Modern day science is very exclusive and specialized. For example, universities segregate knowledge by breaking it up into many realms, such as mathematics, psychology, and philosophy. Although it makes sense to split subjects up for the purpose of mastery, we would be naive in claiming that these branches of study have nothing to do with each other. In fact, these subjects are connected like the roots of an immaculate tree, tangled and entwined in each other. Ancient Greek philosophers realized this and thus attempted to study all knowledge comprehensively. One great philosopher who studied everything from mathematics to linguistics was Plato. Although Plato is known for many things, perhaps his greatest work is his doctrine of forms. Plato's doctrine of forms spans through what would be today numerous branches of science, such as psychology, metaphysics, and cosmology. Because of this, the theory of forms is not a tight argument spanning consecutive pages. Instead it is lucid and flows throughout many of Plato's writings. Perhaps this is why Plato's works can be so perplexing. His conversational style of writing touches on so many questions at once that it can be overwhelming. So in an attempt to clear up his argument on forms, I will focus on one specific perplexity, namely the soul’s relation to the body. While I do not hope to answer this question because it baffles modern day scientists, I argue that focusing on his writings about the soul and body will solve the overarching question of how can we access the world of forms? To accomplish this I will unite key sections of multiple doctrines to prove that Plato believes the soul and body are separate entities that are bound together and, by breaking the bond, we will be able to access the world of forms. First we will discuss what the theory of forms is, then examine the questions of how the soul is related to the body, and finally how one can access the knowable world where the forms exist. By examining these things in detail, we will be able to shed some light on some of Plato’s other ideas.
Plato's theory of forms states there are two worlds. One is the visible and the other is the intelligible. Plato posits that most, if not all, humans in their present state occupy the visible world. Living in the visible world means all of our beliefs are influenced by sensory experience and therefore inaccurate. Because we are influenced by the visual world, all our beliefs are merely opinions and do not represent facts. Instead, things that we think are true are actually distorted reflections from the factual intelligible world. He goes on to state that in this intelligible world there is a true form for everything. This means that while people occupying the visible realm have ideas of justice or morality, these subjective forms are merely reflections of the actual forms themselves. This boldly states that there is a true form of justice or morality or any other thing you wish to consider. Proof of this ideology lies within many works. For example, in the Parmenides, Plato posits through Socrates that (there is) “a form, itself by itself, of just, and beautiful, and good, and everything of that sort” (130b). Although these perfect forms are not immediately accessible to us, we are able to recognize versions of the perfect forms for two reasons. The first is that objects in the visual world share a resemblance to the perfect forms that exist in the intelligible world. He states that the objects we see share a likeness with the actual forms and, because of this likeness, we are able to recognize them. Although the likeness theory is appealing it is not without problems. Plato’s Allegory of the Cave highlights the fact that shadows of “artifacts/forms” get distorted by the inconstant light of the fire and the divots in the cave wall. This means that no one sees the “artifacts/forms” the way they actually are but instead all see subjective versions. The problem is how can we identify the likeness of a form if we have never seen the form in the first place? To answer this question we can look to one of Plato’s earlier works, Meno. In the Meno, Plato explains that the second reason we recognize these forms is because our souls once inhabited the intelligible realm. He states “As
the soul is immortal, has been born often and has seen all things here and in the underworld, there is nothing which it has not learned”(81d). This belief has a huge impact and significance in the rest of his writings. One of the main perplexities within the doctrine of forms lies in the question of can we ever access the world where the true forms exist and, if we can, how can we do it? I believe that Plato's dialogues on education and the soul and body are the keys to unlocking these questions. The best piece to look at when trying to answer these questions is the Allegory of the Cave.

Plato's cave example is used to show the distinction between the realms of the visible and intelligible. This dialogue paints a vivid picture of a world much like a prison. In this world we are the prisoners yet we do not recognize our world as a prison. Basically, we are chained up unable to do anything but stare at the wall and the only source of light is a fire that illuminates the cave. The fire is behind us, and while we are unable to see it, we do see the shadows it casts. In between the fire and us there is a pathway only accessible to the wardens of the prison. These wardens walk the pathway carrying the true forms. The light from the fire reflects versions of the forms onto the wall. While these original artifacts that are carried by the wardens are actual forms, we can only see their reflections. Because of natural divots in the wall and the constant flux of the light produced by the fire, we do not see perfect shadows of the forms. In fact, everyone sees some different shadows of the actual form. As prisoners we are forced to only see shadows so we take them to be reality. One overarching question is can we break these chains and find our way out of the visible world? Plato believes we can, in fact he gives us a pretty clear explanation on how one might escape the facade of the visible world. Plato posits that to escape the cave one must educate their soul. Fortunately, this is an ability that every soul shares. According to Plato, “the power to learn is present in everyone’s soul”(518d). He defines
education not as the filling of the soul with knowledge but more of guiding the soul to look where it ought to look, much like a seeing eye dog directs its master. Through education we will be able to transcend from the visible to the intelligible. Alas, this leads us to another question of what exactly is education?

Throughout his works, Plato emphasizes education as a way to access the intelligible realm. Speaking through Socrates, Plato draws a sharp distinction between what he thinks is education and what other’s ideas of education are. In the Republic, Plato states “Education isn’t what some people declare it to be, namely, putting knowledge into souls that lack it” (518b). He states that education involves guiding and “turning” the soul to direct it what to study. “The instrument with which each learns is like an eye that cannot be turned around from the darkness to light without turning the whole body. This instrument cannot be turned around from that which is coming into being without turning the whole soul”(518d). This constant theme of educating or, in this case, “turning” the soul is explored in many of Plato's writings. Another place where it appears is in the Meno. As mentioned before, the Meno contains the bold claim that our souls are immortal and therefore have learned everything, namely true forms. He states, “As the whole of nature is akin, and the soul has learned everything, nothing prevents a man, after recalling one thing only—a process men call learning-discovering everything else for himself, if he is brave and does not tire of the search, for the searching and learning are, as a whole, recollection.” (81d). This meshes wonderfully Plato's definition of education and, furthermore, he provides us an example by illustrating how to guide or “turn” the soul towards knowledge. In doing so he proves that knowledge is recollection, thus the soul had to have previous knowledge of the intelligible realm. The example he uses involves questioning a servant about shapes to guide him to find knowledge within himself. After a tedious process, the servant
eventually makes progress. Plato points out that everything the servant said was of his own opinions so he concludes that “the man who does not know has within himself true opinions about the things that he does not know.”(85c) Plato thinks this is sufficient proof that the soul is immortal and, at some time, the soul has been distinct from the body. It seems finding a way to distinguish the difference between the body and soul could solve the perplexity of how to transcend to the intelligible world.

One of the best places to explore the distinction between the soul and body is in the *Phaedo*. According to Plato, “those who practice philosophy in the right way keep away from bodily passions”(82c). The problem with bodily passions is that they bind the soul to the body. The body and soul are both two distinct elements and because of this they need a third to bind them. This binding element is bodily passion. This bond, while intact, will not allow you to become a true philosopher. Plato states “Because every pleasure or pain provides, as it were, another nail to rivet the soul to the body and to weld them together. It makes the soul corporeal, so that it believes that truth is what the body says it is.”(83d). From this we must infer that the only way to break free of the visible realm is to break free from the bonds that pain and pleasure have upon us. By separating the soul from the body we will be able to allow for true understanding in realizing the true forms for everything. This idea is really illuminating to our overarching question of how can we access true forms? Plato's answer is through philosophy. He states that “Philosophy then persuades the soul to withdraw from the senses insofar as it is not compelled to use them and bids the soul to gather itself together by itself, to trust only itself and whatever reality, existing by itself, the soul by itself understands, and not to consider as true whatever it examines by other means, for this is different in different circumstances amos os sensible and visible, wheres what the soul itself sees is intelligible and visible.” (83b). By not
using our senses for investigation, we allow ourselves to recall the true knowledge. This is why exploring geometry with the servant was very deliberate and necessary. Guiding him through mathematics was a metaphor that shows how one can move from the visible realm to the intelligible. In the *Republic*, Plato asks “So what subject is it, Glaucon, that draws the soul from the realm of becoming to the real of what is?” (521d) Ultimately they conclude it is “number and calculation” because it is the base for all other things. This is very important because the intelligible world and the forms within it are also the base for all things. Now we can confidently distinguish between the visible and the intelligible. The visible is based on senses which are ultimately untrustworthy while the intelligible world is based on math, ratios, and geometry which are absolute and unchanging. So it makes sense that to guide one's soul to the intelligible realm one would use math as a vehicle to achieve knowing.

With all this it now seems we are prepared to fully answer the perplexities of ever being able to access the world where the true forms exist. And, if we can, how can we do it? Obviously the answer is yes, we can access these true forms. It seems that to access the intelligible world one needs to become a philosopher. To become a philosopher one must separate their soul from their body. This separation is so important because the body is what binds us to the visible world. Forsaking body passions is metaphorical to understanding that sensory experience is not accurate and therefore cannot be trusted as a way to interpret the world. Separating the soul from the body will also allow for recollection of true knowledge. This true knowledge can be thought of as natural patterns such as ratios, geometry, and mathematics. Math shares so much with these forms that Plato thought it was the basis for everything. He posits that true forms are absolute and unchanging, which is the same with numbers. This ability to understand math is deeply ingrained in our souls because they, too, are absolute in the sense that they are undying and have
true knowledge of forms. Ultimately we can conclude that through the exploration and relocation of math we can access the intelligible realm where the true forms exist.