

Title: Judging Striving to be Knowing

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Abstract: In this paper, I defend the unpopular thesis that the objects of knowledge and the objects of judgement are for Plato mutually exclusive – and rightly so. This is, I argue, part of a larger epistemological picture according to which judgement relates to knowledge as their respective objects to each other – as imitation, likeness, or instance to form.

I begin with the principled discrimination of powers at the end of Republic Book V, exploring how the example of seeing and hearing illuminate the powers of knowing and judging. The perceptual examples make clear that the objects of knowing and the objects of judgement must be distinct. But the perceptual powers differ from knowledge and belief in a key respect – the latter pair, unlike the former, are rank ordered according to some shared standards.

The best way to understand this, I argue, is to take it that knowledge and judgement stand in the model-likeness relation – as indeed their objects do, and which objectual relation alone should suggest the relation between the powers, given what we learn in the first place about how and why powers are discriminated by objects and not just by activities.

The implications of this are illuminating: Judgement is an imitation of knowledge, fully appropriate to its objects, which are themselves likenesses; but as a likeness, judgement is to be evaluated according to norms set by perfect knowledge – norms which it is bound not to meet. Such a conception of the relation between knowledge and judgement clarifies at the same time how other cognitive achievements, such as those presented in the simile of the ‘divided line’, might also be set in a rank ordering with respect to one another.

The very same aspects of judgement that make it fail as knowledge make it alone suitable for particulars, especially sensible particulars. I focus on two aspects: precision and holism. Being comprehensive, well-integrated and exhaustive, knowledge cannot but be infallible. Being precise, it has the utmost clarity on its objects. But for ambiguous situations, shaped by practical

considerations, knowledge is not possible. We need judgement here. Likewise regarding matters not fully integrated into a comprehensive, rational order – for such atomistic bits of information, or reality, judgement is necessary, knowledge impossible.

Has the well-ordered Platonic universe has no space for such atomistic truths? They are all around us – above all, they are within us. Sensations and perceptions are by their nature singular, unsharable and to that extent ‘irrational’ – they cannot be expressed within an articulated public account which one could defend under all cross-examination. This is why sensibles are the paradigmatic objects of judgement. And this is why, returned to the cave and dwelling among sensibles, the philosopher will need judgement, as well as knowledge. The philosopher’s judgement will be beautiful, however, and not ugly – for while it remains resolutely judgement, as if must do if it is to do its job, it is judgement informed by knowledge. It borrows its beauty from its original, just as a well-made statue of Helen borrows its beauty from Helen.

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