práce Prolegomena a Kritika čistého rozumu. Prolegomena bude slúžiť na vysvetlenie základov jeho chápania a Kritiku čistého rozumu bude potrebné použiť, pretože jeho základné myšlienky pochádzajú z tejto práce.

V nasledovnej časti budú ukázané základné podobnosti a rozdiely medzi týmito dvoma chápaniami. Záverečná časť sa bude zaoberať implicitnými kritikami oboch autorov na základe chápania druhého autora. Táto časť sa bude snažiť dokázať

tézu tejto práce, že Platónove myšlienky môžu poukázať na chyby v argumentoch Kanta. Zároveň Kant nejde k základu problému, čo je veľkým nedostatkom v jeho chápaní.

Foreword

There are a lot of questions in the area of philosophy. One of these questions is focused around the area of studies of knowledge. What is knowledge? How do we attain knowledge? These are just examples. This thesis is focused on the question of what is knowledge, specifically on whether knowledge is perception. There are two great authors who also focused on this question, Plato and Immanuel Kant, and these two will be examined in this thesis. Although Plato and Kant have been compared many times before, I intend to contrast them specifically on the issue of certain paradoxes each reveals in the other on the question of perception's relationship to knowledge.

The topic of this thesis was determined by the author's passion in philosophy, even though it was difficult to find a good topic to write about, this one surely seemed as one of the best choices to make. A topic that deals with such a fundamental question of what is knowledge is just a fascinating and a great thing to study and explore. After some initial research, it was certain that this is the right one, the main topic being the problem of perception. The author was inspired to return to Plato's analysis of perception because, in his own readings in philosophy thus far, he found this analysis to have been neglected. The purpose of this thesis is for the author to examine Plato and Kant and their own terms in the hopes of arriving at an original understanding of the problem of perception. Thus, even though the author has examined a few secondary sources for the sake of developing some background on the topic, the thesis will not include secondary sources, but will simply focus on four key primary texts.

The author is grateful to all the professors that were teaching him for almost last three years. They were all helpful in many different ways, but most importantly they provided guidance towards the right path in studies, as a good professor should. Finally, the biggest thanks goes to Matthew Post, ABD, who as a consultant of this thesis, but also as a teacher for last two years, done incredible amounts of work in form of comments, criticisms and advices and this thesis would have never seen a light of day without his help.

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Chapter 1 The Problem of Perception in Platonic and Kantian Thought

1.1 Introduction

Questions about knowledge, what it is, how to attain it and others are really interesting. Not only they are interesting to study, but they also seem to be somehow the most important questions one should ask before asking any other question, literally any other question. The reason behind this would be obvious is that one should firstly know what is that thing one is trying to understand and it is called knowledge, because everything is a concern of knowledge, everything around us, everything in us. And even if one succeeds in doing this, he or she has to ask how do I attain this knowledge? Is it a long process, or an immediate process, complicated or easy one? The point is that questions about knowledge are so basic that we need to first answer questions about it, before asking questions afterwards. Of course, there were some great minds, which were bothered by these questions and other concerning knowledge a lot. Some of them are Plato, Spinoza, Leibniz, Hume, Kant and others. One can picture Socrates in Plato's dialogs how he always almost torture his discussing partners, driving them to the very basic of their arguments, where he usually finds their weak points. So similarly one should go from the very foundation and ask these important questions about knowledge itself first. Also our knowledge is tied up to our actions, or in other words what we know, or think we know has crucial relevance to how we act. Knowledge and action are two sides of the same coin, one cannot divide them and also for that reason it is important to pursue knowledge to its foundations, because it would have potential to change our actions.

There is a lot to resolve in the area of epistemology, but this thesis will be focusing mainly on the so-called Problem of Perception. Let's first resolve what the problem itself is. Apparently by perception is meant sense perception, so awareness of things around us through the senses, namely by sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste. These are our senses and we enter the reality through them, don't we? Well imagine if you are asked this question: "How do we access the outside world, the information in it?" The intuitive answer and maybe right answer to that question is that we access the outside world through the senses. One could argue that most people would think of this answer. But if it is really so, if senses are intuitively our tools to access reality,

can one be sure of anything? We can dream, we can hallucinate, we can perceive things as they are not, there are examples of this, one of them called Necker cube, or Penrose triangle (impossible triangle), or we can perceive them in a way other would not see them. There are colorblind people; there are people who taste sweet instead of bitter. And also when people have some kind of sickness their perception can be different than that of the others. How are we to explain these instances, if we believe that perception is our access to reality and now we see that it can either deceive us, or it can vary among others who access the reality.

This is basically the description of the Problem of Perception. It is definitely not an easy task to settle such a problem and it is also not a purpose of the thesis to do that. This thesis will examine how in different times in history philosophers dealt with this problem. Specifically, it will study Platonic and Kantian accounts of this problem. Kant seems to be more influential at present than is Plato on the epistemological problems and the perception problem as well. One can only guess why that is the case, maybe Plato has nothing to offer to the discussion, or his ideas are overlooked and should not be. So the main purpose of this thesis is to study whether Plato's account would add anything to the perception understanding, or not. And if it is the former, not only the conclusion would be that Plato may challenge Kant in this question, but also one can then maybe produce a more accurate account of the perception.

Plato gives one of the most profound accounts on the knowledge topic in general from the ancient times, his understanding is very complex and he pays a lot of attention to the perception topic, which is very important. The main texts used will be *The Republic* and *Theaetetus*. In books V, VI, VII of the *Republic* Plato discusses knowledge, different kinds of knowledge and especially how we attain it. The *Theaetetus* is almost exclusively dedicated to the perception problem, where Plato debates whether knowledge is perception. In these two texts, Plato presents a very profound account on the topics around knowledge and as one shall see they should not be overlooked.

Immanuel Kant is of the most influential modern contributors to the epistemology as a whole. The key works will be his *Prolegomena*, which will serve to depict Kant's account on the problem. *Prolegomena* is a *Critique of Pure Reason* put

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into simpler form that is why it will be of great use, because it will make his understanding easier to comprehend. And Critique of Pure Reason will be the second, because they are some crucial aspects to Kant's arguments which originate in Critique, so it is better to trace them down there.

So this thesis will discuss these two authors and their respective accounts on the perception problem. After analyzing both respective accounts, it will try to prove that Plato and his ideas can challenge Kant's, because they highlight and stress aspects of the problem that are not discussed, or developed by Kant and should be and using his account one can challenge Kant's account, which then may turn out to be paradoxical, if not outright self-contradictory.

To support the thesis these main arguments will be used.

1. Kant's account does not develop the aspect of the problem as Plato does.
2. Based on Plato, one can criticize Kant and his notion of things themselves, which would provide a very strong argument against Kantian understanding.
3. Kant distinguishes between subject and object in his account of perception and knowledge and this distinction is not even justified by him, it is taken for granted. It is not needed to introduce subject and object and moreover it is a threat to Kant's whole explanation and Plato's arguments may subvert this distinction as a whole.
4. Platonic ideas give alternative account of how perceptions, both intelligible and sensible occurs.

Methodologically, the first part will be focused on Plato and his account, his explanation of the problem of perception and his solution to it. Next part will be focused around Kant and how he explains and deals with this problem. Last part will study implied critique of both account based on the opposite one. Most importantly, there are four sources this thesis will use, only mentioned primary sources. There was no need to include secondary sources, or interpretation sources as they are also called, because that would only restrain the possibilities for interpretation. Because if interpretation sources would be used, the interpretation would focus around what has been said and what would be fit in. There is no intention to include secondary sources

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in the thesis, because it is unnecessary, this thesis is focused around analyzing primary sources for its purposes.

Chapter 2 Preliminary understandings

2.1 Preliminary understanding of Plato's account

This part will be dedicated to the analysis of Plato's understanding of perception.

Plato discusses perception mainly in his dialog the *Theaetetus*, it is only natural for him to do so, because perception is something that one needs to explain if he wants to give an account of knowledge in general. In this dialog one of the main speakers is Theaetetus and the dialog was obviously called after him. And Theaetetus is the one who suggests that knowledge is perception. He does so at the beginning of the dialog, as a response to Socrates's question of what is knowledge. And after this point Socrates is trying to explain to Theaetetus why the idea that perception is knowledge is problematic.

2.1.1 Plato's explanation of perception

This is probably the most important part of Plato's account, because he actually describes the process of how perception occurs.

Let's explain it step by step. Imagine a space with two sides, with a division line in the middle. Eye is on one side; and on the other side is a thing/object that commensurates with the eye, this thing can be basically anything, it is not important. Eye and this thing consort (or hit each other so to say) and sight is generated on the side of the eye and for example, whiteness (Socrates uses this example too) is generated on the side of the thing. After the sight is generated eye is full of sight (so it actually sees) and becomes eye-seeing. Then eye gets filled with whiteness and whiteness then becomes white (Plato, 1986, 156d, e).

This is how Socrates describes the process of sight perception. And there are reasons why such an explanation refutes that perception is knowledge. Socrates suggests that it is unstable and any true knowledge cannot be attained in this way. Unstable, because it is a process, a process full of changes. In the citation below Socrates says, that the result and the process can be always different and can vary. And what is most important for Socrates is that the process is actually motion, and if we deem motion as something unstable, one cannot attain a stable truth of anything. So one cannot attain a truth of anything, because truth is stable and perception is a motion, which is unstable. One can say that motion can be considered stable, when it exhibits

consistent pattern. But only the pattern is considered stable, not the motion, because it is the nature of motion to be unstable.

“Whenever, then, an eye and something else of the things commensurate with it consort and generate the whiteness and perception cognate with it, *which would never have come to be if each of the two of them had come to anything else...*(Plato, 1986, 156d, emphasis added).” .

But what this account reveals is that, if one describes perception like this, the logical outcome is that perception cannot be knowledge, because what Socrates observes in this explanation could not be experienced through the senses. One does not literally see how the eye and the thing consort with each other, because there is no third entity which observes the process as an omniscient being, and only this omniscient entity would be able to determine what is affected and what affects, one as an entity that is part of this process cannot determine either side. Or put differently, one cannot know what happens before eye and the thing consort (consort can be described as a clash), because all we have experience of is the clash itself, this is what the explanation says, but somehow Plato gives an account of something that is not possible to perceive. We do not perceive what precedes the clash, because the clash generates perception itself. So, if Socrates’ account of perception here were true, then it would be impossible to *know* or to *confirm* that it was true. So if one does not want to trap himself inside a paradox while arguing what is knowledge, he should agree that perception is not knowledge, because such paradoxes would arise frequently, this is also the reason why they drop this argument in the dialog, because they realized it cannot be proven (Plato, 1986, 156a).

2.1.2 Discussion of possible criticism

One can say that the eye is affected because the light hits the object and then the light reflects from it and hits the eye. So light can help one to explain how eye can still be the affected one, while the object is affecting. The object is affecting in this scenario with the help of light, which transfers the information to the eye. If one interprets the perception in this way, it is not problematic from the point of view Plato proposes, because eye is affected and so stable, which means one can attain a truth, which is stable. But there is a problem with such explanation and that is, how do we come about to such explanation, this is connected to argument from previous

paragraph. If this interpretation would be correct then all that happens is light hitting the eye, which would mean that it is impossible to perceive events before the light hits the eye. So one cannot perceive events explained in the interpretation above, one cannot perceive how light hits the objects and then travels to the eye and hits it, because eye only perceives the final act of light hitting the eye. Or in other words, to perceive the light hitting the eye, one somehow needs to perceive how light is hitting another eye, but one can only perceive that because the light from that process is hitting ones eye. So in the process described above is impossible to tell whether it happens or not. So this counter-argument fails.

If the example of light is introduced to counter the criticism above, it creates another criticism towards Plato's account. This criticism attempts to prove that Plato's account ends up in paradox too. In the explanation in section two, it is mentioned, that the eye and the thing/object consort. This means that they clash and that creates sensory perception. And if that is true, how can one know what happens before the clash, before they consort. Because, as mentioned earlier, all we have experience of is the clash itself, but Plato gives an account of something that is not possible to perceive. This is why it is similar to light example above, because we only perceive the moment when light hits the eye, not how it travels and the same was. applied now, we do not perceive what proceeds clash, because the clash generates perception itself. Plato dealt with this criticism quite simply; they dropped the point in the dialog (Plato, 1986, 157c,d).

2.1.3 Discussion about Being in Theaetetus

Being is the crucial term, because it shows how Plato solves the problem of perception itself. It also illustrates how smoothly Plato transitions from *Theaetetus* to the *Republic*, where he develops his arguments further and discusses questions that arise from such solution.

In the *Theaetetus* Socrates discusses being towards the end of the debate about perception as knowledge. What happens is that Theaetetus and Socrates agree that senses examine things in particular, and the soul examines the similarities between things (Plato, 1986, 185e). Socrates then transforms this statement, when he says in experience is not knowledge, (so in examining things in particular) by which he means sense perception, because one obviously experiences the world around himself

through the senses, but in reasoning about them (experiences) there is knowledge, so in examining similarities between things there is knowledge (Plato, 1986, 186d).

But what Socrates means by saying examining similarities between things? It can be interpreted that examining similarities between things means to look for a form independent of things and that is actually what Socrates had in mind. Consider this example, one has several kinds of materials, such as wood, stone and clay. To each of them one would picture the same object. If done so, each of them would then have something in common and it would be that picture of the object and because one can say that, Plato claims that common thing is the being/form and it is independent by its own. So when Plato says being, he also means form, which is for him only real knowledge. This is good to keep in mind for better understanding.

Now with this set, Socrates asks Theaetetus where would he place being. Theaetetus replies that he would place it to where soul aims at (Plato, 1986, 186a). So the being is not placed to the soul, but rather to things towards which soul aims at. One could have asked now, how is the point that the soul examines similarities between things connected to where is being placed. But in the next paragraph in the dialog, one can see that examining similarities between things and reasoning about them that is actually thinking about their being.

“It’s my opinion that it’s the being of these things in their mutual relations which the soul most especially examines.” (Plato, 1986, 186b)

Later on Socrates connects being to examining similarities between things, he makes a statement that being is truth and truth is knowledge. And on the basis of previous arguments they made, Socrates asks Theaetetus if it is possible to hit upon the truth if one does not hit upon being and Theaetetus replies that it is impossible. And because they agreed that senses look at things in particular, not on the similarities between them (that would mean the being), they conclude that perception is not knowledge. Since senses (perception) cannot hit upon being, they cannot hit upon truth and hence they cannot hit upon knowledge. (Plato, 1986, 186c,d)

2.1.4 Knowledge, Perception and Being in the *Republic*

As mentioned before, Plato extends his ideas on perception and mainly on knowledge as such in the *Republic*. He resumes his discussion about being and also

debates perception in the different manner than in *Theaetetus*, because his main point in the *Republic* is to present how we acquire knowledge, so he has to explain what role our senses play in this question and that is different from *Theaetetus*, where he solely discussed whether senses have the most important role in acquiring knowledge. It is important to clarify, that knowledge must be of what is unchanging for Plato.

First of all, Plato makes a point, almost the same as in *Theaetetus* he just formulates it differently that knowledge is tied to being. In the Book V of the *Republic* Socrates makes a division between knowledge and opinion, saying that they are naturally dependent on different things. What is important is that knowledge is apparently dependent on what *is*, so in other words on what exist, has existence and in other words dependent on being (Plato, 1968, 477e, 478a). Opinion on the other hand is dependent on what is coming into being, but it is also tied to the vision (so form of perception). As can be seen in the citation below, Socrates states that sense cannot attain what *is* (being, knowledge), and in this respect vision and opinion are the same, because they both cannot obtain knowledge. "...and you must consider, testing them with the power of dialectic, who is able to release himself from the eyes and the rest of sense and go to that which *is* in itself and accompanies truth." (Plato, 1968, 537e)

As was mentioned earlier Plato expands on the problem, debating where the being came from and also how to attain knowledge. On the first matter, for Plato being is the consequence of the good and good is also more than being, it exceeds being in dignity and power, as Socrates puts it (Plato, 1968, 509b). So in this respect Plato gives one an origin of the being, which could not be found in the *Theaetetus*.

In the Book VII of the *Republic* one can again see a connection to the being, but Plato does something different than in Book V. He distinguishes between intellection and opinion. Opinion is a combination of trust and imagination and it does not deal with being itself. Whilst intellection is a combination of knowledge and thought and it deals with being itself (Plato, 1968, 533e, 534a). So here Plato explains to a greater detail what can attain knowledge, and as was presented earlier, in *Theaetetus* he only says that soul attains knowledge, but now one has a clearer idea, that intellection is an activity carried out by the soul to acquire knowledge.

In the critical section of Book VI of the *Republic* Socrates creates four segments. He then explains these segments to Glaucon like this. The first two are in the realm of the

visible (sensual perception). These include: images such as shadows and appearances in water and those things of which there is a shadow, or a appearance in water, so material things, animals, plants, rocks and so on (Plato, 1968, 509d, 510a). The other two segments are in the intelligible section, where one part of the soul uses *hypotheses* (this word in Greek means “to set below”, but it can be translated also as *supposition*, for the sake of clarity) in an attempt to know something, but the soul goes a wrong way for Plato here (Plato, 1968, 510b). But the other part makes its way rightly, because it is free from the hypotheses (so from any suppositions) and is using forms themselves to investigate. The significant thing is that Plato says this part does not use images, as the other part of the soul, and that is the reason why this part of the soul can attain knowledge (Plato, 1968, 510b). What Plato says here, in a slightly difficult and implicit manner, is that one has to *release himself and his mind from the senses* to attempt to obtain knowledge. From this point in the discussion Socrates explains to Glaucon how one acquires knowledge. This is the key passage from his explanation, where he also explicitly says that anything sensed ruins the possibility to attain true knowledge.

“...making the hypotheses not beginnings but really hypotheses-that is, steppingstones and springboards-in order to reach what is free from hypothesis at the beginning of the whole. ... making no use of anything sensed in any way, but using forms themselves, going through forms to forms, it ends in forms too.” (Plato, 1968, 511b)

There is important thing to explain, which is how perception and opinion relate to intellection and knowledge. This is important, because from what has been said so far it may seem that for Plato activity of sensing is not at all important and activity of thinking is enough to attain to knowledge of ideas. While it is true that soul touches upon being and only by activity of thinking one can attain ideas, it would be false to claim that this alone is sufficient. Plato rather had in mind that perception has its role in this process. And that is important, it is a process for Plato and it has to start somewhere and the realm of visible is where one always starts. In other words one has to start and end in the realm of visible to carry on to next stage to intelligible realm. It is also important to explain, because to see how one “rises” from sensation to intellection is crucial to avoid another counter-argument, namely, that everything

above is simply made up by Socrates. How does he know there is such a thing as “being”?

“So also, when a man tries by discussion – by means of argument without the use of any sense – to attain to each thing itself that is and doesn’t give up before he grasps by intellection itself that which is good itself, *he comes to the very end of the intelligible realm just as that other man was then at the end of the visible.*” (Plato, 1968, 532a, emphasis added)

One can see that it is in fact journey one has to take to attain knowledge of ideas and all steps are necessary. The further present this argument it is necessary to explain a relevance of perception to opinion and intellection to knowledge. For Plato opinion consist of trust and imagination and intellection consist of knowledge and thought. While opinion has to do with things coming into being, intellection has to do with being (Plato, 1968, 533e, 534a). One uses intellection in the realm of intelligible and opinion in the realm of tangible, visible. It is already possible to see how Plato chooses his words, because he says opinion has to do with things *coming into* being, so it is obvious tangible things are connected to being, role of the visible is described as a first step. The former division is then put into two classes, class that is seen and class that is intellected. While opinion has to do with first class, intellection obviously is used in the other (Plato, 1968, 509d, 510a,b). This description shows how is perception related to opinion. Now it is necessary to explain how opinion relates to intellection and knowledge. Again opinion has to do with things coming into being, while intellection has to do with being.

“And opinion has to do with coming into being and intellection with being, and as being is to coming into being, so is intellection to opinion, and as intellection to opinion, so is knowledge to trust and thought and imagination.” (Plato, 1968, 534a)

From this citation it is clear that there is a very strong connection between opinion and intellection, which means that the realm of visible is connected to the realm of intelligible in a very important way for Plato and one cannot leave it out. Intellection is a process that needs to start in the realm of visible; it is not simply about the realm of intelligible and attaining ideas right away.

There is also other way to connect sensation to intellection. As mentioned, Plato distinguishes between opinion and intellection and on the side of opinion there is imagination and trust. The word for imagination, in this instance, can also be translated from greek as likeness, or similarity. And as was described earlier, this is where *Theaetetus* finishes the discussion, when soul is attributed the ability to examine similarities between things. So now in *Republic* the divided line between opinion and intellection starts of by connecting opinion (so perception too) to what has been before considered as what has the ability to attain knowledge, namely to soul. So it is obvious that the process of attaining knowledge starts in the realm of visible by examinations and then it carries on to the realm of intelligible.

In summary, the activity of sensing things belongs to the perception, but the world of experience is unstable, so any true knowledge is not possible to get from it, from perception. However, one attains true knowledge by the activity of thinking, carried out by the soul, which examine the similarities between things. Similarities meaning forms, or ideas, because only forms are stable and unchanging, unlike things in the outside world and that is why forms represent the only source of stable knowledge. Just for the clarification lets have one example. Form would be the beautiful itself, representing the idea of beautiful, unchanging idea. This form is manifested in many ways in the world of experience, always different and is unstable, for example beautiful paintings. So the form is what one has to seek to find what is unchanging, not what is already a manifestation of it. Also while one does not attain ideas through perception, perception has its place in the process of attaining them, activity of thinking is not enough. One need to start somewhere and then move on to next stages, as well as visible and intelligible realm are interconnected and cannot go apart one another.

2.1.5 Plato's solution to the problem of perception

Obviously Plato's solution to the problem of perception is simple, perception is not knowledge. But let's pose the main question again, how is one to know stable truth of anything if our senses can fool us (granting that through perception one accesses reality)?

Plato's answer being simple, one can attain truth, because perception is not knowledge, so what one perceives is not immediately knowledge. So even if

perception fools us, it is not that big blow to our capacity to acquire knowledge. Perception is not knowledge, because argument that perception is knowledge ends up in paradox, there are some truths, which cannot be attained through perception. Also Plato suggests that perception is a process, or motion and because of that one cannot attain any stable truth of anything from something that is so unstable. While perception by itself is not knowledge, it has its part in acquiring it.

How one then attains knowledge? For this reason Plato introduced the notion of being and division between what senses and soul examines, senses examine things in particular and soul examines similarities between things. Plato connects these similarities to being, so examining similarities is examining being as well. In light of the explanation in previous section, these similarities are perceived by the senses, because knowledge is connected to the opinion and other way round. Plato then connects being to truth and truth to knowledge. So he resolves the whole problem by putting the capacity to attain knowledge mainly to the soul and not to perception, while perception is still part of the process. Shortly, one has to reason about the information he gets, compare them and put them together (what they have in common), to be actually able to claim knowledge of anything and if one does that, s/he attains the forms, or ideas, which are the only stable knowledge. The process of attaining knowledge is also obvious from the *Republic*, where Socrates describes the how one comes from opinion and the visible to the intellection and the intelligible, where the true knowledge rests.

2.2 Preliminary understanding of Kant's account

This part will be dedicated to Kant's account and his solution. It will be presented that Kant takes a different approach. So the main task of this section will be to explain Kant's account clearly and simply, but sufficiently.

2.2.1 Main terms in Kant

First of all, some of the main terms in Kantian philosophy should be explained.

Synthetic and Analytic judgments

Kant distinguishes between analytic and synthetic judgments. Analytic judgments are those, when one does not need to compel to experience. One can

produce such judgement out of an analysis of the concept of the subject. For example: “All widows are woman.” A widow is, by definition, a woman whose spouse has died. Thus, if one would analyse the concept of widow, the result would be that only woman’s can be called widows. So one does not need to compel to any experience of the outside world, it is clear from the concepts that the statement is true. Now synthetic judgements are those, when one needs to compel to outer experience to produce such judgement. For example: “All seagulls are white.” To produce such judgement presupposes some experience with the subject contained in it, because the word white adds something new to the concept of seagulls. In other words, one can only produce such judgement when one had experience of seeing seagulls and their white colour (Kant, 2004, p.16).

A posteriori and A priori propositions

The two other important terms are a posteriori and a priori propositions and these are two possible sources of our knowledge. A posteriori is a knowledge that comes from empirical observation. A priori is a knowledge that comes before any experience.

Obviously synthetic judgements are connected to a posteriori knowledge and analytic judgments are connected to a priori knowledge. But one of Kant’s main goals was to find out how are synthetic a priori judgments possible? This was one of his main issues, but this will be mentioned and explained later. (Kant, 2004, p.17)

World of phenomena / Things in themselves

Kant most importantly distinguishes between the world of phenomena and the things in themselves (Kant, 2004, p. 111). World of phenomena is the world in which we live in, world of experience. Things in themselves are the ones which one cannot attain, they are hidden from us and one can never know them. Nevertheless, things in themselves are connected to things of experience, so they cannot be of angels and fairies, which do not exist (Kant, 2004, p110).

Objective and Subjective value

Even though Kant claims there is a world of phenomena and the world of things in themselves, he uses the words objective and subjective, both in respect to the

world of phenomena. One could say that is kind of strange, because the word objective signifies an ultimate value of judgment, if something is objectively true. But Kant uses the term objective also with respect to world of phenomena, which according to him does not give us, and cannot ever give us any knowledge that is only in the world of things in themselves. This is because he uses the world objective differently. Preliminary, Kant says that something is objective, when people agree that certain thing has certain qualities. And subjective judgment is when only one person claims a quality of certain object and there is no agreement to it (Kant, 2004, p52). If one says: "That chair is brown." It is a subjective judgment, but when more people agree with that person on that judgment, then the statement: "That chair is brown" becomes an objective judgement. One could say that to claim something has objective value only because certain number of people agreed upon it is a fallacy, there is still a possibility that the one who differs may be right. But Kant says that people agree upon some object's objective value, because that object is necessarily manifested in the way they perceive that object. It is necessarily manifested because of the law of causality. So if more people perceive that chair is brown, it is because the light hits the chair and reflects the colour to the eye, and that is the law of cause and effect. While the law of cause and effect may be the most important in this respect, it is even more important to note that the agreement of multiple perceptions that happen from different positions and also at different moments in time, suggests some consistency to the structure of experience. This is a crucial observation, because it suggests that Kant believes that objects in outer world have some stability to them, unlike what has been observed in Plato.

2.2.2 Kant's account of perception

Now in the world of phenomena Kant does think that perception is a tool through which one access the outside world (Kant, 2004, p.27). Nevertheless he does not think that perception equals knowledge, nor truth. He thinks that through perception we acquire only necessary information and after certain process we arrive at some knowledge. In this perception process Kant makes a distinction between the "subject" and the "object". Subject is the receiver of the information, so ourselves, and object is what is given to us, that which affects our senses (Kant, 2004, p41). So we are affected by objects as subjects, this is most important. As Kant puts it: "...in me, as a subject..., through which I am affected by objects (Kant, 2004, p.34). For Kant it is

obvious that the way, in which objects appear to us, is based on the objects, not on the senses.

Kant probably well understood, that only perception cannot lead us to knowledge, he admits that one can even be hallucinating, or be in the state of madness (Kant, 2010 p.203). So he also did not think of perception as something that is sufficient for having knowledge. He best expresses this opinion, when he discusses how one can understand nature.

“We cannot know nature based on experience, because experience is based on laws in nature, which lie a priori at the basis of its possibility (Kant, 2004, p.115).” So anything given in experience is not sufficient just by itself to strive for knowledge. There are a priori concepts and principles which are more important to attain knowledge, but that will be discussed later.

2.2.3 Notion of Understanding

Because Kant also does not think that perception is knowledge, he has to solve this problem of how then one attains any knowledge at all. For this reason he proposes the notion of understanding, which is the highest faculty of cognition.

Cognition arises for Kant from two sources, intuition and concepts. Intuition is appearance of a thing that is based on the senses. This is a stage when one does not come across knowledge. But when one receives the information from the object and then proceeds to think of it, then understanding is taking place, and this when cognition occurs, when objects are thought. As Kant puts it:

“By means of sensibility objects are given to us..., by the understanding they are thought (Kant, 2010, p.49,50).

And according to Kant, when intuition and concepts work together, cognition is possible. First stage has to occur, when objects are given to us and then second stage happens when object is thought by us. Kant then shows how are sensory intuitions and concepts different. While sensory intuitions rest on affectings, it is obvious why, the concepts rest in functions.

Kant then connects understanding to thinking and thinking to concepts. He says that understanding is a faculty of thinking and thinking is cognition through concepts.

Now then what is the function of the understanding, apparently one can think the object because of understanding, but that does not say anything about its function.

“Understanding put in order the elementary cognitions that dwell in it prior to all experience, but must have their application in experience” (Kant, 2004, p.114).

This is the function of the understanding, it puts together what is a priori with the experience, what is a posteriori. It will be more apparent what it really means when the discussion will swing to a priori principles needed for possibility of experience.

2.2.4 Notion of Synthesis

Now the discussion will continue to the notion of synthesis to finish the explanation from the previous part. Synthesis is, according to Kant, a function, which is carried out by the soul. He puts a large significance to it, because he also claims that without the synthesis, cognition would not be possible (Kant, 2010, p.93). Now what is synthesis, expect the function of the soul. In greek synthesis means “to set together”. But what does one “set together”?

“The schema of a triangle can never exist anywhere expect in thought, and it signifies a rule of synthesis of the imagination with respect to pure shapes in space” (Kant, 2010, p. 140).

So the schema, or form of an object exist in thought and one then set this schema, or form, together to the object in the outside world. This way one can distinguish something as being of a certain shape. This is what Kant had in mind, saying that appearances contain their form, which underlies them a priori. We got a priori the schemas, or forms of the objects as appearances in the outside world. Because schemata are in fact form of the appearance, but as will be seen they are significantly different from space and time, discussed in next section, because they are not necessary conditions for experience, schemata manifest under these necessary conditions.

2.2.5 Notions of Space And Time

These two terms prove to be of a very big significance in Kant’s account. First of all, it is important to explain how cognition relates to objects and also pure

intuitions should be mentioned, because it is related to Kant's claim that space and time are necessary conditions for the possibility of any experience.

First of all, space and time are not empirical concepts, which can be attained from the outer world. This is because one represents objects as outside of him/her. This means that space must already be there as a condition for our experience.

“Space and time are pure intuitions, which contain a priori the condition of the possibility of objects as phenomena.” (Kant 2010, p.104).

Space and time are, in this respect, a priori principles, and objects were given to us a posteriori through the senses. Kant's logic behind this is that one cannot ever form a representation of absence of space (Kant, 2010, p.52).

What that basically means, is that one cannot ever imagine a space without space, because that is obviously impossible, but one can imagine a space without fork, or table, or chair, or any other object. So space must be something, which is not bound to experience, if it is impossible to imagine non-space, so to say. Kant says that space and time are pure intuitions, and space is represented, as an infinite given magnitude that is part of the reason one cannot imagine the absence of space.

Kant then relates two senses to space and time. He calls outer sense the one through which we think of objects as outside us in space. He calls inner sense the one by means of which the mind can intuit itself and also everything that belongs to inner determinations is represented in relations of time (Kant, 2010, p.51,52). So because of our inner sense we are able to apprehend time and because of our outer sense one is able to think of objects as in space outside of him/her. The reason Kant thinks the space is solely external is that in space objects are determinate, or determinable in relation to one another. This would not be possible to accomplish in one's mind, because when one imagines objects and its shape, size and so on, its then impossible to determine relation of these objects to one another and space cannot be intuited as something in us, as Kant says (Kant, 2010, p.51). And similarly time cannot be thought of as something outside us, so it is solely internal.

Kant also discusses a different view on the problem, when he reacts to and criticizes Descartes and it is good he did so, because he produced such statements that will greatly help to penetrate his understanding even more. Well Descartes's famous

statement will be of a great help here: “Cogito ergo sum.” Which means, I think therefore I am. What Descartes did in Kant’s eyes is that he justified his existence by using reason, he did not compel to experience. In other words, Descartes used his inner sense to determine he exists (Kant, 2010 p.200), Descartes believed inner sense is above outer sense, because it is too hard to determine anything really exist through the outer sense, but it is possible through the inner sense. Kant does not agree with this, because he is of a totally opposite opinion, he thinks that outer sense is above inner sense, that inner sense is only possible under a presupposition of outer experience (Kant, 2010, p.201). This reason is, that the way Descartes proved his existence already presupposes an existence of things outside of him, which he perceived continuously as they changed and self-existence can be determined only by relating one’s self to the time in which things change and this is only possible by perceiving things as outside of us. So the whole process stands on imposing time on outer experience. Also the term existence itself has some persistence in it for Kant and the intuition of persistence one gets only after perceiving something persisting in space outside of him (Kant, 2010, p.202). With all this Kant was trying to prove that outer experience is above the inner experience, because inner experience already presupposes the possibility of outer experience.

“Empirically determined consciousness of my own existence proves the existence of external objects in space.” (Kant, 2010, p.201)

2.2.6 Kant’s solution to the problem of perception

As was mentioned above, Kant does not believe that perception is knowledge. He thinks that perception is through which one accesses outside world, but it is not knowledge by any means. One is affected by objects, as a subject, so one receives the information. For Kant that is the law of causality, which is the fundamental law in the world of experience. Everything happens according to this law, also when objects are given to us, it is based on this very law. But when this object affects one’s senses, so when the object is given, knowledge is not occurring. Only after understanding thinks the object, cognition is possible. One then, by means of understanding, set object and its form together. The form was intuited by mind a priori and set together with the object and this process is called synthesis.

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But for the cognition to be possible this is still not enough, there are some a priori principles, which underlie the possibility of experience itself. As mentioned, these a priori principles are space and time. These two underlie the possibility of experience, because experience of objects presupposes space and thus one also cannot imagine non-space and one also does think in relations of time, so for Kant these underlie our experience, even before itself. For these two a priori principles Kant proposes outer and inner sense. He recognizes the outer sense the one, thanks to which we can apprehend objects as in space outside us. And recognizes the inner sense the one, thanks to which mind intuits itself, and why one is able to represent things in time.

This is the process, according to Kant, how one can attain knowledge in the world of experience, perception is part of it this process, but one cannot attain knowledge of anything just by perceiving it. Process of attaining knowledge is more complex and it also includes a priori principles, as well as our higher faculties of understanding.

In summary, the only possible knowledge lies in the world of experience, which is ordered by pure concepts of space and time and one uses perception to access it. One is using the activity of perceiving and the faculties of thinking to access the knowledge. One cannot attain knowledge in a different way, because forms and things in themselves are hidden from us and one cannot attain them.

Chapter 3 Main Similarities and Differences between Kant and Plato

This section will deal with a depiction of the major similarities and major differences between the two thinkers. This will help to clarify the contrast between Kant and Plato and it also will end the explaining part of this thesis.

3.1 Similarities

The first similarity can be found right at the beginning, they set themselves similar goals. Plato and Kant both claim that they do not want to take anything for granted, or in other words not to set any unnecessary foundation. They want to go with their accounts as deep as possible, to start from nothing, so to say. And it is probably logical for them to set such a goal, because if one wants to pursue the questions of knowledge itself, he should start from the beginning to avoid any possible error. Plato expresses his opinion in this way; he wants to reach what is free from suppositions:

“...making the hypotheses not beginnings but really hypotheses-that is, steppingstones and springboards-in order to reach what is free from hypotheses at the beginning of the whole (Plato, 1968, 511b).”

Kant says something different; because he was a rationalist he says that he does not want to take no foundation given, expect reason itself. Because he wants to pursue the answers to his questions using only reason (Kant, 2004, p.25)

Interestingly they both claim that perception is not knowledge. They think it is not enough for the possibility of knowledge, so they propose different solutions how is still possible to attain knowledge.

And in these solutions there is another similarity. They both put some kind of a function to the soul and both these functions are vital in their accounts, because they both claim that without these functions of the soul, experience as such would not be possible. Kant puts the function of synthesis to the soul; Plato puts the possibility of attaining knowledge mainly to the soul. While with Kant there are other crucial things he mentions that must occur for knowledge to be possible, with Plato only soul bears the function of touching upon being, so also upon knowledge and for him there are not any other similarly important aspects to the possibility of knowledge. It should be

clarified that while only soul touches upon being, it is quite complex in Platonic accounts at the same time. For example, Socrates divides soul into three parts in the Republic and his explanations of this division are not short.

3.2 Differences

First difference is that Kant differentiates between the subject and the object. Subject is the affected and object is the affecting, while subjects are people. Plato does not distinguish between subject and object, as Kant does and this will prove to be a very important point to discuss in next chapter.

In relation to this, the objects, as Kant says, actually exist. They represent real knowledge that can be attained in the way Kant describes. Moreover, he claims that through empirical experience one can even confirm his own existence, which would be impossible to do, if he would be of a opinion that world around us is not real, or not graspable. Plato goes against this view; he suggests that only real knowledge can be found in ideas, because only ideas are stable. The world around us is in motion, everything is in motion and motion means unstable, so attaining knowledge from the world around us is not possible. These differences relate to another one, whereas Plato claims one has access to ideas, Kant claims one does not have access to things in themselves.

Finally, perhaps the most important difference is in their accounts is the division of affected and the affecting in perception process. Plato tried to set up such division, but he then realized that it is not possible to create such division, because there is no way one would have a capacity to get grasp of events that precede perception. Because according to Plato, sensual perception occurs from a clash, so it is impossible to perceive what happened before that clash. Hence one cannot distinguish between what has been affected and what was affecting.

But Kant claims that there is affector and the affected. Objects are affectors and subjects (people) are affected. And that is the difference, because Kant maintains this distinction throughout his work, while Plato knows he cannot, because it is impossible to prove.

In the next section the debate will swing to the analysis of these differences and to the analysis which of the two explanations comes up ahead.

Chapter 4 Implied Criticisms

Both accounts are now described and contrasted. This section will now try to resolve the main question of this thesis, whether Plato can challenge the understanding of Kant, or whether Kant sustains any possible criticism one may address to him.

4.1 Kant's implied critique of Plato

There are two major possible critiques of Plato based on Kant's understanding.

This critique is related to Kant's critique of Descartes, which was already mentioned. As was stated Plato does not believe that things in the world around us can represent true knowledge, but yet, they are part of the process of attaining ideas. For Plato obviously only real knowledge are ideas. Things of the outside world are in constant motion for Plato and that is a sign of instability of the outside world. So his argument is that knowledge is something stable, true at all times, so how can one have true knowledge from something that is naturally unstable? What is stable are the ideas to which one has access to, so it is possible for us to attain to the stable knowledge. For Kant this would be a problem for two reasons, which means two criticisms.

Firstly, Plato cannot claim that all sensible things are under constant change, without necessarily implying there are indeed things, things that undergo this constant motion. In this way Plato is saying there are things in constant motion, but he is in the same time saying that its stable all sensible things undergo constant change. So saying that Plato creates kind of a law, which says all sensible things undergo constant motion and such statement obviously presupposes existence of these things, while Plato would doubt that.

Secondly, unlike for Plato, outer experience is more important for Kant, as was mentioned with his reaction to Descartes. For Plato outer experience does not represent true knowledge. But for Kant that would be absurd because if one is to speak about anything, such as Plato did with ideas, then he must presuppose outer experience of things. For Kant ideas would be only accessible when they are manifested in the object, so if one has the form of beautiful, he can only access it

when it is manifested in the world of experience in a form of beautiful painting. So ideas are attainable only as qualities of objects in the sensible world. And if one compares two objects and finds some common qualities in them, these qualities do not have existence independent of the objects to which one attributed these qualities. So ideas always refer to things of possible experience, to objects of our sensibility. And if one loses focus from the objects of experience and departs to intelligible beings only, there is no significance left for them, because they are only manifested in the world of possible experience, as well as the other world would not be attainable.

“That we do not know and cannot know anything determinate about these intelligible beings at all, because our pure concepts of the understanding as well as our pure intuitions refer to nothing but objects of possible experience, hence to mere beings of sense, and that as soon as one departs from the latter, not the least significance remains for those concepts.” (Kant, 2004, p.67)

4.2 Plato’s implied critique of Kant

Plato’s implied critique of Kant will not only show the response to Kant’s critique, but also reveal crucial counter-arguments towards his account of perception and solution to it.

Plato’s first critique of Kant is obvious, based on what they realized in *Theaetetus*. Kant claims there is something as thing in itself, but it is not attainable. But, how can one claim that there is something as the thing in itself, if he simultaneously claims it is impossible to attain the knowledge of the things in it that is clearly a paradox. Claiming that something exists without ever having any knowledge of it and also deny the possibility of ever having that knowledge is clearly paradoxical. So if it is impossible to claim the existence of thing in itself that means appearance can be in Kant’s account only an illusion. While Kant himself would say that Plato himself got appearance and illusion mixed up (Kant, 2004, p.66), he ended up the one who has no way to distinguish between the two. Either way, even if one was to apply such criticism to Plato, he does say that there are appearances of real things, because there are appearances of things, such as just, or good, so this criticism would not apply to Plato.

Nevertheless, one may claim that it is possible for someone to know that other person got thoughts, despite it is hard to prove, one could hardly doubt that. So it seems plausible to say something exists without having any knowledge of it, at least in this instance. But this case would be different from the thing in itself, because when one says that other person got also thoughts which are not known to him, one does so based on his own experience, because he has thoughts and one also presupposes that the other person consciousness functions the same. So one claims non-knowledge of thoughts of others, based on knowledge one has own thoughts and from identical character of the other consciousness. So apparently the things in themselves are different because there is no implicit knowledge of them, which would help one to attain them.

Next, as was mentioned, the impossibility of attaining the thing in itself is a problem in Kant's understanding, but there is other aspect to it. Again, Kant claims there is a genuine distinction between subject and object. On the side of objects, there are objects of experience and the things in themselves. The objects of experience are manifestation of things in themselves. But if things in themselves are unattainable by us, how can one claim that there is a distinction between those unattainable objects and objects of experience related to them and subjects, if one does not know whether the things in themselves really exist. Or simply put, how can the distinction of subject and object hold, if one side of the distinction is not attainable, possibly does not exist, or is false, but that will be always obscure to us, because there is no way for one to grasp the truth about them. Hence the distinction itself fails again.

Another criticism is tied to Kant's connection of experience of objects to forms. For Kant, objects of experience are organized by the means of forms, which cannot be derived from them. One can only think, or notice them when they are manifested in the objects of experience. But Kant would say they are independent of each other, but that is not possible to observe, that fact remains obscure to us. And to separate them into independent spheres is only possible when they are together and so become visible to us. Now here comes the problem for Kant. As was already observed he claims that things in themselves cannot be attained, but that is not possible to prove, or at least dubious. So if one separates object of experience from the form, it would not give one an access to thing in itself. And if thing in itself remains unattainable; the form remains empty as well, because both are not accessible. This is

the reason why Plato thinks ideas can be attained, to avoid this fallacy. Higher spheres of knowledge, like ideas / forms, must be attainable, otherwise the world of experience itself would be empty and it would not be possible to attain any knowledge at all.

Next critique was partly mentioned before. Plato in his explanations of perception with Theaetetus tried to set up division between affected and affecting. He then realized that it is not possible to create such division, because there is no way one would have a capacity to get grasp of events that precede perception. Plato explained perception as when a thing and the sensual organ (e.g. eye) consort with each other and from there perception occurs. Hence according to Plato, sensual perception occurs from this clash, so to say. So it becomes impossible to perceive what happened before that clash, because from it perception occurred, perception did not take place before the clash; hence one cannot distinguish between what has been affected and what was affecting in the process.

Nevertheless, Kant claims that there is affector and the affected, namely objects are affectors and subjects (people) are affected. Unlike Plato, Kant maintains this distinction throughout his whole project. On top of this Kant claims that the affected is a person and the affector is the object. So he creates another distinction between subject and object. This distinction also prevails in Kant's account and is one of the basics of his understanding. But as Plato realized the former distinction cannot be maintained, because it is impossible to tell which is affected and which affects, as was explained above perception occurs from a clash, events before clash are not graspable. So the distinction of affected and affector cannot be proven, because there is no third entity, which observes the process from third perspective. Hence the distinction between subject and object cannot hold as well, because the main attributes of both are related to which is affected and which affects. On a basis of Plato's finding, one can see that Kant's account in this respect fails, because one of the main distinctions in his account cannot hold.

4.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, this thesis studied accounts of Plato and Kant on the problem of perception and their solution to it. Next, it tried to prove that Plato's understanding develops different aspect of the problem, compared to Kant, as well as that Plato's

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understanding can challenge Kant's, because it reveals errors in Kant's argumentation. As was presented in this last section, based on Plato one can successfully criticize Kant's distinction between subject and object, which plays crucial role in his account of the problem and his solution to it. To sum up, the line of argumentation against Kant based on Plato would go like this.

-Distinction between affected and affecting.

While Plato tried to set up such a distinction himself, he did not maintain it, because he realized necessary paradoxes that arise from it.

-Division between subject and object.

This distinction never come about in Plato, presumably because he did not maintain the first distinction, from which would then arise subject (the affected) and object (the affecting). It can be argued that similar division was set up by Plato as well, when he makes a distinction between sensation and thing sensed and intellect and thing that is intellected. The difference is Kant makes intellect the attribute of the subject as such, and thing into an object as such.

-Division of world of phenomena and things in themselves.

Simply impossible to tell whether it exists, if all things in it are inherently unattainable.

This thesis successfully showed that Plato should not be pushed out of the discussion about the problem of perception, as well as about the knowledge topic in general. He offers different account, which provides some very good insights on matters that one would possibly never question and that is his biggest contribution to the debate. One should always take into account all possibilities, when trying to argue for certain point, even if some of they may seem wrong beforehand. This thesis did not try to show that Kant's account, *as a whole* is wrong, or paradoxical, only some presumptions in it, but it still provides some excellent observations, that one should not overlook, as was maybe the case with Plato.

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Zhrnutie

Táto bakalárska práca sa zaoberá problémom v rámci epistemológie. Špecificky sa bude ale venovať problému zmyslového vnímania. Predtým, ako bude priblížené čo bude táto práca študovať a snažiť sa dokázať, je potrebné najprv vyjasniť, čo je to problém zmyslového vnímania.

Zmyslovým vnímaním sa očividne myslí vnímanie reality a vonkajšieho sveta cez zmysly, čiže zrak, hmat, čuch, sluch a chuť. Bežne by sa mohlo zdať, že cez tieto zmysly vstupujeme do vonkajšieho sveta a prijímame nimi informácie, ktoré potom pokladáme za pravdivé. Ale je ozaj tak? Väčšina ľudí by asi intuitívne povedala, že je to tak, že zmysly sú náš spoj s realitou mimo nás. Ale keď to takto naozaj je, môžeme si byť istí pravdivosťou akejkoľvek informácie, ktorú dostaneme cez zmysly. Predsa môžeme len snívať, halucinovať, môžeme vnímať veci také, aké nie sú, alebo môžeme vnímať veci tak, ako ich druhý človek nevníma. Takýchto prípadov by sa dalo nájsť veľa, ako potom vysvetlíme, že zmysly sú to, cez čo prijímame informácie, ale môžu nás klamať, môžeme si byť potom istí pravdivosťou čohokoľvek, čo dostaneme cez zmysly.

Toto je v skratke problém zmyslového vnímania. Nie je to určite ľahký problém na vyriešenie a to ani nie je zámerom tejto práce. Táto práca sa snaží študovať, ako sa v rozličných časoch v histórii filozofia vedela vysporiadať s týmto problémom a konkrétne sa bude zaoberať Platónom a Kantom. Kant sa zdá ako vplyvnejší autor na túto epistemologickú tému a tiež na tému tejto práce. Človek môže len hádať, prečo to tak je, možno nemá Platón čo ponúknuť k danému problému, alebo možno je to naopak a Platonové myšlienky sú prehliadané a nemali by byť. Takže hlavným zámerom tejto práce je preskúmať, či Platón prináša dôležité poznatky k danej téme alebo nie.

Platón ponúka jedny z najkomplexnejších vysvetlení na epistemologické otázky v starovekých dobách. V týchto vysvetleniach sa venuje aj problému zmyslového vnímania, čo je veľmi dôležité pre zámery tejto práce. Pri študovaní Platónovho výkladu budú použité jeho dialógy Theaetetus a Republika. V Republike sa Platón venuje hlavne tomu, ako sa k poznaniu dostávame a v Theaetetovi sa venuje hlavne otázke zmyslového vnímania. Immanuel Kant je jeden z najvplyvnejších moderných autorov, ktorí sa zaoberali témami poznania. Kľúčové práce na vysvetlenie jeho pohľadu budú jeho Prolegomena a Kritika Čistého Rozumu. Prolegomena je tak povediac zhrnutie Kantových myšlienok na tému poznanie, čiže bude veľmi dobre slúžiť na základné vysvetlenie. A najdôležitejšie body z jeho

vysvetlenia sú predkladané v súvislosti s jeho Kritikou Čistého Rozumu, lebo práve tam je pôvod jeho myšlienok.

Táto práca teda študuje týchto dvoch autorov a ich pohľady na problém zmyslového vnímania a snaží sa dokázať, že Platónove myšlienky sú prehliadané a nemali by byť, pretože poukazujú na aspekty problému, ktoré nie sú spomenuté v Kantových vysvetleniach. Takýmto spôsobom môže byť Kantove vysvetlenie napadnuté a následne môže byť dokázané, že má veľké nedostatky.

Pri dokazovaní tézy sú použité tieto základné argumenty:

1. Kantove vysvetlenie nerozvíja dôležitý aspekt problému ako to Platónove.
2. Na základe Platónovho vysvetlenia sa dá Kantove vysvetlenie sveta vecí o sebe napadnúť a to predstavuje veľkú trhlinu pre Kantov pohľad.
3. Kant v jeho vysvetlení zmyslového vnímania rozlišuje medzi subjektom a objektom. Toto rozdelenie nie je Kantom preukázané, inými slovami berie ho za samozrejmé. Nie je ani potrebné takéto rozdelenie vôbec uvádzať a navyše to predstavuje pre Kanta veľkú trhlinu v jeho chápaní.
4. Platónove idey dávajú alternatívu k chápaniu zmyslového vnímania a získavania poznatkov ako takých.

Metódou tejto práce je prvú časť venovať Platónovi a jeho vysvetleniu daného problému a jeho následnému riešeniu. Druhá časť je venovaná Kantovi a jeho vysvetleniu a riešeniu problému a v záverečnej časti bude diskusia o implikovaných kritikách oboch vysvetlení na základe opačného vysvetlenia. Hlavná metóda tejto práce je, že používa iba primárne zdroje, čiže dva Platónove dialógy a dve Kantove práce. Nie je potrebné používať sekundárne zdroje, pretože by to len oklieštilo možnosti interpretácie. Nie je potrebné použiť sekundárnu literatúru, pretože táto práca sa zaoberá analýzou primárnych textov.

