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### **The Interchangeability of Τέχνη and Ἐπιστήμη: Reflections on John Lyons' *Structural Semantics*, Fifty Years Later**

Every student of the Platonic dialogues will have, at some point, grappled with the meaning of τέχνη, ἐπιστήμη, φρόνησις, and σοφία. And this is to name only four of the most prominent nouns in Plato's knowledge vocabulary; we cannot get very far without verbs (ἐπίστασθαι, εἰδέναι, etc.) and adjectives (σοφός, ἐπιστήμων, etc.), too. Plato attempts to define ἐπιστήμη in one dialogue (*Theaetetus*) and describes the nature of τέχνη in another (*Gorgias*). But these descriptions utterly fail to capture how he uses the terms in other dialogues; the very fields he denies the status of τέχνη in the *Gorgias* (sophistry, rhetoric, and types of flattery generally) turn up in the *Sophist* as types of τέχνη after all, and his attempt in the *Theaetetus* to define ἐπιστήμη is unsuccessful on that dialogue's own terms. It is best to insist that Plato does not use any of these as technical terms.

For the last fifty years, the best guide through this difficult terrain has been John Lyons' pioneering work, *Structural Semantics: An Analysis of Part of the Vocabulary of Plato*. This book was published in 1963 as a slightly revised version of his dissertation from two years earlier. The book elaborates a new way to approach meaning, namely, the structural semantic method, and then applies this method to Plato's knowledge vocabulary. This method, which I will discuss in a little more detail below, is quite powerful, but also painstaking and difficult, and its methods fall outside the standard training for most researchers in classical philosophy. As a result, it is my impression that few have seriously engaged with his conclusions—that is, have examined the assumptions of the method and the evidence used to prove various theses—let alone have attempted to duplicate or seriously build upon the conclusions using his methods.

While Lyons's method avoids some of the pitfalls of older approaches, it builds in some of its own controversial assumptions. In the paper, my goal is to first explain clearly what I take Lyons to have argued and shown in this book, and then articulate some objections I have with the method and conclusions. By way of this exegesis, I hope to show more clearly the nature of his project; if I can succeed at least in making his project clearer to a wider audience, I will count that as a success.

The paper will proceed in two parts: in the first part, I reconstruct the structural semantic method developed and used by Lyons in the book. I briefly note some more recent approaches in semantics—I particularly draw on Fillmore and Atkins's work on cognitive frames. I then turn, in the second section, to Lyons's application of this method to Plato's knowledge vocabulary. My main objection is to his argument that ἐπίστασθαι implies τὴν τέχνην ἔχειν; I argue, in contrast, that τέχνη builds in more content (particularly, because of its conceptual connection with teachability) than ἐπίστασθαι denotes. This section of his book is very dense, but I try to carefully reconstruct the logic and point out where I disagree. I will then conclude very briefly by noting how I see the structure of Plato's knowledge vocabulary: roughly, I think τέχνη and ἐπιστήμη are not used interchangeably, but rather that they differ in both expressive and denotational content. I also suggest we look to a number of passages in Isocrates and Plato which

make ἐπιστήμη the taught or intellectual component of τέχνη (as opposed to the other components of τέχνη, nature and practice) to explain why Plato sometimes oscillates between terms in referring to a given field, e.g., mathematics or sculpting. In such cases, we can straightforwardly explain what is going on: it's simply a case of synecdoche.