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Communication and Kinship. On "*Koinōnia*" and "*Syngeneia*" in Plato's Dialogues

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Resumen: El propósito de este artículo es esclarecer las múltiples funciones de la noción de *koinōnía* en los diálogos de Platón. *Koinōnía* y su ausencia caracterizan la realidad como un todo: tanto las entidades inteligibles como sensibles o se "comunican" o no se "comunican" (*koinōneîn*); por tanto, reconstruir la red de las relaciones de *koinōnia* equivale a poner en práctica la dialéctica. Hasta ahí todo está bien. Pero un análisis que apunte a esclarecer el papel de la *koinōnía* no puede dejar de considerar la *syngéneia.* La razón de este hecho radica en la relación esencial que vincula a *koinōnía* y *syngéneia,* siendo esta última la condición de posibilidad de la primera.
Palabras clave: Platón; parentesco; *koinōnía*; metafísica

Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to shed light on the multiple functions of the notion of *koinōnia* in Plato's dialogues. *Koinōnia* and its absence characterize reality as a whole: both the intelligible and the sensible entities either "communicate" or do not "communicate" (*koinōnein*); therefore, reconstructing the net of *koinōnia*-relationships amounts to putting dialectics into practice. So far so good. But an analysis which aims at clarifying the role played by *koinōnia* cannot but take also *syngeneia* into account. The reason for this fact lies in the essential link which binds *koinōnia* and *syngeneia*, with the latter being the condition of possibility of the former.
Keywords: Plato; kinship; *koinōnia*; metaphysics

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I.

Koinōnia is a multifaceted notion in Plato's dialogues. The term covers a wide range of meanings and it is employed in very different contexts, as the list below shows.

(1) It may mean "association" (*R.* 333b7, 343d6; *Lg.* 632b4, 861e2), also in the sense of "partnership", "friendship", "alliance" (*Lg.* 695d3, 773d3; *Criti.* 119c5; *Smp.* 182c3[1], 209c5[2]); not by chance, the term is sometimes coupled with *philia* (*Lg.* 695d3; *Smp.* 182c3, 209c5; see also *Grg.* 507e5, ὅτῳ δὲ μὴ ἔνι κοινωνία, φιλία οὐκ ἂν εἴη, and 508a1[3], where nonetheless the meaning of *koinōnia* is different: see (12) below). Also, the verb κοινωνέω can bear this meaning (*Plt.* 304a1).

(2) Broadly speaking, it may mean "community" (*Lg.* 921c4 (in a markedly political sense), 639c1, 639c6; *Plt.* 276b7; *R.* 466d7), also in the sense of "meeting occasion" (*Lg.* 639d2, 640a4, 783b6, 796a3, 834d5 and 833d3, where the term means "competition", 881e1; *R.* 556c8), or even "common condition", "common life style" (*R.* 466c5, see also the employment of κοινωνέω in these pages; *Lg.* 805d7).

(3) Generically speaking, it may refer to a form of "communication", or "compatibility", between abstract concepts (*R.* 402e3, between temperance and excessive pleasure; *Plt.* 283d8[4]; perhaps also *Prm.* 166a2[5]).

(4) It is used with regard to the "joint-ownership" of wives and children (*R.* 449c8, 449d4, 450c1, 461e5, 464a9, 464b6). This meaning is typical of, and limited to, the *Republic*.

(5) It refers to a "common perceiving" (*R.* 462b4, 464a6).

(6) It refers to the "communion" of soul and body (*R.* 462c10, 611b11; *Lg.* 969b7, where the "communion" at issue is the one that existing between

[1] οὐδὲ φιλίας ἰσχυρὰς καὶ κοινωνίας.

[2] ὥστε πολὺ μείζω κοινωνίαν τῆς τῶν παίδων πρὸς ἀλλήλους οἱ τοιοῦτοι ἴσχουσι καὶ φιλίαν βεβαιοτέραν.

[3] καὶ οὐρανὸν καὶ γῆν καὶ θεοὺς καὶ ἀνθρώπους τὴν κοινωνίαν συνέχειν καὶ φιλίαν καὶ κοσμιότητα καὶ σωφροσύνην καὶ δικαιότητα.

[4] κατὰ τὴν πρὸς ἄλληλα μεγέθους καὶ σμικρότητος κοινωνίαν.

[5] τἆλλα τῶν μὴ ὄντων οὐδενὶ οὐδαμῇ οὐδαμῶς οὐδεμίαν κοινωνίαν ἔχει.

head and intellect, 828d4; *Phd.* 65a2[6]). In this sense, see also the employment of κοινωνός at *Phd.* 65b1 and of κοινωνέω at *Phd.* 66a6 (and elsewhere).

(7) It is employed with reference to the participation-relationship (7a) between sensible objects and ideas (*Phd.* 100d6[7]; *R.* 476a7[8]) and (7b) between the ideas themselves, or the μέγιστα γένη themselves (*Sph.* 250b9, 251e8, 254c5, 256b2, 257a9[9], 260e3, 260e5, 264e2[10]; see also the employment of κοινωνέω and ἐπικ0οινωνέω[11] in the same dialogue). As is evident, the latter meaning is absolutely preeminent in the *Sophist*, where it becomes nearly "technical".

(8) It may refer to the "mutual relationship" among some specific disciplines (*R.* 531c10, where it is coupled with συγγένεια; *Lg.* 967e2[12]).

(9) It may allude to sexual relationships and marriage (*Lg.* 636c3[13], 721a4, 771e1, 772d7, 773a4, 773c). As is evident, this meaning is exclusively attested in the *Laws*.

(10) Hardly ever does it refer to the partaking of a common "lineage" (*Lg.* 729c5)[14].

(11) It may refer to a sort of "horizontal communication" among sensible objects, which therefore represent a "whole", or "set" (*Plt.* 285b1[15]; see also [17] below).

(12) It can be employed with reference to the "vertical" communion between human beings and deities (*Smp.* 188c1[16]; *Grg.* 507e5, 508a1).

(13) It may refer to the particular kind of "dialogic communion" which is founded on *logos* (*R.* 371b6; *La.* 180a5[17], 197e7[18]). In this very sense, see

[6] ἀπολύων ὅτι μάλιστα τὴν ψυχὴν ἀπὸ τῆς τοῦ σώματος κοινωνίας.
[7] ἡ ἐκείνου τοῦ καλοῦ εἴτε παρουσία εἴτε κοινωνία εἴτε ὅπη δὴ καὶ ὅπως †προσγενομένη.
[8] αὐτὸ μὲν ἓν ἕκαστον εἶναι, τῇ δὲ τῶν πράξεων καὶ σωμάτων καὶ ἀλλήλων κοινωνίᾳ πανταχοῦ φανταζόμενα πολλὰ φαίνεσθαι ἕκαστον.
[9] ἔχει κοινωνίαν ἀλλήλοις ἡ τῶν γενῶν φύσις.
[10] πορεύεσθαι κατὰ τοὐπὶ δεξιὰ ἀεὶ μέρος τοῦ τμηθέντος, ἐχόμενοι τῆς τοῦ σοφιστοῦ κοινωνίας. The term is employed in relation to the method of division.
[11] This verb is quite rare in the dialogues. See *Grg.* 464c1-2: ἐπικοινωνοῦσι μὲν δὴ ἀλλήλαις, ἅτε περὶ τὸ αὐτὸ οὖσαι, ἑκάτεραι τούτων, ἥ τε ἰατρικὴ τῇ γυμναστικῇ καὶ ἡ δικαιοσύνη τῇ νομοθετικῇ; see also *Cra.* 394c2.
[12] τά τε κατὰ τὴν μοῦσαν τούτοις τῆς κοινωνίας συνθεασάμενος.
[13] τῇ θηλείᾳ καὶ τῇ τῶν ἀρρένων φύσει εἰς κοινωνίαν ἰούσῃ τῆς γεννήσεως.
[14] *Syngeneia* has the same meaning in its semantically "weak" employment.
[15] ὅταν μὲν τὴν τῶν πολλῶν τις πρότερον αἴσθηται κοινωνίαν.
[16] ἡ περὶ θεούς τε καὶ ἀνθρώπους πρὸς ἀλλήλους κοινωνία.
[17] περὶ τῆς κοινωνίας λέγειν ὁποῖόν τι ποιήσετε.
[18] μὴ μέντοι οἷου με ἀφήσειν σε τῆς κοινωνίας τοῦ λόγου.

also the employment of κοινωνός at *Ti.* 20d4 and κοινωνέω at *Cra.* 434b9 (and elsewhere).

(14) In some specific contexts, the term refers to the "mixture" of flavours (*Ti.* 60d8, 61c3), or of different "species" of fire (*Ti.* 46a5[19]); see also *Phlb.* 25e7[20].

(15) It may mean "usage" (*Hp. Mi.* 374e3[21]; *Lg.* 805a2).

(16) Generically speaking, it may amount to "sharing", or "taking part in" (*Lg.* 694b6 with *philia*, 844d4; *Sph.* 252b9; *Prm.* 152a2[22]). The same meaning also arises from the verb κοινωνέω (see e.g. *Sph.* 248a11).

(17) Broadly speaking (once more), it can mean simply "set", or "whole" (*Ti.* 87e2).

The purpose of this paper is to make the case for a theoretically strong connection between *koinōnia* and *syngeneia*/*oikeiotēs*[23]. As the list above shows, there is only one passage where these words are coupled; but were such connection to be proved somehow relevant in one case, it would be legitimate to scrutinize if *each* philosophical[24] employment of *koinōnia* entails, *ipso facto*, some form of *syngeneia* or *oikeiotēs*. As a result, *syngeneia* and *oikeiotēs* will turn out to represent the condition of possibility for *koinōnia* to take place.

II.

The only text where *koinōnia*, *syngeneia* and *oikeiotēs* appear together comes from the *Republic* (531c9-d4). It deals with the disciplines in which future philosophers are expected to be trained: (T1) "And what is more," I said, "I take it that if the investigation of all these studies goes far enough to bring out their community and kinship with one another, and to infer their affinities, then to busy ourselves with them contributes to our desired end, and the labor taken is not lost; but otherwise it is vain" (Οἶμαι δέ γε, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, καὶ ἡ τούτων πάντων ὧν διεληλύθαμεν μέθοδος, ἐὰν μὲν ἐπὶ τὴν ἀλλήλων κοινωνίαν ἀφίκηται

[19] Sure, this "combination", or "communication", is made possible by their common belonging to the same "genre" (fire), their *syngeneia*.

[20] Ἆρα οὐκ ἐν μὲν νόσοις ἡ τούτων ὀρθὴ κοινωνία τὴν ὑγιείας φύσιν ἐγέννησεν;

[21] ὀργάνων ποτέρων βελτίων ἡ κοινωνία.

[22] τὸ ἔσται μετὰ τοῦ μέλλοντος οὐσίας ἐστὶ κοινωνία.

[23] The two concepts are nearly equivalent: see Palumbo, L., "La Philia come Syngéneia in Platone e nella tradizione platonica (o dell'invisibile amicizia tra i Philoi)", in: F. Rey Puente (ed.), *Philia/amicitia na Antiguidade*, Recife: Even3, 2018, pp. 5-6; Delle Donne, C., "On the trail of Plato's συγγένεια", Antiquorum Philosophia, forthcoming, 2022; and also *Def.* 413b7: Οἰκειότης ταὐτοῦ γένους κοινωνία.

[24] I take to be philosophically relevant (1), (2), (3), (4), (6), (7), (8), (11), (12), (13).

καὶ συγγένειαν, καὶ συλλογισθῇ ταῦτα ἢ ἐστιν ἀλλήλοις οἰκεῖα, φέρειν τι αὐτῶν εἰς ἃ βουλόμεθα τὴν πραγματείαν καὶ οὐκ ἀνόνητα πονεῖσθαι, εἰ δὲ μή, ἀνόνητα)[25].

What can be inferred from this passage, when it comes to the relationship between the three notions here at issue? On the face of it, nothing unfortunately. We are only told that there is *some* connection between *syngeneia*, *koinōnia* and also *oikeiotēs* (as the adjective *oikeios* suggests). Nonetheless, as for the precise nature of this relationship, Plato leaves us with no clues. But it cannot be a mere coincidence that these three words are matched in such an argumentatively crucial passage of the dialogue. As I have sketched out above (I), the hypothesis that will be substantiated hereafter is that *koinōnia* can take place only if there is some form of *syngeneia*, or *oikeiotēs*, among the members to be involved in the *koinōnia* itself. In other words, *koinōnia* entails *syngeneia* and *oikeiotēs* as its necessary conditions.

A reassessment of the meanings listed above is now in order. Let's start with (1). *Philia*, which is a form of *koinōnia*, is likely to require *oikeiotēs* to occur. This can be inferred from the *Lysis* (221e), for example, where we read: τοῦ οἰκείου δή, ὡς ἔοικεν, ὅ τε ἔρως[26] καὶ ἡ φιλία καὶ ἡ ἐπιθυμία τυγχάνει οὖσα, ὡς φαίνεται, ὦ Μενέξενέ τε καὶ Λύσι[27]. The same idea can be derived also from the *Menexenus* (243e4-244a3), where, with regard to ἡ τῷ ὄντι συγγένεια, it is said that φιλίαν βέβαιον καὶ ὁμόφυλον οὐ λόγῳ ἀλλ' ἔργῳ παρεχομένη. Last but not least, this very conception is clearly stated also at *Grg.* 507e5: ὅτῳ δὲ μὴ ἔνι κοινωνία, φιλία οὐκ ἂν εἴη.

Also, a "political community" (2) requires, broadly speaking, some form of *syngeneia* among its members, as the Stranger of Elea –for example – puts it in the *Statesman*. As a matter of fact, perceptual συγγένεια is the natural *datum* which brings about any immediate interhuman "association" (*koinōnia*); thus, moderate people only tend to gather with equally moderate people, whereas courageous people are likely to be attracted only by analogously courageous people. But this situation only paves the way to disruption –to dreadful στάσεις[28]. Therefore, it falls upon the politician to make use of both "divine" and "human

[25] The translation is taken from Shorey, P., *Plato. The Republic*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, v. II, 1942.

[26] See also *R.* 485c: οὐ μόνον γε, ὦ φίλε, εἰκός, ἀλλὰ καὶ πᾶσα ἀνάγκη τὸν ἐρωτικῶς του φύσει ἔχοντα πᾶν τὸ συγγενές τε καὶ οἰκεῖον τῶν παιδικῶν ἀγαπᾶν.

[27] On Plato's commitment to this assumption, see Reale, G. (ed.), Platone, *Liside*, Milan: Bompiani, 2015, pp. 58-60.

[28] *Plt.* 307d1-4: κατὰ γὰρ οἶμαι τὴν αὑτῶν ἑκατέροις συγγένειαν τὰ μὲν ἐπαινοῦντες ὡς οἰκεῖα σφέτερα, τὰ δὲ τῶν διαφόρων ψέγοντες ὡς ἀλλότρια, πολλὴν εἰς ἔχθραν ἀλλήλοις καὶ πολλῶν πέρι καθίστανται.

bonds" in order to artificially create "politically correct" kinship-relationships across the citizenship. In particular, the "divine bond", which amounts to τὴν τῶν καλῶν καὶ δικαίων πέρι καὶ ἀγαθῶν καὶ τῶν τούτοις ἐναντίων ὄντως οὖσαν ἀληθῆ δόξαν μετὰ βεβαιώσεως, depends on a specific kind of "kinship" across the citizenship –namely, their sharing τὸ ἀειγενὲς ὂν τῆς ψυχῆς αὐτῶν μέρος. This is an essential and profound kind of *syngeneia*, unlike the perceptual one sketched out above[29]. But also, the "human bonds" deal with *syngeneia*, inasmuch as they aim to harmonise different forms of virtue by means of τῶν ἐπιγαμιῶν καὶ παίδων κοινωνήσεων καὶ τῶν περὶ τὰς ἰδίας ἐκδόσεις καὶ γάμους, thereby bringing about a more heterogeneous (and artificial) net of kinship-relationships across the citizenship. As a result, the *koinōnia* of the *polis* is strong and balanced.

Moreover, the necessity to share wives and children (4) is likely to depend on *syngeneia*. The city must be united, since *stasis* is lethal to its life. In the *Republic*, the privileged means to reach such a purpose seems to be provided by some "unifying" myths, like that of the "Noble Lie"[30]. This kind of tale told by the philosopher-politicians aims to persuade people of their original "kinship" (ἅτε οὖν συγγενεῖς ὄντες πάντες), which lies behind their social and intellectual differences. This fundamental fact urges them to safeguard their unity as a πόλις at any cost. Therefore, their being all "akin" to one another cannot but result into the "communion" of wives and children, thereby neutralizing the risk of egoism and corruption.

(6) is a revealing case study. Actually, soul and body are anything but "akin", or "cognate"; nevertheless, they are often said to hold a *koinōnia*. But

[29] *Plt.* 301e2-7; with Aronadio, F., "Plat. pol. 306-310: il ruolo della syngéneia", in: *Elenchos*, v. XXVI, 1 (2005), pp. 131, n. 21, and Palumbo, L., "La Philia come Syngéneia in Platone e nella tradizione platonica (o dell'invisibile amicizia tra i Philoi)", 2018, p. 5.

[30] Betegh, G., "The Myth and What it Achieves: 268d5-277c6", in: Dimas, P., Lane, M., Sauvé-Meyer, S. (eds.), *Plato's Statesman*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021, 26ff. See *R.* 415a: ἐστὲ μὲν γὰρ δὴ πάντες οἱ ἐν τῇ πόλει ἀδελφοί... ἅτε οὖν συγγενεῖς ὄντες πάντες τὸ μὲν πολὺ ὁμοίους ἂν ὑμῖν αὐτοῖς γεννῶτε. On this myth, see Centrone, B., "Fra poesia e storia: l'istruzione mitica dei metalli nella Repubblica (414b8-415d5)", in: Tulli, M. (ed.), *Graziano Arrighetti e la produzione letteraria dei Greci,* Rome: Fabrizio Serra Editore, 2020, pp. 89-100. In light of this natural kinship of the citizens, it is crucial for a city not to let the seed of inner discord (στάσις) take root; as a matter of fact, the notion of συγγένεια is crucial precisely to define the concept of στάσις: see 470b, ὥσπερ καὶ ὀνομάζεται δύο ταῦτα ὀνόματα, πόλεμός τε καὶ στάσις, οὕτω καὶ εἶναι δύο, ὄντα ἐπὶ δυοῖν τινοιν διαφοραῖν. λέγω δὲ τὰ δύο *τὸ μὲν οἰκεῖον καὶ συγγενές*… ἐπὶ μὲν οὖν τῇ τοῦ οἰκείου ἔχθρᾳ στάσις κέκληται. Actually, in the *Republic* such political reading of συγγένεια happens to be significantly extended in another famous passage (470c2): there, Greeks in general are described as naturally συγγενεῖς. As a consequence, were a war to be inevitable for some reason, it should be directed against non-Greek peoples. See Gastaldi, S., "La guerra della kallipolis", in: M. Vegetti (ed.), *Platone, La Repubblica,* Naples: Bibliopolis, v. IV, 2000, p. 307ff.

there is no real *koinōnia* between soul and body. This relationship damages the soul, which is forced to transmigrate from one body to the other. Their coexistence is as unpleasant as temporary. And the reason why this *koinōnia* is fragile resides in the thorough heterogeneity between soul and body, which do not have anything in common. They lack any form of *oikeiotēs* or *syngeneia*. Therefore, they cannot form part of a strong *koinōnia*.

(7a) is a problematic case. To the best of my knowledge, there is no Platonic passage where some kind of *syngeneia* or *oikeiotēs* is said to link sensible objects with ideas. There are two possible solutions to this *aporia*, to my mind. The first one runs as follows. To the extent that all of the "tokens", so to speak, of a certain "type" share that very "type" (*genos*), which amounts to the correspondent intelligible form, it is legitimate to maintain that the "tokens" and the "type" are somehow "akin" (*syngeneis*: i.e. they share the same *genos*). Sure enough, this willingness to equate intelligible and sensible entities may lead to the notorious "Third Man Argument".

If this hypothesis falls short of the truth, another option would still be left on the table. Both of the occurrences of the term can be philosophically undermined. The employment of *koinōnia* in the *Phaedo* (100d6)[31] occurs in a context where *several* terms are tested, in order to efficaciously express the participation-relationship. Hence, *koinōnia* might be nothing but an unfortunate linguistic attempt, which is echoed only in one passage from the (presumably contemporary) *Republic* (476a7)[32].

(7b) is the most remarkable case. *Syngeneia* is pervasive across the intelligible world. It grants the latter with strong ontological homogeneity. And what is most important, this fact amounts to the notorious κοινωνία τῶν εἰδῶν[33], which is a pivotal issue in Plato's philosophy. Both συγγένεια and κοινωνία τῶν εἰδῶν are the condition of possibility of dialectic and philosophy. For, were the εἴδη not to be συγγενεῖς, there wouldn't be any "communication", κοινωνία,

[31] ἡ ἐκείνου τοῦ καλοῦ εἴτε παρουσία εἴτε κοινωνία εἴτε ὅπῃ δὴ καὶ ὅπως †προσγενομένη.

[32] αὐτὸ μὲν ἓν ἕκαστον εἶναι, τῇ δὲ τῶν πράξεων καὶ σωμάτων καὶ ἀλλήλων κοινωνίᾳ πανταχοῦ φανταζόμενα πολλὰ φαίνεσθαι ἕκαστον. Actually, in this passage *koinōnia* refers both to the participation-relationship between intelligible and sensible entities, and to mutual relationships across the ideal world itself. My idea is that Plato might have condensed two terms into one, *koinōnia*, for the sake of simplicity.

[33] Fronterotta, F. (ed.), *Platone, Sofista*, Milan: Mondadori, 2007, p. 256, n. 59. For the connection between συγγένεια and κοινωνία, see Palumbo, L., "La Philia come Syngeneia in Platone e nella tradizione platonica (o dell'invisibile amicizia tra i Philoi)", 2018, pp. 5-6.

among them; and were κοινωνία τῶν εἰδῶν not to take place, no λόγος and no philosophy would be possible at all[34].

As a mere speculation, one might venture to identify the causal factor responsible for this συγγένεια with the μέγιστον γένος of "being" (ὄν)[35]. For anything to "be", an *analogous* "potentiality to be acted upon or to act" (*Sph.* 248c5, ἡ τοῦ πάσχειν ἢ δρᾶν... δύναμις) is required[36]; but in the intelligible realm, to act and to be acted upon amount to "communicating" (κοινωνεῖν) and "being communicated" (κοινωνεῖσθαι)[37]; and communication and absence of communication entail κοινωνία τῶν εἰδῶν. As a consequence, to the extent that any Form "is", (1) it participates in "being", and consequently (2) it turns out to be able to hold, or not to hold, relationships with any other Form. Therefore, "being" grants the intelligible living being with an all-pervasive inner cohesion and with the possibility of *koinōnia*.

(8) has been already discussed above. I would like to add only a few remarks here. Inter-eidetic συγγένεια (see (7) above) entails the mutual οἰκειότης of those disciplines which form part of the philosophical training of the philosopher-kings in the *Republic* (537b7-c3)[38]. Their συγγένεια results from a *functional analogy* typical of those sciences. All of them are capable of "reorientating" (see μεταστρεπτικῶν ἐπὶ τὴν τοῦ ὄντος θέαν, 525a2) the soul

[34] *Sph.* 259e4 ff., with Centrone, B. (ed.), Platon, *Sofista*, Turin: Einaudi, 2008, pp. 213-214, n. 144.

[35] This notion is anything but uncontroversial: see at least Frede, M., *Prädikation und Existenzaussage. Platons Gebrauch von „...ist..." und „...ist nicht..." im Sophistes*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1967.

[36] See *Sph.* 247d8-e4: λέγω δὴ τὸ καὶ ὁποιανοῦν τινα κεκτημένον δύναμιν εἴτ᾽ εἰς τὸ ποιεῖν ἕτερον ὁτιοῦν πεφυκὸς εἴτ᾽ εἰς τὸ παθεῖν καὶ σμικρότατον ὑπὸ τοῦ φαυλοτάτου, κἂν εἰ μόνον εἰς ἅπαξ, πᾶν τοῦτο ὄντως εἶναι: τίθεμαι γὰρ ὅρον ὁρίζειν τὰ ὄντα ὡς ἔστιν οὐκ ἄλλο τι πλὴν δύναμις. This peculiar characteristic would function as a conceptual similarity, which is symptomatic of some form of kinship of whatever "is": see (B) above. In any case, I agree with Fronterotta (2007a) when it comes to the effective validity of this sort of definition of being. *Cf.* Fronterotta, F., "La notion de δύναμις dans le Sophiste de Platon: κοινωνία entre les formes et μέθεξις du sensible à l'intelligible", in: Crubellier, M., Jaulin, A., Lefebvre, D. (eds.), *DUNAMIS. Autour de la puissance chez Aristote,* Leuven: Peeters, 2007a, pp. 188-207. Nonetheless, I still tend to believe that the expression τὸ παντελῶς ὄν is intensive, even though it is highly ambiguous, and it seems to take on both an intensive and an extensive meaning: see Centrone, B. (ed.), *Platon, Sofista*, 2008, p. XXXIX.

[37] Another form of dynamism is the one regarding knowing and being known: see Centrone, B. (ed.), *Platon, Sofista*, 2008, pp. XXXVII-XXXVIII.

[38] According to Szlezák (2007), also in the expression ἅτε γὰρ τῆς φύσεως ἁπάσης συγγενοῦς οὔσης (*Men.* 81c9-d1) there might be an allusion to the kinship of the mathematical disciplines, which should be synoptically comprehended in their fundamental unity by the real philosopher. See Szlezák, T., "ἅτε γὰρ τῆς φύσεως ἁπάσης συγγενοῦς οὔσης (Men 81c9-d11). Die Implikationen der Verwandtschaft der gesamten Natur", in: Erler, M., Brisson, L. (eds.), *Gorgias-Menon. Selected Papers from the Seventh Symposium Platonicum*, Baden: Academia Verlag, 2007, p. 342.

towards the intelligible, thus "waking *noesis* up" (ἐγερτικὰ τῆς νοήσεως, 524d5)[39]. Moreover, also ἡ τοῦ ὄντος φύσις and τὰ μαθήματα exhibit a form of οἰκειότης: and it is the philosopher who should "synoptically" (εἰς σύνοψιν) comprehend this network of onto-epistemological kinship-relationships. More precisely, a set of ontological relationships (the framework of ἡ τοῦ ὄντος φύσις) entails (and is perfectly mirrored by) a set of epistemological kinship-relations across the correspondent disciplines[40]. Hence, as a result of their "kinship", these sciences exhibit a disciplinary *koinōnia*.

(11)[41] is perfectly in tune with the analysis conducted so far. Apart from the *Menon*, where the expression ἅτε γὰρ τῆς φύσεως ἁπάσης συγγενοῦς οὔσης is anything but perspicuous[42], a form of empirical and horizontal *syngeneia*, which results into *koinōnia*, is well attested also in the *Statesman*, for example

[39] Aronadio, F., *Procedure di verità in Platone (Menone, Cratilo, Repubblica),* Naples: Bibliopolis, 2002, p. 234.

[40] Aronadio, F., *Procedure di verità in Platone (Menone, Cratilo, Repubblica),* 2002, pp. 235-236. See also Palumbo, L., "La Philia come Syngéneia in Platone e nella tradizione platonica (o dell'invisibile amicizia tra i Philoi)", 2018, p. 12. See also *R.* 531d1.

[41] Even though (10) is not philosophically remarkable, this employment entails that *koinōnia* is a synonym of *syngeneia*.

[42] See Brisson (2007): "Ou bien on considère τῆς φύσεως ἁπάσης συγγενοῦς οὔσης comme un segment indépendant, à la facon de Burnet qui imprime une virgule après *οὔσης*, et que l'on coordonne à l'aide du καὶ à μεμαθηκυίας τῆς ψυχῆς ἅπαντα. On obtient alors la traduction suivante: 'En effet, dans la mesure où dans la nature toutes choses sont apparentées et dans la mesure où l'ame a pris connaissance de toutes choses.' C'est là une construction et une traduction très fréquentes. Du point de vue de la grammaire, rien ne s'oppose à cette construction et à cette traduction; mais on ne voit pas bien ce que peut signifier 'dans la mesure où dans la nature toutes choses sont apparentées', car c'est là une affirmation trop générale et donc banale. En revanche, les choses deviennent bien plus claires si l'on considère que τῆς ψυχῆς est le sujet logique à la fois des verbes οὔσης καὶ μεμαθηκυίας". *Cf.* Brisson, L., "La réminiscence dans le Ménon (81c5-d5)", in: Erler, M., Brisson, L. (eds.), *Gorgias-Menon. Selected Papers from the Seventh Symposium Platonicum*, Baden: Academia Verlag, 2007, pp. 201-202. Honestly, I do not find the first reading excessively "generic and banal". It can be traced back also to the Pythagoric literature, and it seems to conceal the reason why it is possible that ἓν μόνον ἀναμνησθέντα… τἆλλα πάντα… ἀνευρεῖν: in light of the universal kinship which thoroughly permeates nature, everything is related to anything else (in Pythagoric terms, this is true to the extent that souls transmigrate from one being to the other). Hence, intellectually speaking, it is possible to move from one thing to any other. See Palumbo, L., "La Philia come Syngéneia in Platone e nella tradizione platonica (o dell'invisibile amicizia tra i Philoi)", 2018, p. 11. This universal interrelation of the whole nature, which is ontologically homogeneous, is the possibility condition of a universal ἀνάμνησις (and hence knowledge). At this point of the text, a non-philosophical ἀνάμνησις seems to be evocated by priests and priestesses. See Tigner, S. S., "On the "kinship" of "all nature" in Plato's Meno", in: *Phronesis*, v. XV, 1, (1970), p. 3; but according to Scott (2005) this kinship is a philosophical concept which is valid to Plato as well: it is a logical notion which regards propositions of knowledge.

Cf. Scott, D., *Plato's Meno,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 97. See also Ferrari, F., *"Anamnesis e syngéneia: a proposito di Menone, 81c-d"*, in: *The Internet Journal of the International Plato Society*, v. XX (2020), pp. 202-203, n. 16.

(see (2) above). There, people instantiating the same "part" of the "whole" virtue[43] are mutually linked by means of immediate kinship-relationships (307d1-4): (T2) "For men who are akin to each class, I imagine, praise some qualities as their own and find fault with those of their opposites as alien to themselves, and thus great enmity arises between them on many grounds" (κατὰ γὰρ οἶμαι τὴν αὑτῶν ἑκατέροις συγγένειαν τὰ μὲν ἐπαινοῦντες ὡς οἰκεῖα σφέτερα, τὰ δὲ τῶν διαφόρων ψέγοντες ὡς ἀλλότρια, πολλὴν εἰς ἔχθραν ἀλλήλοις καὶ πολλῶν πέρι καθίστανται)[44].

Also (12) requires *syngeneia* as its condition of possibility. The "kinship" between human beings and the divine is well attested in the dialogues[45], provided that "divine" is taken to refer to the intelligible. In this sense, there are several passages where this "vertical kinship" is put forward: (T3) "And we must note the things of which it has apprehensions, and the associations for which it yearns, as being itself akin to the divine and the immortal and to eternal being, and so consider what it might be if it followed the gleam unreservedly and were raised by this impulse out of the depths of this sea in which it is now sunk, and were cleansed and scraped free of the rocks and barnacles which, because it now feasts on earth, cling to it in wild profusion of earthy and stony accretion by reason of these feastings that are accounted happy" (καὶ (*scil.* δεῖ) ἐννοεῖν ὧν ἅπτεται (*scil.* ἡ ψυχή) καὶ οἵων ἐφίεται ὁμιλιῶν, *ὡς συγγενὴς οὖσα τῷ τε θείῳ καὶ ἀθανάτῳ καὶ τῷ ἀεὶ ὄντι,* καὶ οἷα ἂν γένοιτο τῷ τοιούτῳ πᾶσα ἐπισπομένη καὶ ὑπὸ ταύτης τῆς ὁρμῆς ἐκκομισθεῖσα ἐκ τοῦ πόντου ἐν ᾧ νῦν ἐστίν, καὶ περικρουσθεῖσα πέτρας τε καὶ ὄστρεα ἃ νῦν αὐτῇ, ἅτε γῆν ἑστιωμένη, γεηρὰ καὶ πετρώδη πολλὰ καὶ ἄγρια περιπέφυκεν ὑπὸ τῶν εὐδαιμόνων λεγομένων ἑστιάσεων) (*R.* 611e1-612a3)[46].

Such kind of συγγένεια is of pivotal importance for several reasons. First of all, this vertical and asymmetric συγγένεια grants the upper dimension of reality (the intelligible) and the lower one (human *nous*) with some form of

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[43] On this issue, see Centrone, B., "La virtù platonica come holon: dalle Leggi al Protagora", in: Migliori, M., Valditara, L. N. (eds.), *Plato Ethicus. La filosofia è vita,* Brescia: Morcelliana, 2008b, pp. 97-113.

[44] The translation is taken from Fowler, H. N., *Plato. The Statesman. Philebus. Ion,* 1975.

[45] That we are somehow akin to the divine was not a theoretical novelty in Plato's time: see Protagoras' account in the *Prt.* 322a, but see also *Criti.* 120e2, though in a mythical context. My idea is that this is another example of Platonic reappraisal of a traditional issue, which ends up being profoundly complexified, thus acquiring a new meaning, once "Platonized".

[46] See also *R.* 487a5, 490b4, 494d10; *Phd.* 79d1-7, 79d1, 84a2-b3, 86b2. The translation is taken from Shorey, P., *Plato. The Republic,* 1942.

"communication" (*koinōnia*). They are put in touch by means of συγγένεια, thus granting reality as a whole with inner cohesion.

Moreover, without an ontological homogeneity between the soul and the intelligible, no prenatal acquaintance with the ideas would have ever been possible for the disembodied soul; and were that prenatal "event" not to have occurred, no knowledge at all would have been possible for the embodied soul. In other words, this asymmetric συγγένεια is the condition of possibility of the prenatal vision of the Forms, which is in its turn the condition of possibility of everyday knowledge[47]. As a matter of fact, the cruciality of this theory would be better appreciated if one considered the paralyzing potential inherent to Menon's paradox. The essential continuity between the soul and the intelligible can be damaged (and it *is* damaged, when the soul is embodied), but it can never be thoroughly erased. Thus, intellectual enquiry and noetic cognition always turn out to be possible. And Menon's paradox is neutralized once and for all[48].

Last but not least, along with a "dialogic communion" (13), also a "dialogic kinship" can be found at work in the dialogues. In the *Statesman* (257d1-258a1), for example, we are explicitly told that only *logoi* can make real *syngeneia* among people come to the fore: (T4) "And besides, Stranger, it seems to me that they are both related to me after a fashion; one of them anyhow, as you say, looks like me in his cast of countenance, and the other has the same name and appellation, which implies some sort of kinship. Of course we ought always to be eager to get acquainted with our relatives by debating with them (Καὶ μὴν κινδυνεύετον, ὦ ξένε, ἄμφω ποθὲν ἐμοὶ συγγένειαν ἔχειν τινά. τὸν μέν γε οὖν ὑμεῖς κατὰ τὴν τοῦ προσώπου φύσιν ὅμοιον ἐμοὶ φαίνεσθαί φατε, τοῦ δ' ἡμῖν ἡ κλῆσις ὁμώνυμος οὖσα καὶ ἡ πρόσρησις παρέχεταί τινα οἰκειότητα. δεῖ δὴ τούς γε συγγενεῖς ἡμᾶς ἀεὶ προθύμως διὰ λόγων ἀναγνωρίζειν)[49] .

Actually, Socrates does not claim that for a "dialogic communion" (*koinōnia*) to take place something like a previous "kinship" among the interlocutors is required. He only maintains that *logoi* represent the legitimate

[47] On this complex theme, see Centrone, B., "L'anamnesi nel Fedone tra conoscere e sapere", in: Alesse, F., Aronadio, F., Dalfino, M.C., Simeoni, L., Spinelli, E. (eds.), *Anthropine sophia. Studi di filologia e storiografia filosofica in memoria di Gabriele Giannantoni,* Naples: Bibliopolis, 2008a, pp. 105-118; Centrone, B., "Episteme, doxa e anamnesi nel Menone di Platone", in: Palumbo, L. (ed.), λόγον διδόναι. *La filosofia come esercizio del render ragione. Studi in onore di Giovanni Casertano,* Naples: Loffredo, 2011, pp. 383-394.

[48] Aronadio, F., Procedure di verità in Platone (Menone, Cratilo, Repubblica), 2002, p. 239, n. 134. See also Ferrari, F., *"Anamnesis e syngêneia: a proposito di Menone, 81c-d"*, 2020, p. 132.

[49] The translation is taken from Fowler, H. N., *Plato. The Statesman. Philebus. Ion,* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975.

means whereby an already existing, profound kinship among the discussants can be shown. But in the dialogues, there are some traces of a form of *syngeneia* that "horizontally" equates people, thus enabling them to intellectually (and hence also dialectically) interact with one another. Each individual *nous* is συγγενής, "akin", to any other *nous*. Each of them belongs to the same "genre" (*genos*): hence, all of them are closely "akin" (*syngeneis*). Thus, human beings happen to be bound together in a fully natural way, by means of a "horizontal" and "noetic" συγγένεια. In other words, men are naturally "akin", in as much as they are all somehow "demonic"[50].

III.

Let's now draw some brief conclusions. As I have sketched out above in the abstract, Plato's ontology seems to largely employ the couple *koinōnia/ syngeneia*. But also, political communities intrinsically draw upon the complex web of kinship-relationships that bring people together, that make them *koinoneisthai*. What's more, even Plato's epistemology is somehow grounded on "communication" and "kinship". Actually, it is philosophy as a whole, in as much as it entails the *koinoneisthai* among its adherents, that requires some form of pre-existing *syngeneia*. In other words, Plato's philosophy cannot but deal with this fortunate couple precisely because it owes to them its very existence.

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[50] Dixsaut, M. (ed.), Platon, *Le Politique,* Paris: Vrin, 2018, p. 592.

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