

**THE ARGUMENT
AGAINST HIMSELF**

PART ONE – CRATYLUS

Aris Skliros

**PLATO'S ACADEMY IN
THE ORCHARD**

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Full text with interleaved Euclid correspondences

London, 2026

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Author: Aris Skliros

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Abstract

Complete novel text of *The Argument Against Himself* (Cratylus · Theaetetus · Sophist · Statesman · Parmenides), with green **EUCLID** boxes and amber **NOTE** boxes interleaved wherever number, geometry, measure, part–whole, contact, or continuum is invoked. Every El. marker is a scholarly **correspondence**: the dialogues predate Euclid. For the Clay / powers scene, only Books **VII** and **X** are Referenced.

Preface

Chronology. Plato's Academy dialogues predate Euclid's *Elements*. Markers El.B.Def. N / El.B.Prop. N record correspondences, not citations by Plato or the novelist.

Cite-first (Theaetetus Clay / powers).

- El.VII.Def.16 — plane / oblong number
- El.VII.Def.18 — square number
- El.VII.Defs.17 & 19 — solid / cube *numbers* (not XI–XIII)
- El.X.Def.1 — commensurable / incommensurable
- El.X.Def.2 — commensurable in square
- El.X.Prop.9 — conceptual twin only

Do **not** cite as Referenced for Clay: I–VI, VIII, IX, XI–XIII.

Cite-first (Statesman due measure). El.V.Defs.1–7 (part, multiple, ratio, same ratio, proportional, greater ratio). Due measure itself is normative, not identical to geometric mean (VI.Def.2 soft only).

How to read. Continuous novel from Prologue through Part Five. At annotated loci a green Euclid box (Referenced) or amber note (light) interrupts briefly. Greek is transliterated or omitted for pdf_{latex}.

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The Image

They had not talked about it for eleven months, and then on the second night of the summer Danae said, out of nowhere, over the washing-up: “Do you think Crito paid the chicken?” Their grandmother looked up. Lela said, “Yes,” and Danae said, “Good,” and that was the whole conversation, and their grandmother went on drying a pan and asked no questions, because she had been ten years old once herself and had known better than to explain anything to anybody.

NOTE · The Image

Annotation (light / institutional): Academy image frame.

Narrative frame only. (light)

. . .

Lela was fourteen now. She had spent the winter doing two things. One was running, which had gone well in a way she found she cared about less than she used to, and which her coach had noticed and had not been able to get a satisfactory answer about. The other was reading. She had started with the Apology, in Greek, with a dictionary, at the kitchen table, in November, out of something that was not quite grief. It had taken her nine days to get through the first two pages and she had cried twice, once out of frustration and once not. By February she was reading it at about the speed of a slow adult and had stopped needing

the dictionary for whole paragraphs at a time, and had discovered the thing that nobody tells you: that it was all exactly as she remembered it, every word, in the right order, and that the difference between the page and the courtyard was not accuracy. It was that the page did not smell of anything.

. . .

Sophia came back on the fourth night. She was on the split trunk at the top of the grove when they got there, and she did not say hello, because she never did. "You have both grown," she said. "One of you has grown a great deal. And one of you has read something." "The Apology," said Lela. "In Greek?" "In Greek." "Ah," said the owl, and turned her head all the way round, and said nothing else about it, and Lela understood that this was the highest compliment Sophia had ever paid anybody and that there was going to be no second sentence.

. . .

"Now," said Sophia. "I have something. Sit down, both of you, and sit down properly, because I am going to explain the rule first." "There's always a rule." "There is always a rule, and this one matters more than the last one did." She shuffled along the branch. "The tree was a door. This is not a door. Nobody is going anywhere. You will sit in this grass and you will not move and nothing you do will make the slightest difference to anything, and I want that understood before we begin, because it is going to be the hard part." Danae said: "So what is it?" "It is a picture," said Sophia. "I can lay it out in the grass and it will run, and you will see it and hear it, the way you would see and hear a thing that was happening in front of you. It is not a memory and it is not a story. It is what

there was.” “And we can’t do anything.” “You cannot do anything. You cannot be seen, you cannot be heard, and if you shout — and you will shout, Lela, about four days from now — nobody will turn round.”

. . .

“That’s not the rule,” said Danae. Sophia looked at her. “You said you’d explain the rule first and then you explained what it does. That’s not a rule. A rule is a thing it can’t do.” And Lela, lying back in the dry grass with her hands behind her head, thought: she is ten.

. . .

“Quite right,” said the owl. “Here is the rule. I can only show you what somebody carried. “Not what happened. What was carried. Somebody had to be there, and see it, and remember it, and tell it to somebody, and that somebody had to tell it on. If that chain was made, I can find it and I can show you what is at the end of it. If it was never made — if a thing happened in a room and everybody in that room died without saying a word about it to anyone — then it is gone, and I cannot get it, and neither can anybody else, ever, for the rest of time.” The cicadas went on. “So most of it is gone,” said Lela. “Almost all of it is gone,” said Sophia. “That is the ordinary condition of the past and people are remarkably cheerful about it.”

. . .

“And there is one more thing about the rule, and you will find it out for yourselves later, but I would rather say it now. “The chains are not all the same length. “Some of what I will show you this summer, somebody wrote down almost as it happened, and those pictures will be as clear as that wall. And some of it went through four men across

fifty years before anybody put a word of it on a page. "And you will see the difference," said Sophia. "You will see it in the picture. That is not a fault in my skill. It is what the thing is."

. . .

She showed them the garden first. It came up out of the grass the way heat comes off a road, and then it was simply there, lying in the space between the olive rows: a long walk under plane trees, and a wall, and beyond the wall a running track worn down to dust, and beyond that the roofs of a city. Lela sat up so fast that she pulled something in her neck. "That's the Academy." "That is the grove of Academus, and it is about thirty-five years after the year you spent last August, and yes." "That's where we came out. That's the track. That's where Danae wanted to—" "Yes."

. . .

There were men walking under the plane trees. Most of them were young. One of them was not. He was in his sixties, broad, white-haired, with a heavy jaw and a way of holding his hands behind his back while he walked that Lela would have recognised anywhere, because the boy had done it too, at the back of a courtroom, with his brother beside him. She did not say anything for a moment. "Sophia." "Yes." "Is that him?" "That is Plato son of Ariston," said the owl. "He is sixty-two years old. He has been running this school for twenty-five years. He has written about twenty books and he is going to write several more, and every single one of them has Socrates in it, and Socrates has been dead for thirty-five years."

. . .

Lela sat in the grass in Messenia and looked at a man walking under a plane tree in the year 365 before the birth of Christ, and found that her eyes had gone hot. Because she had told him. She had stood in a field with an old man on the last day of his life and said: somebody wrote it down, and he had asked who, and she had said the name, and Socrates had laughed and put his hand over his eyes and said he hardly opens his mouth. And this was him. This was the one. And he had done it, all of it, for thirty-five years, alone, without ever once being told that it had worked. "Can he —" "No," said Sophia. "I know. I just—" "I know," said Sophia. "No."

. . .

"There is a boy with him," said Danae. There was. Walking beside him, half a step back, a young man of about twenty-four: dark, sharp-faced, extremely well dressed for a place where everybody else looked like they had got up in whatever was nearest. He had rings on. He was carrying a wax tablet and he was writing on it while walking, which Lela had not known was a thing anybody could do. "Who's that?" "That," said Sophia, "is a northerner called Aristotle, from a town called Stagira, whose father was a doctor. He came down here at seventeen and he has been here seven years and he is the cleverest person in that garden, and the old man knows it. "And this summer you are going to watch Plato give him five books. "And you are going to watch him disagree with nearly all of it."

Part I

Cratylus

Chapter 1

ONE. The Foal



At the Academy, Socrates asks:
Do names come from nature or from convention?



Chapter opener — Plato and young Aristotle walking in the Academy, the foal-that-kicks-its-mother image emerging subtly in the composition.

The first thing they heard him say was about a horse. “— which is what I meant,” Plato was saying, “and you have written down the opposite of it, so read it back.” The young man read it back without breaking stride. It was, as far as Lela could follow, a perfectly accurate account of something, and it took about twenty seconds, and at the end of it the old man walked another four paces and said: “Yes. And it is still the opposite.”

. . .

“He doesn’t like him,” said Danae. “He does,” said Sophia. “Watch the hands.” Lela watched the hands. Plato walked with them behind his back, and when the young man spoke they came apart, and when he had finished they went back together again. “He likes him more than he likes anybody in that garden,” said the owl, “and the

school knows it, and it costs them both something. There is a story they tell later that Plato called him the Mind — that when Aristotle was absent, he would say the Mind is not here today. And another that he called him the foal that kicks its mother. “I have no idea whether either is true. People invent sentences for famous men the way they invent weather for famous days. But somebody made both of those up about these two and not about anybody else, and that tells you something even if the sentences don’t.”



The foal, moments after birth,
finds its mother without being taught.



Dialogue — Socrates, Hermogenes and Cratylus debating whether names belong by nature or convention.

. . .

They stopped at the end of the walk, where there was a stone bench and a view of the track. “You asked me last month,” said Plato, “what a thing’s name has to do with what it is.” “I asked whether it had anything to do with it.” “You did. And I gave you no answer, and you have been extremely polite about that for four weeks, which is not a thing you are naturally good at.” The old man sat down. “There is a conversation I heard about when I was young. Not one I was at. I had it from two of the three men who were in it, separately, years apart, and they agreed about it, which in my experience is the most anybody can ask. “It was Socrates, and a man named Hermogenes, and a man named Cratylus. “Sit down. This one is long, and there is a stretch in the middle of it that is going to make you angry, and I want you to stay until the end.”

. . .

And the picture in the grass in Messenia went dark at the edges and opened again somewhere else.



Lela and Danae watch the foal.
It recognizes what it needs by nature.



Core concept — A human and horse with exchanged naming tokens represented only by visual markers, while their actual natures remain unchanged.

. . .

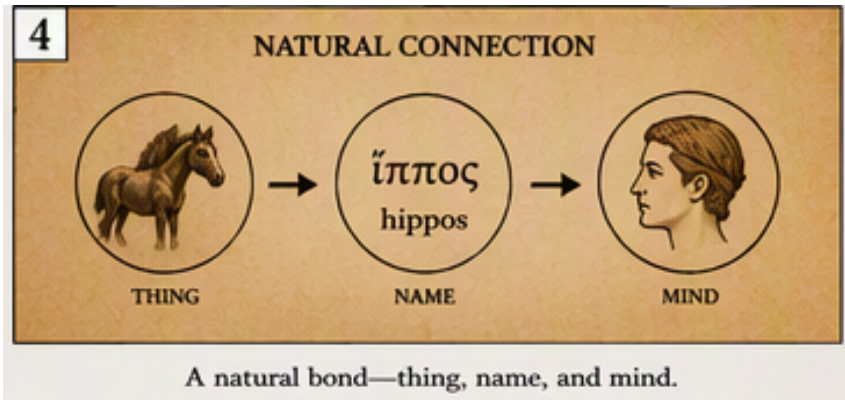
A street. Two men arguing, and a third coming along it who had plainly been going somewhere else. “Shall we let Socrates here join our discussion?” “If you like.”

. . .

Lela made a noise. She had not meant to and she could not have stopped it. She put her hand over her mouth and Danae took her other hand and held on to it, hard, and neither of them said a word. Because he was younger. Not young. Sixty, perhaps. But the beard was more grey than white and he stood straighter and there was none of the enormous stillness that had been in the man on the edge of the bed with his feet on the floor, and he had every appearance of a person with a very great deal of

time. “How long?” she said, when she could. “I do not know exactly,” said Sophia. “Years. Some years before.”

. . .





Analogy — A mare and foal beside the philosophical debate, linking natural kinds with naming.

“Cratylus says, Socrates, that there is a correctness of name for each thing, one that belongs to it by nature. A thing’s name isn’t whatever people happen to agree to call it — some bit of their own language that they stick on it — but there is a natural correctness of names, and it is the same for everyone, Greek or foreign. “So I asked him whether his own name was really Cratylus. He agreed that it was. What about Socrates? I said. His name is Socrates. And does that hold for everyone else? Is the name we call a man his name? “It certainly doesn’t hold of you,” said Hermogenes. “Your name isn’t Hermogenes, not even if everybody calls you by it.”

. . .

Danae sat up. “He said his name isn’t his name?” “Sh.” “But that’s — you can’t just —” “Danae.”

. . .

“So I asked him eagerly what he meant, and he answered me sarcastically and made nothing clear at all. He pretends to have some private knowledge which would force me to agree with him, if only he would put it in plain words. “So if you can interpret Cratylus’ oracles, Socrates, I’d be glad to listen. Though what I’d really rather hear is what you think about the correctness of names, if you don’t mind telling me.”



Hermogenes and Cratylus argue:
Some say names are natural, others say they are not.



Reasoning — Hermogenes moving step by step from private naming toward admitting things have a fixed being of their own.

. . .

“Hermogenes, son of Hipponicus,” said Socrates, “there’s an old proverb that fine things are very difficult to know about, and names are certainly not easy. “Now, if I had gone to Prodicus’ fifty-drachma course — the one he advertises as a complete treatment of the subject — there would be nothing to stop you learning the exact truth about it from me this minute. But I have only had the one-drachma lecture, so I don’t know the truth about it. “All the same, I’m ready to look into it with you and Cratylus. “As for his saying that your real name isn’t Hermogenes — I suspect he’s making fun of you. Hermogenes means son of Hermes, and Hermes is the god of profit; and perhaps he thinks you want to make money and fail every time you try.”

. . .

“Oh,” said Danae, in the grass, delighted. “Oh. That’s mean.” “It is very mean,” Sophia agreed. “Is it true?” “His brother Callias was one of the richest men in Athens and spent nearly all of it on sophists. Hermogenes had nothing. Yes, it is true.”





Counterargument — Convention and nature as two equally serious visual possibilities: communal naming practice versus stable properties of things.

. . .

“Well, Socrates,” said Hermogenes, “I’ve talked to Cratylus about this often, and to a good many other people, and nobody has ever been able to persuade me that the correctness of a name is fixed by anything except agreement and convention. “I believe that any name you give a thing is its correct name. And if you change it and give it another, the new one is just as correct as the old — the way it is when we give new names to slaves in the house. The new one is as right as the one before. “No name belongs to any particular thing by nature. It belongs to it because of the habits and rules of the people who use it and call it that. “But if I’m wrong about it, I’m ready to listen — not just to Cratylus but to anybody — and to learn.”

. . .



Learning moment — Lela and Danae watch the reconstructed conversation in the grass and recognize the hidden step in the argument.

“Perhaps you’re on to something, Hermogenes,” said Socrates. “Let’s see. “Are you saying that whatever anybody decides to call a thing is its name?” “I am.” “Whether

it's one man on his own, or a whole city?" "Yes." "Then what about this? Suppose I take one of the things that are — the one we call man, say — and I give it the name horse; and the one we call horse I give the name man. Will the very same thing have the public name man and the private name horse? Is that what you mean?" "Yes." "So whatever anybody says is the name of something, then for him, that is its name?" "Yes." "And however many names a man says there are for a thing, it really has that many, at the moment he says it?" "Yes, Socrates. Because I can't think of any other way names could be correct. I call a thing by the name I gave it, and you call it by the different name you gave it. And I can see that different peoples have different names for the same things — Greeks differing from other Greeks, and Greeks from foreigners."

. . .



Historical layer — Plato on a stone bench with Aristotle and a wax tablet overlooking the Academy running track.

“Let’s see, then,” said Socrates, “whether the same holds for the things themselves. “Is what each thing is something private to each person — as Protagoras tells us? He says that man is the measure of all things, and that things are

to me as they appear to me, and to you as they appear to you. “Do you agree with that? Or do you think that things have some fixed being of their own?”

NOTE · Protagoras

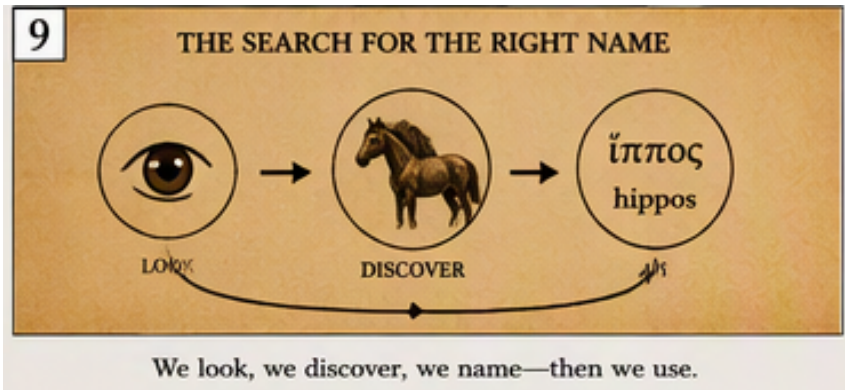
Annotation (light / institutional): Man the measure.

Epistemic measure only. (light)

. . .

“There have been times, Socrates, when I’ve been so stuck that I’ve taken refuge in Protagoras’ doctrine. Though I don’t believe a word of it.” “Really? Have you actually been driven to believe that there is no such thing as a bad man?” “By god, no. I have often found myself believing there are very bad ones, and plenty of them.” “And have you never believed there are any very good ones?” “Not many.” “But some?” “Some.”

. . .



Educational plate — Wordless plate: one object, several differently shaped name-markers, then stable object-properties beneath them.

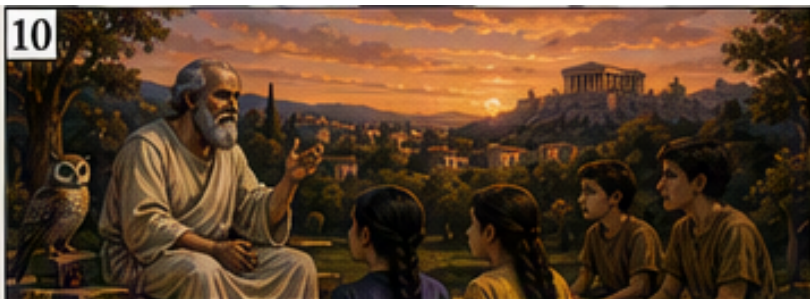
“And what do you think about such people? Isn’t it this — that the very good are very wise, and the very bad very foolish?” “That’s what I believe.” “But if Protagoras is telling the truth — if it is the Truth that things are, for each man, as he believes them to be — how is it possible

for one man to be wise and another foolish?" "It isn't possible." "You believe quite strongly, it seems to me, that if wisdom exists, and foolishness with it, then Protagoras cannot be telling the truth. Because if whatever each man believes is true for him, then nobody can really be wiser than anybody else." "That's right."

. . .

"And you reject Euthydemus' doctrine too — that everything has every attribute at once, always. Because if goodness and badness always belong to everything at the same time, then again it's impossible for some men to be good and others bad." "That's true." "Then if neither of them is right — if it isn't the case that everything has every attribute at once, and it isn't the case that each thing is whatever it privately is for each person — then it's clear that things have some fixed being of their own. "They are not in relation to us. They are not made to swing about by how they look to us. They are by themselves, in relation to their own being, which is theirs by nature." "I agree, Socrates."

10



Plato concludes:
The right name seeks the thing itself.
Go and look at the thing.



Grand spread — Plato and Aristotle, Socrates and Hermogenes, the mare and foal, and the question of whether names reveal nature.

. . .

“He didn’t argue,” said Danae. “No,” said Lela. “He just agreed. He said no name belongs to a thing by nature and about nine sentences later he said yes, things have a nature, and he didn’t even notice.” “I know.” “That’s the whole thing. That’s the whole argument, and he just handed it over.”

. . .

And in a garden thirty-five years later and two hundred miles north, a young man with rings on stopped writing and said: “He shouldn’t have agreed to that.” And the old man said, without turning his head: “No. He shouldn’t.”

Chapter 2

TWO. The Shuttle



Socrates introduces a new image:
Names are like a shuttle in the hands of a weaver.



Chapter opener — Socrates leads Hermogenes from cutting and burning to speaking and naming, with tools arranged naturally through the scene.

“And if things are like that,” Socrates went on, “doesn’t the same hold for the things we do to them? Or aren’t actions one kind of the things that are?” “Of course they are.” “Then an action is performed according to the action’s own nature, and not according to what we believe about it. “Suppose we set out to cut something. If we cut it in whatever way we like, with whatever tool we like, we won’t succeed in cutting. But if we cut in accordance with the nature of cutting and being cut, and with the tool that is naturally for cutting, then we will succeed, and cut properly. And if we try to cut against nature, we’ll go wrong and get nothing done.” “That’s my view.” “And if we set out to burn something, the burning mustn’t go according to just any opinion, but according to the right one — the one that says how that thing naturally burns and is burned, and what the natural tool for burning it is.” “That’s right.” “And the same with every other action?” “Certainly.”

. . .

“Now — isn’t speaking one kind of action?” “Yes.” “Then will a man speak correctly if he speaks in whatever way he thinks he ought to? Or is it rather that he’ll get something done, and succeed in speaking, if he says things in the natural way to say them, and in the natural way for them to be said, and with the natural tool for saying them — and that if he does it any other way he’ll go wrong and get nothing done?” “I believe so.”

. . .



A shuttle passes back and forth,
carrying thread across the loom.



Dialogue — A weaver works a shuttle while Socrates explains that a name can be treated as a tool for teaching and distinguishing things.

“And naming is part of saying, since it is by using names that people say things.” “Certainly.” “And if speaking is a kind of action, and one that is about things, then isn’t using names a kind of action too?” “Yes.” “And didn’t we just see that actions are not in relation to us, but have a nature of their own?” “We did.” “Then if we are going to be consistent with what we have already said, we cannot name things however we choose. We must name them in the natural way for them to be named, and with the natural tool for naming them. That way we’ll get something done and succeed in naming. Otherwise we won’t.” “So it seems.”

. . .

Lela had her chin on her fists. “He’s doing it again,” she said. “Doing what?” “The thing he does. He hasn’t

said you're wrong. He hasn't said anything about names at all. He said cutting. And Hermogenes said yes to cutting, because who wouldn't, and now he's fourteen steps down a road he didn't know he'd started walking."

. . .

"Again," said Socrates. "What one has to cut, one must cut with something?" "Yes." "And what one has to weave, one must weave with something? And what one has to drill, one must drill with something?" "Certainly." "And what one has to name, one must name with something?" "That's right." "What must the drilling be done with?" "A drill." "The weaving?" "A shuttle." "And the naming?" "A name." "Well done," said Socrates. "So a name is a sort of tool as well."



3

The weaver does not create the pattern.
He follows the plan.



Core concept — A shuttle separates warp and weft while naming separates kinds of things.

NOTE · Cratylus 388a–e

Annotation (light / institutional): Shuttle as tool.

Tool–function analogy. No invented EL.I props. (light)

NOTE · 277a–279b

Annotation (light / institutional): Weaving model.

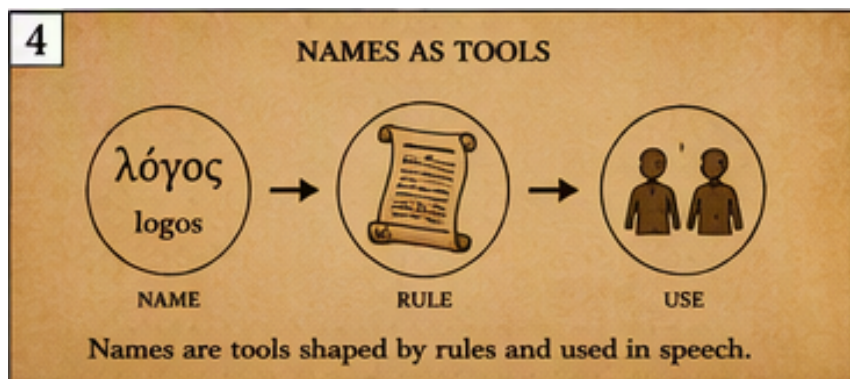
Paradeigma. (light)

. . .

“Now suppose I ask what sort of tool a shuttle is. Isn’t the answer, one we weave with?” “Yes.” “And what do we do when we weave? Don’t we separate the warp and the woof, which were mixed together?” “Yes.” “And you’d answer the same way about a drill, and about tools in general?” “Certainly.” “Then answer the same way about names, since they are tools. What do we do when we

name?” “I don’t know what to say.” “Don’t we teach each other something? That is — don’t we sort things out according to what they are?” “Certainly.” “Then just as a shuttle is a tool for separating warp from woof, a name is a tool for teaching — a tool for separating out what things are.”

. . .





Analogy — Carpenter, blacksmith, weaver and teacher each use a specialized tool, culminating in the name-as-tool analogy.

“And a shuttle is a weaver’s tool?” “Of course.” “So a weaver will use a shuttle well; and to use a shuttle well is to use it the way a weaver does. In the same way, a teacher will use names well; and to use a name well is to use it the way a teacher does.” “Yes.” “And when a weaver uses a shuttle well, whose work is he using?” “A carpenter’s.” “And is every man a carpenter, or only the ones who have the craft?” “Only the ones who have the craft.” “And whose work does a driller use when he uses a drill well?” “A blacksmith’s.” “And is every man a blacksmith, or only the one who has the craft?” “Only the one who has the craft.” “Good. Then whose work does a teacher use, when he uses a name?” “I don’t know.”

. . .

“Can you at least tell me this — who or what gives us the names we use?” “I don’t know that either.” “Don’t you

think it's the rules that give them to us? The customs and the usages of a people?" "I suppose they do." "Then when a teacher uses a name, he is using the work of a rule-setter." "I believe he is." "And do you think every man is a rule-setter, or only the one who has that craft?" "Only the one who has the craft." "Then it isn't every man who can give names, Hermogenes. Only a name-maker. And he, it seems, is a rule-setter — which is the rarest kind of craftsman there is among human beings."



A hammer cuts, a fire burns,
but the craftsman sets the purpose.



Reasoning — The logical staircase from action to tool to naming to name-maker, entirely through staged activity.

. . .

Danae was lying on her front in the grass with her feet in the air and her chin in her hands, and she had been perfectly silent for about four minutes, which meant she had gone in. “He’s saying somebody made them.” “Mm.” “Words. Somebody made words. Not — not they happened, or they grew, or people started. He’s saying there was somebody, and it was a job, and he was good at it, like a man who makes chairs.” “Yes.” “Is that true?” “No,” said Sophia, from the branch. Both girls looked up. “Is that allowed?” said Lela. “You said you only show things. You’ve never once said whether a thing was true.” “I have never once been asked about something I happen to know,” said the owl. “Words are not made. Nobody ever sat down and made one. They come up the way paths come up across a field — nobody digs a path, and yet there it

is, and it goes exactly where everyone was going anyway. “And he is about to build a great deal on top of a man who never existed. Watch him do it. He is not a fool and he is not being careless, and you should ask yourself at the end of the summer why a man that careful wanted a maker so badly.”



Not everyone can set the rule.
It takes knowledge and practice.



Counterargument — Deliberate name-maker craftsmanship with Sophia's path-across-a-field image of words arising through communal use.

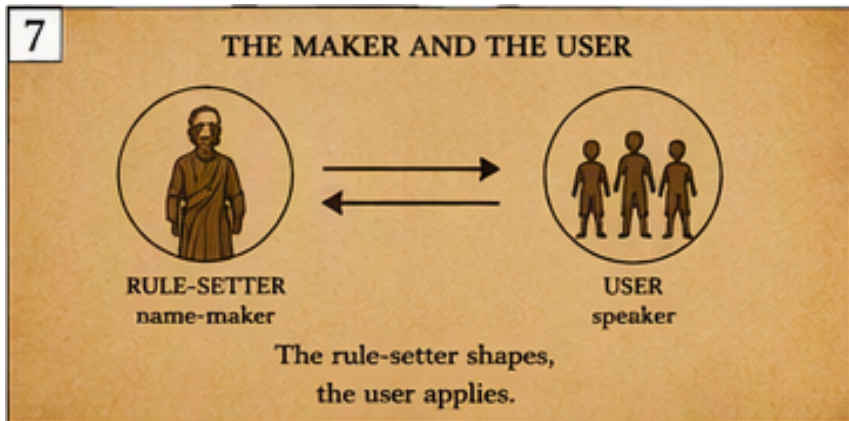
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“Now,” said Socrates, “think about where a rule-setter looks when he gives names. Use what we’ve already said as your guide. “Where does a carpenter look when he makes a shuttle? Isn’t it to the sort of thing whose nature is to weave?” “Certainly.” “And suppose the shuttle breaks while he’s making it. Will he make the next one looking at the broken one? Or will he look to the very same form he was looking at when he made the one that broke?” “He’ll look to the form.” “Then it would be exactly right to call that what a shuttle itself is.” “I suppose so.”

. . .

“And so whenever he has to make a shuttle — for light cloth or heavy, for linen or for wool — mustn’t every one

of them have the form of a shuttle? And mustn't he put into it the nature that naturally best suits it for doing its own work?" "Yes." "And the same holds for every tool. When a craftsman finds the kind of tool that is naturally suited to a job, he has to embody it in whatever material he is making the tool out of. He mustn't make it however he happens to feel like making it, but in the natural way. "So a blacksmith has to know how to put into iron the kind of drill that is naturally suited to each kind of work." "Certainly." "And a carpenter has to put into wood the kind of shuttle naturally suited to each kind of weaving." "That's right."





Learning moment — Lela and Danae notice the unsupported middle step: tools are made, therefore names must have a maker.

. . .

“Then mustn’t a rule-setter also know how to put into sounds and syllables the name that is naturally suited to each thing? And if he is going to be a real giver of names, mustn’t he look, while he is making each one, to what a name itself is? “And if different rule-setters don’t make each name out of the same syllables — well, we mustn’t forget that different blacksmiths making the same tool for the same job don’t all make it out of the same iron. As long as they give it the same form, the tool is correct, even if the iron is different, and whether it is made in Greece or abroad. Isn’t that so?” “Certainly.” “And you’d judge Greek and foreign rule-setters the same way? As long as each of them gives a thing the form of name that suits it, no matter what syllables it’s embodied in, they are equally good rule-setters, here or abroad.” “Certainly.”

. . .

“Now — who is likely to know whether the right form of shuttle is there in a given piece of wood? The carpenter who makes it, or the weaver who uses it?” “In all likelihood, the one who uses it.” “And who uses what a lyre-maker makes? Isn’t he the one who would best know how to supervise the making of lyres, and whether a lyre has been well made or not?” “Certainly.” “And who is that?” “A lyre-player.” “And who will supervise a shipwright?” “A ship’s captain.”



Sophia the owl shows another picture:
Many paths can cross the same field.



Historical layer — A historically grounded workshop sequence: woodworker making shuttle, smith making drill, teacher using names in discussion.

. . .

“And who can best supervise the work of a rule-setter, here or abroad, and judge what he makes? Isn’t it whoever is going to use it?” “Yes.” “And isn’t that the person who knows how to ask questions?” “Certainly.” “And who also knows how to answer them?” “Yes.” “And what would you call a man who knows how to ask questions and answer them?” “A dialectician.”

. . .

“Then it’s the carpenter’s work to make a rudder — and if the rudder is going to be a good one, a ship’s captain has to supervise him.” “Evidently.” “And it is the rule-setter’s work to make a name. And if names are going to be well given, a dialectician has to supervise him.” “That’s right.”

“So the giving of names can’t be as small a matter as you thought, Hermogenes. And it can’t be the work of a small or a chance person. “So Cratylus is right when he says that things have natural names, and that not everyone is a craftsman of names — only the man who looks to the natural name of each thing, and is able to put its form into letters and syllables.”



So how do we find the one true path
that leads to the thing itself?



Educational plate — Wordless plate comparing maker, tool, expert user and function across shuttle, drill, rudder and name.

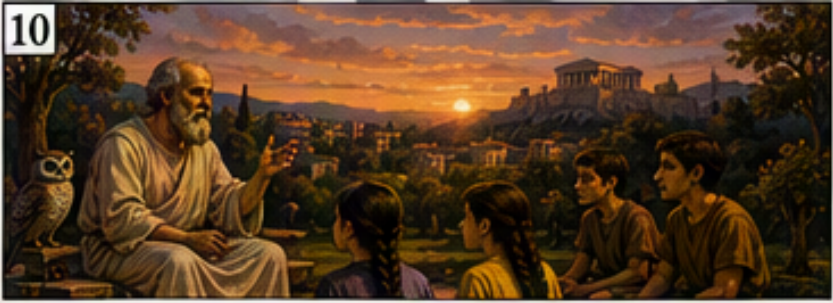
. . .

“I don’t know how to argue against you, Socrates,” said Hermogenes. “But it isn’t easy to change my mind all at once. I think you’d be more likely to persuade me if you actually showed me what this natural correctness of names is that you keep talking about.” “My dear Hermogenes, I don’t have a position on it. You have forgotten what I told you at the start — that I don’t know about names, but that I would look into them with you. “And now that we are looking into them, this much at least is clearer than it was: that names do have some sort of natural correctness, and that it isn’t every man who knows how to give them well. Isn’t that right?” “Certainly.” “Then our next job is to find out what that correctness is. If you really want to know.” “Of course I do.” “Then look into it.” “How am I to do that?”

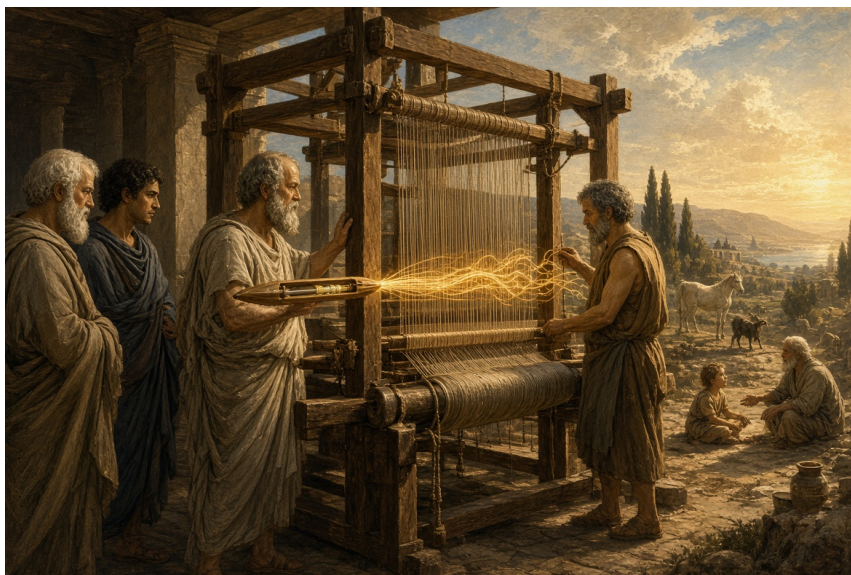
. . .

“The most correct way is with people who already know,” said Socrates. “Though you must pay them well and be grateful besides. I mean the sophists. “Your brother Callias got his reputation for wisdom out of them in exchange for a great deal of money. So you had better go and beg him to teach you what he learned from Protagoras about the correctness of names — since you haven’t come into any money of your own.” “It would be absurd for me to go begging for Protagoras’ Truth, Socrates, as though I wanted what’s in it and thought it was worth something, when I reject the whole thing.” “Well, if that doesn’t suit you, you’ll have to learn it from Homer and the other poets.”

10



Plato says:
We must investigate carefully,
for the right name is not found by chance.



Grand spread — A luminous weaving composition in which syllable-like forms pass through a shuttle and become distinctions among real things.

. . .

In the garden, Aristotle put down his stylus. “Is that the argument?” he said. “That is the first part of the argument.” “Then the first part of the argument is that names are tools, and that tools are made by craftsmen, and that therefore names were made by a craftsman.” He turned the tablet over on his knee. “The middle step is doing all the work and nobody has looked at it.” “No,” said Plato. “Nobody has.” “And he knows that.” “He wrote it that way,” said the old man, “so that somebody would eventually say what you have just said, and he has been dead for thirty-five years, and today it took four weeks and a young man from Stagira. Sit down. It gets much worse.”

Chapter 3

THREE. What the Gods Call It



Socrates asks Cratylus and Hermogenes:
Do the gods give names, or do people?



What the Gods Call It — opening scene.

“And where does Homer say anything about names, Socrates? What does he say?” “In a good many places. The best and most important are the ones where he tells us the difference between what human beings call a thing and what the gods call it. “Don’t you think those passages tell us something remarkable about the correctness of names? Surely the gods call things by their naturally correct names — or don’t you think so?” “If they call them by any names at all,” said Hermogenes, “I’m sure they’re the right ones. But which passages do you mean?”

. . .

2



The gods name from knowledge of what things are.
Their names are not chosen at random.



What the Gods Call It — the chapter's central dialogue.

“You know the place where he says that the river at Troy that fought hand to hand with Hephaestus is called Xanthos by the gods and Skamandros by men?” “I certainly do.” “And don’t you think it is an awe-inspiring thing to know that the river is more correctly called Xanthos than Skamandros? “Or take, if you like, what he says about a certain bird: The gods call it chalcis, but men call it cymindis. “Do you think it’s a small matter to learn that it is far more correct to call that bird a chalcis than a cymindis? Or all the other things of the same kind that Homer and the poets tell us — that it is more correct to call a certain hill Murine than Batieia?”

. . .

3



From the heavens, the gods see
the true nature of each thing.



What the Gods Call It — the central concept made visible.

“He’s showing off,” said Danae. “He is absolutely showing off,” said Lela. “But — hang on.” Danae rolled over onto her back and frowned at the sky. “How does Homer know what the gods call things?” There was a pause in the grass. “Sophia?” “I am not going to answer that one,” said the owl, “because in about four seconds somebody in that picture is going to say the same thing, and I would like you to hear who.”

. . .

“But perhaps those examples are too hard for you and me to work out,” said Socrates. “It’s easier, I think, and more within human reach, to look at the kind of correctness Homer gives to Skamandrios and Astyanax — which he says were both names of Hector’s son. You know the lines I mean.” “Certainly.” “Then which of the two names do you suppose Homer thought was the more correct? Astyanax, or Skamandrios?” “I really can’t say.”

4



They see truly, and from that truth they give the name that fits the thing.



What the Gods Call It — the guiding analogy.

. . .

“Look at it this way. If you were asked who gives names more correctly — the wiser or the more foolish — what would you answer?” “Clearly the wiser.” “And which do you think is wiser as a class, a city’s women or its men?” “Its men.”

. . .

Lela sat up. “Oh, you’re joking.” “Sh.” “No, I’m not going to sh, that’s — he can’t just —” “He is about to do something with it,” said Sophia. “Wait.”



What the Gods Call It — the argument unfolding step by step.

. . .

“Now, you know that Homer tells us that Hector’s son was called Astyanax by the men of Troy. And if the men called him Astyanax, isn’t it clear that Skamandrios

must be what the women called him?” “Probably.” “And didn’t Homer also think that the Trojans were wiser than their women?” “I suppose he did.” “Then mustn’t he have thought Astyanax the more correct name for the boy?” “Evidently.”

. . .





What the Gods Call It — the competing interpretation.

“Then let’s find out why it is more correct. And doesn’t Homer give us a very good reason himself, when he says of the father: He alone defended their city and the long walls? “Because of that, you see, it seems right to call the son of the defender Astyanax — lord of the city, from astu, a city, and anax, a lord — the city which, as Homer says, his father was defending.” “That seems right to me.”

. . .

“Does it? You understand it, Hermogenes?” “...” “Because I don’t understand it yet myself.” “Then I certainly don’t.”

. . .



Lela: So the name comes from knowing,
not from guessing or from liking the sound!



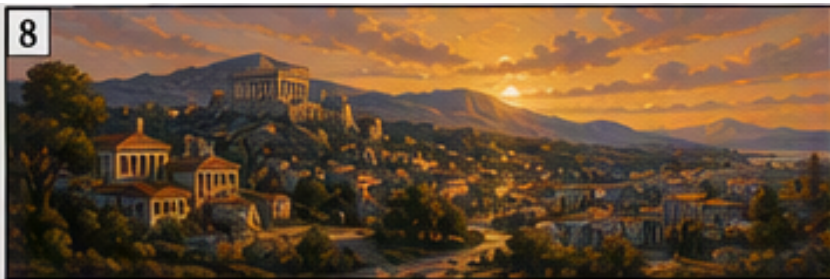
What the Gods Call It — Lela and Danae reconstruct the idea.

Danae laughed out loud, once, like a bark. “He does it to everyone,” she said, delighted. “He did it to Euthyphro and he did it to Lela and he did it to that man at the trial and now he’s done it to this one, and the man agreed with him, and he still —” “Yes,” said Lela. She had her hand over her mouth and her eyes were bright. “Yes. He did.”

. . .

“But, my good friend,” said Socrates, “didn’t Homer give Hector his name as well?” “What if he did?” “Well, it seems to me that Hector is more or less the same name as Astyanax, since both of them seem to be Greek. Anax is a lord and hektor is a holder, a possessor, and those signify much the same thing, since both of them are names for a king. “Surely a man possesses whatever he is lord of; it’s clear that he controls it, and owns it, and has it. “Or perhaps you think I’m talking nonsense, and that I’m wrong to imagine I’ve found a clue to what Homer believed about the correctness of names.” “No, I don’t think you’re wrong. You may well have found a clue.”

8



A true name points to the nature
everywhere it is found.

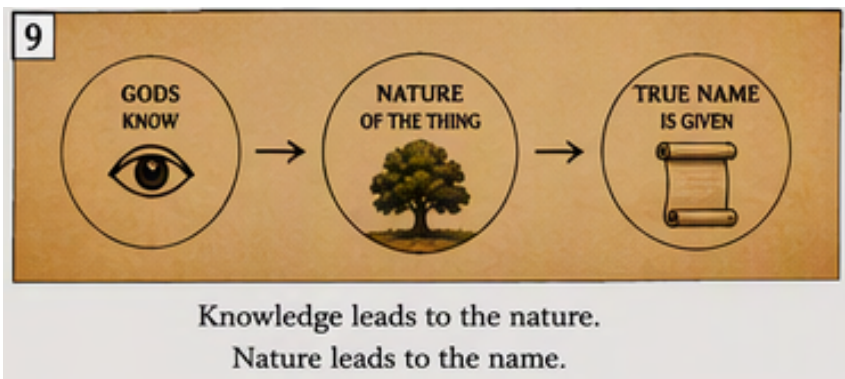


What the Gods Call It — the historical layer.

. . .

In the garden under the plane trees, Aristotle said: “He gave Hector his name.” “Go on.” “Homer gave Hector his name. Homer also gave the son his name. Homer also

reports what the gods call the river.” The young man had stopped writing altogether now. “It is all one poet. Every single one of these correct names came out of the mouth of the same man, and that man was a Greek, making Greek names, out of Greek words, for an audience of Greeks who would hear the joke. “There is no evidence here about the gods at all. There is evidence about Homer.”



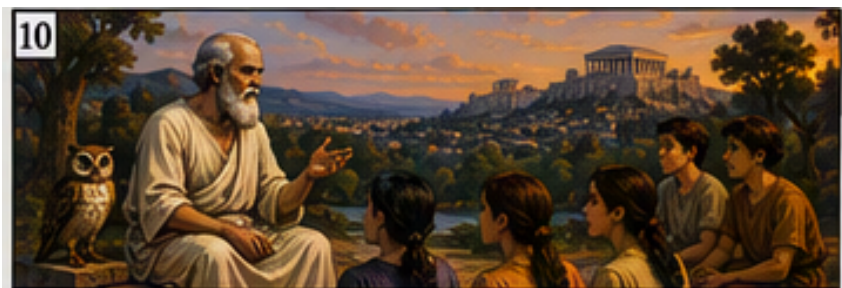


What the Gods Call It — a wordless conceptual plate.

. . .

The old man did not answer for a while. Down at the far end of the walk two boys were carrying something heavy between them and arguing about which of them was taking more of the weight. “You are twenty-four years old,” said Plato at last, “and you have come to that in an afternoon.” “Is it wrong?” “No.” “Then why is it in the book?” “Because,” said Plato, “I did not write it to be right.”

. . .



Socrates: Let us keep this:
the best names are the ones that tell the truth.



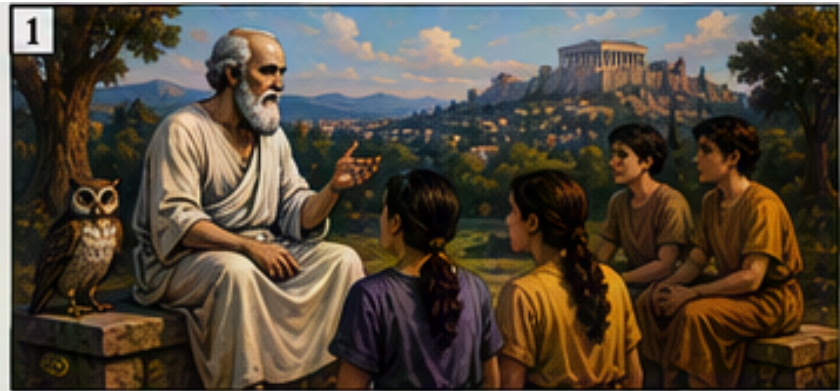
What the Gods Call It — the chapter's narrative and philosophical synthesis.

“He said something,” said Danae. “I heard.” “He said he didn’t write it to be right.” She sat up. “Then what did he write it for?” And Lela, fourteen years old, lying in an olive grove in the dark with a picture of a garden running in the grass beside her, discovered that she knew

the answer, and that she had known it since a street in Athens on the day she failed to warn a man about his own death. “So somebody would argue with it,” she said.

Chapter 4

FOUR. Like Begets Like



Socrates: We learned the gods name from knowledge.
Now, what makes a name fit a thing?



Like Begets Like — opening scene.

“At any rate,” said Socrates, “it seems right to me to call a lion’s offspring a lion, and a horse’s offspring a horse. “I don’t mean some monster other than a horse that happens to be born from a horse. I mean the natural offspring of the kind. If a horse gave birth to a calf, against nature, it ought to be called a calf and not a colt. And if something that isn’t a human offspring were born to a human, I don’t think it should be called a human. And the same goes for trees and everything else. Don’t you agree?” “I agree.” “Good. But you had better watch out, in case I am tricking you — because by the same argument, any offspring of a king ought to be called a king. “And it makes no difference whether the same thing is signified by the same syllables or by different ones. And if a letter is added or taken away, that makes no difference either, so long as the being of the thing is in control and is expressed in its name.” “How do you mean?”

. . .

2



A craftsman makes what he knows.
The maker's skill is in the work.



Like Begets Like — the chapter's central dialogue.

“It’s a simple enough point. You know that when we talk about the letters of the alphabet, what we actually say out loud is their names, and not the letters themselves — except for four of them. For all the others, vowels and consonants alike, we make a name by putting extra letters alongside. “Take beta. Adding the e and the t and the a does no harm at all; it doesn’t stop the whole name expressing the nature of that letter which the rule-setter wanted to name. He knew perfectly well how to give names to letters.” “I believe you’re right.”

. . .

3



What is well made shows the character
of the one who makes it.



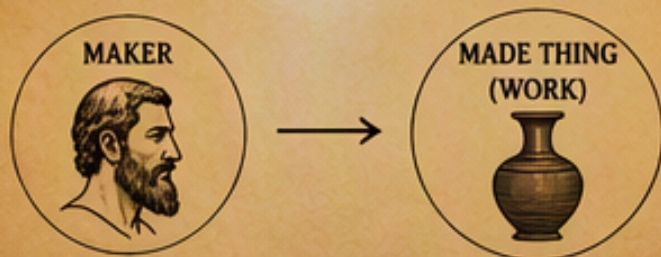
Like Begets Like — the central concept made visible.

“Then doesn’t the same argument apply to a king? A king will most likely be the son of a king, a good man the son of a good man, a fine man the son of a fine one, and so on. “So unless a monster is born, the offspring of a kind will be of the same kind, and should be called by the same name. “But because the syllables vary, names that are really the same look different to people who don’t know. In the same way a doctor’s medicines, with different colours and different scents added to them, look different to us — though they are really the same, and look the same to a doctor, who looks only at what they can do and is not put off by what has been added. “In the same way, a man who understands names looks at what a name can do, and is not put off if a letter is added or moved or taken away, or even if the whole force of the name is carried by completely different letters.”

. . .

4

LIKE BEGETS LIKE



From the nature of the maker
comes the nature of the thing made.



Like Begets Like — the guiding analogy.

“So, for instance, in the names Hector and Astyanax, which we were talking about — not one of the letters is the same except the t, and they signify the same thing anyway. “And what letters does Archepolis — Ruler-of-a-city — have in common with either of them? And yet it expresses the same thing. “There are a great many other names that simply mean king. Others mean general: Agis, Leader; Polemarchus, War-lord; Eupolemus, Good-at-war. And others mean doctor: Iatrocles, Famous-healer; Acesimbrotus, Healer-of-mortals. “And we could probably find a great many more, which differ in their letters and their syllables and have exactly the same force when they are spoken. Is that plain to you, or not?” “Certainly.”

. . .

“Then the ones that are born according to nature should be given the same names as their fathers.” “Yes.” “And what about the ones born against nature — the ones that

are some sort of monster? When a good and pious man has an impious son, for instance. Shouldn't the son have not his father's name, but the name of the kind he actually belongs to — as with our horse that had a calf?" "Yes." "Then the impious son of a pious father should be given the name of the kind he belongs to." "That's right." "So he shouldn't be called Theophilus, God-beloved, or Mnesitheus, Mindful-of-god, or anything of that sort. He should be called something that signifies the opposite — if names are really going to be correct." "That's absolutely right, Socrates."



The sea makes shells.
Smooth things come from the smooth.



Like Begets Like — the argument unfolding step by step.

. . .

“Wait,” said Lela. “What?” “Wait. Sophia, stop it. Can you stop it?” The picture in the grass held still, a man’s hand halfway through a gesture. “He just said,” said Lela slowly, “that if a good man has a bad son, you should change the son’s name.” “Yes.” “That’s — Sophia, that’s Euthyphro. That is literally Euthyphro’s argument. Prosecute your father, because what matters is what he is and not what he’s called. That’s the same shape. He’s using it.” “Yes,” said Sophia. “Keep hold of that for about ten minutes.”



The oak makes acorns.
Hard things come from the hard.



Like Begets Like — the competing interpretation.

. . .

“Thus the name Orestes, Mountain-man, is surely correct, Hermogenes — whether it was given to him by chance

or by some poet — because it shows in his name the wildness and savagery and roughness of his nature.” “It seems so.” “And his father’s name seems to accord with nature too.” “It does.”

. . .



Danae: So a name is like the work
that comes from the maker’s nature!



Like Begets Like — Lela and Danae reconstruct the idea.

“Yes — because Agamemnon was a man who worked hard and stuck at it, and brought his plans to completion through sheer excellence. The fact that his army stayed at Troy, and that he stuck it out there, is the proof of it. “So the name Agamemnon signifies that this is a man to be admired — agastos — for holding his ground — epimone. “And Atreus seems correct as well. His murder of Chrysippus and his cruelty to Thyestes were damaging and destructive — atera — to his own virtue. Though the meaning of that name is a little twisted and obscure, so that it doesn’t show his nature to everybody. But to people who understand names it says well enough what Atreus means: whether it fits his stubbornness, ataires, or his fearlessness, atrestos, or his destructiveness, ateros, it is correctly given. “And I think Pelops has a fitting name too. Pelops signifies the man who sees only what is near at hand — pelas, near, and opsis, sight.” “How is that?”

. . .

8

NAMES ARE WORKS



Names come from the gods' nature,
and point to the nature of things.



Like Begets Like — the historical layer.

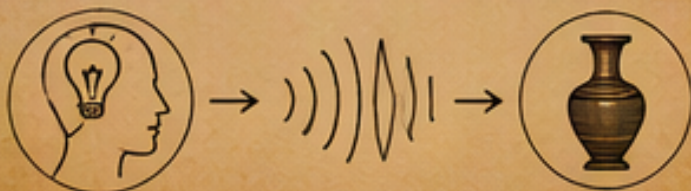
“Because according to the story, he never thought about or foresaw what murdering Myrtilus would do to his whole family in the long run, or all the misery that was going to come down on them. In his eagerness to win Hippodameia by whatever means came to hand, he saw only what was ready and on the spot — what was nearby. “And everybody

would agree that Tantalus was given correctly and according to nature, if what they say about him is true.” “What’s that?” “They say that a great many terrible things happened to him in his life — the last of them being the complete overthrow of his country — and that after his death, in Hades, he had a stone hung swinging over his head, in wonderful harmony with his name. “It’s exactly as if somebody had wanted to name him Talantatos, Most-weighed-upon, and had disguised it and said Tantalus instead. In some such way, at any rate, the chance of the story supplied him with the name.”

. . .

9

SOUND AS A SHAPE OF KNOWLEDGE



The sound carries the shape
of the knowledge within it.



Like Begets Like — a wordless conceptual plate.

“His father, who they say was Zeus, also seems to have been given an altogether fine name — though it isn’t easy to work out. “That’s because the name Zeus is exactly like a phrase that we split into two halves, and some of us use one half and some the other. Some say Zena and some say

Dia. “But put the two halves back together into one, and they express the nature of the god — which is just what we said a name ought to do. Because nobody is more the cause of life — zen — whether for us or for anything else, than the ruler and king of all things. “So Zena and Dia together correctly name the god who is always the cause of life for all creatures, di’ hon zen — the one because of whom we live. But, as I say, his name, which is really one name, has been split into two.”

. . .

“And when a man hears that Zeus is the son of Cronus, he might find that offensive at first; it might seem more reasonable to say that Zeus is the offspring of some great intelligence. “But in fact Cronus’ name signifies not a child, koros, but the purity and clarity of his mind — the sweeping clean of it. “And according to the story he was the son of Uranus — Heaven — whose name is correctly given too. Because the sight of what is above is well called ourania: looking at the things above, horosa ta ano. And the astronomers say, Hermogenes, that that is what produces purity of mind.”



Socrates: Like begets like.
From knowledge comes the fitting name.



Like Begets Like — the chapter's narrative and philosophical synthesis.

. . .

Nobody in the grass said anything for a moment. Then Danae said: “Is any of that true?” “No,” said Sophia. “None

of it?" "Very nearly none of it. One or two of them are not impossible. The rest are inventions, and good ones, and some of them are jokes, and everybody in that street knew they were jokes." "Then why is he—" "Keep watching," said the owl. "He is about to tell you."

Chapter 5

FIVE. Euthyphro of Prospalta



Euthyphro of Prospalta — opening scene.

“If I could remember Hesiod’s genealogy,” Socrates said, “and the still earlier ancestors of the gods that he lists, I wouldn’t have stopped explaining the correctness of the names he gives them until I had tested this wisdom which has suddenly come upon me — I don’t know from where — to see whether it holds up all the way to the end.”

“Socrates,” said Hermogenes, “you really do sound exactly like a prophet who has suddenly been inspired to deliver oracles.”

. . .

“Yes, Hermogenes. And for my part I mostly blame Euthyphro for it. Euthyphro of the deme Prospalta. “I was with him at dawn, and I gave him my ear for a very long discussion. He must have been inspired — because it looks as though he has not only filled my ears with his superhuman wisdom but taken possession of my soul as well. “So here is what I think we ought to do. Today we will use this wisdom and finish our examination of names. And tomorrow, if the rest of you agree, we’ll exorcise it, and purify ourselves — as soon as we have found somebody clever at that kind of purification, priest or wise man.”

. . .

Lela did not move at all. She was aware of the cicadas and of the ground under her elbows and of Danae going completely rigid beside her, and of none of it mattering in the slightest. “Sophia.” “Yes.” “Is that him.” “There were a great many men called Euthyphro in Athens,” said the owl carefully. “It was not a rare name.” “Sophia.”

. . .

2



Euthyphro trusts the experts:
the poets, the craftsmen, the lawgivers.



Euthyphro of Prospalta — the chapter's central dialogue.

The owl was quiet for a second. “He is a man,” she said, “who talked to Socrates at dawn, and held forth at enormous length, and claimed to have special knowledge about the gods. And the men who copied this book out, and read it, and argued about it for two thousand years, have mostly thought it was the same one. “I cannot prove it to you. Nobody can. But if you are asking me what I think, then yes. I think that is the man you watched walk away up a street without looking back.”

. . .

Danae had her fists in her lap. “He’s making fun of him.” “He is.” “He’s saying — he’s saying he caught it. Like a cold. He’s saying I’ve got Euthyphro’s wisdom and it’s made me talk nonsense for an hour and tomorrow I’ll need a priest to get it out of me.” “Yes.” “And he’s doing it while he uses it.” “Yes,” said Sophia. “That is precisely what he is doing, and you are the first person to say it out

loud in this grove, and I would like you to notice, Danae, that your sister has been furious about the wrong thing for twenty minutes and you have not.”

. . .

3

EXPERTS SET THE NAMES



POETS
for the gods



CRAFTSMEN
for their arts



LAW GIVERS
for justice

Each expert names well
in their own field.



Euthyphro of Prospalta — the central concept made visible.

Lela was not listening. She was doing the thing she had learned to do in a prison in Athens, which was to put two pieces down next to each other and see what came up between them. Because in Book — she thought of it as a book now; she could not help it, she had read it — in the morning of the day he was indicted, a man had stood outside the king-archon's court and had been unable to say what piety was, and had gone away. And here he was at dawn, before that. Filling Socrates' ears. Holding forth. And Socrates had gone on from Euthyphro to the courthouse and been charged with impiety, and had stood there and let a man who could not define the word walk away from him up a street. "He'd already heard it," she said. "Heard what?" "All of it. Whatever Euthyphro said at dawn. He'd had it for hours before that conversation started." She was sitting up now. "He knew exactly what he was going to get. He asked him anyway."

. . .

“That’s fine with me,” said Hermogenes, in the picture. “I’d be very glad to hear what’s left to say about names.” “Then that’s what we must do. Since we now have some sort of outline to follow — which names do you want to start with? I want to find out whether names themselves will bear witness to us that they weren’t given by chance, but have some sort of correctness. “The names that heroes and men are said to have might mislead us. As we saw at the beginning, they are often given because they were an ancestor’s name, and some of them don’t fit at all. And a great many are given in hope that they will turn out to fit — Eutychides, Son-of-good-fortune; Sosias, Saviour; Theophilus, God-beloved. I think we should leave those aside. “We’re most likely to find correctly given names among the things that always are, by nature. Those are the ones whose names it is proper to have given with the greatest care — and some of them may even be the work of a more than human power.” “I think that’s sensible.”

5



Socrates asks: Do we learn the truth
from the name or from the thing?



Euthyphro of Prospalta — the guiding analogy.

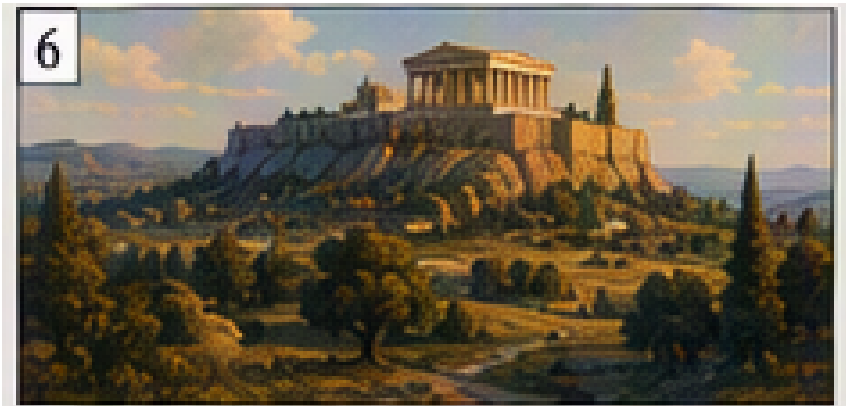
. . .

“Then isn’t it right to begin with why the gods themselves are correctly called theoi?” “It probably is.” “I suspect something like this. It seems to me that the first people in Greece believed only in the gods that a great many foreigners still believe in today — the sun, and the moon, and the earth, and the stars, and the sky. “And seeing that these were always moving, always running, they gave them the name theoi, from thein, to run, because it was their nature to run. “And later, when they learned about the other gods, they called them all by the same name. Does that seem likely — or am I talking nonsense?” “It’s very likely.”

. . .

“He’s not wrong,” said Aristotle, in the garden. Plato turned his head. “Not about the word. About the people.

The first men did worship the sun and the moon and the sky; every nation I have heard of did, and the ones furthest from us still do. That part is observation. He is standing in the middle of a page of invention and he has put one true thing in it.” “Can you tell which is which?” “Sometimes.” “Then you are better off than his friend Hermogenes,” said Plato, “who cannot tell at all, and who is about to agree to every single one of them.”



If names came only from agreement,
they could all be false.



Euthyphro of Prospalta — the argument unfolding step by step.

. . .

“What shall we look at next? Daemons, clearly, and then heroes, and then human beings.” “Daemons next.” “And what is the correct meaning of the word daimones, Hermogenes? See whether you think there’s anything in what I’m about to say.” “Say it and I will.” “Do you know what Hesiod says daemons are?” “I don’t remember.” “Do you remember that he talks about a golden race — the first race of human beings that was ever born?” “I remember that.” “He says this about them: *Since this race has been hidden away by fate, they are called sacred daemons; they live upon the earth and they are good, warding off evil and standing guard over mortal men.*”

. . .

“So what?” “Well, I don’t think he means the golden race was made of gold. I think he means it was good and

fine. And I take it as proof of that, that he calls us a race of iron.” “That’s true.” “So don’t you think that if somebody alive now were good, Hesiod would say he belonged to the golden race too?” “He probably would.” “And are good people any different from wise ones?” “They aren’t.”

. . .



**Lela and Danae: So we must ask
where the truth lives.**



Euthyphro of Prospalta — the competing interpretation.

“Then it’s mainly because daemons are wise and knowing — daemones — that Hesiod says they are named daemones. In the older Attic we actually find the word daemones. “So Hesiod and a good many other poets speak well when they say that when a good man dies he gets a great destiny and a great honour and becomes a daemon — a name given to him because it goes with wisdom. “And I say myself that every good man, alive or dead, is daemonic, and is correctly called a daemon.” “I think I completely agree with you, Socrates.”

. . .

Lela made a small sound, and put the heel of her hand against her eye, and took it away again. Nobody said anything about it.

. . .

“But what about the word hero?” “That one isn’t so hard, because the name has hardly been altered at all. It expresses the fact that heroes were born out of love — eros.” “How do you mean?” “Don’t you know that the heroes are demigods?” “So what?” “So every one of them came out of the love of a god for a mortal woman, or of a mortal man for a goddess. And if you look at it in the old Attic, as before, you’ll understand it better, because it will show you that heros is only a slightly altered form of eros — the very thing they sprang from. “Either that is why they were called heroes — or else it’s because they were sophists, clever speech-makers, rhetores, and dialecticians, skilled at asking questions, erotan. Because eirein is the same as legein, to speak. “And so, as we were just saying, in the Attic dialect the heroes turn out to be speech-makers and question-askers. The noble breed of heroes turns out to be a race of public speakers and sophists.”

7

ΑΝΑΓΚΑΙΟΝ
ΕΙΔΕΝΑΙ
ΤΟ ΠΡΑΓΜΑ

We must go beyond words
and see the thing itself.



Euthyphro of Prospalta — Lela and Danae reconstruct the idea.

. . .

Danae was laughing into the grass. “He’s saying heroes are — he’s saying Achilles was a lawyer.” “He is saying,” said Sophia, “that the word for hero and the word for asking questions sound rather alike, and that this may be the most important fact about heroes. And he is saying it about four years before a jury of five hundred Athenians decides what to do with a man whose entire life has been asking questions.” Danae stopped laughing.

. . .

“That one isn’t hard,” Socrates was saying. “But can you tell me why the human race is called anthropoi? That one is much harder.” “How could I do that, Socrates? I wouldn’t strain myself to find it even if I could, because I think you’re far more likely to find it than I am.” “You really do have faith in Euthyphro’s inspiration.” “Clearly.”

9



Thing, name, and thought
must be examined together.



Euthyphro of Prospalta — the historical layer.

“And you’re right to. Indeed I seem to have had such a clever thought just now that if I’m not careful I shall be in danger of becoming altogether too wise before the day is out. “So pay attention. “First, we have to keep in mind this point about names: we often add letters and take them out, and shift the accents as well, and so swerve away from what we meant to name. And in other cases we do the opposite. “And I think our word for human beings is a case of exactly that sort. It was a phrase, and it became a name. One letter has been taken away, and the accent has moved. “The name human signifies this: that the other animals don’t investigate or reason about anything they see, and don’t look closely at anything. But a human being no sooner sees a thing — opope — than he looks closely at it and reasons about it. “And so human beings alone among the animals are correctly named anthropos — one who looks up at what he has seen. Anathron ha opope.”

. . .

The garden had gone quiet. Aristotle was sitting forward with his forearms on his knees and the wax tablet forgotten in one hand, and he did not look like a man who was about to raise an objection. “That one is beautiful,” he said. “It is.” “It is also false.” “Yes,” said Plato. “It is also false. Hold both of those. You will need to be able to hold both of those for the rest of your life, and most men can only manage one.”

. . .

“What next?” said Hermogenes. “May I say what I’d like explained?” “Of course.” “It seems to me to come next in order. We speak of the body and the soul of a human being.” “Certainly.” “Then let’s try those the way we did the others.”



The search for truth begins
when we dare to look.



Euthyphro of Prospalta — a wordless conceptual plate.

. . .

“Speaking off the top of my head,” said Socrates, “I think the people who gave the soul its name had something like this in mind. “They thought that when the soul is in the body it is what makes it live — what gives it the power to breathe and to be revived, *anapsuchon* — and that when that reviving fails, the body dies and is finished. “That, I think, is why they called it *psuche*. “But hold on a moment, if you don’t mind. I imagine the followers of Euthyphro would look down on that explanation and think it crude. And I believe I can glimpse one that they’d find more persuasive. See whether it pleases you.” “Tell it to me and I will.”

. . .

“When you think about the nature of any body — what is it, apart from the soul, that holds it up and carries it,

so that it lives and moves about?” “There isn’t anything.” “And what about the nature of everything else? Don’t you agree with Anaxagoras that it is ordered and held together by mind, or soul?” “I do.” “Then a fine name for this power — which carries and holds, *ochei kai echei*, the whole of nature, *phusis* — would be nature-holder.”

. . .

Lela lay back in the grass with her arms over her face. “He does that too,” she said, to nobody. “He gives you the plain one, and then he says but the clever people would want a better one, and then he gives you the clever one, and it’s worse, and he knows it’s worse, and he says it anyway so that you can see the difference.” “Yes,” said Sophia. “He’s teaching.” “He has been teaching since the second sentence,” said the owl. “You have been so busy being cross about the women of Troy that you have missed about forty minutes of it.”



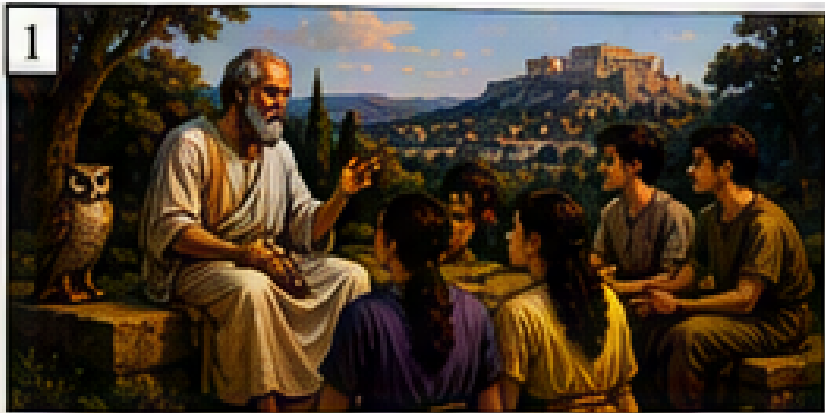
Euthyphro of Prospalta — the chapter's narrative and philosophical synthesis.

. . .

And in a garden under the plane trees, three hundred miles and thirty-five years away, a young man from Stagira wrote four words on a wax tablet, and underlined them, and did not show them to anybody. Lela could not read them from where she was, and said so. “I can,” said Sophia. “Well?” “By agreement. Not by nature.” The owl turned her head all the way round, and back. “He is twenty-four,” she said, “and he has just written down the sentence he is still going to be defending when he is sixty, in a book of his own, against this one. He will put it more carefully than that. He will not put it any differently.”

Chapter 6

SIX. The Strongest Chain



Socrates: A chain links things
one to another.



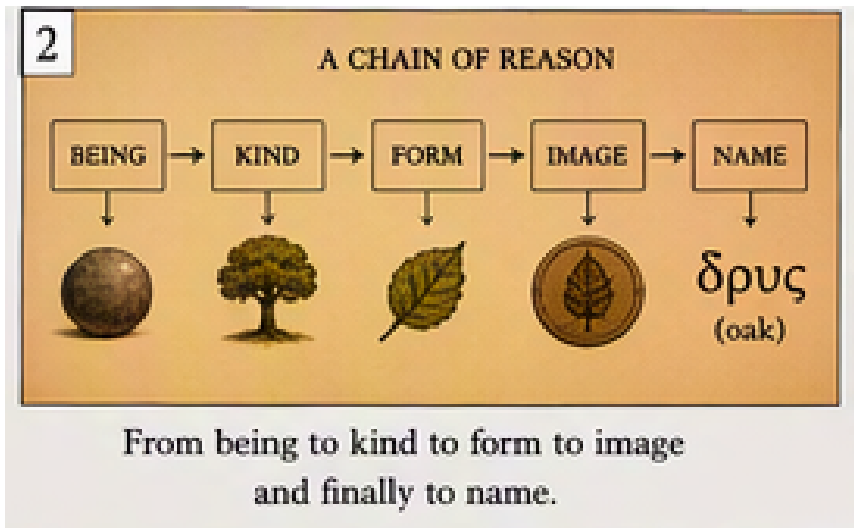
The Strongest Chain — opening scene.

“And what are we going to say about the next one?” “You mean the word for body?” “Yes.” “There’s a great deal to say about that one,” said Socrates, “and if a man twisted it even slightly there would be more. “Some people say that the body — soma — is the tomb of the soul — sema — on the grounds that the soul is buried in it during this present life. Others say it is correctly called a sign — which is the same word — because the soul signifies whatever it wants to signify by means of the body. “But I think it was most likely the followers of Orpheus who gave the body its name. They had the idea that the soul is being punished for something, and that the body is an enclosure, a prison, in which the soul is kept safe — sozetai — until the penalty has been paid. “And on that account not a single letter of the word needs to be changed.”

. . .

Nobody in the grass said anything. Then Danae, in a small voice: “Soma. Sema.” “Yes.” “Body. Tomb.” “Yes.” “It’s the same word with one letter changed.” “Very nearly,” said Sophia. “Close enough that a Greek hears one inside the other, which is the only kind of closeness that matters here.”

. . .





The Strongest Chain — the chapter's central dialogue.

Lela had her arms round her knees and was watching the picture without blinking. “He believed it,” she said. “Which part?” “The prison. He said it on the last day. Not that word, a different word — he said we’re in a kind of guardhouse and we mustn’t let ourselves out. And Cebes asked him about it and he said he was only repeating what he’d heard.” She put her chin down. “He heard it here. Or he heard it wherever this came from. He’s been carrying it around for years.”

. . .

“I think we’ve looked at those enough, Socrates,” said Hermogenes. “But could we investigate the names of the other gods, the way you did with Zeus? To see what sort of correctness they were given with?” “By Zeus, we certainly can. But the first and finest line of investigation — and as sensible men we have to admit this — is that we know nothing at all about the gods themselves, or about the names

they call themselves by. Though it is clear that whatever those are, they are the true ones. “The second-best line on correctness is the one we use in our prayers: that we hope the gods are pleased with the names we give them, since we know no others. I think that’s an excellent custom. “So if it’s all right with you, let’s begin by announcing to the gods that we are not going to be investigating them — we don’t consider ourselves worthy of that — but human beings, and what human beings believed when they gave the gods their names. There’s no offence in that.”

3



The name does not stand alone.
It stands at the end of a long road.



The Strongest Chain — the central concept made visible.

. . .

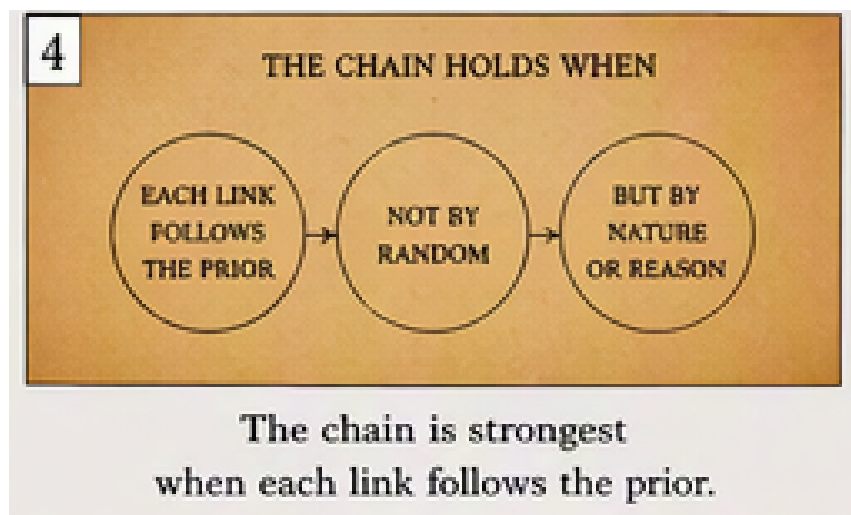
“He does that,” said Aristotle, in the garden. “Does what?” “Puts up a fence before he goes into a field he has no right to be in, and announces loudly that he is not going into the field, and then goes into it.” “Yes.” “Why?” “Because,” said Plato, “he was going to be tried for impiety in the end anyway, and he knew it thirty years before it happened, and he still could not make himself stop. Watch how careful he is. Now watch what he does for the next hour.”

. . .

“Shall we begin, as is customary, with Hestia?” “All right.” “What do you think the person who named her had in mind?” “That’s not an easy question, in my opinion.” “At any rate, Hermogenes, the first name-givers were

not ordinary people. They were lofty thinkers and subtle reasoners.”

. . .





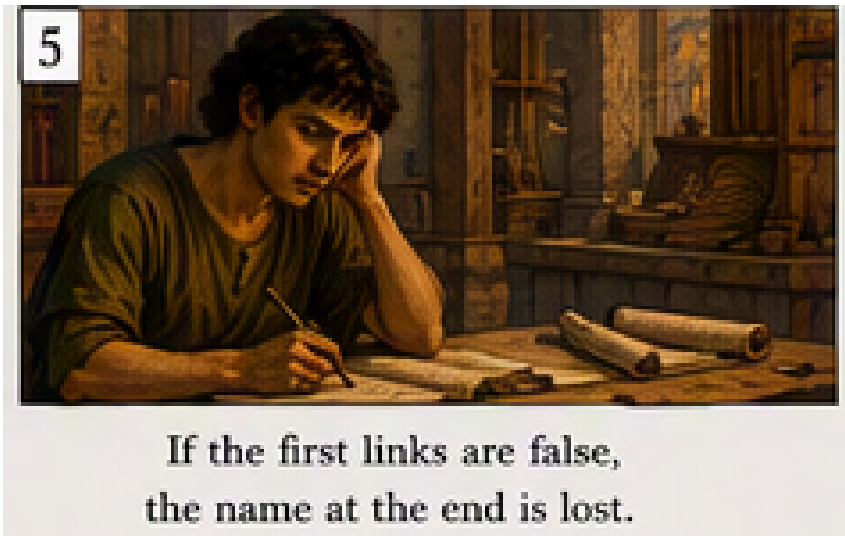
The Strongest Chain — the guiding analogy.

“In Attic we say ousia for being,” Socrates went on. “But some people say essia and others say osia. “Now, according to the second of those, it’s reasonable to call the being of things Hestia. And besides, we ourselves say that whatever has a share of being is — estin — so being is correctly called Hestia for that reason too. “And if you think about sacrifices, you’ll see that the name-givers understood it this way themselves. Because a man who called the being of all things essia would naturally sacrifice to Hestia before any other god. “But the people who say osia seem to agree more or less with Heraclitus — that the things that are are all flowing and that nothing stands still. Because then the cause and origin of them is the pusher, othoun, and is well named osia. “But that’s enough about that, since we know nothing.”

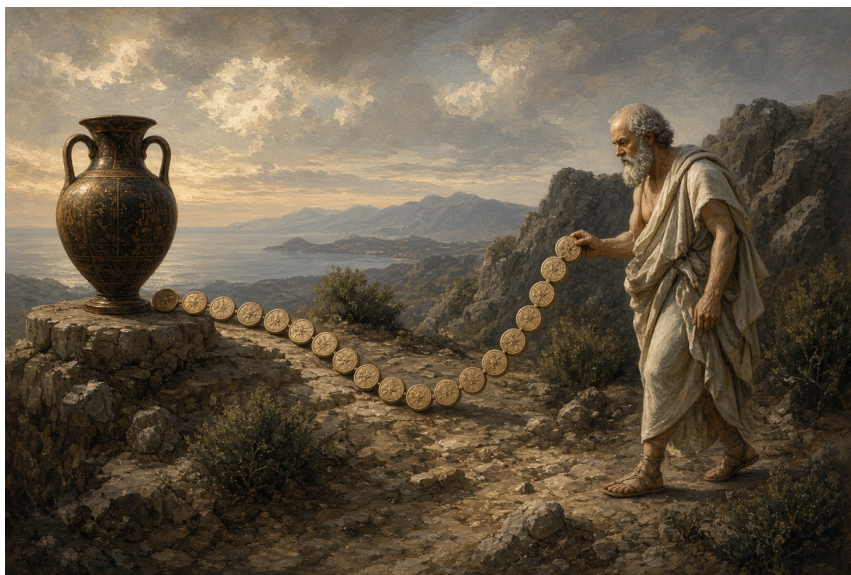
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“After Hestia it’s right to look at Rhea and Cronus — though we’ve already done his name. Now, what I’m about to tell you may be nonsense.” “Why do you say that?” “Because I have a whole swarm of wisdom in my head.” “What sort of wisdom?” “It sounds completely absurd, and yet there seems to me to be something quite plausible about it.” “How so?”

. . .



If the first links are false,
the name at the end is lost.



The Strongest Chain — the argument unfolding step by step.

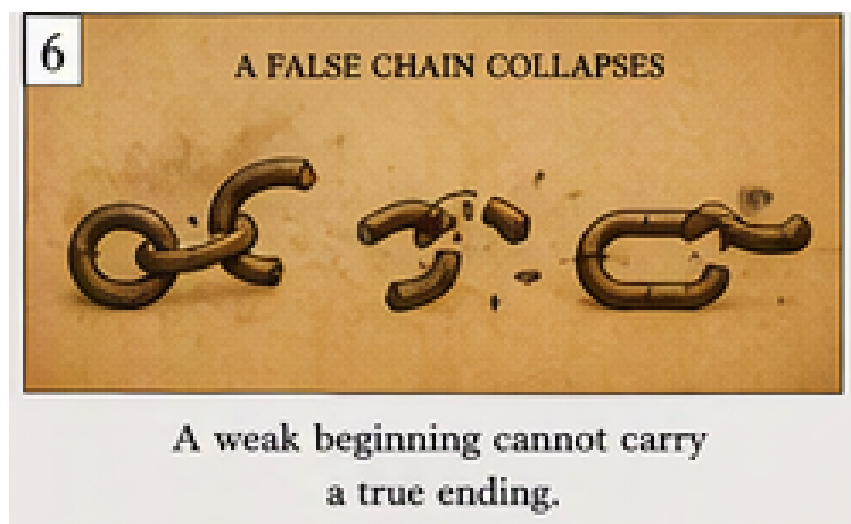
“I seem to see Heraclitus spouting some very old scraps of wisdom that Homer tells us too — wisdom as old as the days of Cronus and Rhea.” “Which ones?” “Heraclitus says somewhere that everything gives way and nothing stands still, and, comparing the things that are to the flowing of a river — rhoe — he says that you cannot step into the same river twice.” “So he does.”

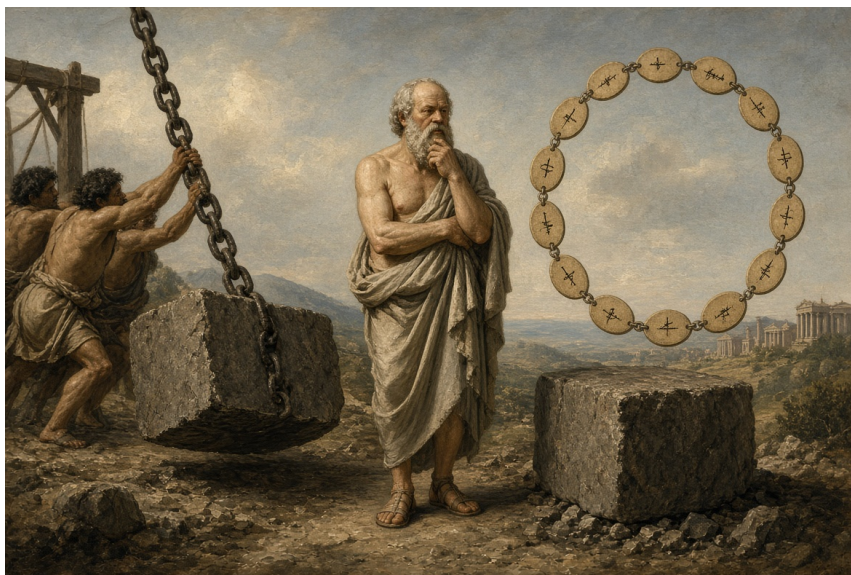
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“Well then. Don’t you think that whoever gave the names Rhea and Cronus to the ancestors of the other gods understood things the same way Heraclitus does? Or do you think he gave them both the names of running water by pure chance? “And Homer says in the same way: Ocean, origin of the gods, and their mother Tethys. “Hesiod says much the same. And Orpheus says somewhere: *Fair-flowing Ocean was the first to marry, and he wedded his sister, the daughter of his mother.* “See how they

agree with each other, and how all of them lean towards Heraclitus.”

. . .





The Strongest Chain — the competing interpretation.

“There,” said Sophia. “That is the first time the whole afternoon has turned round, and I want you both to have seen it happen.” “What?” “He has just said that the very oldest names in the language were given by people who believed that nothing stands still. “He has said it in passing, as a small joke about two gods. He will come back to it in about an hour and it will not be a joke, and it will be the largest thing in the book, and by the end of the day it will have put a hole through the whole argument.”

. . .

“I don’t understand what Tethys means,” said Hermogenes. “But it practically tells you itself. It’s the slightly disguised name of a spring. What is strained and filtered is like a spring, and Tethys is the two of those words put together.” “That’s elegant, Socrates.” “It is indeed.”

. . .

“Then what next? We’ve done Zeus.” “We have.” “So let’s do his brothers. Poseidon, and Pluto — by that name or the other one.” “Certainly.”

. . .



Danae: So we must test
each link of the chain.



The Strongest Chain — Lela and Danae reconstruct the idea.

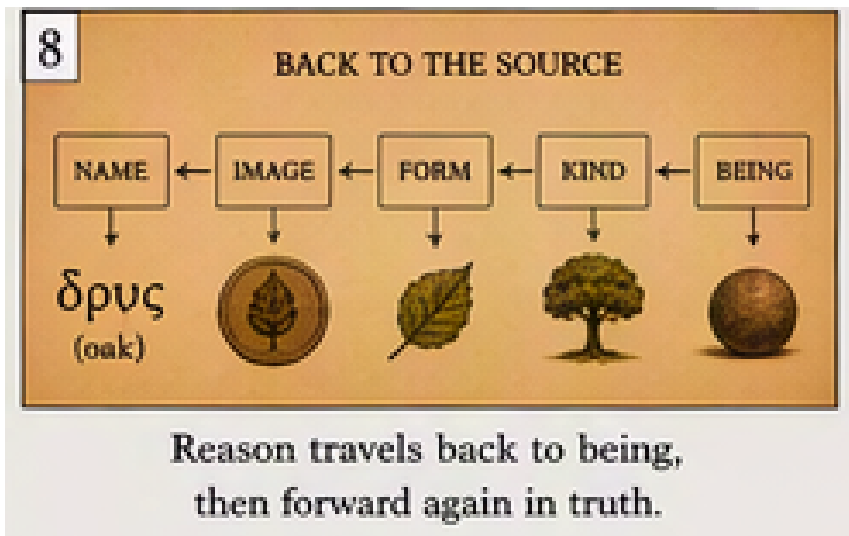
“It seems to me that whoever first named Poseidon did it because he saw that the force of the waves stopped him walking and wouldn’t let him go any further — as though there were a shackle round his feet. *Desmos ton podon*. So he called this god, who is lord of the power of the sea, Poseidon, because his feet were shackled. “But perhaps that isn’t what it says. Perhaps the name was originally pronounced with a double l, because the god knows many things. Or perhaps he was called the Shaker, because he shook the earth, and the other letters were added on.”

. . .

“As for Pluto — he got that name because it goes with his being the source of wealth, *ploutos*, since wealth comes up out of the ground. “I think most people call him Pluto because they are frightened of what cannot be seen — *aides* — and they take his other name, Hades, to be about that.” “And what do you think yourself, Socrates?”

. . .

“I think people have a great many mistaken opinions about the power of this god, and are more frightened of him than they need to be. “They are frightened because once we are dead we stay in his country forever. They are terrified because the soul goes there stripped of its body. “But I think all of these things, and the god’s name and his office along with them, point in the very same direction.” “How so?”





The Strongest Chain — the historical layer.

. . .

“I’ll tell you how it looks to me. But first answer me this. “Of the chains that hold a living creature and keep it in one place — which is the stronger, force, or desire?” “Desire is far stronger, Socrates.” “Then don’t you think a great many people would get out of Hades, if he didn’t bind the ones who come to him with the strongest chain there is?” “Clearly.” “So if he is going to bind them with the strongest chain, and not hold them by force, he must bind them with some sort of desire.” “Evidently.” “And there are a great many desires, aren’t there?” “Yes.” “So if he is really going to hold them with the greatest chains, he has to bind them with the greatest desire.” “Yes.”

. . .

“And is any desire greater than the desire to be in the company of somebody you believe will make you a better man?”

. . .

Lela put both hands flat on the ground. “Oh,” she said.

. . .



**That is the strongest chain:
reason joined to reality.**



The Strongest Chain — a wordless conceptual plate.

“There certainly isn’t, Socrates.” “Then let us say that it is for that reason, Hermogenes, that nobody up to now has ever wanted to come back here from there. “The things Hades knows how to say are so beautiful, it seems, that everybody has been overcome by the spell of them — even the Sirens. “On that account this god is a perfect sophist, and a great benefactor to those who are with him. So great is the wealth down there around him that he even sends a good deal of it up to us. That is how he got the name Pluto. “And on the other hand — because he is not willing to be in the company of human beings while they still have their bodies, and only talks with them when their souls have been purified of all the desires and evils of the body — doesn’t he seem to you to be a philosopher? “Hasn’t he understood perfectly well that when people are free of their bodies he can bind them with the desire for goodness, but that while they are feeling the agitation and the madness

of the body, not even his father's famous chains could hold them?" "Probably so, Socrates."

. . .



The Strongest Chain — the chapter's narrative and philosophical synthesis.

Lela was crying. She had not noticed starting and she did not stop the picture and she did not look at her sister, and after a while Danae simply moved along the grass and leaned on her, which was the arrangement they had arrived at last summer and had not needed since. "He said it again," Lela got out. "At the end. On the last day. He said — he said the best thing about dying would be that he could go on asking people questions and nobody would put him to death for it. He said he'd be happy." "He did." "And this is years before. This is years before anybody has said the word Meletus to him." She wiped her face on her wrist. "He wasn't comforting himself. He'd thought that

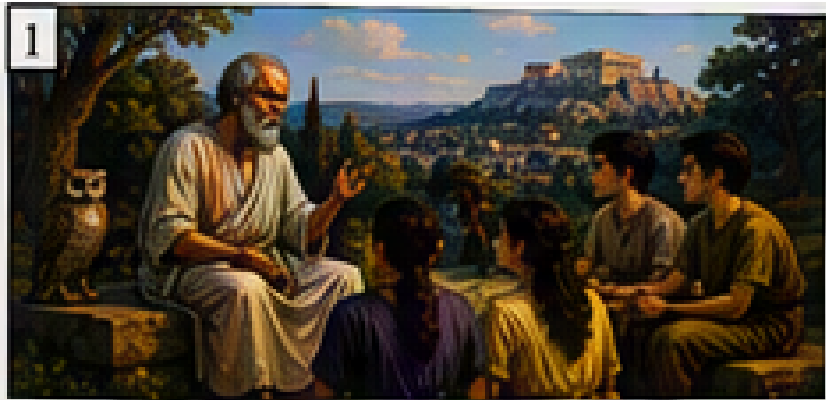
for his whole life. He had an actual picture of where he was going and it was a place where the conversation was so good that nobody ever wanted to leave.”

. . .

“So it’s much more likely,” Socrates finished, “that Hades gets his name not from what cannot be seen, but from the fact that he knows everything fine and beautiful — and that this is why the rule-setter called him Hades.”

Chapter 7

SEVEN. The Four Powers



Socrates: Four powers
work together in every name.



The Four Powers — opening scene.

“All right,” said Hermogenes. “But what about Demeter, and Hera, and Apollo, and Athena, and Hephaestus, and all the rest of them? What are we to say about those?”

. . .

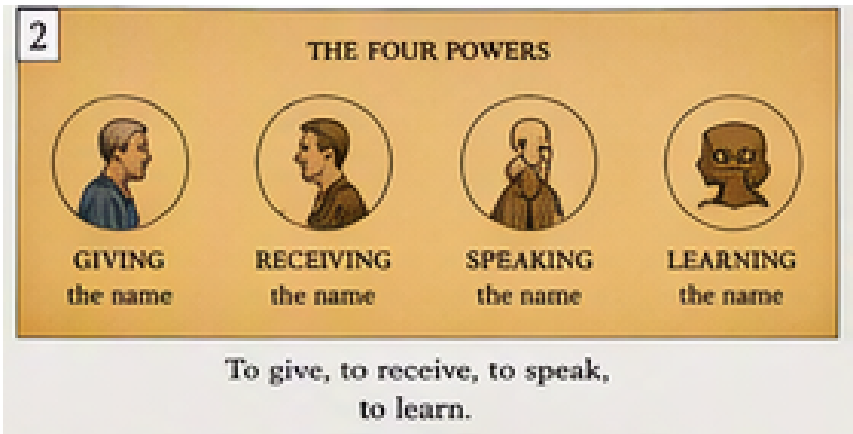
“Demeter seems to be so called because she gives nourishment the way a mother does. “Hera is a loveable one — and indeed Zeus is said to have married her for love. But perhaps the rule-setter, being a lofty thinker, called her Hera as a disguised name for air — putting the end of the name at the beginning. You’ll see what I mean if you repeat Hera over and over.”

. . .

Danae immediately began to repeat Hera over and over. “Yes,” said Sophia. “It really does. If you say it enough it turns into the other word.” “Yes. It is the oldest trick in the

book and it has never once stopped working on anybody, and you have just done it in a field two and a half thousand years later, in your own language, and got the same result they got. “Which is not evidence for anything at all,” the owl added. “But you can see why they wanted it to be.”

. . .





The Four Powers — the chapter's central dialogue.

“As for Persephone,” Socrates went on, “a great many people are frightened of her name, and of Apollo’s, because they don’t understand the correctness of names. They change her name into another form, and then it sounds terrifying to them, as though it meant the bringer of slaughter. “But really the name shows that the goddess is wise. Because since things are being swept along, wisdom is the power to lay hold of them, and to grasp them, and to keep up with them. “So it would be correct to call this goddess something like Pherepapha — because of her wisdom, that is to say, her power to keep hold of what is being swept along. And this is also why Hades, who is wise himself, keeps her company. “But people nowadays care more about a name sounding pleasant than about it being true, so they twist it.”

. . .

3



First, someone gives the name,
heard in the air.



The Four Powers — the central concept made visible.

“And the same thing has happened to Apollo. A great many people are afraid of his name because they think it means something terrifying. Haven’t you noticed?” “I certainly have. What you say is true.” “In my view the name is most beautifully suited to the power of the god.” “How so?” “I’ll try to tell you. I don’t think any single name could fit the four powers of the god better. It takes in every one of them — his power in music, in prophecy, in medicine, and in archery.”

. . .

4



Then another receives it,
ready to use it.



The Four Powers — the guiding analogy.

“That’s a pretty remarkable name you’re talking about. Go on and explain it.” “It’s certainly a harmonious one. After all, it’s the name of the god of music. “To begin with: the purgings and purifyings that doctors and prophets use — the fumigations with drugs, the washings and sprinklings that go with them — they all have the same effect, don’t they? To make a person clean in body and soul.” “Certainly.” “And isn’t Apollo the god who purifies, who washes away such evils and releases us from them?” “Certainly.” “Then since he washes and releases, and is a doctor for our evils, he might correctly be called the Washer. “And since his prophecy goes with single-mindedness and truth — which are the same thing — it may be most correct to call him what the Thessalians call him, because every Thessalian calls this god Aploun, the Single One. “And since he is always shooting, being skilled in archery, he is the always-shooting one as well. “And as for his musical powers — you have to understand that the letter a often signifies

togetherness. Here it signifies moving together: whether the moving together of the heavens about what we call the poles, or the moving together of a piece of music, which we call being in concert. Because the astronomers and the musicians say that all of these move together at once by a kind of harmony. “Apollo is the god who directs that harmony and makes all things move together. “So he was really the one who makes things move together — and we call him Apollo, and we put in the second l so that his name should not come out as the destroyer.”

. . .



**Finally, it is learned,
kept in the mind.**



The Four Powers — the argument unfolding step by step.

“So the whole thing,” said Hermogenes slowly, “is one name.” “It really takes in every one of the powers of the god,” said Socrates. “He is a single-minded, always-shooting washer who makes things move together.”

. . .

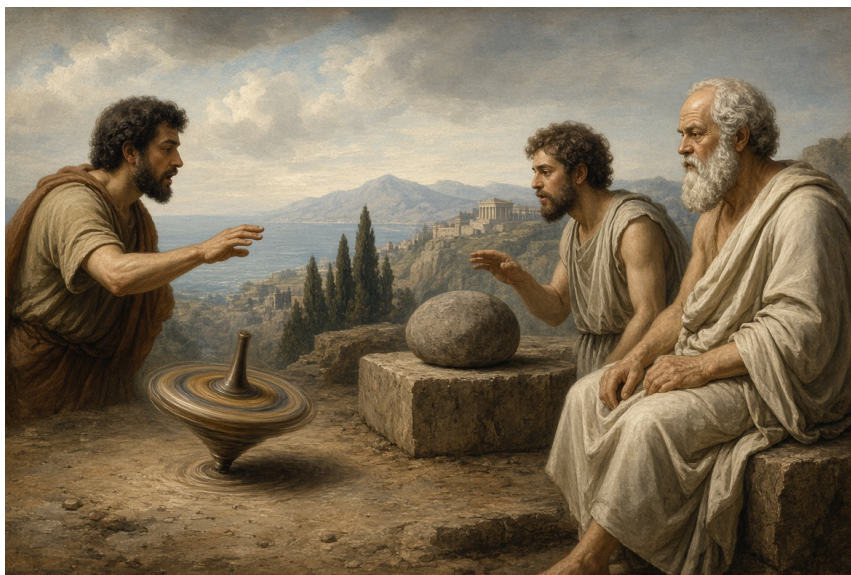
Danae was on her back in the grass, laughing so hard she had to put her arm over her face. “A single-minded always-shooting washer who makes things move together!” “Danae—” “That’s — Lela, that’s a job advert. That’s the worst sentence anybody has ever said.” And Lela, who had been crying about eleven minutes earlier, discovered that she was laughing too, and that both things were somehow the same size.

. . .

“He is enjoying himself,” said Aristotle, in the garden, who was not laughing. “Enormously.” “Is any of it serious?” “Some of it is serious. Some of it is a joke. Some of it is a joke that is also serious, which is the hardest kind to catch and the kind he was best at.” The old man shifted on the stone bench. “And you want me to tell you which is which.” “Yes.” “I know you do,” said Plato. “I am not going to. You have got to get that from the page or you have got nothing.”



**All four must be present
for a name to live.**



The Four Powers — the competing interpretation.

. . .

“As for the Muses,” Socrates went on, “and music, and poetry generally — they seem to get their name from the eager desire to search out and do philosophy. “Leto is so called because of her gentleness, and because she is willing to do whatever is asked of her. Or perhaps her name comes from the form other Greeks use, because her character isn’t rough but gentle and smooth. “Artemis seems to be named for her soundness and her orderliness, and for her love of virginity. Or perhaps whoever named her was calling her an investigator of virtue. It is for one of these reasons, or all of them, that whoever gave her the name gave it.”

. . .

8

THE CHAIN OF POWER



The powers follow one another,
like links in a living chain.



The Four Powers — Lela and Danae reconstruct the idea.

“What about Dionysus? And Aphrodite?” “You’re asking great things of me, son of Hipponicus. There is a serious way of explaining the names of those two and there is a playful way as well. “You’ll have to ask somebody else for the serious one. But there’s nothing to stop us going through the playful one. Even the gods love play.”

. . .

“Dionysus, the giver of wine, might playfully be called the Wine-giver. “And wine itself would most justly be called mind-that-thinks-it-is, since it makes most drinkers think they have understanding when they haven’t. “And as for Aphrodite, there’s no point in contradicting Hesiod. We should agree with him that she is called Aphrodite because she was born out of the foam.”

. . .

“You’re an Athenian, Socrates,” said Hermogenes. “You’re surely not going to leave out Athena. Or Hephaestus and Ares, for that matter.” “Not likely.” “No indeed.”

. . .





The Four Powers — the historical layer.

“It isn’t hard to explain how Athena got her other name.”
“Which one?” “Pallas. You know we call her that.” “Of course.” “In my view we’d be right to think that name comes from her dancing in armour. Because lifting yourself or anything else up — from the ground or in your hands — is called shaking and dancing, and being shaken and being danced.” “Certainly.” “She’s called Pallas because of that.”

. . .

“And correctly so. But how do you explain the other name?” “You mean Athena?” “Yes.” “That’s a much weightier question, my friend. “The ancients seem to have had the same opinion about Athena as the modern experts on Homer do. A good many of them say, in their interpretations, that the poet presents Athena as Understanding, or Thought. “And the maker of names seems to have thought something of the same kind about the goddess — indeed

he speaks of her in grander terms still, saying that she is the very mind of god. “Or perhaps what he called her was God-minded, because of her unequalled knowledge of divine things. Or Character-minded, because he wanted to identify the goddess with the understanding that is in her character. “And then either he or the people after him made the name prettier, as they thought, and called her Athena.”





The Four Powers — a wordless conceptual plate.

. . .

“What about Hephaestus?” “Are you asking me about the noble judge of light?” “It seems so.” “Then isn’t it clear to everybody that he is the shining one with a letter added on?” “It probably is — unless you happen to have another opinion. And you probably do.” “Then to stop me giving it, ask me about Ares.” “Consider yourself asked.”

. . .

“All right, if that’s what you want. “It is proper that a god who is warlike in every way should be called Ares — because it accords with manliness and courage, or with a hard and unbending nature.” “It certainly does.”

. . .

“Then for god’s sake,” said Socrates, “let’s leave the subject of the gods, because it frightens me to talk about them.

“Ask me about anything else you like — until we see what the horses can do. The horses of Euthyphro.”

. . .

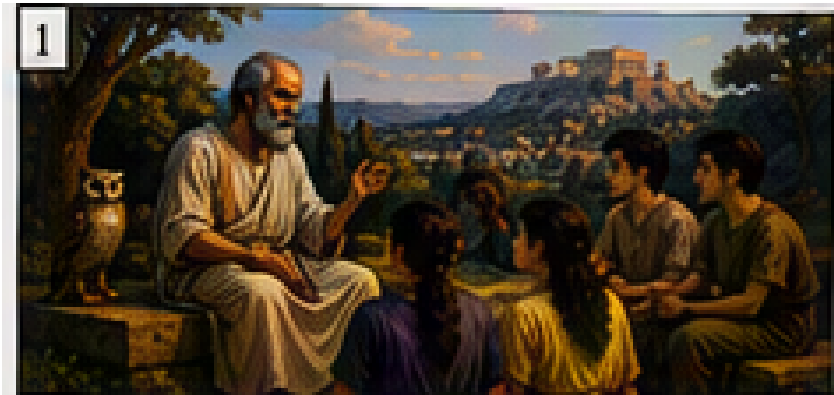


The Four Powers — the chapter's narrative and philosophical synthesis.

“He said it again,” said Danae. “Yes.” “Sophia, he keeps saying it. Every time he does something enormous and ridiculous he stops and says it’s Euthyphro’s fault.” “Yes.” “That’s not a joke about a man,” said Danae, slowly, working it out as she said it. “That’s — he’s putting a label on it. He’s saying this bit, the bit I’m doing now, is the Euthyphro bit. So that when you get to the end you know which parts to throw away.” There was a pause on the branch. “I have been coming to this grove for a very long time,” said Sophia, “and that is the best thing anybody in it has ever said.”

Chapter 8

EIGHT. Foreign Words



Socrates: Names come to us
from many lands.



Foreign Words — opening scene.

“I will,” said Hermogenes, “but there’s still one god I want to ask about, and that’s Hermes — since Cratylus says I’m no Hermogenes, no son of Hermes. So let’s look at the name and see whether there’s anything in what he says.”

. . .

“Well, the name Hermes seems to have something to do with speech. “He’s an interpreter, a messenger, a thief, a liar in words, a bargainer — and every one of those involves the power of speech. “Now, as we said before, one old word means to use words, and the other part of the name means he contrived, or devised. “And it was out of those two that the rule-setter made the name of the god who devised speech. It’s exactly as if he had said to us: Humans — it would be right for you to call the god who contrived speaking Eiremes. And we, thinking we were making it prettier, call him Hermes.”

. . .

2



Sailors bring words
across the sea.



Foreign Words — the chapter's central dialogue.

“Then I’m certain Cratylus was right when he said I’m no Hermogenes,” said Hermogenes, “since I’m no good at all at devising speeches.”

. . .

“And he just takes it,” said Lela. “Mm?” “He just — he’s been sitting there for an hour while a man he asked for help proves that his name is a lie, and he just says yes, I suppose I’m no good at talking, and lets it go past.” “Do you like him?” said Sophia. Lela thought about it. “Yes,” she said, surprised. “I think he’s the only person in this whole thing who hasn’t pretended to know something.”

. . .

4

THE JOURNEY OF A WORD



Across the world,
many tongues, many names.



Foreign Words — the central concept made visible.

“But it’s reasonable for Pan to be Hermes’ double-natured son.” “How so?” “You know that speech signifies all things — to pan — and keeps them circulating and always going round, and that it has two forms, true and false?” “Certainly.” “Well — the true part of it is smooth and divine and lives among the gods above, while the false part lives down here among the crowds of human beings, and is rough, and goatish. Because it’s here, in the tragic life, that you find the vast majority of the myths and the lies. “So the one who expresses all things, and keeps them always going round, is correctly called Pan the goatherd. The double-natured son of Hermes — smooth in his upper parts, and rough and goatish in the parts below. “He is either speech itself, or speech’s brother, since he is the son of Hermes. And it isn’t in the least surprising that a brother should resemble his brother.”

. . .

5



Some words keep their shape,
some change.



Foreign Words — the guiding analogy.

“But, as I said. Let’s leave the gods.” “That sort of god, Socrates, if that’s what you want. But what stops you talking about these gods — the sun and the moon, and the stars, and earth, and aether, and air, and fire, and water, and the seasons, and the year?” “That’s a great deal you’re asking of me. All the same, if it will please you, I’m willing.” “Of course it will.”

. . .

The sun, he said, collects people together when it rises; or it is always rolling round the earth in its course; or it seems to give colour to the things that grow out of the earth. The moon put Anaxagoras in an awkward position — because the name seemed to show that his brand-new theory, that the moon gets its light from the sun, was in fact extremely old. If the Anaxagoreans were right, then the moon’s light was always both new and old: the sun going round it kept casting new light on it, and the light

from last month was still there. And so the right name for it would be a great crashing compound meaning always-has-new-and-old-light — which had been squeezed down over the years into the word people actually said. “And a very grand name it is too, Socrates,” said Hermogenes. “But what about the month, and the stars?” The month was named from growing smaller. And the stars from lightning — because lightning is what makes the eyes turn upwards.

6

THE SAME THING, MANY NAMES



HORSE · ἵππος

(English) (Greek)

EQUUS

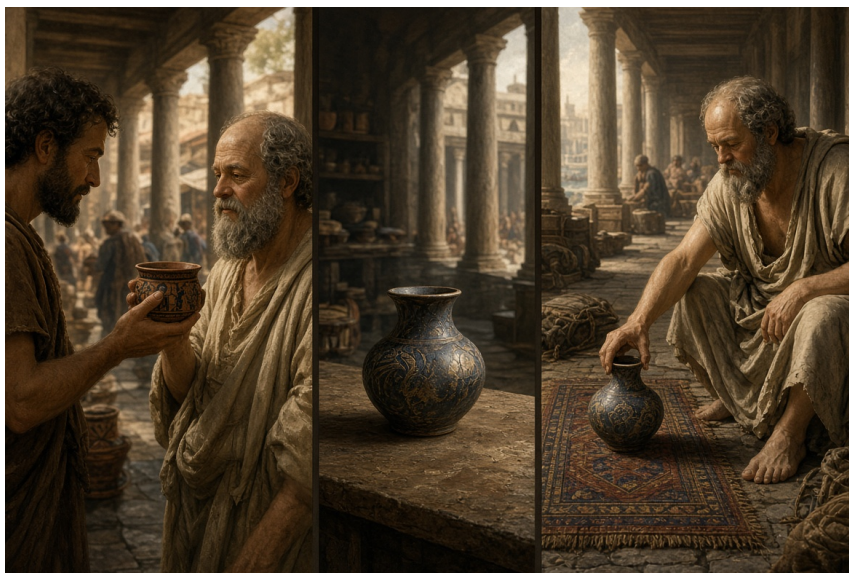
(Latin)

AT

ἄλφειν

(Old Norse)

The same thing,
many names.



Foreign Words — the argument unfolding step by step.

. . .

“What about fire and water?” “I’m really stuck on fire,” said Socrates. “So either Euthyphro’s muse has abandoned me, or this one is genuinely very hard. But notice the device I use in all such cases.” “What is that?” “I’ll tell you. But first answer me this. Could you say how pur — fire — came to be called that?” “I certainly couldn’t.”

7



Lela: So the thing is one,
though the names are many.



Foreign Words — the competing interpretation.

. . .

“Here’s what I suspect. “I think the Greeks — especially the ones who live abroad — have taken a great many names out of foreign languages.” “What of it?” “Well, if somebody were trying to find out whether these names had been sensibly given, and he treated them as belonging to Greek, when in fact they come from somewhere else — you can see that he’d be in a mess.” “He very probably would.” “Now look at fire, and see whether it isn’t a foreign name. It certainly isn’t easy to connect it with Greek. And it’s obvious that the Phrygians use the same word, slightly altered. And the same goes for water, and for dog, and for a good many others.” “So it does.” “So although one might say something about those names, one mustn’t push it too far. That is how I get rid of fire and water.”

8

USE WITHOUT PRIDE

LEARN
THE WORDUSE
IT WELLDON'T
DESPISE IT

We use elements of the idea.



Foreign Words — Lela and Danae reconstruct the idea.

. . .

The wax tablet came down on the stone bench with a noise. “There,” said Aristotle. Plato did not look round. “That is the whole thing, and he has said it himself, in the

middle, as an aside, to get out of a word he could not do. “Fire is a foreign word. Water is a foreign word. Dog is a foreign word. He does not even argue for it; he simply notices it and moves on. “But if a word can come into Greek out of Phrygian and go on meaning fire — if the sound can be carried across from a people who are not us, who did not have our name-maker, who did not look to any form of anything, and can arrive here and work — then what is left of natural correctness? Nothing is left of it. He has just put water and fire and the dog outside his own theory and he has not stopped walking.”





Foreign Words — the historical layer.

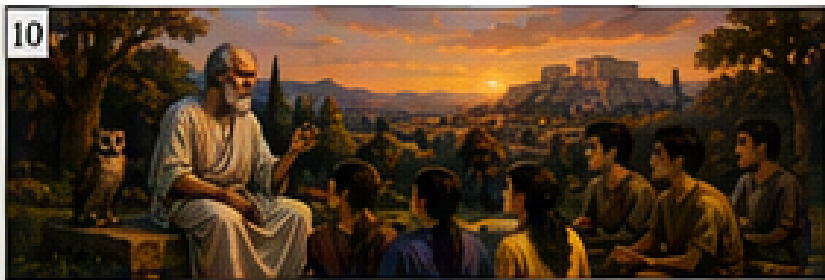
. . .

The old man sat for a while with his hands on his knees. “How old are you?” “You know how old I am.” “Say it.” “Twenty-four.”

. . .

“When I was twenty-four,” said Plato, “I had been in three battles and I had watched them kill him, and I had started writing it down because I could not think of anything else to do with my hands. “It took me until I was about forty to see what you have just seen, and I did not see it on my own; a man named Eudoxus had to show me, twice. “I am telling you that so that you will know that I know what you are, and so that we do not have to have the conversation where you find out whether I know.”

10



We keep what is true, and leave what is not.



Foreign Words — a wordless conceptual plate.

. . .

Aristotle picked the tablet up again and did not say anything at all. “Now,” said Plato. “Air. It is the shortest passage in the book and it is not important. Listen to it anyway, because after it comes the part I actually gave you this for.”

. . .

Air was named, perhaps, because it raises things off the earth. Or because it is always flowing. Or because the wind arises out of its flowing. Aether was always running and flowing about the air. The earth was better signified by its older name, which meant a mother, and which Homer used when he spoke of things being born. The seasons were named, in the old Attic spelling, from dividing — because they divide off the weathers of winter and summer, and the winds, and the fruits of the ground, one from another. And the two words for the year were really one word, split in half the way Zeus had been split in half. Because it is the year, all on its own, that brings the plants and the animals of the earth into the light, each in its own season, and passes them in review within itself. Some people took the first half of that phrase and some took the second, and so one thing came to have two names.

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Foreign Words — the chapter's narrative and philosophical synthesis.

. . .

“I say, Socrates. You’re making great progress.” “I’m driving my apparent wisdom pretty hard at the moment.” “You certainly are.” “You’ll be even more certain in a second.”

Chapter 9

NINE. You Have Asked Enough



Socrates: My friends, you have asked
many and good questions.



You Have Asked Enough — opening scene.

“Now that we’ve done that sort of name,” said Hermogenes, “I’d like to see with what correctness the names of the virtues were given. Wisdom, comprehension, justice — all the fine names of that kind.” “That’s no small class of names you’re stirring up, Hermogenes. But since I’ve put on the lion’s skin, I mustn’t lose heart. So it seems I must look into wisdom, and comprehension, and judgment, and knowledge, and all those other fine names you speak of.” “We certainly mustn’t stop until we have.”

. . .

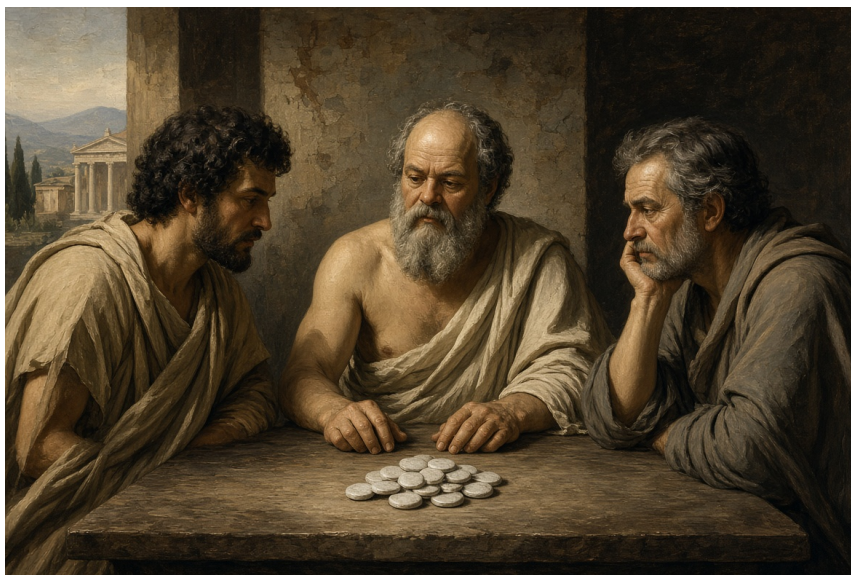
“By the dog,” said Socrates. “I think that’s rather a good inspiration — the thing that has just popped into my head.” “What is it?”

. . .

2



Questions bring us forward,
but too many can bring us in circles.



You Have Asked Enough — the chapter's central dialogue.

“Most of our wise men nowadays get so dizzy, going round and round in their search for the nature of the things that are, that the things themselves start to look to them as though they were turning round and moving every which way. “Well — I think the people who gave things their names in very ancient times were exactly like these wise men of ours. “They don’t blame the dizziness on their own condition. They blame it on the nature of the things themselves, which they think are never stable and never standing still, but flowing and moving, full of every sort of motion and constantly coming into being. “I say this because the names you have just mentioned put me in mind of it.” “How did they do that?” “Perhaps you didn’t notice that every one of them is given on the assumption that the thing it names is moving, and flowing, and coming into being.” “No,” said Hermogenes. “I didn’t think of that at all.”

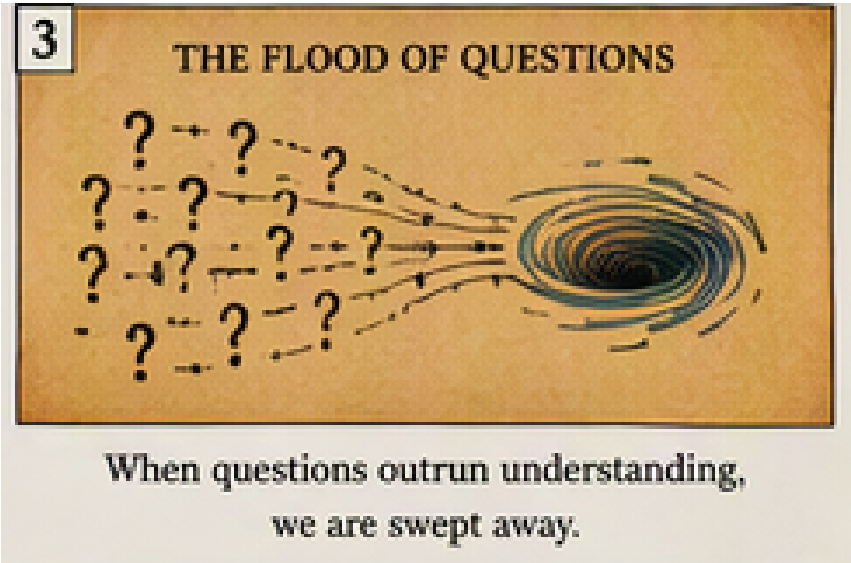
. . .

Sophia said, quietly: “Here it is.”

. . .

“Well, to begin with,” said Socrates, “the first name we mentioned is undoubtedly like this.” “Which name was that?” “Wisdom.”

. . .





You Have Asked Enough — the central concept made visible.

“Wisdom is the understanding of motion, and of flow. Or else it is the delight one takes in motion. It can be heard either way, and either way there is motion in it.”

. . .

“Give me another,” said Hermogenes. “Judgment. To judge is to examine, or study, whatever is begotten — because studying and examining are the same thing.”

. . .

“And another.” “Understanding itself is the longing for what is new. And to say that the things that are are new is to say that they are always coming into being. And that is exactly what the soul longs for. “The old form of the word says so plainly. Ours has had a long vowel put into it, and the longing has gone out of sight.”

. . .

“And moderation?” “Moderation is the saving of the wisdom we have just looked at.”

. . .

4



Some questions are helpful,
some are merely repetition.



You Have Asked Enough — the guiding analogy.

“Knowledge?” “Knowledge says that a worthwhile soul follows the movement of things. Neither falling behind them, nor running on ahead. “We ought to put a letter back into that word. Then you would be able to see the following in it.”

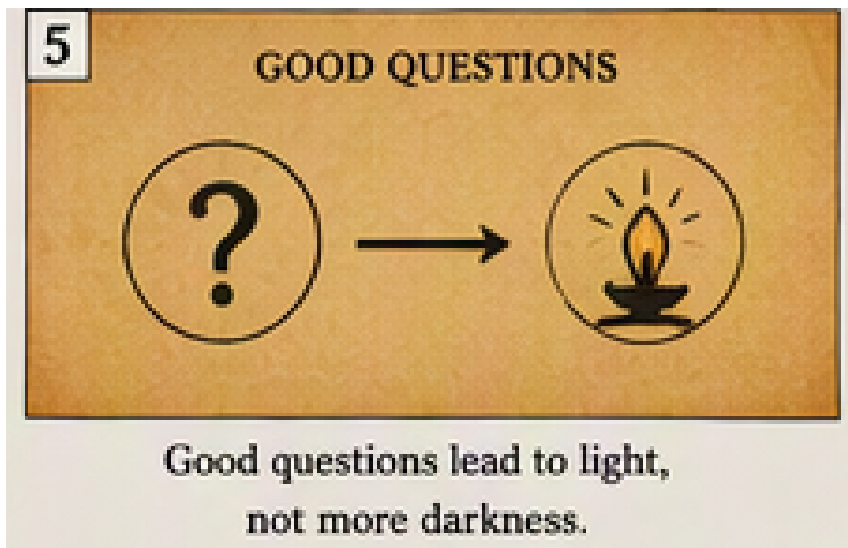
. . .

“Comprehension?” “Comprehension seems to be a kind of summing up. And whenever a man says that somebody comprehends, it is exactly as though he had said that he knows — because the word means that the soul travels along with things.”

. . .

“And there is another word for wisdom,” said Hermogenes. “The old one. The obscure one.” “That one signifies the grasping of motion. “It is obscure, and it is not our

word; it comes from somewhere else. But remember that the poets say of a thing that starts forward quickly that it rushed — and that there was once a famous Spartan called by that very name, because that is what the Spartans call a rapid advance.”





You Have Asked Enough — the argument unfolding step by step.

. . .

Danae, who had been counting on her fingers since judgment, ran out of fingers at comprehension and started again on the other hand.

. . .

“Every single one,” said Lela. “The good,” Socrates was saying, “is meant to signify everything in nature that is admirable. The things that are are moving, but some move fast and some slow; and so the good is what is admirable about the fast. “And it’s easy enough to work out that justice is the name given to the comprehension of the just. But the just itself is hard to understand. “It seems that a great many people agree with one another about it up to a point, and past that point they disagree. “The ones who think the universe is in motion believe that most of

it does nothing but give way — but that something goes through all of it and generates everything that comes to be. And this, they say, is the fastest thing there is and the smallest; because if it weren't the smallest, so that nothing could shut it out, and the fastest, so that it could treat everything else as if it were standing still, it wouldn't be able to travel through everything. "And since it is the governor of everything and goes through everything, it is rightly called the just."

6



Lela: Then how do we know?

Danae: By listening with care.



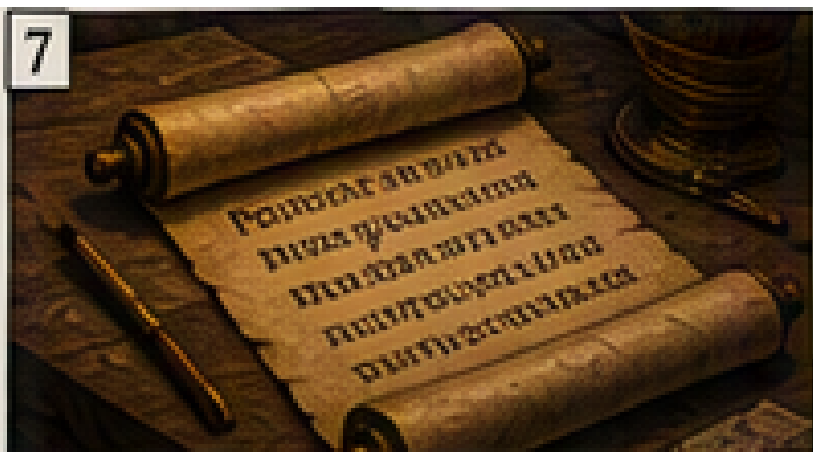
You Have Asked Enough — the competing interpretation.

. . .

“And up to that point, as I said, a great many people agree. “As for me, Hermogenes — because I kept at it — I was let in on the whole thing in private. I was told that this is the just, and that it is the cause, since that through which a thing comes to be is its cause. Somebody even told me it was correct to call it Zeus for that very reason. “And when I had heard all that, I still went on gently asking: if all this is true, my friend, then what actually is the just?”

. . .

7



Wisdom begins when we stop
asking and start understanding.



You Have Asked Enough — Lela and Danae reconstruct the idea.

“And at that point they think I am asking too many questions and demanding the impossible. “And they tell me that I have already learned enough.”

. . .

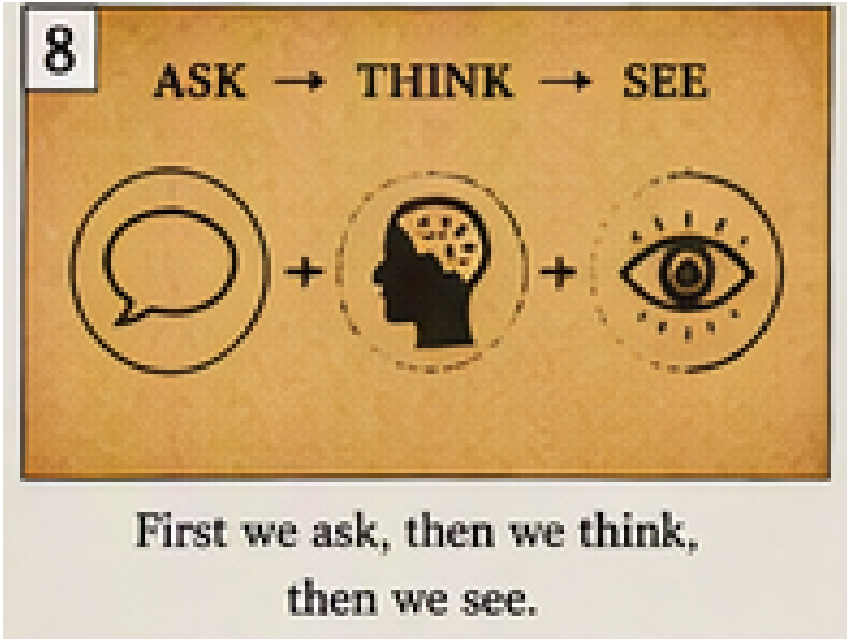
The picture in the grass ran on. Neither of the girls said anything, and after a moment Sophia let it fade down to nothing, which she had not done before and did not explain.

. . .

“Then,” said Lela. “Mm.” “That’s the whole of it, isn’t it. That’s the whole of him, in four sentences, thirty years before anybody kills him for it.” “I think so,” said Sophia. “He kept asking after they’d finished answering.” Lela was looking at the flattened grass where the picture had been. “And they didn’t say we don’t know. They said you’ve asked enough.”

. . .

“Then they try to satisfy me,” said Socrates, “by having each of them tell me his own view. “And they disagree with each other.”





You Have Asked Enough — the historical layer.

. . .

“One says that the just is the sun — since only the sun governs all the things that are, going through them and burning them. “Well satisfied, I take this fine answer to one of the others. “And he laughs at me, and asks whether I suppose that nothing just ever happens in human affairs once the sun has gone down.”

. . .

Danae made a noise into the grass.

. . .

“So I persist,” said Socrates, “and I ask him to tell me what he thinks the just is. “And he says it is fire. “But that is not easy to understand.”

. . .

“Another says it is not fire — but the heat that is in the fire. “And another says that all of these explanations are ridiculous, and that the just is what Anaxagoras talks about. Mind. Because he says that mind is self-ruling, and mixes with nothing else, and orders the things that are, and travels through everything.”



Enough questions for now.
Let us seek answers together.



You Have Asked Enough — a wordless conceptual plate.

. . .

“Thereupon, my friend —“

. . .

“I am even more perplexed than when I set out to learn what the just is.”

. . .

“He went round all of them,” said Sophia. “One at a time. In order. Writing none of it down. “And came away with nothing.”

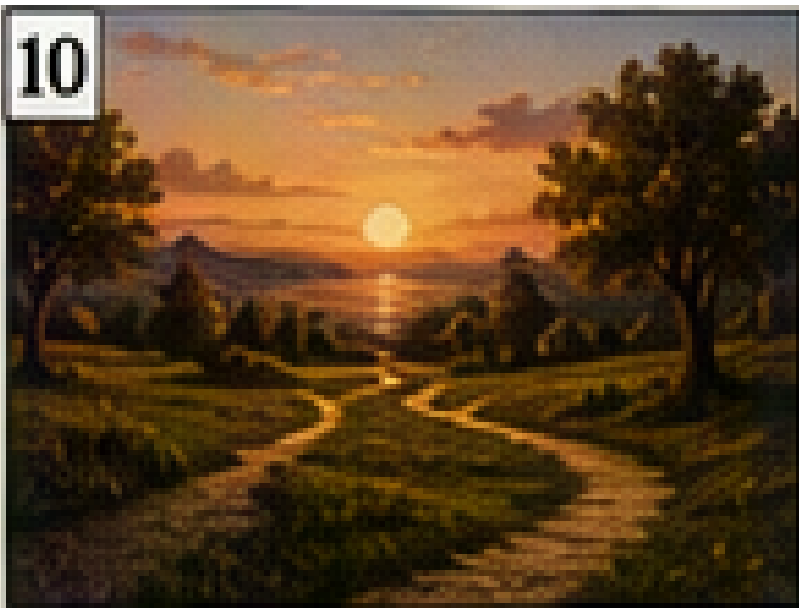
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“That’s the Apology,” said Lela. “It is nearly the Apology.” “No — Sophia, that’s literally it. That’s the oracle.

That's him going round the politicians and the poets and the craftsmen one at a time and finding out that not one of them could say what they were talking about. It's the same story. He's telling the same story. Years earlier, in the middle of a joke about the word for justice, in one paragraph, and nobody in that street even notices."

. . .

10



**The path to truth is narrow
and must be walked, not rushed.**

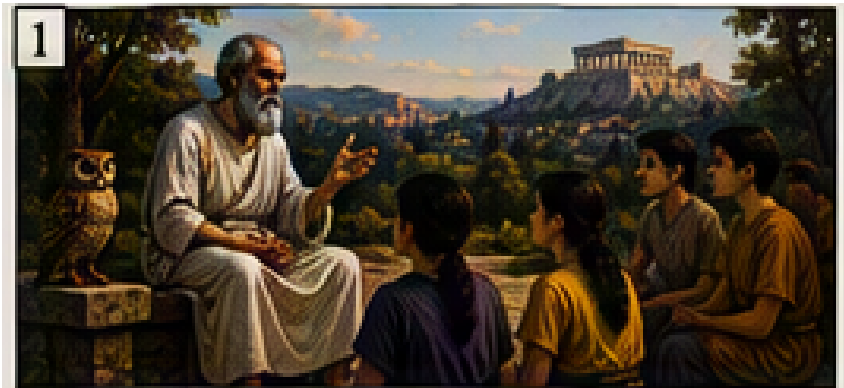


You Have Asked Enough — the chapter's narrative and philosophical synthesis.

And in a garden thirty-five years later, Aristotle said: “He did it twice.” “He did it every day of his life for fifty years,” said Plato. “I have him doing it in nine books. There are men still alive in this city who crossed the street when they saw him coming. “What you have just heard is not a story about the word for justice. It is a man telling you, in passing, while he is pretending to be inspired by a fool, exactly what he did with his one life and exactly what it cost him.” The old man got up off the bench. “That is enough for today. Tomorrow he stops playing, and we do the letters, and you will not enjoy it.”

Chapter 10

TEN. Flowing Back



Socrates: Names do not stay where
they are first put.



Flowing Back — opening scene.

They came back the next morning, and Sophia put the picture down in the grass before either of them had properly sat, and the street in Athens picked up exactly where it had stopped, as though nothing at all had happened in between — which, Lela supposed, was the plain truth of it.

. . .

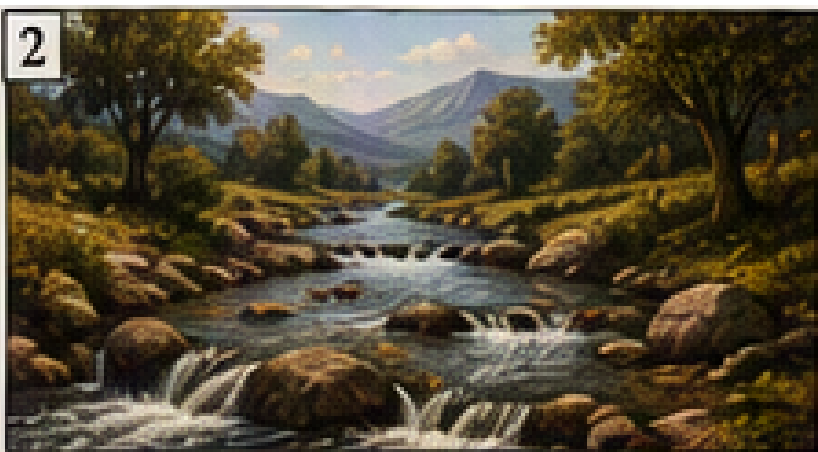
“I think you really must have heard this from somebody, Socrates,” Hermogenes was saying. “Rather than making it up as you went along.” “And what about the other explanations I’ve mentioned?” “Those,” said Hermogenes, “I certainly don’t think you heard.” “Listen, then. And perhaps I’ll be able to deceive you into thinking that I haven’t heard the remaining ones either.”

. . .

“He admitted it,” said Danae, delighted. “He admitted it in the middle of it,” said the owl, “and then went straight

on, and the man he is talking to laughs and lets him, and that is the whole shape of this morning. Everybody in that street knows he is making it up. He is not pretending otherwise. And he is going to keep going for two more hours, and by the end of it there will be nothing left.”

. . .



**Like waters, they flow back
toward their spring.**



Flowing Back — the chapter's central dialogue.

“After justice, what’s left?” said Socrates. “I don’t think we’ve discussed courage. “But it’s clear that injustice is really nothing more than a hindering of that which penetrates.” “And courage?” “Courage means that it gets its name in a battle. “And if the things that are really flowing, then a battle among them is nothing but a flowing in the opposite direction. “So if you take a letter out of the word for courage, the rest of it signifies exactly that: the contrary flow.” “And is courage a flowing against everything?” “Clearly not. Only against what is contrary to justice. “Otherwise courage wouldn’t be praiseworthy.”

. . .

“Wait,” said Danae. “What?” “Courage is swimming the wrong way up the river.” “...Yes.” “That’s good.” She sat up and hugged her knees. “That’s a good one. That one’s actually good.” “It’s still made up.” “I know it’s made up,” said Danae. “It’s still good.”

3

FROM MANY TO ONE



From many sounds and words,
the mind seeks the one meaning.



Flowing Back — the central concept made visible.

“And in the same way,” Socrates went on, “male, and man, indicate an upward flow. “And it seems to me that the word for woman wants to be the word for a womb. “And that the word for female comes from the word for the nipple. And that the nipple is so called, Hermogenes, because it makes things flourish — in just the way that watering makes plants flourish.” “Probably so, Socrates.” “Yes — and the word for flourishing itself seems to me to be like the sudden and rapid growth of the young. The name-giver has imitated something of that kind in it, putting it together out of the word for running and the word for jumping.” And then, without any warning at all, he said: “Notice how I go off course, when I get on the flat.”

. . .

Lela laughed out loud. “That’s a racehorse,” she said. “That’s a — he’s a horse that’s fine on the hill and then it goes flat and he bolts.” “It is a racehorse,” said Sophia.

“And I want you to keep it, because you are going to want it about four days from now when an old man from Elea compares himself to one too, and is not laughing.”



**The name returns to the thing
as water returns to its source.**



Flowing Back — the guiding analogy.

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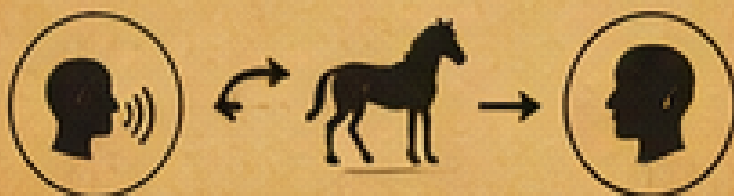
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. . .

5

NAME → THING → MIND



The name, the thing, and the mind
flow together.



Flowing Back — the argument unfolding step by step.

“But there are still plenty of names left that seem important,” said Socrates. “That’s true.” “And one of them is to see what the word for craft means.” “Certainly.” “If you take a letter off the front, and put one in twice in the middle — doesn’t it signify the having of mind?” “Yes, Socrates,” said Hermogenes. “But getting it to do so is like trying to haul a boat up a very sticky ramp.” Both girls made the same noise. “He said it,” said Lela. “He finally said it. He’s been sitting there all morning going probably so, Socrates and evidently, Socrates, and he’s finally —” “He has finally said it,” the owl agreed. “And notice that Socrates does not get cross, and does not deny it, and does not stop. “He explains why the boat is sticky. And it is the best thing he says all day.” “But then you know, Hermogenes,” said Socrates, “that the first names given to things have long since been covered over by people who wanted to dress them up. “Letters were added, and letters were taken away, to make the words sound better in the

mouth. Twisted about, and ornamented, in every way you like. And time has had a share in it too.” “Take the word for a mirror. Don’t you think there is a letter in the middle of it that is an absurd addition, and has no business being there at all?” “I suppose it has not.” “In my view this sort of thing is the work of people who think nothing whatever of the truth, and think only of the sounds their mouths make. “And so they go on embellishing the first names, until at last a word is reached that no human being can understand.” “One example among a great many: they call the Sphinx by that name, instead of what she was called before, which was shorter and plainer and said where she came from.” “That’s right, Socrates.” The orchard was quiet for a moment.

6



Danae: So the name always knows
where it came from?



Flowing Back — the competing interpretation.

. . .

“That’s not a joke,” said Lela. “That is not a joke,” said Sophia. “That’s — he’s just said that words get prettier and stop meaning anything. And that it’s not time doing it, or not only time. It’s people. It’s people who like the noise.” “Yes.” “And he’s said it about himself. Hasn’t he. Because he’s been adding letters and taking letters out all morning to make the words come out the way he wants.”

. . .

“And yet,” said Socrates, “if we can add whatever we like to names, and subtract whatever we like from them, it will be far too easy to fit any name at all to any thing whatever.” “That’s true.” “Yes. It is true. “So I think a wise supervisor — like yourself — will have to keep a close watch. To preserve balance, and probability.” “That’s what I want

to do.” “And I want to do it along with you, Hermogenes. But don’t demand too much precision of me, in case —” And he said it in the voice people use for a line everybody knows: “— you enfeeble my strength.”

7

RIVERS RETURN TO THE SEA



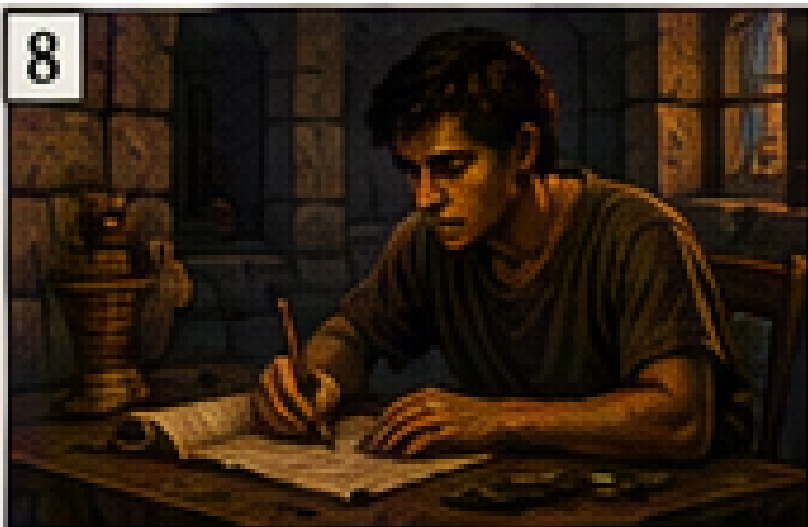
All rivers return to the sea,
all names return to the thing.



Flowing Back — Lela and Danae reconstruct the idea.

. . .

8



When we understand the source,
we understand the name.



Flowing Back — the historical layer.

“He’s quoting the Iliad,” said Danae. “He is quoting the Iliad,” said Sophia, “about being asked to be accurate. And he is going to do another thirty words after this and every one of them is going to be worse.” “Now that craft is out of the way, I’m about to come to the summit of our inquiries. But first I’ll look at the word for a contrivance. “It seems to me to signify getting a long way — because one part of it signifies length of some sort, and the other signifies accomplishing. And the two of them make up the word.” “And now to the summit. Goodness and badness.” “I don’t yet understand the first of them. But the other seems clear enough, and it is in harmony with everything we have said. “To the degree that things are in motion, whatever is moving badly should be called by that name. And the name is mostly given to a soul in which this bad movement in relation to things resides.” “And it seems to me that the word for cowardice, which we haven’t discussed — we ought to have done it after courage, but we passed it by,

as I believe we have passed by a great many others —“ — expresses exactly what this bad movement is.” “How?” “Cowardice signifies the soul’s being bound with a strong shackle. The second part of the word is a degree of strength. So it signifies the strongest of the soul’s shackles.” Danae had stopped being delighted. “That one’s not made up,” she said. “Say it,” said the owl. “The others are word games,” said Danae. “That one isn’t. That one’s just true. That’s what it’s like. It’s not that you don’t want to go. It’s that you can’t go. It’s like somebody’s tied it.” “Yes,” said Sophia. “And he threw it away in a bracket, having forgotten to do it in the right place, and never came back to it. “There are about four of these in this morning. Watch for them. They are not better arguments than the silly ones; they are exactly as silly. They just happen to be right, and nobody — including him — can tell you why.”

9



That is why the wise
follow the flow back.



Flowing Back — a wordless conceptual plate.

. . .

“Perplexity is a vice of the same sort,” Socrates was saying. “And so, it seems, is everything else that hinders movement and motion. “Which makes it clear that the bad movement in question is a restrained or hindered motion. And that a soul which has it becomes filled with badness. “And if that is what badness is the name of — then goodness is the opposite of it. “It signifies, first, ease of movement; and second, that the flow of a good soul is always unimpeded. “So it seems it is given this name because it is unrestrained, and unhindered, and therefore ever-flowing. “It ought to be said in full. But it has been contracted, and now it is the short word we use.” “Now maybe you’ll say I’m inventing things again,” said Socrates. “But I think that if what I have just said about badness is correct — then so is what I have said about the name of goodness.”

. . .

10



To the source all names
flow back.



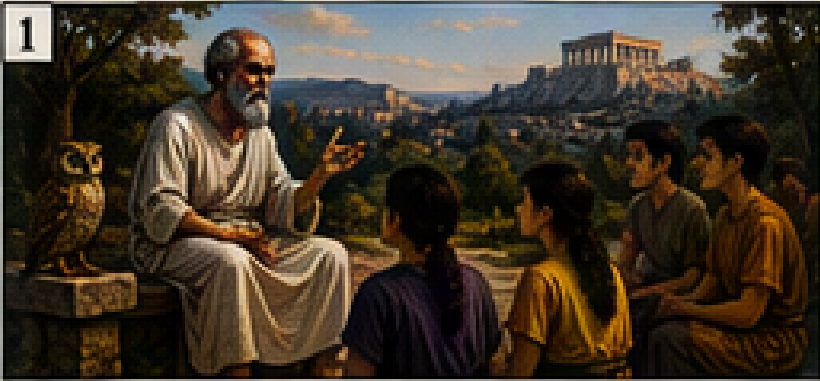
Flowing Back — the chapter's narrative and philosophical synthesis.

“That’s a con,” said Lela immediately. “Go on,” said the owl. “That’s — he’s just said if the first one’s right the second one’s right, and the only reason the first one’s right is that he said it. That’s not two things holding each other up. That’s one thing leaning on itself.” “Yes,” said Sophia. “Write that down in those words, because in five days you are going to watch a man from Elea do the same manoeuvre with a straight face about something that matters enormously, and I would like you to have caught it first on a word for goodness, in a street, from somebody who was joking.”

Chapter 11

**ELEVEN. The Beautiful Is
Thought**

1



Socrates: What is beauty?
Is it in the things themselves?



The Beautiful Is Thought — opening scene.

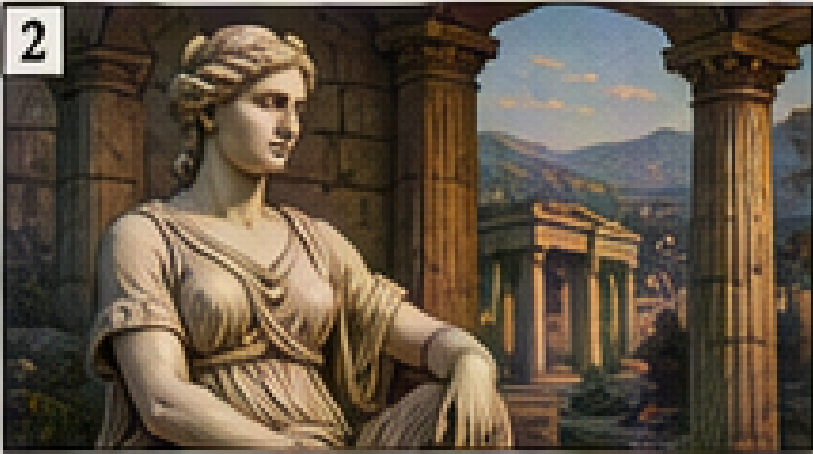
“What about the word for bad?” said Hermogenes. “It has been involved in a great many of the things we’ve said. What does it mean?” “It’s a strange word, by god,” said Socrates. “At least, that’s what I think. And one that’s hard to interpret. “So I’ll use on it the device I introduced earlier.” “Which one?” “Attributing a foreign origin to it.”

. . .

Lela put her face in her hands. “He’s done it again.” “He has done it again,” said Sophia, “and that is the third time, and I want you to count it out loud every time it happens, because it is the only genuinely dishonest move he makes all morning and he makes it four times. “I cannot explain this word. Therefore it is Phrygian. “There is no way to check it. There is no way to argue with it. It is not an answer; it is a door out of the room. And the reason it matters is that everything else he does today can at least be looked at.”

. . .

2



Bodies may be pleasing,
colors may delight.



The Beautiful Is Thought — the chapter's central dialogue.

“And you may well be correct,” said Hermogenes, who did not have an owl. “So suppose we leave those inquiries. And try to see what rationale there is for beautiful — and for disgraceful.” “The meaning of disgraceful seems clear enough to me,” said Socrates, “and it is in harmony with what we said before. “It seems to me that the giver of names reviles everything that hinders or restrains the flowing of the things that are. “And in particular he gave this name to what always restrains their flowing. Though nowadays it is contracted, and we say it short.” “And beautiful?” “That one is harder.” “Here,” said the owl. “Both of you. This is the only place in three hours where he stops shuffling letters and does something else entirely, and hardly anybody notices, because by now everybody has stopped listening properly — including Hermogenes, and including most people who read this book.” “In my view,” said Socrates, “this name derives from a sort of thought.” “What do you mean?” “Tell me. What caused each of

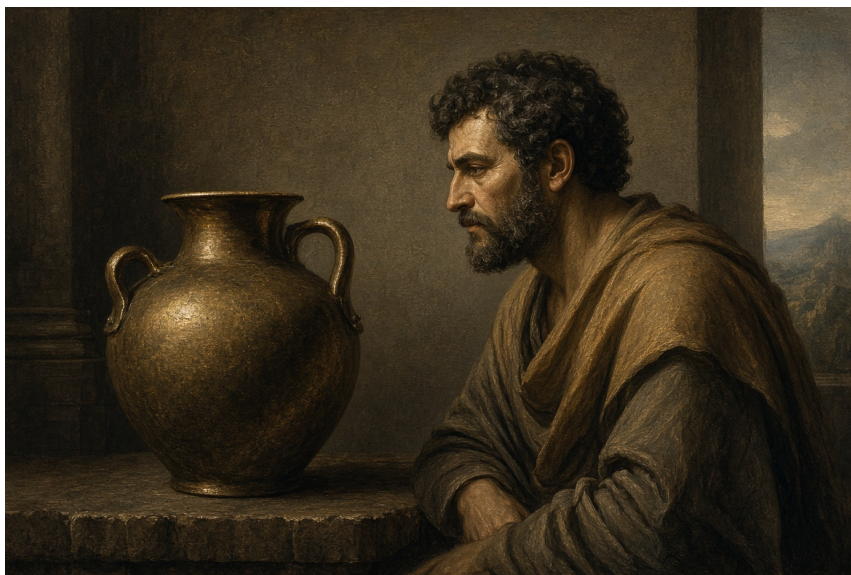
the things that are to be called by a name? Isn't it what-ever gave them their names?" "Certainly." "And wasn't it thought — whether divine, or human, or both — that did this?" "Yes." "And isn't what originally named them the same as what names them now? That is to say, thought?" "Evidently." "Now. Are all the works performed by thought and understanding praiseworthy, while those that aren't are blameworthy?" "Certainly." "And medicine performs medical works, and carpentry performs works of carpentry?" "It does." "And to name things — is that to perform beautiful works?" "Necessarily." "And we say that it is thought that does this?" "Certainly." "Therefore wisdom is correctly given the name beautiful — since it performs the works that we say are beautiful, and welcome as such." "Evidently," said Hermogenes.

3

BEAUTY IS NOT JUST SEEN



But beauty is not only in sight,
in color, or in touch.



The Beautiful Is Thought — the central concept made visible.

. . .

4



The mind measures, orders,
and makes things fit.



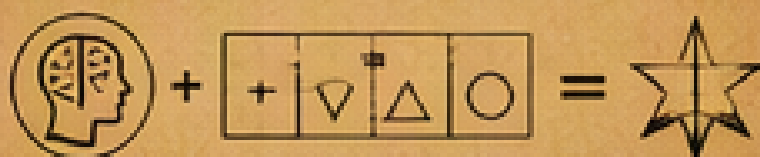
The Beautiful Is Thought — the guiding analogy.

“Stop it,” said Lela. Sophia stopped it. “That’s not the same kind of thing,” said Lela. “That’s — Sophia, that isn’t a word game at all. He hasn’t moved a single letter.” “He has not moved a single letter.” “He’s said —” She was working it out with her hands. “He’s said: the word for beautiful and the word for calling are nearly the same word. All right. That’s the game, that’s the usual thing. “And then instead of doing the usual thing he’s asked who does the calling. “And the answer is: thinking does. Whatever thought it up. And thinking is the thing that makes everything worth having — medicine and building and all of it — so the works of thinking are the good works. “And naming is one of them. Naming is a work of thinking. So naming is a beautiful work. So the thing that does the naming — thought — is what the word for beautiful is pointing at.” “Is it a good argument?” said the owl. Lela thought about it for a long time. “No,” she said. “There’s a hole about four steps in. He’s gone from thinking makes good things

to naming is a beautiful work and that's a jump, that's the whole thing he was supposed to prove — “Yes.” “But it's a different kind of not-working.” “That,” said Sophia, “is the sentence, and you have got it in about ninety seconds, and I want to say why it matters. “Everything else this morning fails because you cannot check it. Shuffle a letter, get a meaning; shuffle it the other way, get the opposite. Nothing in it can be wrong, and that is what is wrong with it. “This one can be wrong. You just found where. You put your finger on the step. “That is the difference between an argument and a performance, and you have now met both of them inside the same hour, from the same mouth, about words that sound the same.”

5

THE MIND MAKES BEAUTY



Through thought, the mind brings
harmony out of parts.



The Beautiful Is Thought — the argument unfolding step by step.

. . .

6



Lela: So beauty is not the body?
Danae: It is the order in the mind.

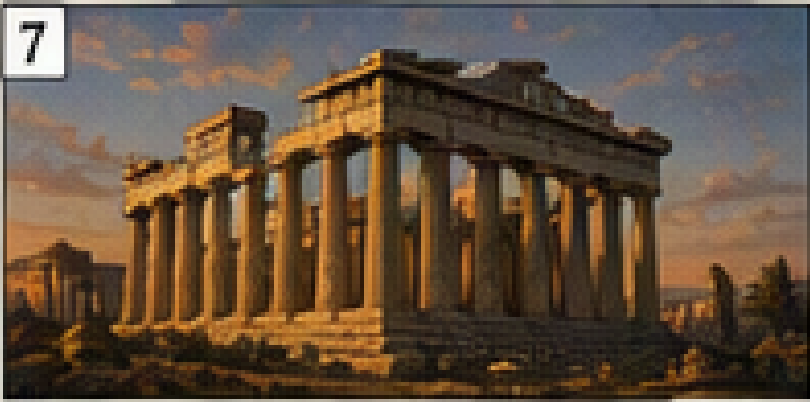


The Beautiful Is Thought — the competing interpretation.

“What other such names still remain for us to examine?” said Socrates. “The ones to do with the good,” said Hermogenes. “Advantageous. Profitable. Beneficial. Gainful. And their opposites.” “In the light of what we have already done, you should be able to explain advantageous for yourself — since it is obviously a close relative of knowledge. “It expresses the fact that what is advantageous is nothing other than the movement of a soul in accord with the movement of things. And the things that get done as a result are called by names that mean they are being carried round together with things.” “Gainful comes from gain. And if you replace one letter in gain, the word says its meaning plainly: because the good goes through everything, it has the power to mix everything and regulate it, and the man who gave it the name named it after that power. But he put the wrong letter in, and we have said it wrong ever since.” “What about profitable?” “I don’t think, Hermogenes, that he uses that name to mean the kind of profit

that releases a sum of money for reinvestment — which is what shopkeepers use it to mean.”

7



The builder thinks before he builds,
the poet thinks before he sings.



The Beautiful Is Thought — Lela and Danae reconstruct the idea.

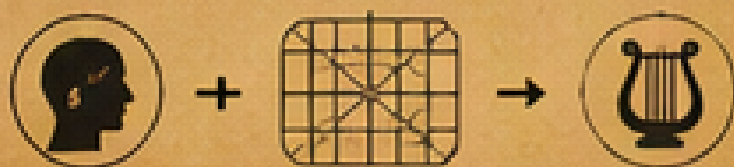
. . .

Danae sat up. “He’s being snotty about shopkeepers.”
“He is being slightly snotty about shopkeepers,” Sophia
agreed, “and it is the only time all day, and he is about to
make up for it.”

. . .

8

THOUGHT → ORDER → BEAUTY



Beauty is thought made visible,
thought made sound.



The Beautiful Is Thought — the historical layer.

“The name-giver calls the good by that name,” said Socrates, “because it is the fastest of all the things that are. “It doesn’t allow things to remain at rest. It doesn’t permit their motion to stop, or pause, or reach an end. “Instead it always does away with any attempt to let motion end — making it unceasing, and immortal. “And that, in my view, is why the good is said to be profitable. “Because it dissolves the end.”

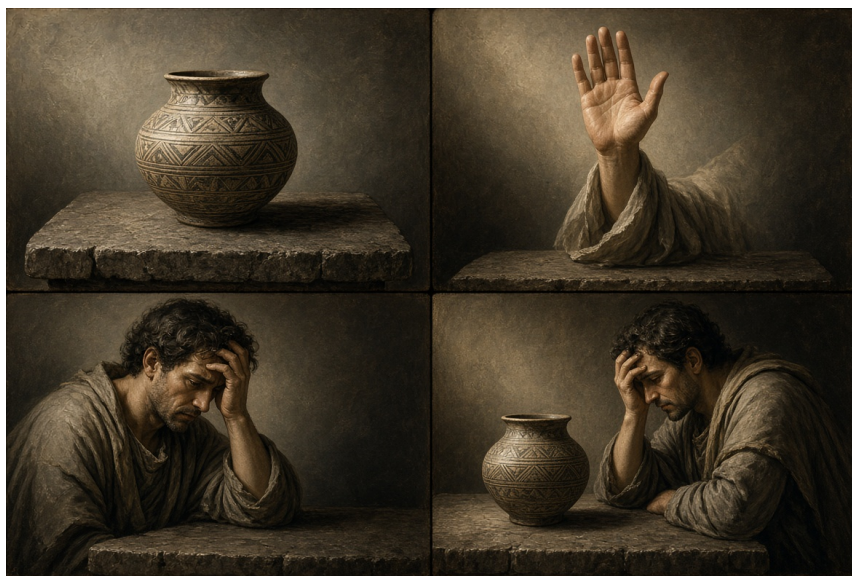
. . .

Nobody in the orchard said anything for a second. “That’s beautiful,” said Lela, in an annoyed voice. “Yes,” said the owl. “It’s made up.” “It is entirely made up. The word means what the shopkeepers say it means and he has just said so himself and then done it anyway.” “But it’s —“ Lela gave up. “The good is the thing that won’t let it be over. That’s what he said. That’s what he said about the word for worth it.”

9



Therefore, the beautiful
is thought.



The Beautiful Is Thought — a wordless conceptual plate.

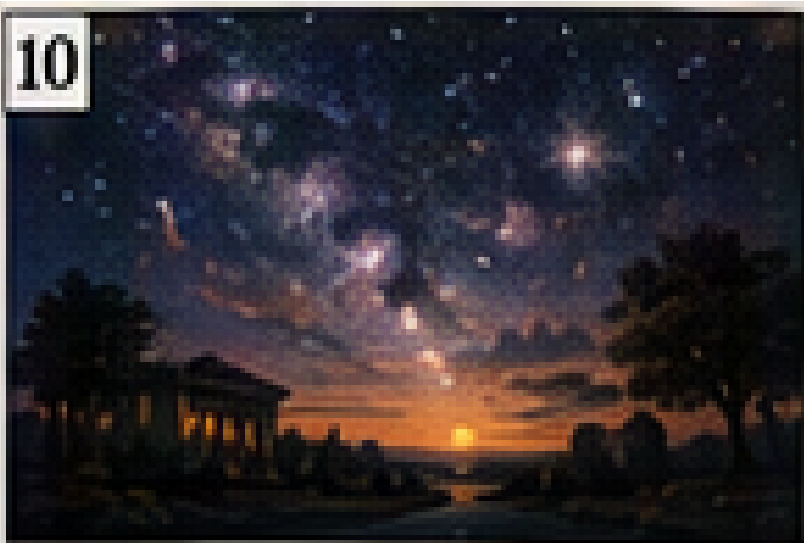
“Beneficial,” said Socrates, “is not one of our words. Homer often uses it in an older form, and it comes from to increase and to make.” “And what are we to say about their opposites?” “Those that are mere negations don’t need any discussion, in my view.” “Which ones are they?” “Disadvantageous. Non-beneficial. Unprofitable. Non-gainful.” “It’s true. They don’t need discussion.”

. . .

“That’s a whole species of word,” said Lela, writing. “The ones that are just not the other one. There’s nothing in them. They’re a hole with a name on it.” “Hold that one for four days,” said Sophia. In the garden of the Academy, Aristotle said: “He is putting the whole language inside one idea.” “Yes.” “Every single word. Courage is flow. Goodness is flow. Beauty is flow. Shamefulness is flow stopped. Profit is flow that will not stop being flow. He has one key and he is turning it in every lock in the city,

and every door is opening.” “And what does that tell you?” “That it is not a key,” said Aristotle. Lela heard that, in the grass, and turned it over, and found that she had known it for about twenty minutes without having any words for it. You could always make it fit. That was the thing. If you were clever enough and you were allowed to move a letter here and add a letter there and take one out at the far end, then any word in Greek could be made to mean flowing, and any word in Greek could be made to mean standing still, and the fact that it worked every time was not a sign that it was right. It was a sign that the method could not fail. And a method that cannot fail cannot tell you anything.

10



The mind that sees
makes the world more beautiful.

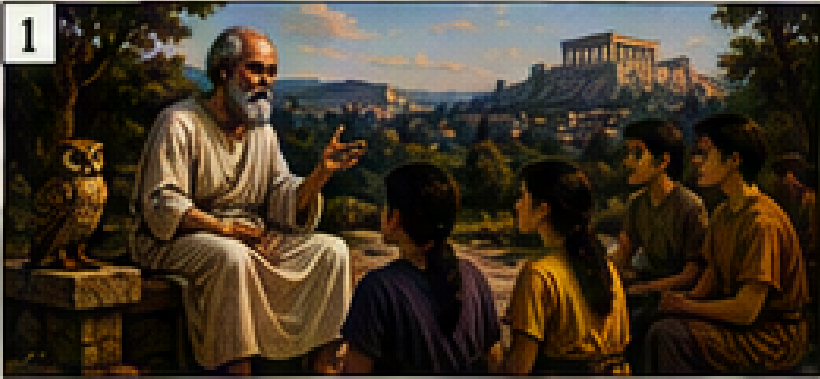


The Beautiful Is Thought — the chapter's narrative and philosophical synthesis.

Chapter 12

TWELVE. The Women Keep the Old Words

1



Socrates: Who keeps the words
when men forget?



The Women Keep the Old Words — opening scene.

“But harmful,” said Socrates, “and hurtful — those do need discussing.” “Yes.” “Harmful means that which is harming the flow. “And harming, in its turn, signifies wanting to grasp. But grasping is the same as shackling — and the name-giver always finds fault with that. “Now, what wants to grasp the flow would most correctly be called —” And he said a word about six syllables long that neither of the girls caught any of. “— but this has been beautified, as it seems to me. And so we say the short one.” “What intricate names you come up with, Socrates,” said Hermogenes. “When you uttered that just now, you looked exactly as if you were whistling the flute-prelude of the Hymn to Athena.”

. . .

2



The women, in the house,
speak them to their children.



The Women Keep the Old Words — the chapter's central dialogue.

Danae fell over. “He did it again,” she said, from the grass. “He did the thing. He did the boat up the ramp and now he’s done the man playing the flute.” “He has done it again,” said Sophia, “and it is funnier than the first one, and I am going to tell you why it is funny so that you can have all of it. “There was a famous piece for the flute, played at the great festival, and it began with a long preparatory noise in which the player blew and blew and blew and nothing you could call a tune came out for some time. “And Hermogenes has just said: you looked like that.”

. . .

3

KEEPERS OF THE OLD WORDS



They keep the old names
from being lost.

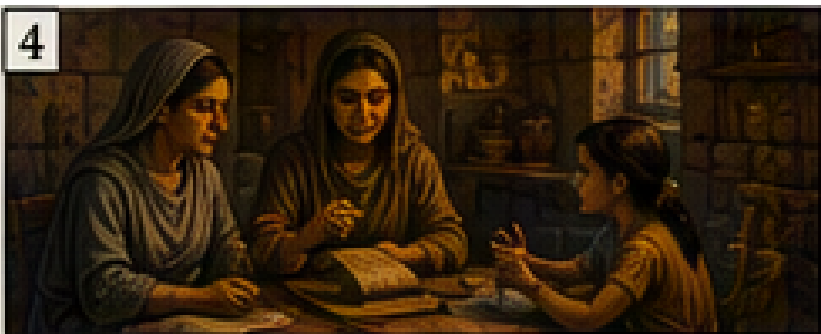


The Women Keep the Old Words — the central concept made visible.

“I’m not responsible for them, Hermogenes,” said Socrates. “The name-givers are.” “That’s true. But what about hurtful? What does that mean?” “What does hurtful mean,” said Socrates. And then he said something in a completely different voice, and both girls noticed the change before they understood the words. “See how right I was, Hermogenes, to say that people make huge changes in the meaning of names, by adding letters and subtracting them. “And how even a very slight alteration of that sort can make a word signify the opposite of what it used to signify. “Obligation is an example that has just this moment occurred to me — and it reminds me of what I was about to say about hurtful. “Our fine modern language has obliterated the true meaning of these names. It has twisted them round until they now mean the opposite of what they meant. “Whereas the ancient language expresses clearly what they mean.” “What do you mean?” “I’ll tell you. “You know that our ancestors made great use of two

letters that we have mostly lost —“ And then he said it, in a bracket, on his way past, in eleven words: “— especially the women, who are the best preservers of the ancient language —” “But nowadays people change them for others, which are supposed to sound more grand.” The orchard was quiet.

4



Through song, story, and daily speech,
the words are passed on.



The Women Keep the Old Words — the guiding analogy.

. . .

5

SPOKEN → REMEMBERED → PASSED ON



Spoken today, remembered tomorrow,
passed to the next.



The Women Keep the Old Words — the argument unfolding step by step.

“Sophia,” said Danae. “Yes.” “What did he just say?” “He said,” said the owl, “that the oldest form of the Greek language is kept by the women. That they are the best preservers of it. That when he wants to know what a word used to mean, before it was dressed up and spoiled, he listens to them. “And then he said but nowadays people change them, and went on to the next word, and never mentioned it again.” “Is it true?” “It is one of the truest things in this book,” said Sophia, “and everybody who studies languages now knows it, and they have known it for about a hundred and fifty years, and they did not get it from him because almost nobody reads this page. “When a language changes, it changes in the places where people talk to strangers. Markets. Ports. Armies. Assemblies. And it changes slowest in the room where the old words go on being said to small children by the people who look after them. “Which, in that city, in that century, was the back room. Where the loom was.” Neither of the girls said

anything. “He is about to give you an example,” said the owl, “and it is the loveliest word he finds all morning, and he found it in the old speech, and he told you where the old speech lives.”

. . .



Danae: So memory lives in the home?

Lela: Yes, through love and use.



The Women Keep the Old Words — the competing interpretation.

“For instance,” said Socrates, “people now call the day by one name. But in very ancient times they called it another.” “That’s true.” “And you know, then, that only the ancient name expresses the name-giver’s meaning clearly? “People welcome the daylight that comes out of the darkness, and they long for it. “And that is why they named it what they named it. “The longed-for.” “Evidently,” said Hermogenes. “But nowadays the name is so dressed up that nobody can understand what it means. Although there are some who think that the day is called what it is called because it makes things gentle.”

. . .

7



Like weaving, they bind
the words together.



The Women Keep the Old Words — Lela and Danae reconstruct the idea.

Danae had her arms round her knees. “They called the day the thing we were waiting for,” she said. “They called the day the thing we were waiting for.” “Because it’s dark and then it isn’t.” “Because it is dark, and then it is not,” said Sophia, “and because in that world the dark lasted a great deal longer than it does in your grandmother’s house, and cost more, and everybody in it was waiting. “And a woman in a back room went on saying the old word for it to her children for about four hundred years after everybody in the market had started saying the new one.”

. . .

8

THREADS OF MEMORY



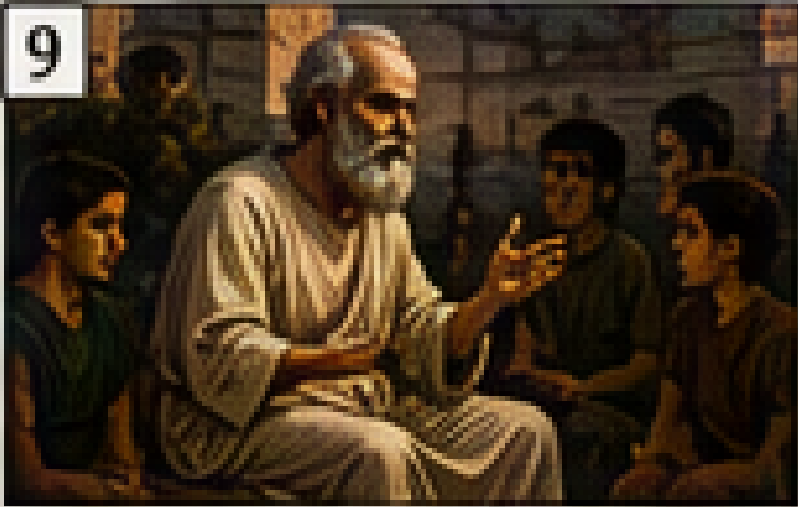
Word by word, thread by thread,
they keep the tapestry whole.



The Women Keep the Old Words — the historical layer.

“Do you also know,” said Socrates, “that the ancients called a yoke by a different name than we do?” “Of course.” “Now, the word we use expresses nothing clearly. But the old one is quite rightly given to whatever binds two animals together, so that they can pull a plough or a cart. “The leading of a pair. “Nonetheless, nowadays it is the other. And there are plenty of other examples.” “Evidently.” “Similarly, obligation, pronounced the way we pronounce it, seems at first to signify the opposite of all the other names for the good. “After all, even though an obligation is a kind of good, the word plainly signifies a shackle, and an obstacle to motion — and so is closely akin to harmful.” “Yes, Socrates. It does plainly signify that.” “But not if you use the ancient name. Which is much more likely to have been correctly given than the present one. “Put the old letter back, and it agrees with all the earlier names of good things. Because in that form it signifies passing through

— which is a good, and a term of praise. “So the name-giver did not contradict himself after all. “And obligation is plainly the same as beneficial, and profitable, and gainful, and good, and advantageous, and ease of movement — all of them different names signifying what orders and moves. “And this is always praised. While what restrains and shackles is always found fault with.” “And hurtful in the same way: put the old letter back, and it will be plain to you that the name was given to what shackles motion.”



**Therefore, the women
are guardians of language.**



The Women Keep the Old Words — a wordless conceptual plate.

. . .

10



From home the words survive,
and from words, thought survives.



The Women Keep the Old Words — the chapter's narrative and philosophical synthesis.

“He fixed it,” said Lela. “Say what you mean.” “He had a word that didn’t fit. Obligation. It’s supposed to be a good thing and the word says tied up. And by his own rules that’s the thing he’s spent all morning saying is bad. “And instead of saying well, that one’s Phrygian —“ she made a face — “he went and got the old form of it, and in the old form it works.” “Yes.” “Is it true?” “No,” said Sophia. “Not that one. That one is as invented as the rest. “But the move is real, and it is the first piece of actual method anybody in Europe ever wrote down about language, and it is this: “When a word does not make sense, look for an older form of it. “He does it four times on this page. He is right about the general principle and wrong about every single example, which is very nearly the definition of being two thousand years early.”

Chapter 13

THIRTEEN. The Rush and the Longing



Socrates tells our friends:
Names are not only chosen.
They are rushed toward by nature,
and we long for what they point to.



The Rush and the Longing — opening scene.

“What about pleasure?” said Hermogenes. “And pain? And appetite, and the others like them?” “I don’t think there is any great difficulty about those,” said Socrates.

. . .

“Here we go,” said Danae, and rolled onto her front. “Pleasure seems to have got its name because it is an activity that tends towards enjoyment. A letter has been put into it that does not belong there.” “Pain seems to come from the weakening the body suffers when it is in pain.” “Sorrow signifies what hinders motion.” “Distress seems to me to be a foreign name.” “Four,” said Lela, without looking up. “Grief seems to be named after the entering in of pain.” “And it is clear to everybody that saying the word for affliction is like giving motion a burden to carry.”

. . .

2



A river rushes to the sea
without being commanded.
So too, nature rushes
toward the right names.



The Rush and the Longing — the chapter's central dialogue.

“And joy?” said Hermogenes. “Joy seems to have been so called because it is an outpouring — a good movement of the soul’s flow.” “Delight comes from the word for delightful. Which in its turn comes from the thing that glides through the soul like a breath. “By rights it should be called the breath-that-creeps-in. But over time its name has been changed.”

. . .

3



Lela thinks about how we feel:
something inside us strains
toward understanding,
toward the true sound.



The Rush and the Longing — the central concept made visible.

“Say that one again,” said Danae. “The thing that glides through the soul like a breath,” said Sophia. Danae lay and thought about it. “That’s when somebody plays the good bit,” she said. “Yes.” “It’s not a big thing. It’s not being happy. It’s the — it goes through you and it’s gone and you couldn’t hold on to it if you tried.” “That is what the word says, in his hands,” said the owl. “And no, it is not what the word means, and no, nobody who studies these things would let him get away with it for a second. “He is a very bad etymologist and he is an extremely good describer of what it is like to be a person, and for about nine minutes those two things are going to run alongside each other, and I want you to watch both.”

. . .

4

THE PULL OF NATURE



We see, we long,
we listen, and then we name.
The name is the answer
to the call of the thing.



The Rush and the Longing — the guiding analogy.

“Lightheartedness needs no explanation,” said Socrates, “since it is clear to everyone that it derives from the movement of the soul that well accords with the movement of things. “By rights it should be said longer than we say it. But we say it short.” “Nor is there any difficulty about appetite. It is clear that the name derives from the power that goes against the spirited part of the soul. “While spirit itself derives from the raging and boiling of the soul.”

. . .

“And now,” said Sophia. “Both of you. The two best words of the day are the next two and they come one after the other.”

. . .

5



Hermogenes compares words
from different tongues.
Many names, he says,
chase the same truth.



The Rush and the Longing — the argument unfolding step by step.

“The name for desire,” said Socrates, “derives from what most drives the soul’s flow. “It flows with a rush, and sets itself on things, and so drags the soul violently along, because of the rush of its flow. “And because it has all that power, it is called what it is called.” “Longing, on the other hand, signifies that it is not a desire for what is present. “But for what is elsewhere. Or absent. “So when the thing is away, it is given the one name. “And when the thing is there, it is called the other.”

. . .

6



Danae wonders:
If nature rushes,
why do we still make mistakes
and choose badly sometimes?



The Rush and the Longing — the competing interpretation.

Nobody in the orchard said anything at all for a moment. “That’s two different words,” said Lela. “That is two different words,” said Sophia. “We haven’t got two. We’ve got wanting. We’ve got one word and it does both.” “You have got missing,” said the owl. “And it is not the same, because you can only miss a person, and you cannot miss a thing that has not happened yet. “And Greek has one word for I want the thing that is in front of me and a completely separate word for I want the thing that is not here — and they are not two strengths of the same feeling; they are two different feelings, and everybody in that street would have said so without being asked. “And your sister has been carrying one of them in her pocket since the spring.” Danae put her hand on the flat grey stone without looking at it.

. . .



Socrates answers:
Because we rush too,
but not carefully.
We rush without knowing.



The Rush and the Longing — Lela and Danae reconstruct the idea.

“Erotic love,” Socrates was saying, “is so called because it flows in from outside. The flow does not belong to the person who has it. It is introduced into him, through his eyes. “Which is why in ancient times it was called the inflow, when they used a shorter vowel than we do. Now the vowel is long, and we say what we say.”

. . .

“Through his eyes,” said Lela. “Through his eyes,” said Sophia. “It is not yours. It is not something you did. It came in from outside and it is now inside and you are carrying it about. “Every love poem written in Europe for the next two thousand three hundred years is a footnote to that sentence, and he says it in eleven words on his way to the word for opinion.”

. . .

TWO KINDS OF RUSHING

NATURE'S RUSH



toward what is true

HUMAN RUSH



without understanding

Nature's rushing is steady
and true.

Ours is sometimes wild
and confused.



The Rush and the Longing — the historical layer.

“So — what other names do you think are left for us to examine?” said Socrates. “What do you think about opinion,” said Hermogenes, “and the ones like it?” “Opinion either derives from the pursuit the soul engages in when it hunts for the knowledge of how things are — or it derives from the shooting of a bow. “But the second is more likely.” “And thinking is in harmony with it. It seems to express the fact that thinking is the motion of the soul towards every thing — towards how each of the things that are really is. “And in the same way, planning has to do with trying to hit some target. And wishing and deliberating signify aiming at something. “All these names go along with opinion, in that they are all like a shot. Like trying to hit something. “And the opposite — failure to plan — seems to signify a failure to get. As when a man misses, or fails to get what he shot at, or wished for, or planned, or desired.”

9



We long for what is beyond us
and not yet ours.
Names are bridges
across that distance.

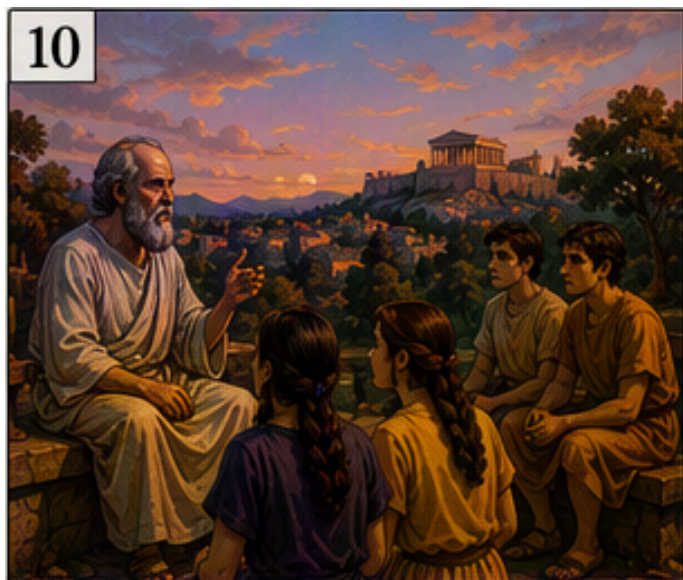


The Rush and the Longing — a wordless conceptual plate.

. . .

“They’re all archery,” said Danae, sitting up. “They are all archery,” said the owl. “Every one. Thinking’s archery and planning’s archery and wanting’s archery and getting it wrong is missing.” “Yes.” “Is that one true?” “Two of them are,” said Sophia. “Which two is not settled and I am not going to pretend it is. “But I will tell you something about that family of words that is certainly true, and that you will use for the rest of your life. “In your language a mistake is a thing you made. You made an error. You did something wrong and it is sitting there with your name on it. “In theirs, a mistake is a shot that missed. “Same event. Two completely different feelings about it. And one of them lets you pick the bow up again.”

10



So we keep searching,
rushing with nature,
longing for the true name
that matches the thing itself.



The Rush and the Longing — the chapter's narrative and philosophical synthesis.

. . .

“The pace of investigating seems to be quickening, Socrates,” said Hermogenes. “That’s because I am coming to the finishing post.”

Chapter 14

FOURTEEN. A Divine Wander- ing



Socrates tells another story.
Names, he says, have wandered with the gods
as they wandered across the world.



A Divine Wandering — opening scene.

“But I still want to investigate compulsion,” said Socrates, “and the voluntary. Since they are next.” “The voluntary expresses the fact that it signifies yielding — not resisting, but yielding to the motion. The one that comes into being in accord with our wish.” “Compulsory, on the other hand — and resistant — signify motion contrary to our wish. And so they are associated with error, and with ignorance. “Indeed, saying the word for compulsory is like trying to get through a ravine. “Because ravines restrain motion. They are rough going, and filled with bushes, and hard to get through. “It is probably for that reason that we use the word the way we do. Because saying it is like trying to get through a ravine.”

2



The gods do not stay in one place.
They move, they meet peoples,
they receive new names and give *new ones*.



A Divine Wandering — the chapter's central dialogue.

. . .

“He’s saying the word’s hard to say,” said Danae. “He is saying the word is hard to get out of your mouth,” said Sophia, “and that this is why it means what it means. That the difficulty is in the sounds themselves. “That is the first time anybody has said that in writing, in any language, that we know of. “And in about half an hour he is going to build the whole of the rest of the morning on it, and it is going to fall over, and you are going to watch it fall.”



They cross seas and deserts.
Every journey leaves a trace
in the words of those they meet.



A Divine Wandering — the central concept made visible.

. . .



Lela and Danae think about this.
Words are like travelers.
They change, but they carry memories.



A Divine Wandering — the guiding analogy.

“Nonetheless,” said Socrates, “while my strength lasts, let’s not stop. “And don’t you stop either. Keep asking your questions.” “Well then,” said Hermogenes. “Let me ask about the finest and most important names of all. “Truth. Falsehood. Being. “And — the subject of our present conversation — name. And why it is so named.” “Do you know what the old word for searching is?” said Socrates. “Yes. It means to look for a thing.” “Well — name seems to be a compressed statement. It says: “This is a being for which there is a search. “You can see it more easily in the word for thing named, since that one says it plainly: a being for which there is a searching.” “And truth?” “Truth is like these others in being compressed. “Because the divine motion of being is addressed in it — as though it were a divine wandering.” “Theia ale.”

5

A NAME TRAVELS



IN NATURE
A THING IS



A PEOPLE
GIVE IT A
NAME



THE NAME
TRAVELS
WITH THEM



IT IS KEPT,
CHANGED,
OR LOST

Thus names are not born once,
but many times in many places.



A Divine Wandering — the argument unfolding step by step.

. . .

Nobody in the grass said anything for a second. “Say that again,” said Lela. Sophia said it again. “Theia ale. A divine wandering.” “Truth is a wandering?” “That is what the word says, if you break it where he breaks it. And it is almost certainly not where the word actually breaks.” “But he’s saying —” Lela stopped. “He’s saying truth isn’t a place you arrive at. He’s saying it’s a going about.” “He is saying,” said Sophia, “that the oldest word in the language for the thing he died for might mean a wandering that has something of the god in it. And he has said it in the middle of a joke, in one line, on the way to something else. And two and a half thousand years later people are still arguing about whether he meant it.”



The gods look up and name.
The stars, the winds, the rivers,
the seasons, the numbers, the measures.



A Divine Wandering — the competing interpretation.

. . .

7

ONE THING, MANY NAMES



Peoples see the same thing,
but their names are different.



A Divine Wandering — Lela and Danae reconstruct the idea.

“And falsehood?” said Hermogenes. “Falsehood is the opposite of motion,” said Socrates. “It belongs with the things that are held back and made to rest. And with the people who sleep.” “And being?” “Being is going, with a letter knocked off the front. “And not being is not going. “And indeed there are some who call it exactly that.” “Well, Socrates,” said Hermogenes. “You seem to me to be hammering these out like a real craftsman.” “I’m not doing it. I’m being carried. “But hurry — while I am still going. Ask me what remains.” “Then there’s one class left that I’d most like to see,” said Hermogenes. “The fine ones. Virtue. Knowledge. Justice. And all of that we have done. “But what I want now is the other question.” “You have been explaining names by other names all morning. This word is really that phrase, squeezed. And that phrase is made of these words. And so on. “But the words you are explaining them with — where do those come from? “What happens when you get to the bottom?”



Hermogenes asks:
Which name is the right one?
Socrates smiles: The right name
is the one that leads us to the thing.

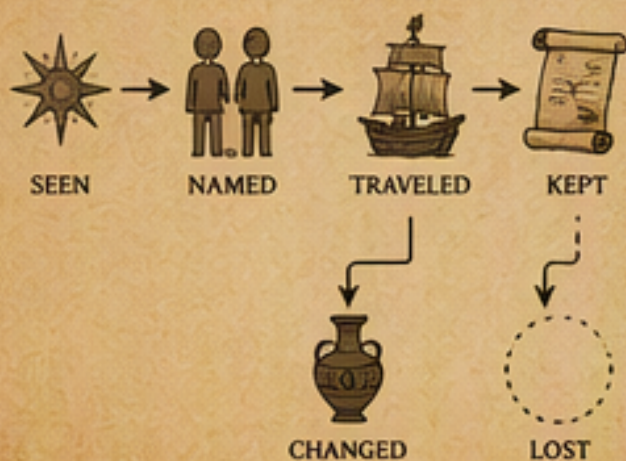


A Divine Wandering — the historical layer.

. . .

Lela sat up so fast she nearly hit her sister. “He got there.” “He got there,” Sophia agreed. “Hermogenes, who has not had one original thought since breakfast, has just asked the only question in the book.”

THE JOURNEY OF A NAME



Some names remain, some change,
some disappear like footsteps on sand.



A Divine Wandering — a wordless conceptual plate.

. . .

“That’s an excellent question,” said Socrates, “and exactly the right one. “Look. If a man explains a name by another name, and that one by another, he must at some point stop — or go round in a circle for ever. “The names that can be broken down into others, I’d call derivative. But the ones they are broken down into must be primary, and those cannot be explained by any further names at all. “And unless we can say how a primary name is correct, we know nothing whatever about how any of the others are — because they can only mean something by means of the ones we know nothing about. “So anybody who claims to understand derivative names must be able to explain the primary ones with perfect clarity first. Otherwise he can be quite sure that everything he says about the rest is worthless. “Or don’t you agree?” “I agree completely, Socrates.”



So we must follow the names
as the gods once did:
wandering, asking, and learning.

This is the divine wandering.



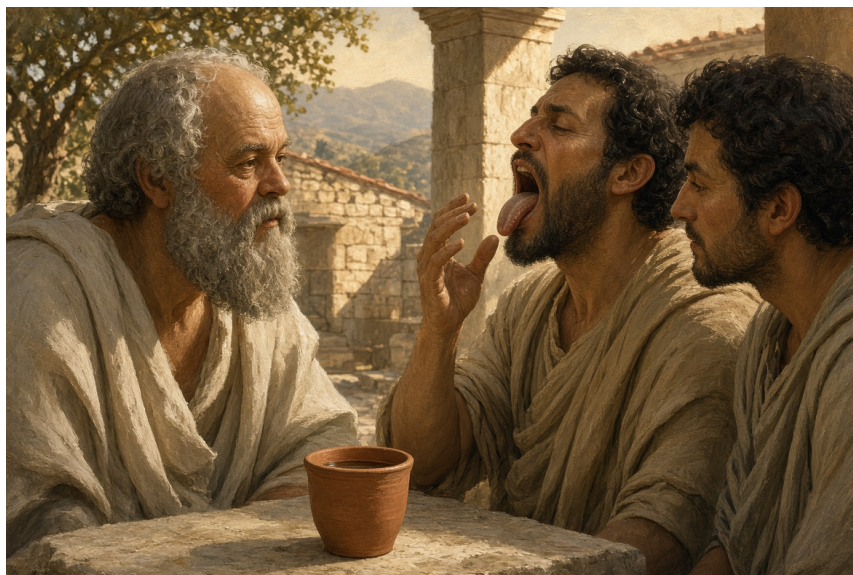
A Divine Wandering — the chapter's narrative and philosophical synthesis.

Chapter 15

FIFTEEN. The Tongue



Socrates turns to another subject.
Words are not enough to learn.
We must look at the tongue that speaks them.



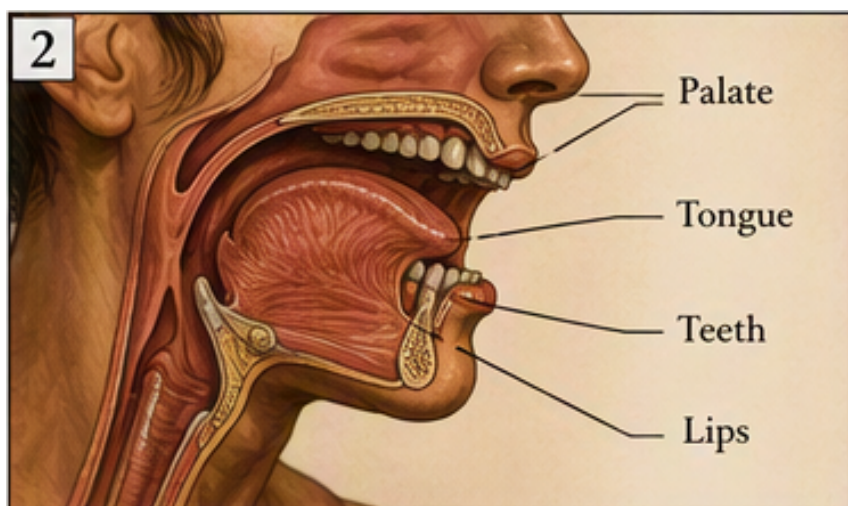
The Tongue — opening scene.

“Perhaps it will seem absurd, Hermogenes, to think that things are made clear by being imitated in letters and syllables. But it is absolutely unavoidable, because we have nothing better to base the truth of the primary names on. “Unless you want us to behave like the tragic poets, who lower a god on a machine whenever they get stuck. Because we could get out of our difficulty the same way — by saying that the primary names are correct because the gods gave them. “Or we could say we got them from foreigners, who are older than we are. Or that they are simply too ancient to investigate, in the way foreign words are. “But aren’t all of those just the clever excuses of people who have no account to give at all?”

. . .

“And my impressions about the primary names,” Socrates said, “seem to me to be entirely outrageous and absurd. “All the same, I’ll share them with you if you

like. And if you have anything better, I hope you'll share it with me." "Have no fear. I will."



Look at the tongue in the mouth.
It is soft, wet, and always moving.
It touches the palate, the teeth, and the lips.



The Tongue — the chapter's central dialogue.

. . .

And then he did the thing that Lela was still thinking about years later. He put his hand up to his own mouth.

. . .

“R,” he said, “seems to me to be a tool for copying every sort of motion. “He used it first to imitate motion in the words for flowing and flow themselves. Then in trembling and running, and in the words for striking, crushing, rending, breaking, crumbling, whirling — it is mostly r that he uses to imitate all of these. “Because he saw, I suppose, that in pronouncing that letter the tongue is most shaken and least at rest.”

3



Without the tongue,
we cannot shape the sounds
that become words.



The Tongue — the central concept made visible.

. . .

Danae was already saying it. “Rrrrr.” “Danae.” “No, but it does.” She had her fingers against her throat. “It’s the only one that moves. All the others you just put your mouth somewhere and stop. That one you have to keep going.”

. . .

4

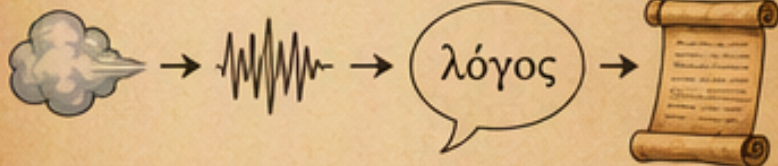
SOUNDS BECOME SPEECH

BREATH

SOUND

WORD

MEANING



Breath becomes sound.
Sound becomes word.
Word becomes meaning.



The Tongue — the guiding analogy.

“I,” Socrates went on, “he uses to imitate all the small things that go through everything most easily. So he uses it in the words for moving and hastening. “And ph, ps, s and z he uses in words like chilling and seething and shaking and quaking — because all of those are pronounced with the breath pushed out. Whenever he wants to imitate blowing or hard breathing, he almost always uses them. “And he seems to have thought that the pressing and stopping of the tongue in d and t made them fit for words like shackling and standing still. “And because he saw that in l the tongue glides more than anywhere else, he used it to make the resemblance in the word for gliding itself, and in smooth, and sleek, and sticky. “But when he wanted to imitate something cloying, he used words where the gliding of the tongue is stopped by the force of a g — gluey, sweet, clammy. “And because he saw that n sounds inwardly, he used it in the words for within and inside, so that the letters should copy the things. “He put a long a in the word for large

and a long e in the word for length, because both of those letters are pronounced long. “And he wanted o to mean roundness, so he mixed a great deal of it into the word for round.”

5

MANY KINDS OF NAMES

ὄνομα ONOMA	ῥῆμα RHEMA	σύμβολον SYMBOLON	ἵχνος ICHNOS
			
things in nature	actions and events	agreements and tokens	traces and signs

There are many kinds of names.
Not all names point in the same way.



The Tongue — the argument unfolding step by step.

. . .

The whole grove had gone quiet except for the picture. Both girls had their mouths slightly open and both of them were, without either of them noticing, saying the letters under their breath.

. . .

“He’s right,” said Lela at last. “About which part?” “About the mouth. Not about the words. About what your tongue does.” She sat up. “Sophia, r really is the one where your tongue doesn’t stop. And l really does slide. And o really is round; you make a round shape to say it. He’s not making that up. That part you can check on your own face.” “Yes,” said the owl. “So how much of it is true?”

6



Hermogenes asks: How do we know
which names are good and which are not?
Socrates: We must test them against the things.



The Tongue — the competing interpretation.

. . .

Sophia was quiet longer than usual. “A little,” she said. “There is such a thing. Some words in some languages do sound like what they mean — the words for buzzing and crashing and whispering, in nearly every tongue there is. And there are people who have spent whole lives arguing that small bright vowels go with small bright things more often than chance allows, and they have some evidence, and it is not nothing. “But it is a thin thread and he is hanging the whole language on it. He is about to say that all the words in Greek were built out of these letters the way a wall is built out of bricks, each one chosen for what it is like. “And they weren’t. And you will know they weren’t in about ten minutes, because you already know that fire came out of Phrygia.”

7



Lela thinks: The tongue is like a tool.
Danae: We must learn how to use it well,
or it will use us.



The Tongue — Lela and Danae reconstruct the idea.

. . .

“That, Hermogenes,” Socrates finished, “is my view of what it means to say that names are correct. “Unless, of course, Cratylus disagrees.”

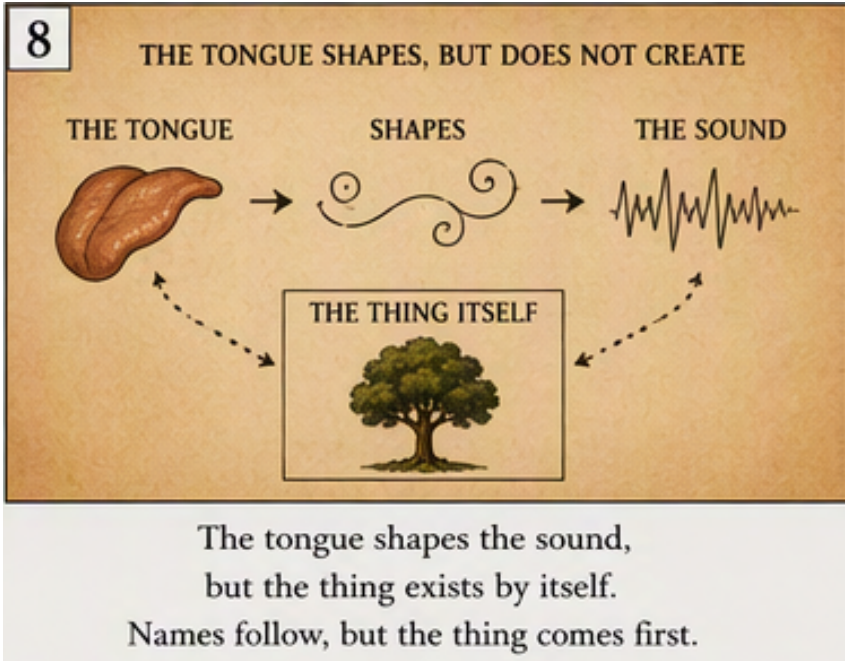
. . .

And all three of them in the picture turned to look at the man who had not said a word for the whole of the morning.

. . .

“Well, Socrates,” said Hermogenes, “as I told you at the start, Cratylus confuses me most of the time. He says there is such a thing as the correctness of names, and he never explains what it is, and I’m never able to work out whether he’s being unclear on purpose. “So tell us now, Cratylus,

with Socrates here to hear it. Do you agree with what he has been saying, or have you something better? And if you have, say it — and either you'll learn where you've gone wrong from Socrates, or you'll become the teacher of both of us."





The Tongue — the historical layer.

. . .

“But Hermogenes,” said Cratylus, “do you really think any subject can be taught or learned as quickly as that? Let alone one like this, which seems to be among the most important there are?”

. . .

“He’s been sitting there all day,” said Danae, in the grass. “All day,” said Lela. “And that’s his first whole sentence. And it’s — that’s not an answer. That’s a man saying this is too hard for you.”



With the tongue we can name many things—
people, actions, qualities, and places.
This is a great power.



The Tongue — a wordless conceptual plate.

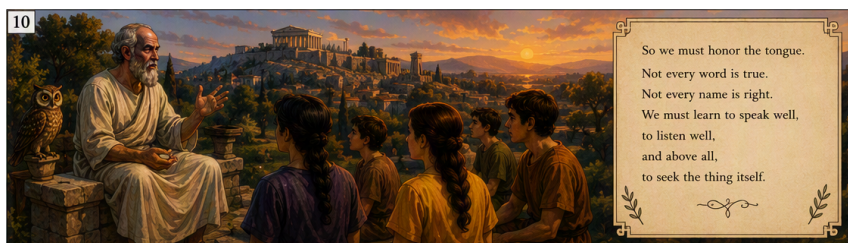
. . .

“No, by god, I don’t think so,” said Hermogenes. “But I think Hesiod is right when he says that if you can add even a little to a little, it is worth it. “So if you can add even a little, don’t shrink from the work. Help Socrates — he deserves it — and help me too.”

. . .

“Yes, Cratylus. Please do,” said Socrates. “As far as I’m concerned, nothing I’ve said is set in stone. I’ve simply been saying what seemed right to me as I looked into it with Hermogenes. “So don’t hesitate. And if your views are better than mine, I’ll gladly take them. It wouldn’t in the least surprise me if they were better, since you’ve looked into these things for yourself and learned about them from other people as well. “So if you do happen to

have something better, sign me up as a student on your course.”



So we must honor the tongue.
Not every word is true.
Not every name is right.
We must learn to speak well,
to listen well,
and above all,
to seek the thing itself.



The Tongue — the chapter’s narrative and philosophical synthesis.

. . .

“And he means it,” said Lela. “Yes,” said Sophia. “He’s seventy — he’s not seventy yet, but he’s old, and he’s just spent four hours doing the most extraordinary thing I’ve ever watched anybody do, and a man who’s been silent all

day says it's too hard to teach quickly, and he says sign me up." "Yes." "Does anybody ever take him up on it?" "Never once," said the owl. "In fifty years. Not one of them."

Chapter 16

SIXTEEN. What Cratylus Said



Socrates asks Cratylus to explain his view clearly.

Do names come from nature,
or are they fixed by agreement?



What Cratylus Said — opening scene.

Cratylus, when he finally spoke, agreed with everything. That was the strange part. He had sat silent through the whole of it, and when he opened his mouth it turned out that he thought Socrates had been entirely right — more right than Socrates thought he had been himself. “Then let’s see how far you’ll go with it,” said Socrates. “Tell me. Is it possible to give a name badly?” “No.” “No? Not at all?” “Not at all. A name that is given badly isn’t a name. It’s a noise. If you make the noise wrongly, you have not said the thing wrongly — you have not said it. You have simply made a sound, the way a man might bang on a pot.”

. . .

“So when Hermogenes here is called Hermogenes—” “He isn’t,” said Cratylus. “Those are letters in the air. They are not his name. Nobody has said anything about him at all.”

2



Cratylus says that the right name
fits the nature of the thing.
He believes names are not random,
but part of the way things are.



What Cratylus Said — the chapter's central dialogue.

. . .

“Sophia,” said Danae. “Is that mad?” “It is not mad. It is very tidy, and a great many extremely clever people have believed some form of it, and it has one enormous flaw which Socrates is about to find with his thumb.”

. . .

“Let me ask you this,” said Socrates. “Is it possible to speak falsely at all?” “How could it be? If a man speaks falsely he is saying what is not. And how can anybody say what is not? He would be saying nothing.” “That’s too clever for me,” said Socrates, “and for a good many people older than I am. But leave it. Answer me a plainer question. “Do you think it’s possible to say something false to a man’s face, but not possible to name him falsely?” “I don’t think it’s possible either way.”

3

TWO POSSIBILITIES

BY NATURE



Names grow
from what things
really are.

BY CONVENTION



Names are set
by agreement
among people.

Either names are natural,
or they are conventional.
The argument must be settled.



What Cratylus Said — the central concept made visible.

. . .

“Then consider painting,” said Socrates. “There are likenesses of things in colours and shapes, just as there are likenesses in letters and syllables. Isn’t that so?” “Yes.” “Then suppose a man goes up to you with two pictures, and says: this one is a likeness of you, and that one is a likeness of your wife. Assigning, as it were, the picture to the person. “Could he assign them rightly?” “He could.” “And could he assign them wrongly — give you the woman’s picture and the woman yours?” “He could.”

. . .

4



If names are natural,
then we can choose the right ones
by understanding the thing itself.



What Cratylus Said — the guiding analogy.

“And would he still have done something? Would he have assigned them, even though he assigned them wrongly?” “He would.” “Then why is it any different with names? “If a man can hold up a likeness made of paint and put it against the wrong person, and still be doing the thing called assigning — then a man can hold up a likeness made of sounds and put it against the wrong person, and still be doing the thing called naming. “And then a name can be given badly. Which is what you said could not happen.”

. . .

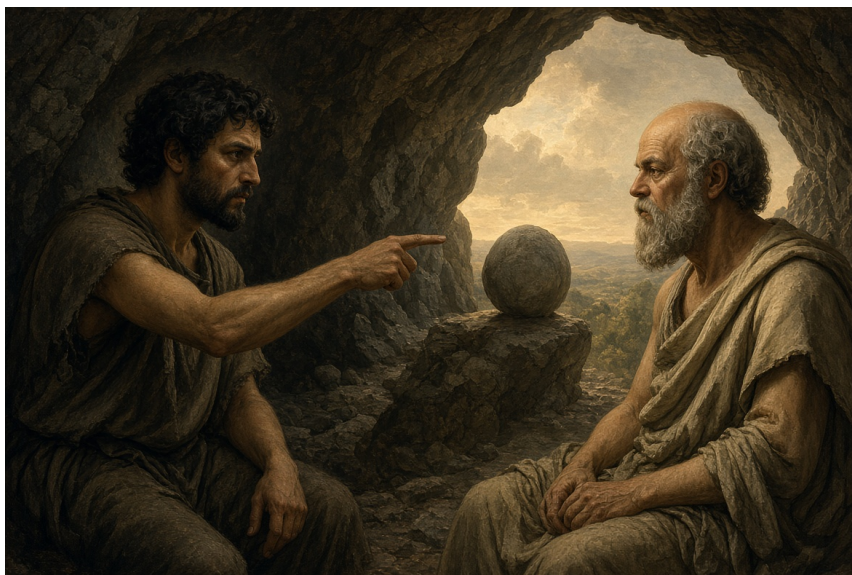
Cratylus did not like this and did not concede it, and Socrates went at it again from three other directions, and the girls watched a man who had said almost nothing all day turn out to be the hardest work in the street.

5

NATURE LEADS TO KNOWLEDGE



Seeing, understanding, naming—
one path that follows nature.



What Cratylus Said — the argument unfolding step by step.

. . .

“Try it this way,” said Socrates. “You’ll agree that a name is a likeness of the thing it names?” “Yes.” “And that a likeness needn’t have everything the original has? That if it did, there would be two of the thing and not a thing and a picture of it?” “...Yes.” “So a likeness may fall short and still be a likeness.” “Yes.” “Then a name may fall short and still be a name. It may have a letter too many, or a letter too few, or the wrong letter altogether, and still do its work — badly, but still do it. Because it is a picture, and pictures can be poor pictures and still be pictures of what they are pictures of. “It is only in numbers that this doesn’t hold. Take one away from ten and you haven’t got a worse ten; you have got nine. But a name is not a number.”

6



Hermogenes objects:
People in different places
use different names for the same things.
That shows names are by convention.



What Cratylus Said — the competing interpretation.

EUCLID · Elements VII, Definitions 1–2 and Common Notion 3 — why a number is not an image

El.VII.Def.2 — *number* STRONG

And a number (is) a multitude composed of units.

EUCLID, BOOK VII — DEFINITION 2: NUMBER
 "A number is a multitude composed of units."

1

Alexander, we begin with one.

This single stone is a **UNIT**.
It is **ONE**.

2

Add another unit.

Now we have $1 + 1$.
This multitude of units is called **2**.

3

Add another.

Now we have $1 + 1 + 1$.
This multitude of units is called **3**.

4

Add one more.

$1 + 1 + 1 + 1 = 4$.
A **number** is **many** units taken together.

5

And another.

$1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 = 5$.
And so on, without end...

6

$$\begin{aligned} 2 &= 1 + 1 \\ 3 &= 1 + 1 + 1 \\ 4 &= 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 \\ 5 &= 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 \\ &\dots \\ n &= \underbrace{1 + 1 + \dots + 1}_{n \text{ times}} \end{aligned}$$

Every **number** is made by repeating the **unit**.

7

Look at our soldiers.

One soldier is a **unit**.
Many soldiers together give us a **number**.

8

= 1 unit
= 2 units
= 5 units
= 10 units
...

Whatever we count—stones, soldiers, apples—each is counted as one unit.

9

Remember this, Alexander:
A unit gives the idea of one.
But a number is born when units become a multitude.

A NUMBER IS A MULTITUDE COMPOSED OF UNITS.

UNIT = ONE
(not yet a number)

→

NUMBER = MANY ONES TOGETHER
(a multitude composed of units)

El.VII.Def.2 — number

El.VII.Def.1 — unit STRONG

A unit is (that) according to which each existing (thing) is said (to be) one.

EUCLID, BOOK VII — DEFINITION 1: UNIT
 “A unit is that according to which each existing thing is said to be one.”

1 ARISTOTLE: Alexander, before we speak of numbers, we must understand the very idea of “one.”	2 Behold this single stone. It is ONE.	3 This “one” is what we call a UNIT—that according to which each existing thing is said to be one.”
4 $1 + 1 + 1 = 3$ When we put units together, we can count: three stones = $1 + 1 + 1$.	5 See how each stone is first taken as one, because of the unit.	6 1 = unit (not yet a number) $2 = 1 + 1$ $3 = 1 + 1 + 1$ $4 = 1 + 1 + 1 + 1$... From repeated units, numbers arise: 2, 3, 4, and so on.
7 If we have apples, each apple is taken as one apple—one unit—relative to the collection.	8 UNIT “the idea of one” ↓ repeat units ↓ NUMBERS (2, 3, 4, 5, ...) Thus the order is: first the unit, then, by repeating it, numbers.	9 Remember this well, Alexander: a unit gives the meaning of one, and numbers are made of units.

For Euclid, “number” means a positive integer greater than one. 1 = unit (not a number) $2 = 1 + 1$ $3 = 1 + 1 + 1$ $4 = 1 + 1 + 1 + 1$...

El.VII.Def.1 — unit

E1.I.CN.3 — equals subtracted from equals MODERATE

And if equal (things) are subtracted from equal (things) then the remainders are equal.

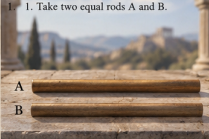
COMMON
NOTION
3

EUCLID'S ELEMENTS — COMMON NOTION 3
Καὶ ἐὰν ἀπὸ ἴσων ἴσα ἀφαιρεθῇ, τὰ καταλειπόμενά ἐστιν ἴσα.
And if equal things are subtracted from equal things, the remainders are equal.

THE SAME
RULE
IN EVERY
KIND OF
MAGNITUDE

LENGTH — CUT EQUAL PIECES FROM EQUAL RODS

1. Take two equal rods A and B.



2. Remove equal pieces from each.



3. The remaining lengths are equal.



$A - C = B - D$

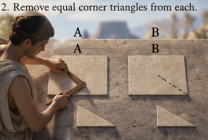
Remainders are equal.

AREA — REMOVE EQUAL TRIANGLES FROM EQUAL RECTANGLES

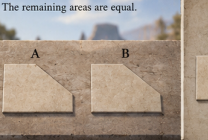
1. Take two equal rectangles.



2. Remove equal corner triangles from each.



3. The remaining areas are equal.



$A - C = B - D$

Remainders are equal.

WEIGHT — REMOVE EQUAL AMOUNTS FROM EQUAL BAGS

1. Take two equal bags of grain.



2. Remove equal scoops from each.



3. The remaining weights are equal.



$A - C = B - D$

Remainders are equal.

LOGICAL
ROLE

This licenses subtraction of equals, used in Propositions I.5, I.6, I.14, and I.47 (and many others).
Remove the same from the same, and what remains is still the same.

EQUALITY
PERSISTS
THROUGH
SUBTRACTION

El.I.CN.3 — equals subtracted from equals

Why here: Socrates' crux at *Cratylus* 432a–d. An image may lose a detail and still be an image of the same thing; a number may not. Take a unit from ten and you do not have a defective ten, you have nine — because a number is nothing but its units, and Common Notion 3 governs it exactly. The argument works only because VII.Def.2 is true, and Plato is using it four generations before Euclid states it.

7

MANY NAMES, ONE THING



Different peoples, different sounds,
but they all point to the same animal.



What Cratylus Said — Lela and Danae reconstruct the idea.

NOTE · Cratylus 432a–d

Annotation (light / institutional): Name = number.

Soft number vocab. (light)

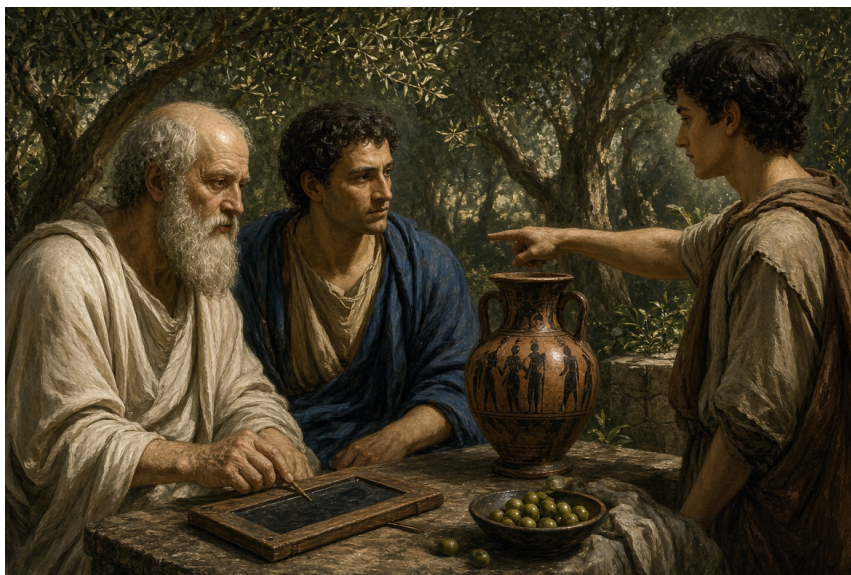
. . .



Socrates asks:

If names change from place to place,
how can any name be by nature?

We must look deeper.



What Cratylus Said — the historical layer.

“He’s doing it,” said Lela quietly. “Doing what?” “He spent the whole of yesterday and half of today building the thing Cratylus believes. And now Cratylus believes it and he’s taking it apart.” “Yes.” “Why?” “Because he never believed it,” said Sophia, “and because the only way to show a man the shape of what he is holding is to build it for him first, at full size, and let him stand inside it.”

. . .

And then, near the end of it, Socrates said the sentence that Aristotle stopped writing for.

. . .

9

WHAT WE MUST INVESTIGATE



Examine things themselves.



Examine the reasons
people give.



Test which account
holds together.



Follow the path
that leads to truth.

This is the work of dialectic.



What Cratylus Said — a wordless conceptual plate.

“I myself prefer the view that names should be as much like things as they possibly can be. But I’m afraid that, as Hermogenes said, this business of dragging in likeness is a poor thing, and that we are forced to use, in addition to it, this crude business of agreement, for the correctness of names. “Because probably the best possible way to speak would be to use names that are all — or mostly — like the things they name. That is to say, suitable to them. And the worst way would be the opposite. “But tell me this next thing. What power do names have for us? What good do they do?”

. . .

In the garden, the young man put the tablet flat on the bench and sat back. “There,” he said. “Yes.” “He has admitted it. Not in so many words — he has called it crude, and he has said he is forced to it — but he has admitted that agreement has to be in there, because there is no other

way to get the hard words in. “That is my sentence. That is my sentence, written by him, forty years before I thought of it, and he has put it in the middle of the page in a tone of apology.”



The search for the right name
is the search for what things truly are.
So we must investigate it courageously.



What Cratylus Said — the chapter's narrative and philosophical synthesis.

. . .

“How does it feel?” said Plato. Aristotle thought about it, honestly, for longer than most men would have. “Like being beaten to something,” he said. “Yes.” “And also like being handed it.” “Yes,” said Plato. “Both of those. Hold both of those. We had this conversation about a different sentence four days ago and you will be having it for the rest of your life.”

Chapter 17

**SEVENTEEN. Investigate It
Courageously**

1



Socrates calls Cratylus and Hermogenes
back to the beginning.
We must not be afraid of the argument.



Investigate It Courageously — opening scene.

“Then let’s go back to where all this started,” said Socrates. “You said a little while ago that whoever gave the first names had to know the things he was naming. Do you still say that?” “I still do.” “And do you think the giver of the first names knew the things he named?” “He did know them.”

. . .

“From what names did he learn them, or find them out?” Cratylus said nothing. “Because the first names had not been given yet,” said Socrates. “And on our own account it is impossible to learn or discover anything except by learning its name from somebody else, or finding the name out for ourselves. “So if things can’t be learned except from their names — how can we possibly say that the name-givers had knowledge, before there were any names for them to have it from?”

. . .

“You have a point there, Socrates.”

. . .

Lela let out a long breath. “That’s the hole,” she said. “That’s the hole, isn’t it. That’s the actual hole.” “That is the actual hole,” said Sophia. “He can’t have learned it from the names because he’s the one making the names. So he must have got it some other way. So there is some other way. So you don’t need the names at all.” “Yes.” “And that means the whole book—” “Wait,” said Sophia. “Let him.”

. . .

“I think the truest account of it, Socrates,” said Cratylus, “is that some more than human power gave the first names to things. And that they are therefore necessarily correct.” “So in your view this name-giver contradicted himself — even though he was a daemon or a god?” “What?” “Because half the names he gave say that everything is moving, and half of them say that everything is standing still.”

2



Cratylus: I will help you investigate,
if you will help me.
Let us not turn away from the question.



Investigate It Courageously — the chapter's central dialogue.

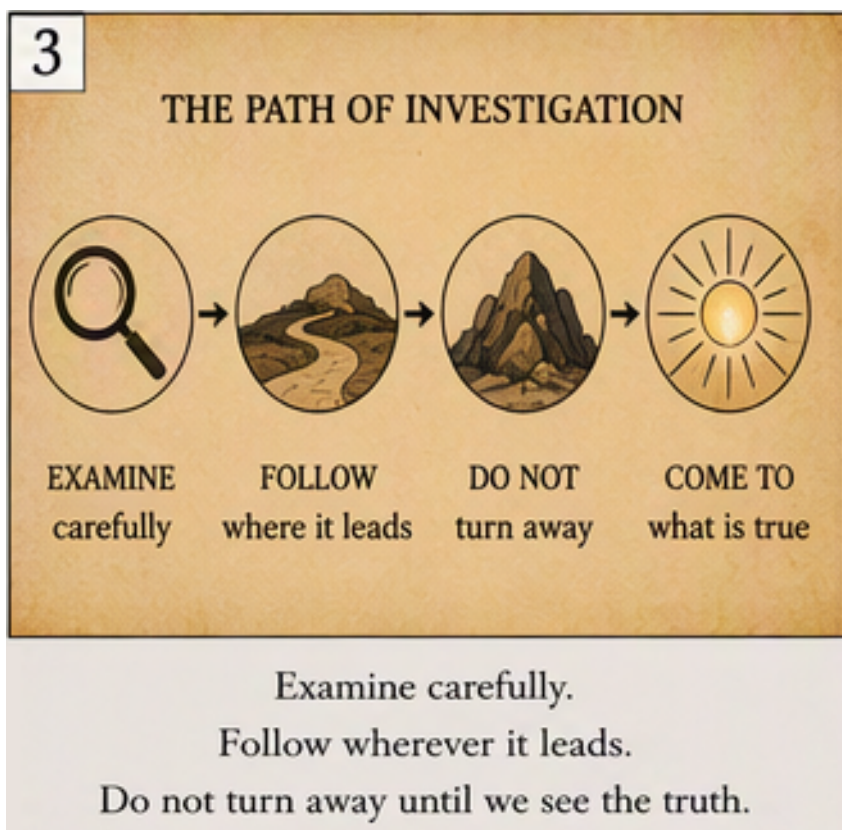
. . .

And then Socrates did it again, backwards, and it took him about four minutes. Knowledge did not mean the soul following the movement of things. It meant stopping the soul's movement towards them. Certain was an imitation of resting. Inquiry meant stopping the flow. Confidence meant stopping. Memory plainly meant a staying in the soul, not a motion at all. And then, to finish, he took the words for error and mishap and showed that if you followed the names as guides they came out meaning the same as comprehension and knowledge — and that ignorance came out as going along with god, and licentiousness as keeping up with things. “So the names of what we take to be the very worst things,” he said, “turn out to look exactly like the names of the very best.”

. . .

“He can make it say anything,” said Danae. She did not say it triumphantly. She said it the way you say a thing you have just understood and rather wish you hadn’t. “He can make it say anything at all. He did the whole language yesterday one way and he’s just done it the other way in four minutes, and he didn’t cheat either time.”

. . .





Investigate It Courageously — the central concept made visible.

“But look, Socrates — most of them do signify motion.”
“What if they do, Cratylus?” said Socrates. “Are we to count names like votes, and settle their correctness that way? If more of them signify motion, does that make them the true ones?” “No. That isn’t a reasonable view.”
“It certainly isn’t.”

. . .

“There is a civil war among the names,” said Socrates. “Some of them claim one thing and some claim the other. “So how are we to judge between them? What are we to start from? “We can’t start from other, different names, because there aren’t any others. So clearly we’ll have to look for something that isn’t a name at all — something that will show us, without using names, which of the two kinds are the true ones.” “I think so too.”

. . .

“But if that’s right, Cratylus — then it must be possible to learn about the things that are without names.” “Evidently.”

. . .

“And how else would you expect to learn about them? How else than in the most proper and natural way — through one another, if they are akin, and through themselves? “Because something else, something other than them, wouldn’t show us them. It would show us something else.” “That seems true to me.”

. . .



Lela: It takes courage to follow a thought
past what we already believe.

Danae: But that is how we learn.



Investigate It Courageously — the guiding analogy.

“But wait a moment. Haven’t we agreed over and over that if names are well given, they are like the things they name — that they are likenesses of them?” “Yes.” “Then if it really is possible to learn about things through names, and also possible to learn about them through themselves — which is the better and the clearer way? “Is it better to learn from the likeness, both whether it is a good likeness and also the truth it is a likeness of? “Or is it better to learn from the truth itself — both the truth, and whether the likeness has been properly made?”

. . .

“I think it is certainly better to learn from the truth.”

. . .

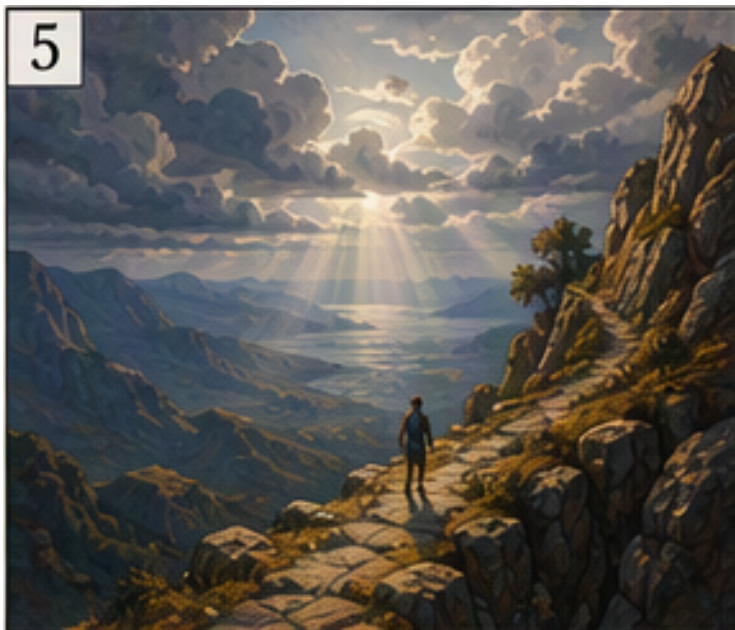
Lela lay back in the dry grass with her arm across her eyes. “That’s it,” she said. “That is it.” “That’s the whole

book. That's four hours of the cleverest thing I've ever seen anybody do, and it ends with go and look at the thing." "Yes." "He knew that at the start." "He knew it before he left his house," said Sophia.

. . .

"How to learn about the things that are, and how to discover them, is probably too large a subject for you or me," said Socrates. "But let us be content with having agreed on this much: that it is far better to look into them and learn about them through themselves than to do it through their names. "Still — let's look at one more thing, so that we're not taken in by the fact that so many of these names lean the same way. "Because it does seem to me that the name-givers really did give them believing that everything is always moving and flowing. And that things aren't like that at all. And that the name-givers themselves fell into a kind of whirlpool, and are being spun round in it, and are dragging us in after them."

5



The path to truth is not flat.
It has steep places
and places where we cannot see ahead.



Investigate It Courageously — the argument unfolding step by step.

. . .

“Consider a question I often dream about, Cratylus. “Are we or are we not to say that there is a beautiful itself, and a good itself, and so for each one of the things that are?” “I think we are.” “Then let’s not ask whether some particular face is beautiful, or whether all such things seem to be flowing. Let’s ask this instead. Are we to say that the beautiful itself is always such as it is?” “Absolutely.”

. . .

“But if it is always passing away, can we correctly say of it, first that it is this, and then that it is such and such? “Or, at the very instant we are speaking, isn’t it already becoming a different thing, and altering, and no longer being what it was?” “It is.” “Then if it never stays the same, how can it be something at all?”

. . .

“And then,” said Socrates, “it can’t even be known by anybody. “Because at the very instant the one who is going to know it comes near, the thing he is coming near is becoming something different, of a different character. So he can’t yet come to know what sort of thing it is, or what it is like. “And surely no kind of knowledge is knowledge of what isn’t in any way at all.”



Hermogenes: Let us test every answer
and not keep the first that sounds good.
The easier path is not always the true one.



Investigate It Courageously — the competing interpretation.

. . .

“Indeed, it isn’t even reasonable to say there is such a thing as knowledge, Cratylus, if all things are passing on and none of them stay. “Because if that thing itself — knowledge — did not pass on from being knowledge, then knowledge would always stay, and there would be such a thing as knowledge. “But if the very form of knowledge passed on from being knowledge, then at the instant it passed into some other form, there would be no knowledge. And if it were always passing on, there would always be no knowledge. “And so on that account nobody could know anything, and nothing could be known either.”

. . .

Danae had sat up. “That’s not about words any more.” “No,” said Sophia. “That’s about — if everything moves

then there's no such thing as knowing. Anything. Ever.”
“Yes.” “That’s the biggest thing anyone has said all summer
and he’s just said it at the end, on the way out, like he’s
remembering to mention it.”

. . .

7

COURAGE IN THINKING

 Ask what is difficult.

 Face the consequences.

 Keep following the argument.

 Welcome the truth, even if it reaches places we did not expect.

This is the courage we need.
Not the courage of the body,
but the courage of the mind.



Investigate It Courageously — Lela and Danae reconstruct the idea.

“But if there is always that which knows and that which is known,” Socrates said, “if there are such things as the beautiful, and the good, and each one of the things that are — then it doesn’t appear to me that these can be at all like flowings or motions. “Whether I am right about that, or whether the truth lies with Heraclitus and a good many others, isn’t an easy matter to look into. “But no man with any understanding will hand himself over, or hand over the care of his own soul, to names — or trust them and the men who gave them to the point of firmly stating that he knows something. “He will not condemn himself and the things that are to be totally unsound, like leaking jars. He will not believe that things are exactly like people with streaming colds, dripping over everything.”

. . .

“It is certainly possible that things are that way, Cratylus. “But it is also possible that they are not. “So you must look into them courageously, and thoroughly, and not accept anything easily. You are still young, and in your prime. “And then, when you have looked into them — if you happen to discover the truth, you can share it with me.”

. . .

The grove was entirely silent.

. . .

“I’ll do that,” said Cratylus. “But I assure you, Socrates, that I have already looked into them, and taken a great deal of trouble over the matter, and things seem to me to be very much more the way Heraclitus says they are.”

8



Socrates: Some questions have no end
until the soul itself is examined.
We must not grow tired too soon.



Investigate It Courageously — the historical layer.

. . .

And Socrates laughed — the short, surprised, entirely ordinary laugh that Lela had heard exactly once before, in an olive grove in August, when a girl of thirteen told him the name of the boy who was going to write him down.

. . .

“Instruct me about it another time, Cratylus, when you get back. “But now go off into the country, as you were meaning to. And Hermogenes here will see you on your way.”

. . .

The picture ran on for another second and a half, and then it went out.

. . .

Danae got there first. She got there about four seconds before Lela did, and she got to her feet to do it. “He gave it back.” “What?” “Hermogenes.” She was pointing at the flattened grass where nothing was. “Son of Hermes. The god who — Sophia, what’s the god who takes people where they’re going?” “Hermes,” said the owl. “Among a great many other things, Hermes is the one who conducts travellers. And the dead.” “So the very last thing he says,” said Danae, “in the whole book — after four hours of a man being told by everybody that his name isn’t really his name and never arguing back about it — “the very last thing Socrates says is Hermogenes will see you on your way. “He gave him his name back. In the last line. And he didn’t explain it and nobody in that street noticed and he just went home.”

9

SHALLOW ANSWER



Stops at the shore.
It feels safe.

DEEP ANSWER



Descends to the depth.
It finds what is real.

Shallow answers do not satisfy.
We must dive deeper
until the bottom is reached.



Investigate It Courageously — a wordless conceptual plate.

. . .

Lela sat in the grass with her hands over her face for a while. “Sophia.” “Yes.” “Is that in the book? Is that actually in it, or is that just something that happened?” “It is the last line of the book,” said Sophia. “Word for word. Plato wrote it and put it there and never said a thing about it, in exactly the way you have just watched Socrates do it, and for exactly the same reason.”

. . .

In the garden, under the plane trees, Aristotle was reading his own tablet back. “Well,” said Plato. “It is a serious book pretending for four hours to be a silly one.” “Yes.” “And the argument, when you take the joke off it, is that names cannot teach you anything, because whoever made them had to know before he made them, and so knowing

must be able to happen without them. And therefore you have to go to the things.” “Yes.” “Then I agree with the end of it and almost nothing else.”

. . .

The old man laughed out loud at that, which the boys at the far end of the walk turned round to hear, because it was not a common sound. “Good,” said Plato. “Write that down. Write it down exactly as you said it, and keep it, because in thirty years you will have built something very large on it and you will have forgotten that this was the afternoon. “Tomorrow we start the long one. “It is about what knowledge is, and it takes three days, and at the end of it there is no answer. And I want you to know that before we begin, so that you don’t spend the whole of it waiting for one.”

. . .



So let us investigate it courageously,
without fear of the long road.
The truth is worth the journey.



Investigate It Courageously — the chapter's narrative and philosophical synthesis.

And in an olive grove in Messenia, two and a half thousand years later, a girl of fourteen lay on her back in the dark and looked at the sky and thought: go and look at the thing. She had asked a man how he knew, and he had said because I was there. She had been asked how she knew, three times, in a street, and had said somebody told me, and had been right, and had not known, and had spent a year finding out what the difference was. And here was a whole book about it. Four hours of the cleverest man who ever lived proving, with enormous care, at great length, and entirely on purpose, that you cannot get it from the words. You have to go where the thing is. She had been there. That was the joke. She was the only person alive who had actually been there, and it had taken her a year and a book to work out that this was the answer.

Colophon

This annotated edition was compiled for Aris Skliros from the novel source and the sibling Euclid annotation layers (Theaetetus, Sophist, Statesman, Parmenides hypertexts). It does not claim authorship of Plato or Euclid. Correspondences only. Cite-first lists applied exactly.

Concordance of Euclid correspondences

Plato predates Euclid by roughly half a century; Theon of Smyrna and Nicomachus of Gerasa follow him by four hundred years. Every entry below records a *correspondence* between what is done on the page and the statement in the *Elements* that later systematises it. None is a citation by Plato, and none implies that any speaker in this book had read Euclid. Statements follow the Fitzpatrick bilingual edition of Heiberg’s text; El.B.Def.N, El.B.Post.N, El.B.Prop.N are the canonical identifiers. Tiers: STRONG where the page performs the proposition itself, MODERATE where it performs a recognisable part of it, LIGHT where the pointer is thematic.

Reference	Locus	Tier	Page
El.VII.Def.2	Elements VII, Definitions 1-2 and Common Notion 3 – why a number is not an image	STRONG	326