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BEING AND STRUCTURE IN PLATO'S *SOPHIST*

Colin C. Smith
University of Kentucky, colin.smith@uky.edu
Author ORCID Identifier:
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4688-6156
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BEING AND STRUCTURE IN PLATO'S *SOPHIST*

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DISSERTATION
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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the
College of Arts and Sciences
at the University of Kentucky

By
Colin C. Smith
Lexington, Kentucky
Director: Dr. Eric Sanday, Associate Professor of Philosophy
Lexington, Kentucky
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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

BEING AND STRUCTURE IN PLATO'S *SOPHIST*

Being and Structure in Plato's Sophist is a study of the metaphysical notion of being as it is at play in Plato's dialogue the *Sophist*, and the senses in which Plato's conception of being entails further accounts of ontological structure and goodness. While modern metaphysics primarily concerns existence, ancient metaphysics primarily concerns what grounds what, and in this dissertation I consider the nature and value of Plato's understanding of being as a notion of ground rather than a principle of existence. I argue that Plato conceives of being in the fundamentally unified sense of participation, which entails a self-and-other and hence complex relation. For Plato, being must be understood in its context as one among many Platonic forms, or the network of mutually co-constitutive structures of determinacy that are the grounding stability necessary for the very possibilities of becoming, knowing, and discourse. I argue that Plato inherits his view in large part from Parmenides, and that the account in the *Sophist* makes explicit a previously implicit aspect of the Parmenidean tradition insofar as it involves a novel sense of nonbeing not as absolute nothingness, but instead as difference in the sense of constitutive and determinate otherness. I furthermore discuss the ways in which this account helps to show the connections between seemingly disparate elements of the dialogue like its dramatic setting, the method of division, and the discussion of the great ontological kinds. In this way, the dissertation entails a study of the entire dialogue and the interrelation of its parts, as well as its context among several other key Platonic and Parmenidean texts.

Colin C. Smith

(Name of Student)

August 15, 2019

Date

BEING AND STRUCTURE IN PLATO'S *SOPHIST*

By
Colin C. Smith

Eric Sanday
Director of Dissertation

Clare Batty
Director of Graduate Studies

08/15/2019
Date

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1.1   Being, structure, and the *Sophist*

The following is a study of Plato's dialogue the *Sophist* with the aim of bringing to light the account therein of *being* and *structure,* and in the process to contribute to our own understanding of what it is 'to be' and the ways in which the structure of being implies *goodness*. The *Sophist* is a key resource for understanding Platonic philosophy and the ancient philosophical tradition more broadly, but to us its riches are obscured and difficult to access. This is due in large part to many bad habits of thinking, such as thinking of reality as composed only by the things that present themselves to us directly through sensation and understanding these things as fundamentally self-sufficient objects. On such a view, there is no greater reality from which the beings found in sensation derive their nature. Such a conception leads quickly to the view that the human individual is the sole originator of truth and value while the other beings stand in relation to the human individual as mere resources with potential yields waiting to be extracted.

But these are the very habits of thinking from which Plato seeks to break us. Doing so will require our following Plato's interlocutors as they practice esoteric metaphysical exercises and reflect on both the values and deficiencies of the process in ways that offer a deeper and firmer grasp of the constituents of reality, their interconnections, and their causal structure. The result, provided we are able to achieve it, will be a transformed perspective of being that demands wonder and gratitude in response to the gift of being, and the opportunity to affirm one's place in the interconnected web of reality through the recognition of the value of all the other beings and the structures of determinacy from which they derive their natures.

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The *Sophist* depicts a group of interlocutors composed of teachers and students engaging in dialectical investigation into the nature of the sophist, or that teacher of sham wisdom who is notoriously more concerned to offer students the skill of winning arguments than that of finding truth. The sophist's underlying view of things is that which in the modern world is called 'subjectivism,' or the view that something *is* true precisely and only insofar as it *appears* true to a given individual. The dialogue is thus set in the context of the question of whether the educative process is guided most essentially by subjectivity and the goal of victory or instead by truth itself. This presupposes the deeper question of truth itself and whether truth is merely a human construct in one form or another—be it that of an individual, society, or even a group of skilled thinkers—or whether it instead is that which thinking traces and to which the student must remain receptive. The interlocutors will come upon a sense of necessary being that demands our careful and receptive attention, comprising the sense of being that underlies the truth that all education (and indeed all discourse and thinking) presupposes. This will decisively show the poverty of the sophistical valuation of the victory of the human subject over truth itself and indicate the danger that lies behind the mortal forgetting of being and truth that such a valuation entails.

Itself a pedagogical work, the dialogue comprises a rich but extremely difficult set of interrelated accounts. Its narrative structure is circular and is often described as comprising an outer 'shell' (containing the two halves 216a-236d and 264c-268d) framing its inner 'core' (236d-264b). In it, the interlocutors begin with a brief discussion of the distinction between the sophist, statesman, and philosopher before the Eleatic Stranger guides the young mathematician Theaetetus through a series of dialectical

investigations into sophistry. Upon reaching some complications, they pause in what is

known as the 'central digression' to reflect on nonbeing, being, the ontology of

composition, and true and false speech (*logos*), before returning to a brief, final series of

dialectic. The dialogue offers a wealth of resources toward answering many of the most

important philosophical questions, but herein I will focus on the account of being that is

at its textual and conceptual center. I will argue that in the *Sophist* Plato presents a

unified conception of being that is captured but not exhausted by a series of definitional

accounts upon which we shall arrive, such as 'being is power,' 'being is communion,'

'being is participation,' 'being is being given to thought and speech,' 'being is grounded

in necessity,' and others. These definitions are closely connected to the notion of

ontological structure, as evidenced (for example) by the 'X is Y' structure that each of

these definitions exhibits. That is, though Plato's conception of being is unified, it is

unified by the very sense in which it suggests a further complex specificity, which can

and will be worked out in a number of interrelated ways. I hold furthermore that Plato

derives this sense of necessary being from Parmenides but seeks to show that the

Parmenidean notion of necessary being clarifies the senses of what we mean by 'being'

and 'nonbeing' without suggesting upon this that plurality of any kind is impossible, as

many have taken Parmenides to imply. Instead, and as Plato will have his interlocutors

make explicit, 'being' and 'oneness' both require a structure through a host of ontological

natures like otherness, sameness, motion, rest, and others. Each of these natures is in

some sense simple and unique, but requires for its instantiation each of the others,

therefore implying a web of mutual interdependence. Turning our mind to this structure

allows us to see the ways in which the beings that we encounter owe their own nature to

this prior ontological structure. This dependence implies the further recognition of the

interdependence of the beings upon one another, and thus suggests that care for one being

requires care for all the beings.

An important first step in breaking ourselves from bad habits of thinking will be

to address what Plato *does not* mean when referring to 'being,' which is 'existence.' In

this way, considering the *Sophist* will show that metaphysical inquiry is, or should be,

characterized most essentially not by questions regarding existence but instead by those

concerning *structure*. The *Sophist* therefore is a paradigmatic and exemplary instance of

ancient metaphysical inquiry, and one from which we in our time have very much to

learn.

Modern metaphysics most essentially entails questions regarding *what exists*,

while ancient metaphysics most essentially entails questions regarding *what grounds

what*.[1] Because modern metaphysicians take themselves to begin with questions

regarding 'existence,' a modern metaphysician (or indeed a modern layperson) might ask,

for example, 'Do souls exist?' This entails interrogating the being of the alleged entity in

question, here souls, in such a way that pits the alleged entity's being against absolute

nothingness.[2] By this I mean that an answer to the question regarding souls' "existence"

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[1] For a thorough discussion of this contrast, albeit in the context of Aristotelian metaphysics specifically,
see Schaffer 2009. In what follows I will suggest that Schaffer's conception of Aristotelian metaphysics as
the study of what grounds what is equally applicable at least to the metaphysical views of Parmenides and
Plato. I will on occasion speak of such a view as the 'ancient' view, by which I mean the ancient
orientation towards metaphysics as the inquiry into what grounds what represented at least by Parmenides,
Plato, and Aristotle, and in contrast to modern metaphysical inquiry oriented towards questions of
'existence.'

[2] The view that the history of metaphysical thinking is founded on one grand confusion between the
existential and predicative senses of being begins, or at least is decisively articulated, by John Stuart Mill
(see Mill 1843: Iiv1, for instance). Mill distinguishes between the following senses: (i) existential (e.g.,
'There *is* a snake in my boot!'), (ii) predicative (e.g., 'Snakes *are* scary!'), (iii) identity (e.g., 'Snakes *are*
carnivorous reptiles of the suborder Serpentes,') and (iv) veridicality (e.g., 'Socrates *is not* a snake.') This
distinction, and the alleged inability of ancient Greek thinkers like Plato to make good sense of it,
dominated much of the scholarly interpretation of the *Sophist* during the 19th and 20th centuries, with many

will either suggest that souls *are* (in a manner yet to be specified) or that souls quite simply *are not,* i.e., that they are absolutely nothing, that they *are* in absolutely no way whatsoever. This is, in other words, a binary, yes-or-no question that acts as a 'gatekeeper' for further inquiry into the entity. Being in this 'existential' sense is furthermore thought to be the most basic sense of being from which all other, allegedly 'secondary,' senses of being – predication, identity, veridicality, existential-locativity, and so forth – are posterior. For how, the modern thinker asks rhetorically, could anything *be* in any of the 'secondary' senses of being if it *is not* 'first' and 'foremost' in the sense of '*existence*?'

Ancient Greek metaphysics, by contrast, does not concern what we moderns call 'existence,' at least not in a primary way. On my view, this is as true of the *Sophist* as it is of ancient metaphysical inquiry more broadly.[3] Instead, the 'existence' of the entities

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commentators taking themselves to be untangling the muddles of thinking of being in these four terms at play in ancient metaphysical thinking. Charles Kahn (most notably in Kahn 1970) and Lesley Brown (first in Brown 1986) are two recent scholars whose work has allowed us to push beyond this alleged 'problem' in ancient Greek philosophy and understand some of the ways in which Greek thinking on the matter is in fact healthier than our own. Kahn enacts a 'Copernican turn' in conceiving of being as oriented most primarily by predication, not existence, while Brown shows that any predicative expression of being entails weakly existential force, and that any 'one-place' articulation of being implies an elided 'two-place expression.' For example, 'Socrates is' necessarily implies 'Socrates is Y,' where 'Y' could mean 'snub-nosed,' 'mortal,' 'a thing in space and time,' etc.

[3] This claim is of course contentious, and at odds with very much of the 19th and 20th century scholarship on the *Sophist* and Platonic metaphysics more broadly. There have been many arguments regarding what senses of meaning the term 'being' has in the *Sophist.* Very many of these have entailed granting the fundamental distinction between the senses of 'being' as entailing existential, predicative, veridical, and identity forces first established by Mill and described above. (As I describe each of these views, I treat each as simply applying to the voice of Plato, although in any given instance the case might be considerably more complex regarding who, according to a given commentator, is speaking.) Ackrill 1957 claims that Plato refers to being in existential, predicative, and identity senses. Crombie 1962: 388-516 argues that Plato explicitly distinguishes between the senses of predication and identity, which entails strong but tacit existential force (cf. discussion of Crombie's view in Bluck 1975: 13-15), while Bluck 1975: especially 61-63 and 67-68 offered a contemporaneous version of this thesis that entails reducing the role of existential force in the interpretation. Frede 1967 argues that Plato is not distinguishing between senses of being, but instead is drawing upon two applications of the verb, closely related to the distinction between being in the *auta kath' hauta* and *pros alla* senses that the Stranger identifies at 255c-d. Drawing upon versions of views initially posited by Runciman 1964, Malcolm 1967, and Frede 1967, Owen 1971 offered the most influential and definitive version of the view that existence plays no role in the notion of being at play in the *Sophist*, and instead that Plato's concern is to distinguish between being in the senses of

in question is either taken for granted or at most quickly shown to be a non-issue, with the far more interesting questions regarding the *nature* of the being in question and the ways in which the nature of the being in question determines and is determined by other beings.[4] The question, in other words, is not, '*Is* it?' but instead, '*What* is it?' In the rare instances in which questions that resemble what moderns would call 'existence' questions (i.e., '*Is* it?') do come up in the ancient metaphysical discussions that are meaningfully adjacent to the *Sophist*, the questions are typically dismissed relatively quickly as having a self-evident affirmative answer. A good example of this comes in Book M of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, when Aristotle briefly addresses the question of whether it is right to posit the being of numbers (*Metaphysics* M2.1077b13-34). Following a brief proof that that which is not separable nonetheless *is* in some sense, he concludes:

> Thus, since it is true to say, without specifying, that not only what is separate *is* but also what is not separate – for example, that the moving *is* – it is also true to say, without qualification, that the mathematicals *are*, and indeed are such as mathematicians say.

> ὥστ' ἐπεὶ ἁπλῶς λέγειν ἀληθὲς μὴ μόνον τὰ χωριστὰ εἶναι ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ μὴ χωριστά (οἷον κινούμενα εἶναι), καὶ τὰ μαθηματικὰ ὅτι ἔστιν ἁπλῶς ἀληθὲς εἰπεῖν, καὶ τοιαῦτά γε οἷα λέγουσιν. (1077b31-34).[5]

Here Aristotle is concerned with something akin to what moderns call 'existence' questions (i.e., '*Are* numbers?'), but he quickly dismisses the subject as easily answered

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predication and identity. Flower 1980 follows Owen regarding existence but challenges Owen's claim that Plato is seeking to distinguish between predication and identity, and instead argues that Plato speaks univocally throughout of being in the sense of 'participation.' Wiitala 2014b interprets Plato to speak univocally throughout of being as 'power.' In what follows, I will endorse a version of Flower's and Wiitala's views, but while holding that there are numerous (and perhaps an infinite number of) definitions that could capture Plato's univocal sense of being throughout, including 'being is participation' and 'being is power' among others.

[4] Cf. Corkum 2008: 76.

[5] This translation is my own, in consultation with the Apostle translation.

before turning his attention in what follows to the nature of the grounding relationship between numbers and things in space and time. In short, Aristotle's argument is that numbers very clearly '*are*' or 'exist' on the basis of the proof that non-separate beings nonetheless have some kind of being, and the further simple observation that mathematicians engage in discourse about the numbers.[6] The compelling question is in what senses the numbers are *determinate* and are *determined,* or in which they are *grounded* or *grounding.* To return to the previous example of the soul, we could maybe say (to choose a few possibilities merely to allow me to illustrate my point) that, 'The soul is what is immortal in us' (i.e., it is grounding); or 'It is the aggregate principle of life that sustains our many bodily functions without reducing to those functions' (i.e., it is grounding); or 'It is merely a fiction that has arisen in the course of human history that will soon be laid to rest by the findings of science' (i.e., it is grounded by discourse and history); etc. In all instances, these explanations render the 'existence' question redundant. *Of course* souls 'exist' in the broadest sense, for we have spoken of them! Now we must account for *what* they are. I argue that this example from Aristotle shows that the ancient Greek thinking of being does not entail simply *missing* the notion of existence, but instead a recognition that this concept is in and of itself easily answered and gives way to deeper and more meaningful questions about being in the form of the 'What is it?' question.

I aim to show by example the value of this model of metaphysical inquiry oriented by something other than the question of 'existence,' and that a consideration of Plato's *Sophist* offers us a paradigmatic example of this mode of ancient inquiry that

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[6] Cf. Schaffer 2009: 359 for discussion of this point in this context.

sheds light on its nature. Be that as it may, I will have only a little to say about the

comparative values of ancient and modern metaphysics in what follows, and hope

primarily to show the value of the ancient method specifically through considering its

results.[7]

This discussion of being in terms not of existence but instead grounding relations

prepares us next to address the notion of structure. A given entity in an important sense

is so far as it is structured. For example, a cat *is* insofar as it is structured by its color, its

lungs, the nature of 'breathing thing,' the nature of 'life,' etc. The cat, at least in some

significant sense, is many, though what exactly that means will be at issue for much of

the dialogue. But it is not *merely* many, or at the very least, we are able through our

speech to address it as a 'one,' i.e., as a cat, and our habits of speaking seem to suggest

but do not confirm that it is ontologically one as well. This yields a puzzle regarding the

cat, and entities more broadly, that is suggested by our ability to address them both as a

one (cat) and a many (grey thing, thing with lungs, etc.) Sorting out these puzzles will be

a central project in the *Sophist,* and we will ultimately come upon an account of Platonic

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[7] Of course, the question of how, when, and why the notion of 'existence' arrives upon the philosophical scene is a rich and fascinating one about which I will have little to say in what follows. Mill's 19th century articulation of the concept as a primary sense of being draws upon a long history dating back at least to later antiquity and the Latinization of philosophical vocabulary of '*einai'* through the Latinate '*esse.'* Indeed, many significant aspects of this philosophical development of the notion of 'existence' occurred thanks to the history of Platonism. For a discussion of the importation of the notion of 'existence' through the Latin '*esse'* between the Neoplatonic Plotinus and finally in its interpretation through Aquinas, see Bradshaw 1999. In short, Bradshaw argues that the notion of being *qua* 'existence' begins as a conception of being that is prior to the imposition of *form*, '*to einai to apoluton*,' from which the secondary sense of being (either as '*to on*' or '*to einai*') is derived. Bradshaw 1999: 385ff considers the early appearance of this with the contrasting conception of being in the anonymous commentary on Plato's *Parmenides* discovered in Turin in 1873, and its evolution into modern conceptions of existence (particularly through the influence of Christian sources) via the 4th century CE commentary by Marius Victorinus through Boethius (see especially Bradshaw 1999: 397-400). Bradshaw describes how this distinction is at play in that of Boethius in differentiating between the Latin '*esse*' and '*id quod est*,' or being in the sense that lacks admixture and being in a certain way, respectively. Bradshaw argues that this notion (e.g., in Victorinus) initially implies a dynamism entailing intellection and activity, before later taking the form of the doctrine of divine simplicity via Aquinas (Bradshaw 1999: 400).

forms (more on that below) as themselves simple and unique that nonetheless partake of the natures of one another and allow for structuring relationships of the things that we encounter in space and time.

Furthermore, it seems that some things are grounded by other things, while others are not. An ontologist holding that 'all is water' would, for example, argue that everything is grounded in water, while water itself is not grounded but is in fact the ultimate ground of all the other things. Of course, the ultimate ground is not easy to discern, and accounts like this one regarding water suggest further objections; for example, one might wonder whether if it is true that all is water, then it follows that the dry *is not*. In any event, the notions of primary being and the grounding and grounded relationship will lead the interlocutors in the *Sophist* to develop an account of the senses in which entities are and are not grounded in a way that implies that they are or are not one. Questions regarding this include what it means to be a one or a whole, and the differences between different kinds of ones, including those that are in space and time and those that are not. The interlocutors will ultimately conclude that some kind of ontological ground is necessary that is composed of wholes, and is pluralistic in an importantly qualified sense. To do so, they will need to consider and develop the Platonic notion of forms.

1.1.2   Overview of this dissertation

I take the significant contribution of this dissertation to be twofold. First, I offer a new conception of Plato's understanding of being as fundamentally unified and captured but not exhausted through a series of accounts in the dialogue such as "being is power"

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and "being is communion." I argue that, for Plato, being is the sense of ontological

ground in terms of power that explains the entity's 'whatness' and binds it in a

meaningful sense to another. My interpretation is in contrast to the accounts of the many

scholars in recent decades who have argued that Plato through his interlocutors has

'confused' the allegedly 'various' senses of being and must be 'corrected' through

modern distinctions. Instead, I hold that Plato has much to teach us in our day about

being from which we have much to learn.

Second, and closely relatedly, I seek to show the interconnection of the elements

in the dialogue and the sense in which this notion of being arises within and calls for

further considerations of free and uncoerced inquiry and the structure that being

conceived as power or communion entails. To be is to have a structured nature from

without, and when we free ourselves from the desire to account for things in self-serving

terms on the model of sophistry, we are able to inquire with reference to being of the

things themselves and thus are granted the possibility of true insight into the structured

nature of the various beings in space and time through the eidetic natures that structure

these beings. In contrast to the many scholars who have focused their discussion on

various parts of the *Sophist*, I aim to account for the dialogue as a whole and with an eye

to its fit in several related clusters of dialogues and the Platonic project more broadly.

This dissertation is structured symmetrically. At its core are chapters on

nonbeing (Chapter 3) and being (Chapter 4). These are flanked immediately by two

chapters on structure, one each on simple bifurcatory structure (Chapter 2) and complex

noetic structure (Chapter 5), as well as an Introduction (Chapter 1) and Conclusion

(Chapter 6) in which I aim to set up and resolve these issues. After discussing some

principles of Platonic interpretation (1.2) and key concepts from other Platonic dialogues

(1.3), I will argue in Chapter 2 that the dialectical division exercises in the *Sophist*

represent a helpful but incomplete and inconclusive way of getting at the '*What* is it?'

question and the mutual co-constitution of beings through aiming primarily (though not

necessarily exclusively) at the sameness and otherness of objects. The shortcomings of

this method will demand, as I discuss in Chapter 3, a reconsideration of what it means to

say that something '*is not,*' which itself requires addressing the sophistical view of

nonbeing and the senses of being and nonbeing laid out by Parmenides in his

philosophical poem. This I will do with an orientation established by the distinction

between Parmenides' two modes of inquiry, those with reference to '[…] is […]' and the

mortal mode of inquiry that entails missing the '[…] is […].' Doing so allows a

clarification of nonbeing not as pure nothingness (*to medamos on*), but instead as a kind

of otherness. In the process, and as I will discuss in Chapter 4, the interlocutors will

review the deficiencies in the history of thinking being while developing their own

positive account of what we mean when we say '[…] is […].' The positive account

begins with differentiating between beings of a certain kind (i.e., the relationship 'X is

F') and certain kinds of being (i.e., *what it is to be F*). This yields a new way of taking

up being as something unopposed and as a power of causality to which we must be

receptive. As I will consider in Chapter 5, this suggests a type of noetic dialectical

science that is responsive to the structures of determinacy, and furthermore indicates a

complex ontology of causal powers that do not reduce to one another but instead require

one another in an important sense. These will finally allow for conceptions of nonbeing

as determinate negation and being as something that is fundamentally unopposed.

Furthermore, the new conception of being implies structure and hence must be understood with reference to the *goodness* that structure entails, which will be at issue throughout and to which I turn to in the concluding Chapter 6. In terms of the dramatic and methodological arcs of the dialogues, the previous bifucatory ontology begins to falter toward the end of the *Sophist* and the beginning of the *Statesman*, and these new concepts and methods will allow the interlocutors to push forward by allowing them to take up a higher-order science of non-bifurcatory dialectic beginning at *Statesman* 287c. The *Sophist* thus conceived offers the preparatory groundwork necessary for taking up higher-order dialectical science.

1.2   Principles of interpreting Platonic dialogues

1.2.1   The dialogues as pedagogy

I take the Platonic dialogues to be pedagogical tools that both introduce the most valuable philosophical concepts and teach the reader how to think about these concepts for herself through lived dialogue with others. I assume that the dialogues are intended for philosophical students broadly defined who are in the process of learning to turn their thinking from received opinion to truth. This implies that the dialogues are not primarily treatises in which the author advocates straightforwardly for an explicit view, as many have interpreted them to be.[8] Put simply, I take it that they should be understood as offering the occasion to develop *skills* regarding *how* to think and converse, not doctrines explicitly about *what* to think, though these skills are developed in the context of key

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[8] Many versions of the view that Plato's interlocutors speak straightforwardly for Plato have been advanced. For a particularly clear version of this view, see Sedley 2003: 1-3. I will say more about this when turning to consider the Eleatic Stranger in section 2.2.2.

philosophical issues to which Plato directs our attention and gives us profoundly valuable resources for addressing.

Much of this pedagogical function derives from the dialogue form, which also makes Plato's writing unlike nearly all other texts in the philosophical canon. Most basically, the dialogues mimic a lived philosophical discussion.[9] They depict dramatic conversations set between historical characters at specific moments and present ideas in the context of lived conversations that develop over the dramatic time of the dialogue. The effect of this is a complicated mediation between universal and particular, that is, the seemingly universal truths that arise in the conversation and the particularly of the conditions in which they arise that necessarily shapes their appearances in a given context. In this way, the nature of the dialogues suggests both the need for our receptivity to the truth of the matter and the recognition that all mortal inquiry is necessarily limited by the extents of mortal knowledge. Rather than suggesting relativism, this requires a kind of humility regarding the situatedness of knowledge and a willingness to revisit previous views with the recognition that one is liable to err. This furthermore implies that considerations of aspects like the dialogue's dramatic setting, symbolic or imagistic content, and dramatic characters therefore should factor into any interpretation of a Platonic dialogue, as they work in tandem with the contents of the discussion to allow access to the concepts to which Plato is calling our attention.

Moreover, none of these speaking characters is Plato. The effect of Plato's excluding himself from his own dialogues is to give critical distance between the author and the concepts that arise in the course of the discussion. Because Plato himself remains

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[9] Hence Aristotle's claim at *Poetics* 1477b9-11 that Socratic dialogues are characterized by their mimetic quality.

silent, the dialogues do not neatly or directly present a thesis, and instead require the

reader to develop her own view of what is important and how it is or is not supported by

the evidence presented by the interlocutors. At times, the dialogues also require a

consideration of what was not, but should have been, said. Insofar as they require the

reader to develop original views, the dialogues offer the possibility for a lived

philosophical exchange between reader and text that exceeds that of which most treatises

are capable. That they also feature many other virtues, such as rich imagistic allusions,[10]

compelling plots,[11] deep insights into the mortal mind and social sphere,[12] and occasional

humor,[13] is a superadded bonus that both contributes to the depth of their meaning and

makes the study of them all the more enjoyable for the student.

But my claim is not that Plato's absence from the dialogues implies that the

dialogues are devoid of positive content and instead are, for example, purely aporetic

exercises in thinking. I take it instead that they depict interlocutors giving inchoate but

highly provocative accounts of important issues, and indeed the most basic and important

philosophical concepts, like being, structure, knowledge, and the good. The *Sophist*, for

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[10] In both the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*, for example, Plato has his interlocutors employ images to an arresting affect. This occasions further discussion on the arresting nature of images.

[11] While most Platonic dialogues do not feature much plot development above and beyond the deepening of a good conversation, at least some do. The *Symposium*, for example, depicts an attempt at sober discourse that eventually gives way to Bacchic revelry, as is perhaps appropriate to its subject matter of Eros. Somewhat similarly, the *Republic* depicts Socrates attempting to attend a festival but becoming sidetracked by friends, although dramatic details do not factor into the latter books in any straightforward way. So while dramatic progression does not appear to be a primary aim of the dialogues to the extent that we find in Greek drama, it is nevertheless a device that Plato occasionally employs quite effectively.

[12] Examples of well-defined Platonic characters include Thrasymachus and Callicles, both of whom represent their respective positions thoroughly through action and discussion. Insight into social relations is offered, for example, in the group dynamics of dialogues like the *Lysis, Protagoras*, *Euthydemus*, and early *Parmenides*.

[13] Humor abounds in the *Symposium*, as in the example of Aristophanes gargling and burping his way through Eryximachus' speech, or the folly of the drunken Alcibiades in the dialogues' conclusion (Marren 2019: 3-8 is a recent discussion of this). For arguments regarding humor in the *Cratylus*, see Sallis 1975: 232-262 and Ewegen 2014: especially 98-120 and 182-190.

example, will cover all four of these topics, and a close study of the argumentative moves will yield profound insight into the nature of these most basic and important concepts that develop on and just below the surface of the text. Therefore, I hold that we are warranted in allowing their content to guide our thinking toward these extremely important issues, albeit not on the straightforward model of a treatise.

Due to their richness and complexity, the dialogues furthermore allow students at all levels to develop in terms of their philosophical maturity. The surface-level discussions offer the reader the occasion to reflect on implicit received opinion and, as inevitably seems to happen, come upon a lack of knowledge where previously knowledge had seemed to reside; but a deeper and more careful reflection leads with equal inevitability to the opportunity for developing a positive view through critical reflection. In this way, the dialogues are inexhaustible resources for further philosophical thinking for students at all stages of development.

Finally, it is important to note that the dialogues contain many kinds of voices. They are typically led by wise philosophers (including Socrates,[14] The Eleatic Stranger, Parmenides,[15] and, arguably, Timaeus and the Athenian Stranger) who are possessed of deep insight but nevertheless occasionally err or speak in such a way as to belie the need to develop a view further. These philosophers furthermore are depicted alongside many other kinds of interlocutors with whom the philosopher will need to converse. Thus in

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[14] Throughout, any reference to 'Socrates' should be understood as reference to Plato's character Socrates, and not the historical Socrates, unless noted otherwise. I make no speculations about the historical figure, since he is all but lost to us through the extant record, or about the connections between Plato's character and the historical figure. (Nails 2002: 263-269 provides a comprehensive overview on the extant sources on the historical Socrates.)

[15] Because I do consider herein both the historical Parmenides, i.e., the author of the poem, and Plato's character Parmenides from the eponymous dialogue, I distinguish between these two figures in what follows by referring always to the latter as the 'Parmenides character.'

Plato we find resources for considering the views of ambitious and talented youngsters who are nevertheless sometimes overeager to please their teachers (Theaetetus and Socrates the Younger),[16] those who are politically minded but not conceptually precise (Glaucon and Adeimantus), power-hungry warmongers (Meno and Anytus), seemingly well-meaning laypeople who have not thought through the basic terms that motivate their action (Euthyphro), talented thinkers who have given themselves over to untenable views like relativism (Protagoras), esotericism (Cratylus), or dogma (Gorgias), among many others. In this way, the dialogues are also helpful in showing the kinds of lived mortal conditions that will impact, both negatively and positively, one who is engaged in the process of developing philosophical views.

Loosely stated and by way of summary, I take the dialogues to have a something like a threefold aim: (i) to provoke and direct, though not in an overdetermined way, the kinds of focused and critical thinking skills that will be required to take up philosophical concepts, (ii) to introduce and foster insights into the most important objects of philosophical study, such as being, structure, knowledge, and the good, and (iii) to help the student to anticipate and respond to the kinds of responses and objections that she will encounter through conversing with individuals with certain beliefs, aims, and inclinations that have been developed in specific socio-historical contexts and yet also have a kind of timeless relevance to philosophical inquiry in all its difficulty.

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[16] Cf. Miller 1980: 5-8 for a discussion of Socrates the Younger in the *Statesman* as the paradigmatic overeager student.

1.2.2 Relationships among dialogues and chronology

A further set of closely related issues in interpreting the dialogues must be addressed at the outset, which are the questions concerning the relationship among dialogues and the ways in which the dialogues should be taken to bear on one another. The most popular view in the last century[17] regarding these questions was developmentalism, or the view that Plato's dialogues were written in a certain order and thus reflect Plato's changing "development" of various positions and "later" "rejection" of others, which Plato's modern readers must disentangle.[18] This is not the place in which to mount a full-scale attack on developmentalism,[19] but here I must state that nothing in this dissertation hinges on any kind of developmentalist interpretation of the dialogues in any way.[20] In short, I leave aside all questions regarding "when" Plato

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[17] Certainly there is no evidence to suggest that this view was held in antiquity. Among the ancient commentators, the only extant claim that we have regarding the relative chronology of the dialogues is Aristotle's claim at *Politics* 1264b26 that Plato wrote the *Laws* after the *Republic*; cf. Nails 1995: 65.

[18] On this view, Plato's dialogues were written in a sequence that reflects the author's increasing maturity, and that this sequence can be ascertained either scientifically or interpretively with at least some degree of certainty. On the typical and well-known model, the "young" Plato set out initially to capture the unwritten ethical attitude of his teacher Socrates and penned "early" dialogues like the *Euthyphro* and *Apology*, next "developed" an interest in metaphysical notions as reflected in "middle" dialogues like the *Republic* and *Symposium*, and "later" "refined" these metaphysical views in dialogues like the *Sophist* and *Statesman*. The view is now familiar enough that I take this brief characterization of it to suffice. Brandwood 1990 offers a thorough study of this view, while Klagge 1992: 4 gives an especially concise articulation of it.

[19] For a seminal discussion of the problems of developmentalism, see Nails 1995: 53-135. Nails addresses the relative lack of agreement among commentators on nearly all interpretive points (53-96), circularity and general inconclusiveness of stylometry (97-114), and the promising philological theories that threaten the developmental view entirely (115-135).

[20] Regarding my leaving aside developmentalism, I will note only two points. First, developmentalist accounts are inconclusive at best. Despite much sustained interest in the subject, the stylometric, philological, and conceptual (i.e., philosophical) analyses have yielded only inconclusive results that have not led to a clear consensus on nearly any basic issues. See Nails 1995: 58-61 for a canvassing of the most prominent views that makes evident the lack of consensus. By Nails's account, only the claim that *Sophist, Statesman, Laws, Critias,* and *Philebus* are "late" dialogues nearly approaches broad consensus by those advocating for a developmentalist interpretation. (Nails also mentions *Timaeus* as belonging to this group while discussing the view held by Owen 1953 that the *Timaeus* was a "middle" dialogue.) But Nails rightly notes at Nails 1995: 114 that "[t]he only fully warranted conclusion […] is that there is a group of *stylistically similar* dialogues. Whether that similarity derives from order of composition, subject matter, genre, intended audience, or some other variable, remains unknown." Thesleff 1982 argues extensively that the dialogues likely underwent revision in and shortly after Plato's lifetime, and that what are called the

wrote something and focus instead on questions of "what" Plato wrote and "how" and "why" he wrote it.[21] The only chronological aspects of my account in this dissertation are that I take Plato clearly to have written after Parmenides, that I take the Eleatic Stranger to have in mind a 'historical' account of thinking being (see Chapter 4) to which he considers himself to be contributing, and that I take seriously the dramatic time of the dialogue as leading to an enhanced perspective for the reader from beginning to end and across dramatically continuous dialogues.[22]

On my view, the dialogues should be understood relative to one another in terms of their respective contents and pedagogical functions. I take it that the dialogues build upon one another, for example that the *Sophist* is elucidated by considering ground covered in the *Parmenides* and *Theaetetus* and that it itself will further elucidate the investigations undertaken in the *Statesman* and *Philebus.* In the case of seeming contradictions between passages in different dialogues, I hold that we are warranted in revisiting the passages to see whether those that seem to be in conflict admit of a deeper

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"late" dialogues likely exhibit the editorial mark of Philip of Opus. If this is true, this tells us nothing about the relative chronology of the dialogues and only that certain dialogues bear an editorial mark while others do not. In any event, I leave this issue aside hereafter. Second, developmentalist accounts lead to unwarranted hierarchies among the dialogues, in which the so-called "late" dialogues are asserted to have authority over the so-called "early" dialogues. These hierarchies have not and, I suspect, cannot be established with certainty, but they lead commentators to make unjustified assertions about which passages are "later" and hence implicitly "truer" reflections of Plato's "more mature" view. These are the kinds of interpretive commitments that I seek to avoid in leaving aside developmentalism.

[21] I also leave aside the question of unitarianism, that is, whether Plato's dialogues are in fact unified and consistent in all instances. For a classic articulation of this view, see Shorey 1903. I am by no means prepared to defend, nor am I interested in defending, the claim that Plato never "changed his mind" about anything; be that as it may and so far as I can tell, nothing in this dissertation conflicts with such a view. In any event, I hope merely to show throughout that freeing ourselves of the traditional relative dating paradigms allows us to see connections between dialogues that became obscured in the era dominated by developmentalist hypotheses. For an argument for this view and a good example showing the connection between the *Euthyphro* and *Statesman*, typically taken to be "early" and "late" respectively but shown in their unified concerns when we are freed of developmentalist interpretations, see Wiitala 2014a.

[22] E.g., through the *Theaetetus, Sophist,* and *Statesman*. See section 2.2.1 for more discussion on the relationship between these and other conceptually and dramatically neighboring dialogues.

interpretation that can resolve the issue, or if a certain point is being framed in its particular way due to the pedagogical needs of the situation. Let me give a simple possible example merely to illustrate my point. Perhaps it is the case that Socrates calls the immortality of the soul 'unknowable' in the *Apology* to support his account of the poverty of mortal knowledge in the service of his courtroom speech, only to call the soul 'immortal' in the *Phaedo* to allow his friends to stop crying and return to the philosophical conversation.[23] While I am not asserting that this is right, I hope that it serves as a simple example of the kind of comparative and contextual analysis for which I am advocating. In any event, in the forthcoming discussion of the *Sophist,* any reference to another Platonic text should be understood to be in reference to the relative pedagogical and conceptual contexts of the dialogues without reference to any alleged date of relative composition.

1.3   Concepts from other dialogues

1.3.1   Forms

Next we can consider several interrelated and essential concepts in Plato's dialogues, beginning with his famous notion of forms. The forms are arguably Plato's most important and memorable contribution to the history of metaphysics, but how exactly we should understand the notion of form is of course much debated. By my reading, the *Sophist* contains essential contributions to our understanding of forms, including at least (i) an account of the ontological necessity of certain forms (kinds) and (ii) an account of the necessity of understanding forms as co-constitutive and

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[23] Cf. Hyland 1995: 3.

participating in one another.[24] Before embarking on a defense of this reading throughout

this dissertation, I will explain somewhat briefly in this section (I) why we must posit

forms, (II) what I take a form to be and the various and structured senses of form, and

(III) how I take it that we should interpret this notion to be at play in the *Sophist.*

I begin with (I). Plato has several of his primary interlocutors suggest at various

points that we must posit forms.[25] One particularly helpful articulation of the necessity

of positing forms is offered by Timaeus in his eponymous dialogue:

> If understanding (νοῦς) and true opinion (δόξα ἀληθής) are distinct, then these
> "by themselves" (καθ᾿ αὐτά) things definitely [*are*][26]—these Forms, the objects
> not of our sense perception, but of our understanding only. But if – as some
> people think – true opinion does not differ in any way from understanding, then
> all the things we perceive through our bodily senses must be assumed to be the
> most stable things there are. But we do have to speak of understanding and true
> opinion as distinct, of course, because we can come to have one without the other,
> and the one is not like the other. It is through instruction (διὰ διδαχῆς) that we
> come to have understanding, and through persuasion (ὑπὸ πειθοῦς) that we come
> to have true belief. Understanding always involves a true account (μετ᾿ ἀληθοῦς
> λόγου), while true belief lacks any account (ἄλογον). And while understanding
> remains unmoved by persuasion, true belief gives in to persuasion (51d4-e8).[27]

Here Timaeus makes an argument for the need to posit forms grounded most primarily in

epistemological considerations. He tells us that there is a difference between *knowing*

something that is true and merely *believing* it. The former entails a genuine noetic

encounter with the being that is known that allows for further and deeper engagement

with the known entity in its being, while the latter entails the mere ability to indicate an

entity without truly or fully grasping it. The former, in other words, is the kind of grasp

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[24] For the view that the discussion in the *Sophist* draws upon discussions of forms in other dialogues like
the *Parmenides* but does not require any requisite knowledge of Platonic notions and thus can be read at
least potentially as a self-sufficient discussion, see Bluck 1975: 1-3.

[25] Examples of this include *Parmenides* 135b6-c3 and *Philebus* 15a1-16a4, along with the *Timaeus* passage
cited here.

[26] Replacing Zeyl's "exist" with "are" for 'εἶναι' at 51d5.

[27] Translation taken from Zeyl in Cooper 1997, with one change noted above.

of reality of which the scientist or philosopher has after years of instruction (διδαχή) and study, while the latter is the kind of grasp exhibited by a novice student merely rattling off memorized facts about concepts that she has been told through persuasion (ὑπὸ πειθοῦς) to believe but does not truly or fully grasp. Timaeus points out that it could have been the case that these two states were exactly the same, but in fact they are different, as evidenced by the facts that they come through different means (i.e., instruction and persuasion, respectively), either necessarily entail an account (*logos*) or explicitly lack one, and either resist persuasion or give in to it. It follows that there must be *something* that the scientist or philosopher has grasped that the student has at most only begun to glimpse. This 'thing' grasped is not simply a private mental construct of the grasper, nor is it any single sensory perception that the grasper has encountered, nor the sum of many or all sensory perceptions or private intuitions. Instead, that which is grasped is something that is in principle available to anyone willing to go about seeking after this truth through dedication to the kind of instruction that yields noetic insight. This thing sought is, as Timaeus makes explicit, the form.

These considerations allow us to turn to (II) addressed above, that is, the question of what exactly forms *are*. Broadly speaking, forms are the atemporal ratios that govern the being and nature of the things in space and time that come to be and perish and are the source of their normativity. Forms themselves are things that always are as they are, but this should not be understood on the model of a thing engaged in the process of possessing the same property for all of eternity. Instead, it should be understood as *being* that property.

Accounting for what a form is more specifically requires distinguishing between several senses of the form. Most primarily, a form is a nature, such as the nature of the just (the form justice) or the nature of the large (the form largeness). In this primary sense, forms do not depend on anything other than themselves and are the ultimate grounds of causal and explanatory priority of the beings of space and time. (I will unpack my understanding of causal and explanatory priority below in 1.3.2.) Each form is fully what it is and does not admit of change, nor does it depend on anything outside of itself. In this sense, each form is simple and unique; but the sense in which the forms are simple and unique is a secondary sense of the forms insofar as the form is understood with reference to its partaking of the form of oneness or unity, which is itself something external to each form. The simple and unique sense of the form, therefore, is one of the main senses of the form insofar as the form is given to knowing and to speech, and indicates the structure of the form insofar as mortals can access it. Importantly, even to say that the form '*is* fully what it is' as I say above is also to address the form in a secondary sense, since we are in this instance addressing the form via the '*is*' and hence with reference to its *being*. Being, we will learn in the *Sophist,* is a form outside of the other forms and therefore one on which a particular form does not depend *qua* its nature, but does depend *qua* its being given to thought and speech. One major goal of the *Sophist* will be to sort out these senses, including the distinction between that which admits of a nature and the nature itself (addressed below in 4.2.3) and the necessary structure for which forms call to be given to thought and speech (which is explicitly taken up in the discussion of the great ontological kinds in 5.3.1).

The forms have metaphysical, epistemological, and ethical components. Metaphysically, they are the fundamental constituents of reality. They are, that is, the 'καθ᾽ αὐτά' being of these entities, or the being *by itself, in itself,* or *as such* of these entities, distinguished from those particular instances that go by the names of these entities in space and time that have happened to have come about, like, e.g., a particular just act.[28] I take it to be a mistake to assume that Plato understands them as composing or dwelling in another "realm" outside ours in any straightforward sense, and yet I do think we are justified in taking it to be the case that they have a greater share of reality in that they *are* in the complete sense, while beings in space and time come to be and perish and therefore only *are* in incomplete senses. That both form and participant share in being, with the former acting as the causal grounds of the being of the latter, I hope to make evident as we proceed (particularly in Chapter 4).[29] Furthermore, we must conceive of forms in ways that are not self-predicating, so as to avoid the well-known infinite regress argument at *Parmenides* 132a-b ff. I will argue in what follows that the *Sophist* provides us the tools to do just this by considering forms not merely as that which is *the subject of* a certain kind of being, but rather *what it is to be in that manner itself*.

Epistemologically, the forms are, as Timaeus suggests, those true and stable natures that we access noetically when we grasp a given true nature through νοῦς. Forms are not in space and time, and yet they are grasped by our acts of intellection and thus are what orient our intellection, thereby facilitating a temporal coming-to-know despite

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[28] Cf. Diotima's description (via Socrates) of the form of the beautiful in *Symposium*, especially 210e3-211b5, for a particularly rich account of the notion of form, its *kath' hauta* nature, and its independence from and causal priority over the particulars that share its name and partake of its nature.

[29] For further discussion of the notion of forms and the distinction between shifting particulars and underlying reality in Plato's thinking upon which I draw, see Miller 1990: especially 139-159, McCabe 1994: 43-46, and Sanday 2015a: 24-26.

themselves being atemporal. There is therefore a strong connection between forms and

νοῦς.[30] But we will learn from the *Sophist* that this strong connection implies that forms

are structured in a posterior sense, and hence require one another in a meaningful way.

Ethically, forms are *normative* insofar as they imply instantiations of themselves

in an intermediate sense that structure given entities in space and time, which can

instantiate the form either well or poorly. In other words, justice is something of which a

particular act can entail an instantiation that is full, partial, or not at all, and hence the

form justice is a source of normativity in this sense. On my view, another potential

mistake would be to interpret this normativity as authoritarian, or the kind of normative

force that imposes itself upon particulars in a way that does violence to the particulars.

Instead I take the opposite to be the case, i.e., that the form is precisely that standard of

health, or good ordering, that allows the particular to be, in the modern idiom, its 'best

self.'

Of course, the account of forms that I am sketching here is provisional by

necessity. I intend to show in what follows that (III) a reading of the *Sophist* on a deep

level requires such an account of forms, and that such a notion is explicitly at play and

being developed in the dialogue. Naturally, I will need many pages to substantiate these

claims, but offer this provisional sketch for now to indicate what I take myself to be

talking about when discussing forms in these various moments.

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[30] For more on this connection, see section 4.3.3.

1.3.2 Causal priority

Another important distinction to consider, and one with close connection to the notion of form, is that of causal priority.[31] Causal priority is an asymmetrical, atemporal relationship between two entities in which one entity holds explanatory and causal priority over the other, which is posterior. The relationship of causal priority can in a sense be expressed as 'X is Y,' where 'Y' causally determines and hence explains the being of X but not vice versa.

One stretch of discussion in Plato's dialogue the *Euthyphro* (9e-11c) offers good occasion to reflect on this notion. While seeking an account of the nature of piety and the question of the relationship between that which the gods love and that which is good, Socrates makes a series of distinctions in response to Euthyphro's definition of piety that helps us to get at this issue. Euthyphro defines the pious as "what all the gods love" (9e1-2), to which Socrates responds by asking whether the pious is loved by the gods because it is pious, or whether it is pious because it is loved by the gods (10a2-3). When Euthyphro is confused by the question, Socrates distinguishes between the following entities to illustrate his point:

> (i) (a) The thing *carried* (φερόμενον) and (b) the thing *carrying* (φέρον)
> (ii) (a) The thing *led* (ἀγόμενον) and (b) the thing *leading* (ἄγον)
> (iii) (a) The thing *seen* (ὁρώμενον) and (b) the thing *seeing* (ὁρῶν)
> (iv) (a) The thing *loved* (φιλούμενον) and (b) the thing *loving* (φιλοῦν) (10a5-11).

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[31] I am much indebted to Evans 2012 and Wiitala 2014b: 25-31 in this section. In terminology I follow Wiitala 2014b in preferring the term 'causal priority' over other terms to get at the same or similar notions like 'explanatory priority' or 'priority in explanation,' as favored by Evans. This is primarily because terms involving explanation highlight the sense in which the object is *being known,* i.e., being *explained,* with reference to its priority, whereas terms involving causation emphasize the sense in which the object *is* because of that which is prior. I take this to be primarily a metaphysical and not epistemological issue, and therefore prefer 'causal priority.' Cf. Wiitala 2014b: 25 fn. 43 for further discussion.

Each of the four sets contains two separate entities holding in a kind of relation with one another. Most immediately, this is a distinction between the (a) passive and (b) active things, respectively, indicated clearly by Socrates' use of passive participles for each (a) and active participles for each (b). Here Socrates has (merely) emphasized that (a) and (b) are separate, and that they are engaged in a relationship with one another. He does not make this explicit, but this relationship is demonstrated precisely by their sharing a name, e.g., that the 'thing seen' derives its name in regard to this relationship from the 'seeing thing.' But Socrates further specifies the precise meaning and structure of this causal relationship by next addressing the sense in which each (a) is an (a) *because of* the activity of each (b):

> (i) (a) The thing carried (τὸ φερόμενον) is carried *because of* (b) *its being carried* (φέρεται)
> (ii) (a) The thing led (τὸ ἀγόμενον) is led *because of* (b) *its being led* (ἄγεται)
> (iii) (a) The thing seen (τὸ ὁρώμενον) is seen *because of* (b) *its being seen* (ὁρᾶται)
> [(iv) (a) The thing loved is loved *because of* (b) *its being loved*][32] (10b1-c1).[33]

Socrates summarizes by declaring that in each case the (a) thing affected "is not being affected (πάσχον) because it is a thing affected (πάσχει), but *it is a thing affected because it is being affected*" (10c3-4, my emphasis). Here Socrates describes not only the (mere) relationship between each (a) and (b), but the causal nature of each relationship. Here, each (b) is in an important sense *prior to* each (a), and it is in each case a mode of being made possible by an activity. In this way, we see that each (a) is a *kind of being*, and it is made possible precisely by the causally prior activity represented by the activity that

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[32] Socrates does not return to the loved-loving relationship as he explains his point, but the structure of the previous three examples that he does develop seems to carry over to this point as well.

[33] Note that here Socrates uses (a) a passive participle to denote the thing as affected and (b) the passive finite verb to distinguish the mode of affective being.

makes possible each (b). The activity that makes possible each (b), in other words, is the grounding source that makes each (a) possible *qua* its being (a).

A few further points should be noted. Socrates' four examples are all faculties of mortal agents, as in the examples of the agent who carries, the agent who leads, the agent who sees, and the agent who loves. But unlike in the first set of four in which Socrates referred to (b) with reference to the *thing* doing the action via the active participle, he does not make his points with reference to the agent doing these things, but instead with reference to the passive participle of each verb. The source from which (a) the seen derives its being seen is not the agent who sees, but (b) its *being* seen, which is something that is only possible because of *seeing itself*, or what the being of sight implies and its active instantiation in this given instance. Socrates' point is not about mortal agency, but instead about the ontology that makes relationships between (a) things affected and (b) affecting sources possible in the first place. There is seeing, and because of this, there is (b) 'being seen' that makes possible the mode of being of (a) the thing that is seen.

Furthermore, this is an asymmetrical and atemporal relationship. The seen thing owes its being seen to the seeing, but not vice versa. Regarding the asymmetrical structure, it is important to note that the seeing is at least in some important sense independent of the seen thing, as seeing itself is not dependent on the object been seen to be seeing. In this sense, (a) owes itself to seeing, but seeing does not owe itself to (a). Regarding the atemporality, the seeing and the thing's being seen happen simultaneously, and this relationship of cause and effect is not one that should be understood with reference to an unfolding temporal sequence in the ways in which the notion of causality might initially suggest to the modern thinker. The case of the seeing is analogous to

musical improvisation, in that the musician is causally but not temporally prior to the song that she improvises. Her fingers move along the guitar and precisely at the same instant at which the song is played, and yet the song is still posterior to the player in an important sense. Analogously we should understand the relationship between (a) and (b) as atemporal and yet respectively posterior and prior.

The important takeaway for us going forward is this. Any one of the (a) examples is, in itself, insufficient to explain why it is (a). For example, it is explanatorily inadequate to say that the thing seen is seen because it is a thing seen. Rather, its being seen requires reference to some causally prior principle, namely, (b) its being seen and the sense in which this being is grounded in seeing. The tendency in human thinking to take (a) to be self-sufficient is one that Plato will teach us via his interlocutors to challenge. The ultimate explanatory principles, or those examples that underlie all (b) and that do not owe their being to anything other than themselves, will prove to be the forms; considering the relationship of causal priority will, I hope, help us to see the sense of structuring relationships and the account of forms that will be at play in the *Sophist.*

1.3.3   Definitions

A final preliminary consideration helpful to take up before embarking upon our study of the *Sophist* regards the concept of definitions. Above I considered the sense in which ancient metaphysical investigations can be understood as an asking of the 'What is it?' question, and this kind of definitional question regarding the being of the entity under

scrutiny is at play in many of Plato's dialogues.[34]   I here want to consider the structure of

the answers that such a question might elicit. A definition of F would, in a sense, capture

that which is common to all Fs, or, perhaps more accurately, that *through which* an F is

an F. Quoting Lesley Brown (2010), the definition of F must give "the 'what it is,' the

essence of F, i.e., that which explains why all the Fs are F." [35]   The structure of a

definition, therefore, suggests a structure of essence and explanation, where the essence

acts as the explanation of the nature of the thing being explained thereby serving as a

definition.

Furthermore, the notion of definitions is closely related to the notion of causal

priority, but in it is emphasized the sense in which the causally posterior is in some sense

explained by the causally prior, though the causally prior is not explained by the causally

posterior. A simple example is the relationship between the notions of 'oddness' and

'number.' Number is causally prior to what it is to be 'odd' and number explains

oddness in an important sense, although the reverse is not the case. In other words, the

'odd' is defined at least in part with reference to number, though 'odd' does not explain

what number is.

It is important also to distinguish the ancient and modern senses of 'definition.'

In the modern sense, 'definition' is typically taken to be the authoritative and (to speak

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[34] For a helpful discussion of definition in those dialogues of Plato's typically called "early," see Santas 1979. Santas identifies nine definitional accounts in these dialogues and discusses their structure in depth, ultimately arguing that in each instance a causally posterior notion is explained with reference to a causally prior one. Further helpful discussion is in Brown 2010: especially 151-153. Brown gives compelling reasons to take it that the aim of definition in the dialogues is consistent between those called the "early" dialogues, the *Republic,* and the *Sophist* and *Statesman*, arguing that the search for the essence of the thing sought is common across the dialogues.

[35] Brown 2010: 151. Brown considers this point in depth and discusses the ways in which this issue relates to inquiry in the *Sophist* specifically. Cf. *Republic* 533b-534b for relevant discussion, upon which Brown also draws.

circularly) 'definitive' account of the thing for which the account is given. The modern sense of definition, in this way, is often taken to *exhaust* the entity defined. For instance, in the modern sense, 'the just' might be defined as 'that which is based on or behaving according to what is morally right' in a way that seems to imply that the subject has been resolved 'once and for all' by this account.

The ancient notion of 'definition,' by contrast, can be understood on the model of mathematics.[36] One might, for example, come upon the notion of 'six' in any number of ways, say by adding four to two, doubling three, subtracting 710 from 716, etc. So too might it be the case that 'the just' is arrived upon by any number of ways. It does not follow from this that there are 'many' justices that one finds in each instance. The justice is the same justice, just as the six is the same six. This plurality of accounts is an indication of the rootedness of mortal inquiry in particular circumstances, and the sense in which entities show themselves from different angles in different contexts. At issue in what follows will be a consideration of the plurality of accounts, particularly as regards the sophist, the entity sought explicitly in the dialogue, and being, the entity sought perhaps more implicitly in the dialogue and quite explicitly in this dissertation. With these considerations stated, we are prepared to turn to division, which is itself a means of giving an account of the defined object with reference to that which is causally prior to it.

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[36] We will have occasion to reflect more on this when considering bifurcatory division; see section 2.3.5.

CHAPTER 2. DIVISION (216A – 231E)

2.1   Chapter 2 Introduction

Ontological structure is centrally at issue throughout the *Sophist,* and bifurcatory

division (διαίρεσις)[37] is the first way in which this subject is explored in the dialogue. In

Chapter 2, I consider the method of division in the *Sophist* both on its own terms and with

the aim of accounting for its fit with and propaedeutic role in grounding the deeper and

richer discussions that follow. To situate division, I begin in 2.2 with preliminary

considerations of the context and dramatic frame of the dialogue, with an eye particularly

to the relevance of these to our understanding of the method of division in the *Sophist*. In

other words, I argue that an account of what exactly division *is* requires a consideration

of this context in which it arises. In 2.3, I offer an extended engagement with the method

of division in the *Sophist*, contrasting it with other methods of Platonic inquiry and

highlighting particular aspects that I believe will be helpful in accounting for the method.

In 2.4, I conclude this chapter by anticipating the senses in which division has prepared

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[37] Frequently herein I use the terms 'bifurcatory division,' 'division,' 'diairesis,' and 'diairetic'
interchangeably to refer to the method of investigation specifically at play throughout the *Sophist* (which I
also take to be the same method as that in the *Statesman* prior to 287c). Any use of these terms should be
understood as such, unless specified otherwise. Below (in section 2.3.1) I will distinguish this type of
division from at least one other method of division in Plato's dialogues, which is the type of 'division and
collection' that Socrates names at *Phaedrus* 266b3-4 and describes thereafter. For discussion of the change
from bifurcatory to non-bifurcatory division at *Statesman* 287c, see Miller 1992, 1999, and 2016, Gill
2008, and Smith 2018 and 2019. For more on the dialectical method of the *Statesman,* see Ionescu 2014
and 2016 and Sanday 2017.

the way for the digression and the discussions of nonbeing, being, and structure that follow in the dialogue.

2.2   Division's setting (216a – 218b)

2.2.1   Context and dramatic setting

The *Sophist* contains one of the richest discussions of being and ontology in Plato's corpus, but the text is very dry in other senses and generally lacks the kinds of literary and dramatic flourishes that bring so much character to other dialogues like the *Symposium*, *Phaedrus*, and *Phaedo,* to name only a few. This has led some commentators to write of something like what David Bostock calls a "distinct falling off in Plato's dramatic powers" at play in the *Sophist*.[38] This dryness is perhaps nowhere more apparent than in the early passage on division, in which the interlocutors engage in an extended stretch of dense and mentally taxing dialectical exercises, the obscurity of which has frustrated commentators for generations.[39]

I suggest that this dryness is not due to Plato's 'loss of power,' but instead is a deliberate stylistic decision made on the basis of the needs specific to the subject matter of the dialogue. Similarly, I argue that, as always in Plato's dialogues, the characters have been chosen carefully and in response to the particular needs at hand. Furthermore,

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[38] Bostock 1988: 12. Rutherford 1995: 280 and Lane 1998: 1 are examples of similar claims.

[39] So dense and mentally taxing are these exercises that the distinguished early commentator Cornford opted to summarize, rather than translate, these passages (see Cornford 1935: 170). Ryle (1939 and 1966) offers a famously scathing assessment of division as having nothing to do with proper philosophy, i.e., hard reasoning about truth regarding value-neutral concepts, and refuses to believe that the philosopher behind the *Sophist* digression and the *Parmenides* would take seriously the 'Linnaeus-type genus-species trees' yielded by diairetic inquiry. More recent authors whose commentaries treat the division exercises only cursorily include Seligman 1974, de Rijk 1986, and Crivelli 2012.

I argue that the 'dryness' of division is paradigmatic for the dialogue's overall difficulty. Thus, before addressing division directly, I begin with an account of the ways in which considering the dramatic context and characters helps us to understand what exactly division is and why Plato uses it as propaedeutic to deeper ontological considerations.

The first notion to consider is the *Sophist*'s context within Plato's corpus. Although the *Sophist* is self-contained, it is not self-sufficient.[40] This is because its dramatic and philosophical contents owe to other Platonic dialogues and related texts both explicitly and implicitly. Most immediately, the *Sophist* is paired with the *Statesman* insofar as the latter is a direct continuation of the former,[41] leading the two to be understood as a 'diptych.'[42] The *Theaetetus* also precedes these two dialogues dramatically, and the three taken together form a trilogy.[43] Thus the *Sophist*'s dramatic and philosophical contents are shaped in large part by those of the two closely

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[40] Burnyeat 1990: 60 writes of a "choice between two global approaches to Plato" in which one must either take a dialogue "in its own terms" as "self-sufficient" or "to determine its meaning from the horizons of expectation established in earlier works of the same author." In what follows, I argue that the *Sophist* requires that we do the latter, though I do not relegate the investigation to "earlier" expectations in the sense of composition dates. Instead I suggest that the expectations should be established through considerations of all other dialogues largely in respect to their pedagogical functions and dramatic dates (see 1.2.2).

[41] Cf. Klein 1977: 3-5 for a discussion of the doubtless certainty of this connection.

[42] The "diptych" interpretation is sometimes offered as a means of emphasizing the shared features of the *Sophist* and *Statesman* as opposed to their connection to the *Theaetetus*. Typically this is supported by a developmentalist interpretation of the corpus in which the *Sophist* and *Statesman* are taken to be "late" dialogues and the *Theaetetus* a "middle" or otherwise "transitional" dialogue. For versions of this view, see Haslam 1976 and Lane 1998: 6-8. At Blondell 2002: 316-317, Blondell points out that the dramatic frame of *Theaetetus* and its lack of inclusion of Socrates the Younger and the Eleatic Stranger in the list of people present (at 144b8) stands as evidence for the "diptych" interpretation that does not compromise the interpretation of the two dialogues as fitting together as the latter two-thirds of the trilogy including the *Theaetetus*. In other words, Blondell emphasizes the cogency and non-contradictory understanding of the dialogues as grouped in a set of two and a set of three. While throughout this dissertation I emphasize the importance of an interpretation of the dialogues accounting for the role of the trilogy, I intend to do so without compromising the "diptych" interpretation. This is due to the many stylistic and conceptual shared similarities between the *Sophist* and *Statesman*.

[43] Commentators who have connected whole or parts of these three dialogues in the context of what is called "Plato's Trilogy," or alternatively "Plato's Triad," include Campbell 1883, Sayre 1969, Klein 1977, Miller 1992 and 2006, Dorter 1994, Frede 1996, Blondell 2002, and Smith 2019.

neighboring dialogues.[44] Considered in this sense, division is relevant as a method of

inquiry that follows the seemingly aporetic conclusion of the *Theaetetus*. There, the

interlocutors had engaged in a discussion motivated by the question concerning the true

nature of knowledge (*epistēmē*), but the discussion had ended without a clear answer to

the question. In the course of the quest for an account of knowledge, Socrates had taken

up considerations of various burgeoning intellectual traditions that stood as competitors

to philosophy, including sophistry (through the conjured voice of Protagoras) and a

version of Heraclitean flux theory. Centered around the question of the nature of

knowledge, the dialogue thus depicts several methods of inquiry into being in

competition for a satisfying account of knowledge, including simple sense perception,

mathematics, sophistry, flux theory, and Socratic maieutic, all of which seem at least on

the surface to fail to yield such an account. In this way, division appears as the latest in a

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[44] The *Theaetetus* ends with Socrates' imperative, "Let us meet here again in the morning, Theodorus," (ἔωθεν δέ, ὦ Θεόδωρε, δεῦρο πάλιν ἀπαντῶμεν, *Theaetetus* 210d3), while the *Sophist* begins with Theodorus stating that, "In accordance with yesterday's agreement, Socrates, we have duly come ourselves […]" (κατὰ τὴν χθὲς ὁμολογίαν, ὦ Σώκρατες, ἥκομεν αὐτοί […], *Sophist* 216a1. Ray 1984: 2, 95, and 108-109 offers some interesting thoughts regarding κατὰ ['in accordance with'] as the dialogue's first word, which he suggests foreshadows the consideration of accordance at the dialogue's center, i.e., the accordance of participation relative to forms. For a consideration of the significance of this appearance of ὁμολογίαν, see Sallis 1975: 457). Thus the conclusion and opening of the two dialogues exhibit something of a call-and-response structure between Theodorus and Socrates, with each addressing the other in the vocative. This serves to the link the two dialogues, suggesting that the concerns of the former remain relevant in the latter. The *Statesman* similarly begins immediately or almost immediately after the conclusion of the *Sophist*. Socrates says, "I really owe you a big debt of thanks, Theodorus, for my getting to know Theaetetus, along with getting to know the [S]tranger as well. (ἦ πολλὴν χάριν ὀφείλω σοι τῆς Θεαιτήτου γνωρίσεως, ὦ Θεόδωρε, ἅμα καὶ τῆς τοῦ ξένου) *Statesman* 257a1-3.) Here he thanks Theodorus, again in the vocative, for the account yielding knowledge of both the sophist and the interlocutors in response to his own animating question in the *Sophist*, that is, whether in Elea the sophist, statesman, and philosopher are taken to be one, two, or three kinds (217a6-9). Thus a different sort of call-and-response structure between Socrates and Theodorus is also apparent between the *Sophist* and *Statemsan*, with Theodorus acting as the mediator by providing an answer to Socrates' question indirectly and through his introduction of the Eleatic Stranger. The contents of the discussion depicted in the *Statesman* additionally includes numerous explicit references back to the discussions in the *Theaetetus* (e.g., at *Statesman* 257a2, 258a7), and *Sophist* (e.g., at *Statesman* 266d3-4, 284b7-9, and 291c3.), emphasizing their continuity.

series of methods of inquiry and is part of a chain of methods that will continue into the

Statesman.[45]

The moves inherent in the concluding section of the *Theaetetus* – that is, the

discussion of knowledge as 'true opinion with an account' at play from 201c8–210d3 –

help to set the stage for the methodological moves like the introduction of division that

follows in the *Sophist* and *Statesman*. In the context of their hazily recollected theory of

knowledge known as the 'dream theory,'[46] Socrates and Theaetetus consider three senses

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[45] Here I have considered the *Theaetetus-Sophist-Statesman* trilogy, and I consider the inferred *Sophist-Statesman-Philosopher* trilogy below in section 2.2.3. In a sense, the joining of these individual texts into structured clusters of dialogues anticipates and mimes the ontology of commingling that the Eleatic Stranger and Theaetetus unpack in the *Sophist* itself. (For more on the function of mimesis in the structure of a Platonic dialogue, see Miller 1990: 4-9.) Additional dialogue clusters present themselves as well. These include the *Theaetetus-Euthyphro-(Cratylus-)Sophist-Statesman* tetralogy or pentalogy, and the *Theaetetus-Euthyphro-(Cratylus-)Sophist-Statesman-Apology-Crito-Phaedo* heptalogy or octology. Often neglected in accounts of the interwoven structures of Plato's dialogues is the role of the *Euthyphro*, and perhaps also that of the *Cratylus*, in mediating the dramatically earlier (*Theaetetus*) and dramatically later (*Sophist* and *Statesman*) dialogues. After the conversation depicted in the *Theaetetus*, Socrates leaves to the King's Porch and happens upon Euthyphro; the two discuss their upcoming trials while seeking and (apparently) failing to find an account of the nature of piety, as depicted in the *Euthyphro*. Hence the provocative aporia with which the *Theaetetus* concludes pairs with that of the *Euthyphro* to support that which follows in *Sophist* and *Statesman*. (For discussions of the dramatic relationship between the *Euthyphro* and Plato's trilogy, see Sallis 1975 and Wiitala 2014a and 2014b: 24-36.) Similarly, there is a debate regarding the intended dramatic date of the *Cratylus*, given that Socrates references a conversation with the prophet Euthyphro held earlier that day (396d, 399a, 400a, 407d, and 428c) that may refer to that conversation depicted in the *Euthyphro*. (Some commentators take these references to point back to the conversation in the *Euthyphro* dialogue, setting the *Cratylus* in spring 399 BCE. These include Sallis 1975: 227-230, who offers a detailed defense based on dramatic context, and Zuckert 2000: 65-66, who assumes a dramatic connection between *Cratylus* and *Sophist* but does not argue in support of this connection so far as I am aware. Conversely, Nails 2002: 105-106 and 312-313 argues that the *Cratylus* is set some two decades earlier, closer to 422 BCE, on textual evidence that Hipponicus is still alive; but Ademollo 2011: 21 rejects Nails's reading and suggests that the text implies that Hipponicus is in fact dead by the dramatic time of the dialogue. I cannot resolve this controversy here, of course, but I note that further work connecting the discussions in *Cratylus* and the diptych seems at least potentially fruitful, suggested by the shared philosophical concerns and perhaps also their close dramatic proximity.) In any event, there remains at least the possibility that the *Cratylus* groups dramatically with the trilogy; if nothing else, the extended inquiry into the relationship between names and their referents is surely relevant to an understanding of the inquiry via division depicted in the *Sophist*. The tetralogy or pentalogy's inclusion of the *Euthyphro* makes clear the further connection to the *Apology, Crito,* and *Phaedo* dialogues. These dialogues, taking place in the weeks or months immediately after the events depicted in the tetralogy or pentalogy, have been linked to the *Euthyphro* at least since the time of Thrasyllus of Mendes' first-century BCE compilation of Platonic dialogues, in which *Euthyphro, Apology, Crito,* and *Phaedo* were paired as a tetralogy in a tradition that has continued into recent centuries and the many 'Trial and Death of Socrates' compiled volumes intended largely for novice students.

[46] For a particularly helpful consideration of the 'dream theory' in itself, in its context in the dialogue, and within the history of philosophy, see Burnyeat 1990: 128-186.

of 'account' (λόγος). The first is the account that makes "one's thought apparent vocally

by means of words and verbal expressions […] like reflections upon water or in a mirror"

(206d1-4). I argue that this type of account is closely related to Socrates' maieutic

method in the *Theaetetus*, insofar as the task in maieutic is to externalize the internal by

reflecting thought in an account, exposing it in its nature and presenting it for scrutiny.

Read as such, the *Theaetetus* is a 'purging' of the implicit conceptions of knowledge at

play in the thinking of the young Athenian mathematicians present in the dialogue,

primarily the promising young Theaetetus. This making apparent of thought shows these

implicit conceptions, themselves the products of doxa, to be wind eggs, and thus clears

the way for a new way of thinking of knowledge.

Through this interpretation, the *Sophist* and *Statesman* entail such productive

accounts, or at least the lay groundwork for them. These come through a working out of

the latter two types of account that Socrates identifies. The second, "being able, when

questioned about what a thing is, to give an answer by reference to its elements"

(206e10–207d2) is at stake in the non-bifurcatory divisions of the *Statesman* (beginning

at 287c);[47] the third, "being able to tell some mark by which the object you are asked

about differs from all other things" (208c8-9), anticipates the aim of the Stranger in

practicing bifurcatory division in the *Sophist* (i.e., from 218b to 236c and 264c to 268e)

and early *Statesman* (up to 287c).[48] Thus understood, Plato's task in the trilogy is to

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[47] Cf. Miller 1992 and 1999.

[48] Other commentators have also suggested that Socrates' dismissal in the *Theaetetus* of his descriptions of
'account' are not as definitive as they might initially seem. Gómez-Lobo 1977: 31, and Desjardins 1981:
11, both argue that these definitions foreshadow elements in the 'Eleatic' dialogues. Miller (in Miller
1992: especially 94-104 and Miller 2016: especially 321-322) also discusses the ways in which the final
two senses of 'account' in the *Theaetetus* correspond to the methodology in the *Sophist* and *Statesman*. I
work out the implications of this interpretation for a broader reading of the dialectical methods at play in
the trilogy with reference to the paradigm of letters (*stoicheia*, also 'elements') in Smith 2019.

guide the reader through a purging of their implicit views of knowledge, views that are themselves the product of doxa, and turn to different modes of accounting to arrive upon knowledge. The bifurcatory division of the *Sophist*, by this conception, is the process by which the marks of difference are discerned in the objects under scrutiny that follows the sort of purging yielded by Socratic maieutic. In these ways, the method used by interlocutors in the *Sophist* is thematically connected to the methods in these neighboring dialogues.

Similarly, considering the dramatic setting of the *Theaetetus* is necessary to address the contents of the *Sophist*. Because the *Theaetetus* ends with Socrates' proposal to Theodorus that those present regroup on the following day, we can infer that the *Sophist* and *Statesman* take place in the same gymnasium in Athens in which the *Theaetetus* is set and in the weeks or months prior to the trial and death of Socrates in 399 BCE.[49] There are, however, no dramatic details in the *Sophist* or *Statesman* that themselves definitively suggest a specific location for the dialogue in space and time,[50] and hence it is solely through its contextual and dramatic relationship with the *Theaetetus* that we can speculatively infer the location and time of the dialogue.[51] Through its

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[49] Following Nails 2002: 320-321. Alternative dating paradigms on the basis of late-5th century Athenian law have been suggested, including that of Burnet, who argues for a dramatic date sometime in 400 BCE (Burnet 1924: 4 fn4). Nails, following MacDowell 1978: 47 and 229-30, argues instead that the most precise estimate for the dramatic date is one in spring 399 BCE entailing an interval of as much as two months before Socrates' trial depicted in the *Apologies* of Plato and Xenophon. For a thorough consideration of the surviving sources from which we learn of the historical Socrates' trial and execution, see Brickhouse and Smith 2002.

[50] Few commentators have argued that clues indicate or at least support a specific date within the *Sophist* itself, and these clues are inconclusive at best. For example, Brann, et al. interpret the references to the "Great King" at *Sophist* 230e4 and *Statesman* 264c3 to refer to Artaxerxes II, the king of Persia in 399 BCE; but this serves (at best) to confirm the hypothesis regarding the 399 BCE dramatic date, not support it on its own.

[51] Blondell 2002: 317 rightly notes that no details internal to the *Sophist* (or the *Statesman*) clearly indicate time or location of any kind, and thus our understanding of the dramatic – as well as all bodily – elements of the dramatically latter two dialogues in the trilogy comes entirely from the dramatically former. But while no details regarding the dialogues' location can be extrapolated from contents of the dialogues

concluding reference to summons of Meletus to the King Archon (210d3), the narrative connection to the *Theaetetus* nonetheless makes clear that the events leading to Socrates' execution by the state of Athens were in motion by the dramatic time of the dialogue, and the impending Athenian failure to distinguish the philosopher (Socrates) from the sophist looms, albeit implicitly, throughout the *Sophist* and *Statesman*.

As I have suggested, the lack of literary and dramatic elements in the *Sophist* has been received critically by commentators like Bostock, but the falling away of literary and dramatic elements is a feature of which we should take note. In fact, the move from literary and dramatic motifs into purely abstract discourse inherent in the shift from the *Theaetetus* to the *Sophist* is not distinct to this context. Such a move from literary embellishment to its absence is inherent in several closely related texts. One good example is Parmenides' poem, which exhibits a similar structure in the move from the imagistic and mythologizing Proem (Fragment 1) into the pure deduction of being in Truth (particularly Fragments 2 through 6). That is, while Fragment 1 contains an evocative description of the young traveler's journey to meet the goddess, Fragment 2 contains only a modal argument regarding the necessity of a sense of being.[52] In this

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themselves, there is also nothing to suggest (as Blondell also notes) that the interlocutors have moved their meeting place and thus are in a *different* location than that of the *Theaetetus*. Thus it is reasonable to assume that the "here" (δεῦρο) at *Theaetetus* 210d3 "accords with yesterday's agreement" (κατὰ τὴν χθὲς ὁμολογίαν) at *Sophist* 216a1.

[52] Compare the opening lines of Fragments 1 and 2. Fragment 1 begins: "The mares which carry me as far as my spirit ever aspired were escorting me, when they brought me and proceeded along the renowned road of the goddess […]" (Ἵπποι ταί με φέρουσιν, ὅσον τ' ἐπὶ θυμὸς ἱκάνοι, / πέμπον, ἐπεί μ' ἐς ὁδὸν βῆσαν πολύφημον ἄγουσαι / δαίμονος […] [Fragment 1.1-1.3]). Fragment 2, conversely, finds the goddess describing "the only ways of inquiry there are for thinking" (αἵπερ ὁδοὶ μοῦναι διζήσιός εἰσι νοῆσαι) as "the one, [that] […] is […] and [that] […] is not possible [for] […] not to be […]" (ἡ μὲν ὅπως ἔστιν τε καὶ ὡς οὐκ ἔστι μὴ εἶναι" [Fragment 2.2-2.3]). These lines capture the dual purpose of Parmenides' poem, namely, to allow the reader passage into insight through images (Proem and Doxa) and ontology (Truth). (Note: here I use Curd's revision of the McKirahan translation as my point of departure for translations.) For a thorough discussion of the allusions in the Proem and their relationship with the ontological argument that follows, see Miller 2006. I discuss this matter more in section 3.3.

way, Parmenides uses the familiar literary style to lay the groundwork for his most difficult logical and ontological argument, but allows this style to fall away when presenting the heart of his insight. This motif is also at play in other Platonic dialogues, perhaps most notably in the *Parmenides*. In the *Parmenides*, the rich and evocative literary elements inherent from the dramatic frame through Socrates' refutation of Zeno (126a – 130a), well represented, for example, by Plato's description of the flashes of admiration that Parmenides and Zeno direct at Socrates (130a7-9), eventually give way to purely abstract discourse lacking any reference to particularity whatsoever in the dialogue's concluding eight hypotheses (137c – 166c).[53]

That such a motif is found in other key contexts suggests that this is an intentional stylistic move on Plato's part, rather than a sheer lack of interest in, or inability to add, dramatic flourishes. We must recognize that the move from a literary style to abstract discourse is intentional and an indication of something significant. Regarding this significance, note that both Parmenides' poem and the *Parmenides* dialogue include an ontological insight after the falling away of literary elements, respectively the insight into necessary and unopposed being and the notions in the eight hypotheses concerning the one. I submit that division in the *Sophist* should be understood similarly as a moment of significant ontological insight, or at least the beginning of it. As I see it, Plato uses this stylistic progression in the move from the comparatively literary *Theaetetus,* along with

[53] The dialogue begins with a rich description of the journey from Clazomenae to Athens and the meeting of Adeimantus and Glaucon, referencing Parmenides' poem and the *Republic* in the process. Further literary and dramatic embellishments continue as Plato establishes the narrative voice of the smith Antiphon (127a1), the young Socrates' arrival to meet with Parmenides and Zeno in the Potters' Quarters (127c2), through, e.g., Plato's description of the admiring smiles that Parmenides and Zeno flash at Socrates during his account of forms (130a7-9). But following the beginning of the hypotheses, beginning at 137c4, all such details have been replaced solely by abstract discourse. For more on the senses in which the introductory frames of the *Parmenides* set the tone for the dense ontological passages that follow in the hypotheses, see Miller 1990: 4-70 and Sanday 2015a: 3-74.

the *Sophist's* brief dramatic frame, into the passages on division to create an atmosphere in the dramatically latter two dialogues that is timeless and placeless for good reason. He does this to shape the context best suited to considerations of fundamental aspects of being, and the dialogue's contents should be understood in this way. The lack of the familiar comforts of literary and dramatic flourishes also forces the reader to prepare for the sort of difficult 'mental gymnastic' that will be required for the bifurcatory division exercises and subsequent digression into ontology.

The cast of characters and their dramatic roles in the *Sophist* simultaneously reflect this need for abstraction while also maintaining Plato's unyielding commitment to a view of philosophy as always embodied in the particular individual and enacted in a specific spatiotemporal context. Put differently, the need to rely primarily on abstract discourse inaugurated by the difficult subject matter does not override Plato's commitment to writing in dialogue form using known historical figures almost exclusively. I will argue, furthermore, that division is a practice heavily reliant on the needs and natures of its practitioners. By my reading, division yields accounts that do not exhaust the object of scrutiny, and yet nonetheless capture its nature in some sense that is appropriate to the lived context of the inquiry and the nature of the inquirers, as the seven different accounts of the sophist yielded in this particular investigation indicate. Understanding division as a method and the accounts yielded by it in the *Sophist* thus entails a consideration of the characters who are practicing it.

The *Sophist* features Socrates, Theaetetus, and Theodorus, three characters familiar from other dialogues, alongside the Eleatic Stranger, an unknown and unnamed

philosopher from Elea.[54] The contents of the dialogue, however, only hint at the

personalities of these individuals, and nearly all hints come in the dialogue's dramatic

setup (216e–218b), or, in the cases of the Stranger and Theaetetus, in fleeting instances

elsewhere. Like the dramatic setting and date, most of what we know about the

characters in the *Sophist* therefore comes through sources external to the dialogue itself,

although these external details are largely confirmed by the fleeting hints that we do get.

Because understanding the method of division specific to the *Sophist* entails considering

the personalities of the interlocutors using it, we turn now to consider these characters.

2.2.2   The Eleatic Stranger

Appearing in no other contemporaneous source in the historical record other than

the *Statesman*, the apparently fictional[55] Eleatic Stranger introduces the method of

division and oversees its diairetic cuts and, moreover, the discourse throughout the

dialogue.[56] The Stranger is never addressed by name, and the biographical details that

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[54] Translating ξένον […], τὸ […] γένος ἐξ Ἐλέας at 216a2–3. Throughout this study I refer to this character either as the Eleatic Stranger or simply the Stranger. I choose 'Stranger' over the alternative 'Visitor' mostly in deference to the tradition followed by the majority of recent English commentators, and also out of an appreciation for the mysteriousness that such a term entails (albeit at the expense of the further entailments of the English word "strange.") I capitalize 'Stranger' for ease of the reader's distinguishing mentions of this character from similar words not denoting human individuals. For a reasonable and well-taken defense of the alternative 'Eleatic visitor' appellation, see Blondell 2002: 319 fn18. Duerlinger 2005: 4ff uses the title "the philosopher," but since this indicates the unwritten dialogue that would complete the trilogy in one sense I find this to be potentially confusing.

[55] While nearly all of the approximately 77 speakers in Plato's dialogues connect to figures attested to in the historical record, at least a few are apparently fictional. These include the anonymous Athenian Stranger of the *Laws* and *Epinomis*, and less certainly also include Diotima of the *Symposium*, Philebus and Protarchus of the *Philebus*, perhaps Timaeus of the *Timaeus* and *Critias*, and the additional speakers in the *Laws* and *Epinomis*. Cf. Nails 2002.

[56] Regarding the Stranger's status as fictional, I note here that this interpretation dates back at least as far as Diogenes Laertius 3:52. I follow Blondell 2002: 318-326 in assuming that it is very likely that the Stranger is fictional, that any strong evidence suggesting his connection to a historical figure is now apparently unavailable to us, and hence that we are justified in treating his anonymity as interpretively and philosophically significant.

arise regarding him in the course of the two dialogues are scant.[57] We first learn from

Theodorus that the Stranger is from Elea (216a2), the home of Parmenides and Zeno, and

that the Stranger associates with the 'comrades' (ἑταίρων) of these two (216a1–5). The

Stranger thus is situated purely with reference to Eleatic philosophy, and particularly that

of Parmenides, Zeno, and their unspecified 'comrades.'

Although he does not give the character a name, Plato does provide this context

for the character, and thus the Stranger's association with the context of philosophy is

more primary to his character than his individual identity *qua* name. The Stranger's

anonymity furthermore reflects the lack of dramatic and literary flourishes in the text. By

having an anonymous and otherwise unknown character discuss the obscure ontological

concepts at issue in the dialogue, Plato is able to present these concepts in the context of

philosophizing broadly, and more narrowly in the Eleatic tradition.

The Stranger's identity and significance as a Platonic interlocutor have been

debated by commentators since antiquity.[58] I interpret this character as a representative

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[57] While the Stranger is often described as a dry and sober interlocutor, I suggest instead that his sincere engagement and investment in the discussion is palpable at least at times, suggesting that he is not purely a 'god' but instead 'god-like.' Good examples of his emotive engagement include 249a1-4 and 254a8-b2. One commentator who is particularly sensitive to the emotive arc of the conversation, albeit speculatively so at times, is Klein 1977.

[58] One popular interpretation of the Stranger's character is what has been called the 'standard view,' that the Stranger is a 'mouthpiece' and hence stand-in for Plato. Good examples include Frede 1996 and Rowe 1996. The standard view derives its name from its dominance in mid-to-late 20th century scholarship. Nearly always interpreters take it that the Stranger is a stand-in for Plato that espouses what is generally called Plato's "later" view. I explain the reasons why I do not take up any developmentalist accounts above (see 1.2.2). In any event, the adherents of this view in its most straightforward form hold that the Stranger essentially is Plato himself, and hence that the Stranger's accounts can be taken as Plato's definitive and unchallengeable word on a given matter on which the Stranger is speaking. The standard view, though, is at least somewhat problematic for several reasons. Upon taking it up, one must immediately answer the question as to why Plato's 'mouthpiece' is both anonymous and a foreign *xenos* in Athens. Put differently, if the character is *merely* a stand-in for Plato, it is strange indeed to find that the few biographical details that we do receive regarding the Stranger do not match those of Plato. In other words, on this view it is apparently the case that Stranger is connected to but not coextensive with Plato; but this merely returns us to our original questions regarding the Stranger's identity and association with Plato's own philosophy. The standard view, I therefore hold, is inadequate insofar as it offers no explanation as to the meaning of the Stranger's identity. Furthermore, were such an interpretation correct, we would be forced to treat all of

of the Eleatic tradition with similarities to Plato's character Parmenides who nonetheless

is fictional and philosophizes in a manner relevant to the needs arising from the specific

context in the trilogy in which he appears.[59] The introductory frame in which the

Stranger situates his dialectical exercise recalls that of the eponymous character in Plato's

Parmenides dialogue, and Plato takes care to offer dramatic details acting as parallels

between the Stranger and Parmenides character. Both the Stranger and Plato's

Parmenides express hesitation at embarking upon vast accounts spanning many words

and dense concepts (cf. *Sophist* 217e1–3 and *Parmenides* 137a3–5),[60] and ultimately

elect to proceed via dialectic with a passive and compliant interlocutor (*Sophist* 217c9–d2

and *Parmenides* 137b7–c2).[61] Each displays a dialectical method aimed primarily at

yielding a metaphysical account, with additional pedagogical aims.[62] That the Stranger is

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the Stranger's claims as definitively Platonic, though there are good reasons to be hesitant to maintain a critical distance from at least some of his claims. (For compelling accounts of some specific mistakes that the Stranger makes in the *Statesman*, see Rosen 1983: 67 and Miller 2017. For a further helpful discussion of the Stranger's role as a Platonic figure that is nevertheless not coextensive with Plato himself, see Miller 1980: xxiv-xxxiii.) But a rejection of the standard view does not entail that the Stranger's views in the dialogues should not be taken seriously or used to understand Plato's philosophy more broadly. By my reading, the Stranger must be taken seriously as a philosopher, but should not be understood as identical to Plato.

[59] Cf. Bluck 1975: 31-32.

[60] At *Sophist* 217e1–3, the Stranger says, "Socrates, I feel a certain shame about making our first meeting together not an exchange of brief words for words, but instead a spinning out at great length of a long account by myself – even if it is with another – as if I were making a display (ὦ Σώκρατες, αἰδώς τίς μ᾽ ἔχει τὸ νῦν πρῶτον συγγενόμενον ὑμῖν μὴ κατὰ σμικρὸν ἔπος πρὸς ἔπος ποιεῖσθαι τὴν συνουσίαν, ἀλλ᾽ ἐκτείναντα ἀπομηκύνειν λόγον συχνὸν κατ᾽ ἐμαυτόν, εἴτε καὶ πρὸς ἕτερον, οἷον ἐπίδειξιν ποιούμενον.)" At *Parmenides* 137a3–5, Parmenides says, "I too, when I think back, feel a good deal of anxiety as to how at my age I am to make my way across such a vast and formidable sea of words (κἀγώ μοι δοκῶ μεμνημένος μάλα φοβεῖσθαι πῶς χρὴ τηλικόνδε ὄντα διανεῦσαι τοιοῦτόν τε καὶ τοσοῦτον πέλαγος λόγων.)"

[61] In the *Sophist,* Socrates asks the Stranger whether he prefers to give accounts by himself or with a partner, referencing the conversation depicted in *Parmenides* in the process (217c5-9). The Stranger states his preference for proceeding with an "unirritating" and "compliant" partner. At *Parmenides* 137b7, Parmenides dismisses Socrates as his interlocutor in favor of Aristoteles, the youngest person present, for "he will give the least trouble and would be the most likely to say what he thinks." (Aristoteles later became a member of the Thirty Tyrants, the brutal oligarchical regime in late 5th century Athens, suggesting some irony at play in this moment.)

[62] While the metaphysical concerns in the divisions are granted by nearly all commentators, some recent commentators hold that the Stranger's method is doomed to fail due to the Stranger's neglect of considerations of *value*, either in all diairetic exercises or in those specifically depicted in the *Sophist*, as opposed to the non-bifurcatory divisions in the *Statesman*. (For the view that the Stranger fails in both

not meant to be Parmenides himself is clear, however, since Theodorus introduces him as

Parmenides' 'comrade' and the Stranger explicitly differentiates himself from the 'father

figure' of Parmenides (e.g., at 237a, 241d, 242c, 244e, 258c-d). Thus Plato makes clear

the connection between the Stranger and Parmenides through dramatic details without

leaving open the possibility that the two are one and the same. The effect of this is to

offer the Stranger as a figure within a philosophical lineage, and to call to mind the

Eleatic philosophical project broadly and Parmenides the character more narrowly

without committing to the voice of any particular historical figure. The Stranger is not a

god – he is occasionally embarrassed, prone to misspeaking, and retracts his views on

occasion – but his 'godlike' (216c1) status ensures that his philosophizing is first-rate.

Plato further has Theodorus add that the Stranger is 'more measured' (μετριώτερος) [63]

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dialogues to consider value, see Gonzalez 2000. For the view that the Stranger neglects value in his bifurcatory exercises in the *Sophist* and early *Statesman* but corrects the error by the time of the non-bifurcatory analysis of care for the human community [beginning at 287c] in the Statesman, see Ionescu 2013.) My view overlaps with this view at least in some ways, which I will address as we progress, but suffice it to say here that I do not think that Plato intends to present the Stranger for critical reflection on the basis of the Stranger's neglect of value, but instead that the role of value becomes increasingly apparent as the *Sophist* progresses and forces key changes in the *Statesman*, increasingly making explicit what has been the largely implicit role of value. I furthermore want to guard against the danger of missing the importance of the preparatory value of the diairetic investigation for the accounts arrived upon in the central metaphysical digressions, as these will allow us to conceive of value through conceiving of being with reference to goodness (more on this throughout). Furthermore, these passages bear very meaningfully on other key metaphysical passages in Plato's work that are framed with reference to value, such as the *Republic* V-VII (in a dialogue on justice), *Philebus* 11a-31b (a dialogue about pleasure), the Seventh Letter (Plato or pseudo-Plato's discussion of his life and political ambitions) and Aristotle's account of the "unwritten teachings" (including the lecture 'On the Good.')

[63] Theodorus, interpreting eristic entailments in Socrates' description of the Stranger's 'divine' appearance, says: "That, Socrates, is not the stranger's turn of mind; he's more measured (μετριώτερος) than those who take eristic (τὰς ἔριδας) seriously. And to me the man seems to be in no way a god, though certainly godlike. For that's what I call all philosophers. [οὐχ οὗτος ὁ τρόπος, ὦ Σώκρατες, τοῦ ξένου, ἀλλὰ μετριώτερος τῶν περὶ τὰς ἔριδας ἐσπουδακότων. καί μοι δοκεῖ θεὸς μὲν ἀνὴρ οὐδαμῶς εἶναι, θεῖος μήν· πάντας γὰρ ἐγὼ τοὺς φιλοσόφους τοιούτους προσαγορεύω]" (216b8–c2). Here I follow Duerlinger 2005: 79, and deviate from Brann, et al. in rendering "τὰς ἔριδας," the plural accusative form of 'ἔρις,' as "eristic" rather than "polemic." The term appears again in the fifth diairetic account of the sophist, beginning at 225 c 10. Benardete 1984: II.3 chooses "contentiousness," Fowler 1921: 267 "disputation," and Ambuel 2007: 179 "eager for debate." Cornford 1957: 177 fn2 discusses the notion in terms of eristic as well and notes that this phrase "τῶν περὶ τὰς ἔριδας ἐσπουδακότων" is taken in modified form from Isocrates (*Kata Soph.* I: 291b; *Helena* 1 and 6; *Antid.* 258): "οἱ περὶ τὰς ἔριδας ἐσπουδακότες." This casts

than those arguers who 'busy themselves with eristic' (ἔριδας, derived from 'ἔρις'),

(216b9).[64] This separates the Stranger off from those sophistical arguers who engage in

eristic, which the Stranger himself will later identify as a component of sophistry

(ἐριστικὸν) at 225c10.[65]

The Stranger, an Eleatic and non-sophistical philosopher, is significant as the

inheritor of the extended inquiry that began in the *Theaetetus*. In his first passage of

dialogue in the *Sophist,* Socrates refers back to the provocative aporia that followed his

maieutic exercises in the *Theaetetus* and suggests that the Stranger has a specific function

to perform in the greater context of the trilogy. His description of the Stranger as a 'sort

of refuting god' (θεὸς ὤν τις ἐλεγκτικός, 216b7) draws directly on the notion of *elenchus*

(ἐλεγκτικός) for which Socrates is known, as is on display in the *Theaetetus*.[66] Thus the

Stranger is introduced as the divine – or divine-like – provider of refutation (*elenchus*)

that will advance the work from the previous day and lead to a deeper kind of *logos*. The

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Theodorus' claim about the Stranger in the broader context of the warring intellectual traditions in Athens, a theme also developed at length in the *Theaetetus*.

[64] Elsewhere Plato makes explicit the contrast between the sorts of dialectical inquiry oriented by truth with which the Stranger will engage and mere eristic conducted for the love of victory. One example is the contrast between "dialectical" and mere "eristic" discourse in describing the 'god-given method' at *Philebus* 17a1–4.

[65] Another popular interpretation of the Stranger is to hold that the Stranger is intended by Plato either to be a sophist or to exhibit fallacious reasoning or doctrines in a manner similar to sophists. (For this view, see Cherubin 1993, and Zuckert 2000: 91-97 and especially 93-95. Similarly, Ambuel 2007 takes Plato's project in the *Sophist* to be an extended reflection on the parallels between Eleatic philosophy and sophistry, and hence the Stranger to represent an overlap of these two traditions.) In other words, by this reading the Stranger is guilty of some of the same sins of argumentation as is the sophist, that Plato was aware of these sins and largely intended these dialogues to be depictions of these sins *in situ*, and hence these dialogue should be understood to play an essentially critical function. This interpretation therefore entails a rejection of the Stranger's findings on the basis of his flawed character, method, or both. I hold that there is much that is confused and misleading about this view. As I seek to defend in what follows, a careful and critical reading of the Stranger's accounts yields extensive true insight into Platonic philosophy, and truth more broadly. To endorse the Stranger's character overall is not to say that he is not prone to err on occasion (surely he is), that all his accounts have equal value (I argue below that this cannot be right), or that he should not be treated critically at least in some instances. But I hope to show in what follows that taking the Stranger seriously yields many philosophical riches.

[66] Perhaps it would be right to add that the refutation depicted in the dramatically neighboring *Euthyphro*, and perhaps *Cratylus* as well, is also relevant here.

first step toward this goal that the Stranger makes, in the name of articulating the nature of the sophist, is offering inchoate means for considering the ontology of commingling through the division exercises.

2.2.3 Socrates and additional dramatis personae

While the Stranger is, without a doubt, the central figure in the dialogue, the other characters play significant supporting roles as well. Plato's character Socrates is of course the principle interlocutor and driving philosophical force in the majority of the dialogues, and only rarely does Socrates appear in a mere supporting role as is the case in the *Sophist*.[67] Socrates' silent presence here is striking for a number of reasons. First, through the thematic established in its opening pages, the *Sophist* and *Statesman* together imply another trilogy, to be completed by a dialogue called the *Philosopher*. Socrates asks the Stranger about the understanding of the relationship between the sophist, statesman, and philosopher among those in Elea;[68] after the Stranger has Theaetetus help him work out the account in the *Sophist,* Theodorus suggests to Socrates early in the

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[67] Considering those texts handed down to us in the earliest edition of Plato's corpus, that of Thrasyllus of Mendes in the first century CE, Socrates is the principle interlocutor in the following dialogues that are generally taken to be authentic: *Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Phaedo, Cratylus, Theaetetus, Philebus, Phaedrus, Charmides, Laches, Lysis, Euthydemus, Protagoras, Gorgias, Meno, Lesser Hippias, Ion, Menexenus,* and *Republic.* This is likewise the case for most specious or spurious dialogues, including *Alcibiades, Second Alcibiades, Hipparchus, Rival Lovers, Theages, Greater Hippias, Minos, On Justice, On Virtue, Sisyphus, Halcyon, Eryxias,* and *Axiochus.* Socrates' lead presence in the spurious dialogue *Demodocus* is unstated but implied (cf. Hutchinson in Cooper 1998, 1699). Socrates is present for the discussions depicted in the *Symposium, Sophist, Statesman, Clitophon, Timaeus,* and *Critias*, but is (arguably, at least in the case of the *Symposium* and perhaps also the *Clitophon*) only a contributor to these conversations. Aside from Letters, Epigrams, and a few minor spuria, this leaves only *Laws* and the specious *Epinomis* as Platonic texts that do not include depictions of Socrates.
[68] Though, indeed, these distinctions are foreshadowed in the *Theaetetus*, and particularly in the digression from 172c-177c. For considerations of the distinctions drawn implicitly among the sophist in Protagorean form, the philosopher, and the lawyer or politician (anticipating, but not quite reaching, the subject of the statesman), see Polansky 1992: 134-148 and Bradshaw 1997.

Statesman that accounts of the statesman and the philosopher are to follow (*Statesman* 257a3-4). Other details throughout the diptych lead us to expect a third dialogue, including the discussion of the philosopher's art at *Sophist* 253d1–e3. This has led to much speculation among commentators as to why Plato apparently only provided explicit accounts of the sophist and the statesman, and not the philosopher, despite indicating through numerous dramatic hints that such an account would complete the discussion conducted in the diptych.[69]

It is therefore especially striking that Socrates, the philosopher *par excellence*, is present but largely silent for the discussion. Moreover, Socrates helps to set the stage for the investigation that follows, doing much work in his six passages of dialogue in the *Sophist* to animate the course of the investigation. After Theodorus begins the *Sophist* by recalling the *Theaetetus* and introducing the Stranger, Socrates assesses the Stranger via two Homeric allusions – in rare instances of explicit gestures to outside texts in the *Sophist* – that frame the dialogue's action and invoke the themes with which the interlocutors will be struggling. This also anticipates the reference to *Iliad* 6 with which the dialogue concludes (268d4–5), creating the Homeric frame that contains the dialogue

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[69] I follow Gill 2012: 1 fn1 in inferring that the *Philosopher* dialogue was probably never written, given that Diogenes Laertius' discussion of the two ancient editions of Plato's canon, those of Thrasyllus of Mendes and Aristophanes of Byzantium, contain only surviving dialogues and lack references to a *Philosopher.* Many have written of this 'missing' dialogue, resulting in many and conflicting views. I side ultimately and in a broad sense with Gill 2012, who argues that through the *Parmenides* and *Sophist* (along with closely related passages in *Statesman, Philebus,* etc.) Plato offer his readers the tools to give an account for the philosopher herself, although I do not necessarily interpret the *Parmenides* and *Sophist* passages in exactly the same manner as Gill. Among other popular explanations, those who follow what is called the "Parity Assumption" or "Joint Illumination" (following Owen 1971, 229-231) hold that the account of the sophist's nonbeing brings to light its opposite, that is, the realm of being in which the philosopher dwells; hence no further account of the philosopher is needed. For recent and modified versions of this view, see Notomi 2007: 257-262 and Thomas 2008: 649-653. (I challenge the Parity Assumption below in Chapter 5.) Others have argued that different dialogues take the place of *Philosopher.* These include arguments for the *Parmenides* (Wyller 1972) and *Philebus* (Davidson 1993: 193). For other discussions of this 'missing' dialogue, see Cornford 1935: 168-169, Miller 1980: iv, Klein 1977: 4-5, Dorter 1994: 235-237, Frede 1996: 149-151, and Notomi 1999: 23-25.

within its boundaries. In response to Theodorus' introduction of the Stranger, Socrates

states the first of these, containing allusions to *Odyssey* Books 9 (271 ff.)[70] and 17 (485-7

ff.):[71]

> Has it escaped your notice, Theodorus, that – by Homer's account – you're
> bringing not a stranger but some god? He says that besides the other gods the god
> of strangers especially becomes a companion to those who participate in just
> reverence, and that he "looks down on both outrages and lawful conduct." So
> perhaps here too some one of the higher powers may be accompanying you, to
> keep an eye on us and to refute us, since we are feeble at giving accounts – a sort
> of refuting god.
>
> ἆρ᾽ οὖν, ὦ Θεόδωρε, οὐ ξένον ἀλλά τινα θεὸν ἄγων κατὰ τὸν Ὁμήρου λόγον
> λέληθας; ὅς φησιν ἄλλους τε θεοὺς τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ὁπόσοι μετέχουσιν αἰδοῦς
> δικαίας, καὶ δὴ καὶ τὸν ξένιον οὐχ ἥκιστα θεὸν συνοπαδὸν γιγνόμενον ὕβρεις τε
> καὶ εὐνομίας τῶν ἀνθρώπων καθορᾶν. τάχ᾽ οὖν ἂν καὶ σοί τις οὗτος τῶν
> κρειττόνων συνέποιτο, φαύλους ἡμᾶς ὄντας ἐν τοῖς λόγοις ἐποψόμενός τε καὶ
> ἐλέγξων, θεὸς ὤν τις ἐλεγκτικός (216a6–b7).

Here Socrates foreshadows both ontological and methodological concepts that will be at

play in the dialogue. His Homeric allusion introduces the central themes of being,

seeming, truth, and falsity by recalling Odysseus' return to Ithaca disguised by Athena as

a beggar (*Odyssey* 17).[72] That is, the theme of the disguised Odysseus invokes the

question of true being and the tension between the phenomena of experience and the true

and concealed nature that underlies them that will be worked out through the discussion

of sophistry that follows.[73] Furthermore, Socrates invokes the relationship between

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[70] Here Odysseus begs the cyclops Polyphemus for mercy with reference to the guest-host relationship.

[71] Here Odysseus describes to Antinous that "gods can truly make themselves appear like foreign strangers, assuming many shapes and haunting cities, to investigate human pride and their obedience to laws."

[72] For discussion of each allusion, see Rosen 1983: 62-63 and 65. Socrates also quotes this passage in a critical context at *Republic* 381d, where he criticizes Homer for depicting the gods in non-self-identical ways; cf. Sallis 1975: 460.

[73] The theme of sophistry suggests another cluster of dialogues in which the *Sophist* could be set. Although sophism is a recurrent theme throughout many Platonic dialogues (e.g., *Meno*, *Theaetetus*, and *Republic*, all featuring present or conjured sophistic interlocutors), the set of dialogues featuring Socrates and comrades approaching historical sophists head on – *Gorgias, Protagoras,* and *Euthydemus* – finds a natural pairing with the *Sophist*, in which the implicit methodology (if there is one) of the sophistical interlocutors is set into a series of accounts. While I do not treat the subject here, it is possible that the

xenoi, that is, that which binds guest and host into a mutual relation, through reference to *Odyssey* 9.

Socrates follows by pointing to the difficulty of discerning (διακρίνειν) the 'kind' (γένος) of the philosopher, given that those who are not 'artificially so' but instead are philosophers 'in their very being' appear 'entirely without honor' (μηδενὸς τίμιοι) to some and 'worthy' (ἄξιοι) to others, and furthermore appear (φαντάζονται) sometimes as statesman, sometimes as sophists, and sometimes as 'altogether mad' (μανικῶς) (216c3–d2). Hence Socrates here further expands the distinction between seeming and being that he introduced through the allusions to the *Odyssey*, which will be developed throughout the dialogue. At stake are accounts of true being, as opposed to the deceptive order of seeming at play in mortal doxa.

Given the controversy regarding the distinction between sophists, statesman, and philosophers in Athens, Socrates asks the Stranger whether these three names are considered to divide and mark off (διαιρούμενοι, 217a8)[74] one kind or three in the Stranger's native Elea. Socrates' question, in other words, is whether in the view of those of Elea the three names pick out a single kind or three separate kinds, given their apparent similarity. This introduces the theme of dividing nature according to joints that will become explicit in the method of division. Speaking for the first time, the Stranger

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multiple definitions of the sophist's 'art' that arise in the *Sophist* can perhaps be read to map on to the various sophists that we meet in other Platonic dialogues. The only sophist mentioned explicitly in the dialogue is Protagoras, via his texts on wrestling, at 232d10; cf. Ambuel 2007: 38 fn. 51. (In this near lack of reference to actual sophists, the *Sophist* contrasts sharply with the other major Platonic dialogues on subjects related to sophistry; cf. Sallis 1975: 462.) Ambuel 2007: 42-48 argues that each sophist account yielded by the bifurcatory division exercises (see section 2.2 below) corresponds to a particular sophist (or type of sophist with multiple instances) depicted in Plato's dialogues. Ray 1984: 3ff makes similar conjectures, albeit noncommittally. Brown 2010: 160 associates sophists one through four with Protagoras, Hippias, and the other sophists depicted in the *Protagoras*, and sophist five with Euthydemus and Dionysodorus of the *Euthydemus*.

[74] This is the first appearance of a form of the verb 'διαιρέω,' to divide or cleave in two, in the dialogue.

responds by asserting that though his people consider these to be three separate kinds, 'to mark off (διορίσασθαι)[75] clearly what they are one by one' is 'not a small nor an easy job' (217b3–4). Thus, the task of 'marking off' these three, beginning with the sophist, is set before the interlocutors. The Stranger will use his method of division to consider the marking off of forms from one another at length in what follows.

Socrates' penultimate sentence in the dialogue, immediately before suggesting Theaetetus or one of the other young mathematicians as an interlocutor, is his promise that '[a]ll of us will listen up meekly' (πάντες γὰρ ὑπακούσονταί σοι πρᾴως, 217d4–5). As promised, he spends the rest of the dialogue silently present. Socrates' silent presence is meaningful in at least a few different senses. First, we can imagine that the Eleatic Stranger is aware of Socrates, perhaps having learned of his interactions with Parmenides and Zeno depicted in the *Parmenides* dialogue through his associations with the comrades of Parmenides and Zeno. Hence the Stranger is likely aware of Socrates' considerable stature as a thinker and speaker. The Stranger expresses 'a certain shame' (216d9) at meeting and first conversing with Socrates under these conditions, presumably at least in part because he must offer his account in the context of a group discussion with younger philosophers, drawing upon the conversation from the preceding day. Given the Stranger's desire to contribute to the account already underway and also to address Socrates directly, we are justified in interpreting the Stranger to intend his discourse simultaneously to satisfy the young interlocutors present *as well as* Socrates.[76] In other words, the Stranger must present an account that suits the needs of the immediate interlocutors while simultaneously gesturing at deeper implications that a critical listener

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[75] The aorist middle infinitive form of 'διορίζω,' 'to delineate.'
[76] Cf. Miller 1980: 8-10.

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would find valuable. In this way, the Stranger's task is a mimetic copy of the task of a

Platonic text, insofar as it is the job of both is to address and satisfy students at vastly

different levels. Socrates' silent presence reminds us that the significance of the implicit

meanings of given concepts are here as meaningful and important as ever in a Platonic

dialogue, and hence that we as readers are warranted in attending to these meanings in

our attempts to understand the course of the dialogue as a whole.

Second, Socrates' silence dramatically anticipates his impending absence. With

the allusions to his forthcoming trial and execution, the dialogue is tacitly set within the

backdrop of Socrates' departure and the loss of the guidance of the philosopher *par

excellence*. If the Athenians are going to continue to sustain themselves with the

nourishment of philosophy, they will need to learn to distinguish the philosopher from the

sophist and statesman, and to practice discerning being according to sameness and

difference through delineating and sharing accounts.

Finally, considering Socrates' silent presence helps to situate our understanding of

division. The Stranger's diairetic exercises will prove to be adjacent to methods of

investigation that Socrates either implicitly or explicitly draws upon in other dialogues,

but not quite coextensive with any of them. Socrates considers versions of division in

several instances in the dialogues, notably in the *Phaedrus* and *Philebus*,[77] and the

method of division in the *Sophist* is (I will argue) similar to, but not coextensive with,

Socrates' notions of division elsewhere. Socrates' presence calls these discussions to

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[77] Here I do not address the question of whether division – or a so-called "early" form it – appears in
Gorgias at 454e and 464a–466c. For an argument in favor of this supporting a 'unitarian' reading, see
Shorey 1903: 31 fn.200 and 51 fn. 371. For more cautious interpretations, see Dodds 1959: 226 and
Moravcsik 1973: 158-159.

mind, but I take it that his silence suggests at least some distance from the accounts in other dialogues.

Before turning to division, the other characters present also warrant brief considerations. These characters include the two young philosophically-inclined mathematicians Theaetetus and Socrates the Younger – who serve as the Stranger's interlocutors in the *Sophist* and the *Statesman* respectively – along with the elder mathematician Theodorus and other young, silent mathematicians.[78] In his eponymous dialogue, Theaetetus had received some of the most lavish praise of any Socratic interlocutor, and he distinguished himself in that dialogue as an especially patient and attentive student capable at times of genuine innovation. His reprised role in the *Sophist* does not entail any apparent contradictions of these traits, and his patience and memory are both here discernable. Although his role in offering positive contributions is noticeably reduced, we are nevertheless justified in drawing on the account of the character in the previous dialogue. Theaetetus in the *Sophist* proves to be an intelligent and attentive interlocutor who has not yet mastered key metaphysical distinctions or dialectical methods. He furthermore refers to Socrates the Younger as his 'partner in age and physical exercise (συγγυμναστήν), someone not unaccustomed to working out with me in almost everything' (218b4–5).[79] This reference to 'gymnastics' in anticipation of dialectical exercise recalls Parmenides' imperative to the young Socrates to train in

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[78] Several passages strongly suggest the presence of additional non-speaking people, and probably fellow young mathematicians. Perhaps most tellingly, Socrates addresses the Stranger at 217d3–7 and suggests that "you can choose anyone you wish of those who are here. All of us will listen up meekly. Still, if you use me as advisor, you will choose one of the young men, this Theaetetus here or even one of the others (τῶν ἄλλων), if that's more to your mind." Among "the others," only Socrates the Younger is mentioned explicitly (at 218b1–5); though no others are mentioned, the elder Socrates' use of the plural implies that at least one beyond Socrates the Younger is counted among "the others." Other passages that seem to corroborate this view include *Theaetetus* 144b-c and especially *Sophist* 218a.

[79] ἐμὸν δὲ ἡλικιώτην καὶ συγγυμναστήν, ᾧ συνδιαπονεῖν μετ᾽ ἐμοῦ τὰ πολλὰ οὐκ ἄηθες.

mental gymnastics (γύμνασαι) and foreshadows the strenuous task through which the Stranger is about to put Theaetetus (and the reader) when taking up the method of division.[80]

While Theodorus plays a prominent role in the *Theaetetus*, his role in the *Sophist* is reduced largely to that of the mediator, as he introduces the Eleatic Stranger to the crowd and hence to Socrates. Several smaller clues, including Socrates' jab at his neglect of relative value with which the *Statesman* opens (257b1–2), suggest that his character as a distinguished mathematician who lacks a keenness for philosophy remains here intact.[81] Theodorus' presence should furthermore indicate that division arises amid the presence of mathematicians, and mathematics is itself a study of the fittingness of various elements with one another and the compounds that result, as in the simple example of the addition of two numbers. Division is significantly related to mathematics (as I will consider in 2.3.5 below), but the Stranger will situate it in what follows as a decidedly philosophical art.

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[80] At 135c7– d5, Parmenides speaks to the young Socrates about the necessity of preparatory 'training' (γυμνασθῆναι) for performing dialectic with a view to the beautiful, the just, the good, and all of the forms.
[81] Throughout the *Theaetetus*, Theodorus exhibits an inability to grasp the nature of philosophical inquiry despite his erudition and friendliness to Socrates. His silent presence throughout the majority of the *Sophist* and *Statesman* thus is significant insofar as it continues to suggest the presence of those Athenians who, despite good intentions, have failed to understand Socrates and thus have done a disservice to philosophy. Thus the silent presences in the *Sophist* include the philosopher (Socrates), a representative of those elder Athenian intellectuals who have failed to understand philosophy (Theodorus), and the young students whose task it will be to take up philosophy anew in the oncoming absence of the philosopher (Socrates the Younger and the silent, unnamed young mathematicians who are also present). The task of differentiating the sophist, statesman, and philosopher is thus enacted among a group of people for whom the distinction is of the utmost importance.

2.3   Division (218b – 236e)

2.3.1   Division and the angler (218b – 221c)

Following this discussion of its context, we turn to division itself. The moves I make through the rest of the chapter are as follows. I begin in section 2.3.1 by considering the introductory account of division (218b7–c6) and paradigmatic angler example (218b–221c), the three brief passages in the *Sophist* in which the Stranger indicates the aims of division (235b9–235c7, 253d1–e3, and 264d12–265a2), and by way of contrast, the section in the *Phaedrus* in which division is discussed (266b3–9 ff.). With these themes addressed, from sections 2.3.2 to 2.3.5 I offer a defense of interpretive stances on several controversies regarding division in the *Sophist* with reference to some specific features of the first six diairetic accounts of the sophist. Finally, I conclude in 2.4 with a short discussion of some ways in which these passages have prepared the way for the forthcoming moves in the central digression of the *Sophist*.

Led by the Stranger, the interlocutors begin to develop the themes of marking off (διορίζω) and dividing (διαιρέω) according to the discernment (διακρίνω) of kinds (γένος) in the manner of the genuine Eleatic philosophy that contrasts with eristic (ἔρις) considered in the dialogue's brief dramatic frame by engaging in the division exercises over the next 18 Stephanus pages. While Plato devotes much space to depicting division in action, he does not have his characters make very basic aspects of the method explicit. The method's function, meaning, value, relationship with other methods of dialectic, and status in terms of its seriousness or jest therefore are debated issues among scholars.   The exercises are dense and mentally taxing, which I have suggested above is Plato's way of ensuring that his readers are well-stretched and committed to the mental gymnastics

required for the investigation into being and structure in the exercise in the central digression that lies ahead. The diairetic passages therefore require careful attention, as do the passages with which Plato frames them. Before introducing division via the angler paradigm and then proceeding forward in search of the sophist, the Stranger gives a preliminary indication of the purpose of the investigation:

> In common with me you're now to join the investigation, starting first, as it appears to me, from the sophist; and you're to search for and make apparent in speech (ἐμφανίζοντι λόγῳ) whatever he is (τί ποτ᾽ ἔστι). For right now you and I have only the name in common about this fellow; but each of us may have, for ourselves, his own private notion of the job we call by that name. But we must always and about everything be in agreement with each other about the thing itself (τὸ πρᾶγμα αὐτὸ) through accounts rather than about the name alone apart from an account.

> κοινῇ δὲ μετ᾽ ἐμοῦ σοι συσκεπτέον ἀρχομένῳ πρῶτον, ὡς ἐμοὶ φαίνεται, νῦν ἀπὸ τοῦ σοφιστοῦ, ζητοῦντι καὶ ἐμφανίζοντι λόγῳ τί ποτ᾽ ἔστι. νῦν γὰρ δὴ σύ τε κἀγὼ τούτου πέρι τοὔνομα μόνον ἔχομεν κοινῇ, τὸ δὲ ἔργον ἐφ᾽ ᾧ καλοῦμεν ἑκάτερος τάχ᾽ ἂν ἰδίᾳ παρ᾽ ἡμῖν αὐτοῖς ἔχοιμεν· δεῖ δὲ ἀεὶ παντὸς πέρι τὸ πρᾶγμα αὐτὸ μᾶλλον διὰ λόγων ἢ τοὔνομα μόνον συνωμολογῆσθαι χωρὶς λόγου (218b7–c6).

The Stranger characterizes the exercises to follow as 'making apparent in speech' (ἐμφανίζοντι λόγῳ) the whatness (τί ποτ᾽ ἔστι) of the sophist. This then is a *'What* is it?' question entailing the search for a definitional account of the thing under scrutiny that captures the nature of the thing (here the sophist) and marks off the thing from all other things. This account is to represent something common and shared by which the interlocutors as both philosophers and citizens can partake in a common understanding of the thing itself (τὸ πρᾶγμα αὐτό). To understand the Stranger's meaning here it is helpful to remember the fragment of Heraclitus in which Heraclitus says that "[a]lthough the *logos* is common, fools live as though they have a private understanding (τοῦ λόγου δ' ἐόντος ξυνοῦ ζώουσιν οἱ πολλοὶ ὡς ἰδίαν ἔχοντες φρόνησιν)" (B2).[82] Similarly here, the

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[82] Translation taken from the Curd edition.

Stranger points to the 'idiocy' (ἰδίᾳ, derived from ἴδιος) entailed in maintaining one's

own private notion at the expense of an understanding of the common (κοινῇ, in the

Stranger's dialect, or ξύνος, in that of Heraclitus). Sharing a name is insufficient, and the

goal of division is initially established with reference to the need for a shared account

(λόγος). Thus it is clear from the start that this method entails aiming at the level of

community, insofar as the goal is to make apparent what is (or should be) shared in

common.

The Stranger proposes taking up the way of inquiry (μέθοδον, 218d4) through an

easier notion than the difficult target of the sophist, and chooses the angler as the

paradigm (παράδειγμα, 218d9). Though the angler is 'familiar' and 'not worthy of much

serious interest,' the angler is instructive insofar as this art will be relevant in tracking

down the sophist, offering a way of inquiry (μέθοδον) and several distinctions suited to

the purpose at hand (219a1–2), that is, practicing division with the goal of finding an

account of sophist.[83] The angler will serve as the paradigm for the investigation into the

sophist that follows in the first five accounts of the sophist, insofar as the angler account

will suggest several definitional terms relevant to the investigation of the sophist and help

the interlocutors to articulate their pre-discursive grasp of the angler into a full account.[84]

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[83] Cornford 1935: 259 and 268-269 argues against an understanding of this method as an inquiry into predication in the sense of Aristotelian logic. Many 20th century commentators have tried to argue for an understanding of division as related to the notions of predication and Aristotelian logic; this view is perhaps best represented by Vlastos 1973: especially 273-274, who argues that the conception in the *Sophist* entails a blurred distinction between 'ordinary' and 'Pauline' predication. For further arguments in the spirit of Cornford against the correspondence between the modern conception of predication and that which is sought through division, see Lafrance 1979: 33-34 and Rosen 1983: 29-48.

[84] For discussions of the roles of paradigms (or 'models') in Platonic inquiry broadly and division specifically, see Miller 1980: 55-64, Gill 2006, Murr 2006, Ambuel 2007: 8-9, Sanday 2017, and Smith 2018. For the argument that using paradigms entails something related to the so-called 'theory of recollection' that Socrates describes in the *Meno* and *Phaedo*, see Bluck 1975: 34-40. While I do agree that the discussion of recollection bears on the notion of paradigms, I do not think this is because "Plato" held the view that the soul recollects knowledge of the forms from a time prior to birth in the simple sense for which some interpreters have advocated.

Furthermore, we will use the Stranger's paradigmatic diairetic account of the angler to understand the method of division in this context more broadly.

The Stranger accounts for the angler (218e2–221a8) as (1) an expertise (*technē*) of (2) getting (not making) through (3) manipulation (not willingness) by (4) hunting (not fighting) (5) ensouled (not soulless) animals (6) in water (not on land), hunting (7) by striking (not via enclosures) by (8) day (not night) and from (9) below (not above) (218e7–221a3, summarized from 221a8–c2.[85] See Appendix 1a for schematic rendering of the tableau[86] yielded by this investigation.) The Stranger proclaims that he and Theaetetus have "not only reached agreement about the name, but have also gotten a sufficient hold on the account of the job itself (συνωμολογήκαμεν οὐ μόνον τοὔνομα, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸν λόγον περὶ αὐτὸ τοὖργον εἰλήφαμεν ἱκανῶς)" (221b1–3). Division has helped to rid Theaetetus of his private understanding of the angler and provided him with an account that in principle is available to all with reference to the structure of the angler's job insofar as it is different from other adjacent figures and notions, such as, for example, the hunter who strikes from above.

The angler exercise has prepared the interlocutors to pursue the sophist in speech, but their method of doing so, division, is not yet clear. The Stranger has Theaetetus join him in dividing prior to explaining the method and the aims of its employment, and proceeds to give a series of disconnected hints regarding the method as the investigation progresses. In three instances throughout the text, the Stranger accounts for this method,

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[85] Among commentators of whom I am aware, Rosen 1983 offers the most detailed analysis of each step of each division. For commentary on the steps in the analysis of the angler, see Rosen 1983: 91-99.
[86] I owe the description of the bifurcatory diairetic accounts as 'tableaux' to Ron Mawby. I do not intend a technical meaning by this term, but instead only that the accounts can (but need not necessarily) be written out in the style of a truth tree. Doing so is helpful, but I do not claim to be capturing any aspect of the Stranger's or Plato's intention by using this term or practice.

but each is a mere indication. The clearest description of division comes late in the

dialogue, beginning at 264d12. Here the Stranger suggests to Theaetetus that they return

to their diairetic search for the sophist after their lengthy digression:

> Let us therefore try again to pass onward. Let's split the proposed kind (γένος) in two, always keeping to the right hand part of the section and hold fast to the community to which the sophist belongs, until we've stripped away all his common features and left him [in][87] his indwelling nature. Then we may show him forth, first to ourselves and next to those who are by nature nearest in kind to such a Way (μεθόδου).
>
> πάλιν τοίνυν ἐπιχειρῶμεν, σχίζοντες διχῇ τὸ προτεθὲν γένος, πορεύεσθαι κατὰ τοὐπὶ δεξιὰ ἀεὶ μέρος τοῦ τμηθέντος, ἐχόμενοι τῆς τοῦ σοφιστοῦ κοινωνίας, ἕως ἂν αὐτοῦ τὰ κοινὰ πάντα περιελόντες, τὴν οἰκείαν λιπόντες φύσιν ἐπιδείξωμεν μάλιστα μὲν ἡμῖν αὐτοῖς, ἔπειτα καὶ τοῖς ἐγγυτάτω γένει τῆς τοιαύτης μεθόδου πεφυκόσιν (264d12–265a2).

This passage indicates several important components of division. First, the dialectician

using division is to begin with a kind or form (γένος),[88] split it in two, and keep to the

'right hand' part of the split.[89] This split is to distinguish two separate parts that compose

the prior whole.[90] This process is to continue until the form has been stripped away of its

features held in common with the discarded 'left hand' forms and been shown in its

simple and unique nature via the account composed of the 'right hand' forms. This

allows the interlocutors, as well as those who are 'near' to the 'Way' (μεθόδου), to

account for the form in question.

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[87] "In" seems to have been omitted due to typographical error in the Brann, et al. translation.

[88] Cf. Cohen 1973, Moravcsik 1973, Brown 2010: 155.

[89] The majority of divisions in *Sophist* and *Statesman* (prior to 287b) follow this bifurcatory method. One notable exception is *Sophist* 266a–d, which I argue in the concluding section 6.2 indicates the inevitability of bifurcation eventually proving inadequate for accounting for the co-constitutive nature of beings in a sufficiently robust way and following the account of forms.

[90] In the *Statesman*, the Stranger will reflect that this cut is best made as close to the middle as possible, e.g. cutting the form 'number' into 'even' and 'odd' rather than 'less than or equal to ten-thousand' and 'greater than ten-thousand;' cf. *Statesman* 262c9–263a1. It is not clear whether all *Sophist* divisions reflect this measure.

The Stranger's second description of division came earlier, shortly after the first six accounts of the sophist. While seeking the image-making art in pursuit of the sophist at 235b, the Stranger had paused to offer a brief indication of the interlocutors' aims:

> We are to divide the image-making art as quickly as possible and make our descent within it. Should the sophist confront us right off, we are to seize him by order of Royal Reason, and we are to display our quarry as we hand him over. Should, however, the sophist plunge down somewhere among the parts of the imitative art, we are to follow him closely, always dividing the part that receives him, until he is caught. In any event, neither he nor any other kind is ever to boast of escaping the Way (μέθοδον) of those who can pursue matters both piecemeal (καθ᾽ ἕκαστά) and all over (ἐπὶ πάντα).

> ὅτι τάχιστα διαιρεῖν τὴν εἰδωλοποιικὴν τέχνην, καὶ καταβάντας εἰς αὐτήν, ἐὰν μὲν ἡμᾶς εὐθὺς ὁ σοφιστὴς ὑπομείνῃ, συλλαβεῖν αὐτὸν κατὰ τὰ ἐπεσταλμένα ὑπὸ τοῦ βασιλικοῦ λόγου, κἀκείνῳ παραδόντας ἀποφῆναι τὴν ἄγραν: ἐὰν δ᾽ ἄρα κατὰ μέρη τῆς μιμητικῆς δύηταί πῃ, συνακολουθεῖν αὐτῷ διαιροῦντας ἀεὶ τὴν ὑποδεχομένην αὐτὸν μοῖραν, ἕωσπερ ἂν ληφθῇ. πάντως οὔτε οὗτος οὔτε ἄλλο γένος οὐδὲν μή ποτε ἐκφυγὸν ἐπεύξηται τὴν τῶν οὕτω δυναμένων μετιέναι καθ᾽ ἕκαστά τε καὶ ἐπὶ πάντα μέθοδον (235b9–235c7).

In addition to reinforcing the notion of searching to find the intended target, this passage entails the indication that the search can move according to a 'piecemeal' (καθ᾽ ἕκαστά) or 'global' (ἐπὶ πάντα) search. Nicholas White's translation of these terms as 'the particular' and 'the general' captures another aspect of the philosophical force in this distinction,[91] that is, that division entails pursuing matters in both particular and general terms.

Finally, a third passage, notoriously vexing and of central importance to this entire investigation, warrants introduction here. This passage seems to promise to hold the key to an interpretation of division and dialectic in the *Sophist,* but its exact meaning

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[91] White in Cooper 1997: 256. Ambuel 2007: 203 interprets the Stranger here to be claiming that the employers of the method are able "to pursue every kind in every place;" similarly, Duerlinger 2005: 101 translates the Stranger's claim as involving "those capable of pursuing [the method] in this way in each and every case."

has been a subject of significant controversy among commentators. I will not be able to substantiate my own interpretation of the passage until we have considered being, structure, and the notion of commingling in the account of the great kinds (as will be my aim throughout Chapters 3 through 5). Nevertheless, because the passage bears on our consideration of division, it is helpful to begin to consider it here. In the heart of the central digression (beginning at 253d1), the Stranger gives a brief but tantalizing indication of what the dialectician discerns, with my roman numerals separating off some points that I will discuss briefly here and in more depth in section 5.2.3:

> ES: Won't we claim that it belongs to dialectical knowledge to divide (διαιρεῖσθαι) according to kinds and not to regard the same form as other nor the other as the same?
> THEAE: Yes, we'll claim this.
> ES: Then the man who can do this has an adequate perception of (i) one form (ἰδέαν) extended everywhere through many things, each one of which lies apart, and also (ii) many [forms] which are other than one another and are embraced by one external to them; again [αὖ], he perceives (iii) one unified [form] composed of many wholes as well as (iv) many [forms] marked off as entirely apart. But to know this is to know how to discern, according to kind, where each is able to commune and where not.

> Ξέ: τὸ κατὰ γένη διαιρεῖσθαι καὶ μήτε ταὐτὸν εἶδος ἕτερον ἡγήσασθαι μήτε ἕτερον ὂν ταὐτὸν μῶν οὐ τῆς διαλεκτικῆς φήσομεν ἐπιστήμης εἶναι;
> Θεαί: ναί, φήσομεν.
> Ξένος: οὐκοῦν ὅ γε τοῦτο δυνατὸς δρᾶν μίαν ἰδέαν διὰ πολλῶν, ἑνὸς ἑκάστου κειμένου χωρίς, πάντη διατεταμένην ἱκανῶς διαισθάνεται, καὶ πολλὰς ἑτέρας ἀλλήλων ὑπὸ μιᾶς ἔξωθεν περιεχομένας, καὶ μίαν αὖ δι' ὅλων πολλῶν ἐν ἑνὶ συνημμένην, καὶ πολλὰς χωρὶς πάντη διωρισμένας: τοῦτο δ' ἔστιν, ᾗ τε κοινωνεῖν ἕκαστα δύναται καὶ ὅπη μή, διακρίνειν κατὰ γένος ἐπίστασθαι (253d1–e3).

The explicit reference to dividing (διαιρεῖσθαι) at 253d1 makes clear (or so I will argue) that division is at issue in this passage. To indicate for now an interpretation that I will spend the next several chapters unpacking, I read this passage as a description of the dialectician's art of discerning the communing of forms via Platonic diairesis in both non-bifurcatory and bifurcatory forms. It is relevant to our purposes now insofar as it

begins to indicate the function of bifurcatory division. What is at issue, we learn here, is (i) that division is an investigation into the *oneness* of a form insofar as it is common to many separate things, (ii) the *sameness* of multiple different forms, (iii) the *structure* of a unified form, and (iv) the *difference* among forms. For now we should note that this passage indicates that division is an exercise into discerning (i) oneness, (ii) sameness, (iii) structure, and (iv) difference. In the case of the account of the angler, for example, the angler is shown in its structure (all right-hand forms), sameness (the sense in which its constitutive parts are themselves parts of other structured wholes, as in the example hunting common both to manipulation and to willingness), difference (those marks that separate each of its parts from the discarded left-hand forms), and oneness (insofar as the exercise yields an account of the angler and not any of the other forms).

Considering the angler paradigm and the brief discussions of method in the *Sophist* has nearly prepared us to consider the first six diairetic accounts of the sophist, but one more interpretive controversy must first be addressed. This is the question of whether the Stranger's method is best understood as 'division' or 'collection and division.' I will argue for the former, namely, that this method entails 'division' most essentially and 'collection' at most parenthetically.

To consider these two possibilities, 'division' and 'collection and division,' let us turn briefly to the *Phaedrus*. There, Socrates discusses a method (or methods) of 'division and collection' (τῶν διαιρέσεων καὶ συναγωγῶν, 266b3-4) as a viable means of dialectical inquiry (or multiple means of dialectical inquiry). Socrates there says the following:

> I myself am certainly a lover, Phaedrus, of these processes of division and
> collection (διαιρέσεως καὶ συναγωγῶν), so that I may have the ability to speak

and think. If I believe that someone else has the capacity to see into a single thing and to see the natural outgrowth from a single thing toward many things, I pursue him, following right behind his tracks as if he were a god. […] I have been calling those who have the capacity to do this 'dialecticians.'

τούτων δὴ ἔγωγε αὐτός τε ἐραστής, ὦ Φαῖδρε, τῶν διαιρέσεων καὶ συναγωγῶν, ἵνα οἷός τε ὦ λέγειν τε καὶ φρονεῖν· ἐάν τέ τιν᾽ ἄλλον ἡγήσωμαι δυνατὸν εἰς ἓν καὶ ἐπὶ πολλὰ πεφυκόθ᾽ ὁρᾶν, τοῦτον διώκω 'κατόπισθε μετ᾽ ἴχνιον ὥστε θεοῖο.' καὶ μέντοι καὶ τοὺς δυναμένους αὐτὸ δρᾶν […] καλῶ δὲ οὖν μέχρι τοῦδε διαλεκτικούς (*Phaedrus* 266b3–9).

Noting Socrates' description here, many commentators on the *Sophist* and *Statesman* diptych have understood the method at play in these dialogues to be that of 'collection and division.'[92] There are at least some compelling reasons for this, perhaps most notably Socrates' references to the 'capacity to see a single thing […] through many' (δυνατὸν εἰς ἓν καὶ ἐπὶ πολλὰ, *Phaedrus* 266b4-5) as the art of 'dialecticians' (διαλεκτικούς, *Phaedrus* 266b9), which so closely echoes parts of the *Sophist* discussion, most notably 253d1-e3.

Nevertheless, I argue that imposing the technical term 'collection and division' onto the *Sophist* creates more problems than it solves. The urge to understand the Stranger's method in the *Sophist* with close reference to Socrates' methodological description and exercises in the *Phaedrus* leads to problematic accounts of the *Sophist* methodology. First, note that no explicit reference to 'collection' (συναγωγῶν) appears in the titular references to the method in the diptych,[93] including the Stranger's three discussions of method in the *Sophist* considered above. Second, the difficulty of

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[92] E.g. Stenzel 1964 (1931), Cornford 1935, Bluck 1975, Klein 1977, de Rijk 1986, Notomi 1999, Ionescu 2013, among many others. I consider some of these accounts in more depth below.

[93] Cf. Sayre 2006: 36-37, who notes that the term 'collection' is missing from *Sophist* 235c8 and 253d1, and *Statesman* 285a4-5 and 286d9, and instead contains an explicit discussion of the method of 'division' only. There is a long tradition of inferring collection to be implicitly at play in *Sophist* 253d1-e3 beginning at least with Stenzel 1964 (1931) and Cornford 1935. I discuss this interpretation in depth in section 5.2.3; cf. Miller 2016.

conceiving of explicit acts of collection in the Stranger's methodological moves has led to some opaque and question-begging assertions by commentators. This is perhaps most evident in Richard Bluck's commentary. Bluck rightly notes that it is difficult to infer how an act of collection is at play in nearly any of the Stranger's diairetic accounts, and in this I agree with Bluck. But Bluck nevertheless concludes from this that, "Probably, in fact, a Collection is made before each Division, though sometimes the collection process receives no open mention."[94] Bluck does not, however, explain how or why we are justified in inferring this 'unmentioned' 'collection process' on the basis of the Stranger's explicit comments, and this supposition that the collection act must be understood as 'unmentioned' indicates the difficulty of understanding the *Sophist* divisions with respect to collection.

I suggest instead that these kinds of readings entail taking collection to be related to the method of inquiry in the *Sophist* solely on the basis of the perceived authority of Socrates' description of this method in the *Phaedrus*. Furthermore, I hold that the notion of 'collection' is more proper to the Socratic method of elenchus, given that his interlocutors upon initial Socratic scrutiny typically define the their target concepts with reference to lists of examples that satisfy the term being sought: e.g., Euthyphro's list of impious deeds as a definition of impiety at *Euthyphro* 5d–e, and Theaetetus' list of various *technai* as a definition of knowledge at *Theaetetus* 146c–d. 'Collection,' in other words, is more clearly relevant to the Socratic method than the Stranger's Eleatic method, and therefore is a separate method warranting separate consideration.[95] In summary,

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[94] Bluck 1975: 34. Bluck considers the role of collection in his larger discussion of method in the *Sophist* (34-45.)

[95] Cf. Ambuel 2007: 39, who makes a similar argument, albeit with references to an understanding of alleged deficiencies in Eleaticism and the Stranger's method that I do not share.

because the name 'collection and division' distorts several of the Stranger's articulations

in the diptych, and because the act of collection is more properly suited to Socratic

practice in the greater context of the trilogy, I hold that a commitment to the term

'collection and division' both fails to capture the moves made in the text and threatens to

distort the actual nature of the method and hence is best left aside. I therefore prefer the

name 'division' over 'collection and division' when discussing this method.[96]

2.3.2   Discovery and the first sophist (221c – 223b)

With division thus situated, we are prepared to consider and interpret the first six

diairetic accounts of the sophist. Due to the breadth of interpretations of bifurcatory

division defended by scholars, it is necessary for me to frame my own account with

reference to the controversies at play in previous interpretations. I will argue that

bifurcatory division, one type of division among others both in Plato and elsewhere in

antiquity,[97] is a method of (i) dialectical discovery (not demonstration) of (ii) definitional

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[96] Following commentators like Ambuel 2007: 38-39 and Miller 2016: 326-329. Nevertheless, some
interpretations of the role of collection in the *Sophist* overlap with parts of my own account. E.g., Ionescu
2013: 44-47 suggests ways that collection is explicitly at play in the *Sophist* divisions. While I agree that
"we are encouraged to regard division as part of a complex process that proceeds in both directions […]
since it recognizes that every division presupposes a prior synthesis or collection," I nonetheless worry that
the 'collection and division' name entails the potential distortion of passages in the *Sophist* and that the
terminological and substantive evidence suggests that we are better suited in understanding the process as
that of division, albeit within a plane of interrelated terms that owe their identity to one another via
sameness and difference. Other novel arguments that collection is at play in the *Sophist* include de Rijk
1986: 78-79 and Notomi 1999: 2 fn. 75. Cornford and Klein each hold middle positions entailing a
rethinking of the term 'collection,' as Cornford argues that collection is not at play in the method of the
interlocutors but is nonetheless exhibited throughout the movement of the text (Cornford 1935: 171), while
Klein holds that each articulation of the preceding divisions counts as a collection (Klein 1977: 14ff).
Klein's account is that the final summaries that follow each division exercise count properly as collections.
On this view, after the right-hand forms have been divided from the left-hand forms, they are then gathered
together (i.e., collected) in an account. I find this view intriguing and note that it has the virtue of
proceeding in the order of the terms that Socrates names in the *Phaedrus*, i.e., division and [then]
collection. Nevertheless, I find the view to be too speculative to endorse.
[97] Other helpful discussions of divisions in various contexts in Plato, Aristotle, and their ancient followers
include Ambuel 2007: 10-32 and Bénatouïl and Ierodiakonou 2019.

and taxonomic accounts that entails (iii) considering the commingling of *either* forms *or* particulars depending on the level of understanding guiding the inquiry. Furthermore, (iv) while its method yields definitional accounts, these definitions are not themselves exhaustive of the objects under scrutiny due to the method's situatedness in mortal inquiry broadly and the setting of a particular inquiry and context more locally. Thus conceived, division is a dialectical *process,* not a means of 'generating' axiomatic truth, which offers the possibility of shared inquiry and calls for further inquiry at increasingly higher levels of understanding in the pursuit of a richer account of the thing itself (τὸ πρᾶγμα αὐτό).[98]

The method's results entail disclosing the structure of interrelations between determinate intelligibilities by which each determinate term is constituted by those like it in kind. In cases of preceding terms, this includes the disclosure of interrelations of terms that exhibit causal priority over it, and in the case of those terms from which it is disconnected, the participatory relation of otherness (which we might also call nonbeing, difference, or non-participation; more on that in Chapters 3 and 5). Put differently, it is a means of disclosing identity with reference to otherness, where 'identity' is taken to be a set of essential but non-exhaustive predicates that explain but are not themselves explained by the thing identified. I assume that these are accounts are best taken seriously and as intrinsically valuable, and insist that they are, if nothing else, *instrumentally* valuable as we stretch ourselves in preparation for the ontological considerations ahead.[99]

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[98] I am indebted to Ionescu 2013 in this interpretation, as I will describe below.

[99] For an excellent discussion of the relationship between metaphysical discussion elsewhere in Plato, particularly in what is typically called the "middle dialogues," see Moravcsik 1973: 324-348. While I do not agree with all aspects of Moravcsik's account, particularly in his dependence on the notion of

After setting down the paradigmatic account of the angler, the Stranger and

Theaetetus proceed to delineate five diairetic accounts of the sophist. These accounts

arrive in rapid succession, giving the audience and the reader the difficult task of tracking

these fine-grained distinctions. The definition of the first sophist (221c3–223b6) builds

upon several cuts made in the pursuit of the angler, while also entailing cuts that deviate

from those of the diairetic account of the angler. The first sophist is defined as (1) the

expert in (2) getting (not making) (3) footed (not non-footed) and (4) tame (not wild)

prey through (5) "credibility-producing" (not forcible) means in (6) private (not public)

and through (7) pay-earning in pursuit of the receiver's virtue (not gift-bearing in the

pursuit of the receiver's "erotic" pleasure).[100] (See Appendix 1b for the tableau

disclosing the first sophist.)

One of the numerous controversies at play in the interpretation of division in the

Sophist regards whether Plato is depicting characters *discovering* accounts or

demonstrating predetermined accounts. Put differently, this question entails addressing

whether bifurcatory division is intended merely as a means of *presenting* accounts

through demonstration or *arriving upon them* through inquiry.[101] Both possibilities entail

conceiving of division as holding a pedagogical function, but the 'demonstration' view

entails *reducing* division to the act of teaching or explaining a given account that has

already been conceived by the primary interlocutor. By contrast, the 'discovery' view

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"existence" and developmental interpretation of the dialogues, this paper is very helpful in drawing
together notions across various dialogues.

[100] See Rosen 1983: 102-106 for discussion.

[101] While the view that bifurcatory division is intended to *demonstrate* accounts seems to me to have lost
ground in recent decades, it nevertheless held sway strongly in the past. Crombie 1962 (2): 380-383 and
Moravcsik 1973: especially 165-166 offer versions of this view. Bluck 1975: 39 characterizes this process
explicitly not as 'discovery' but rather 'clarification' related somehow to the alleged theory of recollection,
a view echoing Cherniss 1944 and endorsed by de Rijk 1986: 78. Cornford 1935: e.g. 187 offers an early
'discovery' view. For recent defenses of 'discovery' views, see Gill 2010 and Ionescu 2013.

entails emphasizing that the pedagogical upshots of the investigation are the product of the shared work done by all interlocutors.

I endorse the 'discovery' view and find support for it in this passage. Some preliminary indications of the strength of such an interpretation appear in this first exercise. For example, at 221c6 the Stranger implores Theaetetus to join him in trying 'to find' (εὑρεῖν, from εὑρίσκω, 'I find') the sophist. This suggests that what follows is not mere guidance toward a doctrine, but instead the application of a method of seeking. Similarly, later uses of forms of the verbs σκοπάω ('I behold,' twice in 229b2–3, again at 229d8, and again at 232b11), ζητέω ('I seek,' 229b11), and again εὑρίσκω (231d2), all indicate that the interlocutors understand themselves to be seeking and finding something, rather than merely disclosing an account possessed by one and lacked by another.

But there are deeper and more troubling entailments in holding the view that division is demonstrative. An understanding of division as a means of disclosing a predetermined account would entail that "Plato's" philosophy could be captured in treatise form, which violates several core principles of reading Plato for which I advocate (see section 1.2.1). Such an interpretation would, furthermore, imply that the responding interlocutor's role is inessential and eliminable, and that the account could be given through *any* secondary interlocutor or *without* a secondary interlocutor; this interpretation therefore entails that division is not a dialectical process. But this cannot be right. The connection between division and dialectic is firmly secured at 253d1-e3 considered above, where dialectic is understood as a collaborative and not merely demonstrative method. Additionally, the Stranger's repeated emphasis of this method as shared inquiry,

and the joining of interlocutors via the 'Way' (e.g., at 235c7 and 265a2) corroborates this point.

Furthermore, interpreting the divisions as strictly demonstrative would cause problems for our understanding of the divisions as they begin to falter in the *Statesman*, such as the 'joke' regarding the 'laughable king' (*Statesman* 266c1–9) that arises following the final bifurcatory exercise.[102] If divisions were strictly demonstrative, it is unclear why the Stranger would "demonstrate" a dialectical account that he ultimately rejects as laughable and insufficient, and one moreover that seems to fail. To put the same point one further way, the demonstrative interpretation entails that all diairetic exercises are intended equally and in equal seriousness. At the very least, it entails that all division exercises are intended to demonstrate implicitly the relative strength and weakness of given accounts; but there is nothing in the Stranger's description of these accounts to indicate this.

Finally, I argue also that the paradigm of the angler-as-hunter captures both the sophist's art and the interlocutor's pursuit of the elusive sophist. The notion of hunting is brought up early in the exercise and recurs frequently, serving as a paradigm both for the thing being sought (the sophist) and the method with which the interlocutors are seeking (bifurcatory division).[103] Hunting is, of course, more applicable to seeking a discovery than seeking to demonstrate a predetermined account. In other words, the hunting paradigm suggests that this inquiry is a seeking, not a displaying. Thus I argue that it is

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[102] Cf. Miller 2017.

[103] This is thus similar to the role of the weaver paradigm in pursuit of the *Statesman*; for there (especially 277a – 287b) weaving acts as a paradigm both for understanding the statesman and for the non-bifurcatory division exercise upon which the interlocutors are about to embark beginning at 287c. For more on this, see Miller 1980: 55-72, Sanday 2017, and Smith 2018.

better to understand division in terms of the teacher-student dialectic yielding discoveries of value to each interlocutor, rather than a means of passing doctrine from a purely active speaker to a purely passive listener.

2.3.3 The web of relations disclosing the second, third, and fourth sophists (223b–224e)

While the first diairetic account of the sophist offers insight into the question regarding division's status as a process of discovery or demonstration, the next accounts are helpful in other senses. In particular, the rapid-fire set of cuts that yields the second, third, and fourth accounts offers insight into a similar problem regarding whether the aim of division is to yield a definition or a taxonomy. Commentators have disagreed, that is, as to whether it is best to understand the result of divisions on the model of a linear definition (e.g., the angler is [1] the expert in [2] getting…, etc., moving forward in the kind of linear form inherent in a written sentence), or the structural model of a taxonomical tableau. A consideration of these cuts will show that this distinction is not mutually exclusive, and that the definitions secured through this method entail reference to taxonomy.

After disclosing the first account of the sophist, the Stranger makes the surprising move of doubling back onto an earlier branch of the tableau and continuing to divide in search of the sophist, leading to the next three accounts. The second sophist (223b9–224d4) described by the Stranger entails a return to the tableau established by the angler and first sophist. This sophist is accounted for as having (1) expertise in (2) getting

[implicitly not making][104] via (3) exchanging (not hunting) through (4) marketing (not gift-giving) via (5) trafficking products made by others (not selling of self-made goods) in the mode of (6) trading between cities (not peddling within a city) wares related to the (7) soul (not body) through (8) learnable selling (not displaying) related to virtue of the soul.[105] (See Appendix 1c for the tableau that discloses the second sophist.)

Immediately after recapping the second sophist, the interlocutors again double back, this time to terms within the tableau that disclosed the second sophist, to describe the third (224d5–9) and fourth (224d11–e3) sophists. The interlocutors return to cut (6) made in pursuit of the second sophist, suggesting that both bisective cuts of trafficking follow the sophist; the third sophist, that is, is also located on the branch delimiting those who peddle wares within a city.[106] Similarly for the fourth sophist, and moving further up the tableau yielded in the pursuit of the second sophist, the interlocutors revisit cut (5), suggesting that the branches of marketing entailing both peddling the wares of others and peddling one's self-made wares disclose the sophist.[107] (See Appendix 1d for the tableau that discloses sophists three and four.)

With these in mind, let us consider the question of whether the accounts yielded by division are best understood as fundamentally definitional or taxonomical. Beginning with a distinction drawn between the results of division in the *Phaedrus* and those of the *Sophist-Statesman* diptych, commentators have debated whether the division exercises in the diptych are intended primarily to disclose the definition of a given entity only*,* or

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[104] I use brackets to indicate alternative branches that are named in other diairetic exercises in the text but are not explicitly mentioned in these particular instances.
[105] See Rosen 1983: 106-109 for commentary.
[106] See Rosen 1983: 110-112 for commentary.
[107] See Rosen 1983: 112-114 for commentary.

instead a taxonomical network of relations that extend from a given concept.[108] Put

differently, this is the question of whether the goal is ultimately disclosing a particular

node on a branch (i.e., a definition), or instead the whole-tree structure (i.e., a broader

taxonomy).[109]

The controversy in this mutually exclusive form is problematic for several

reasons. First, I argue that both definitional and taxonomical accounts are at play in the

dialogue. I take it that the presence of the former, definitional accounts, is

uncontroversial given the angler and seven sophists disclosed by division. Each of these,

I argue, is a definition in a fairly straightforward sense, as evidenced at least in part by

my capturing them in the structural model of a linear sentence. But taxonomical accounts

are present as well, as evidenced by the tableaux in the Appendix. In particular, the third

and fourth sophists under consideration here are only articulable with reference to the

predetermined structure that yielded the second sophist. In other words, these accounts

are only possible because of the prior taxonomy.

Furthermore, taxonomy is at play more basically in the bifurcatory exercises in

the text. This is the case perhaps most clearly in the interlocutors' account of the making

art as divided into the two mortal parts and the two divine parts (266a1–d9) at play in the

account of the seventh sophist. The interlocutors here sketch a web of interrelations in

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[108] Pellegrin 1986: 38 argues for a sharp distinction between the goal of division in the *Phaedrus* and that of division in the *Sophist-Statesman* diptych. For Pellegrin, the former entails disclosing the web of relations of madness and locating love as a particular moment within these interrelations, as opposed to the goal of definitional accounts in the diptych. Brown 2010: 154-155 argues for a more moderate version of this, holding that the goal in the diptych is "predominantly" definition and not taxonomy, while also hedging that taxonomy is present in the *Sophist*, pointing also to 266a–d as I do above. I agree with Pellegrin's interpretation of the *Phaedrus* cuts, and furthermore follow Brown and take this to suggest that the emphasis on definitions in the diptych is not at the complete expense of at least some taxonomical considerations.

[109] Borrowing from Brown 2010: 154.

the service of their broader account of the seventh sophist and the 'apparition-making'
that such an account entails (see section 6.2 and Appendix 1f below). To put the matter
briefly for now, in this taxonomical cut the Stranger divides making into (I) human
making, composed of (Ia) human thing-making and (Ib) human image-making, and (II)
divine making, composed of (IIa) divine thing-making and (IIb) divine image-making. I
take it that this taxonomical structure suggests that the Stranger is inferring a taxonomical
structure of the objects of inquiry such as making, and that the goal of division is not
merely to define but also to show the interrelations of terms among one another. It
follows therefore that taxonomy is at play at least in some sense in the *Sophist*.

But more profoundly, I argue that the distinction between definitional and
taxonomical accounts entails a false dichotomy. A definitional account is, ultimately, an
account of the conceptually prior terms that explain, but are not themselves explained by,
the thing in question. But these explanatory terms are themselves subject to further
definitions, entailing reference to the conceptually prior terms that explain, but are not
themselves explained by, them in turn. Giving a definitional account, then, *necessarily*
entails disclosing one aspect of the web of interrelations that constitute a given thing. To
posit the two separately is to misapprehend their relationship.

Of course, there is no reason to deny that the *emphasis* in the diptych is
definitional accounts, as opposed to elaborate taxonomies, and that the goal is not the
taxonomy itself but instead the branch within the taxonomy that suits the purpose of the
given investigation. That is, I am quite willing to grant that the divisions in the *Sophist*
are *primarily* in the service of definitional accounts. But it is important to note that such
a definitional disclosure is possible only because of the web of interrelations that make

definition possible in the first place. Therefore, I argue that the accounts are best understood as definitional *and* taxonomical.

2.3.4   Form and the fifth sophist (224e–226a)

The fifth account of the sophist that the Stranger offers will help us to address a third controversy among scholars regarding division, that is, what exactly is being divided. This is the question of whether division applies to *particulars*, i.e., beings in space and time that become and perish, or *forms*.[110] Here I will consider several common lines of argumentation regarding this issue with reference to the account of the fifth sophist before discussing my own view.

Having moved backwards on the preceding branch to consider two further relations that yield two further sophists, the interlocutors then take two further steps back to the node of getting, the first branch stemming from expertise, to begin the account that will lead to the fifth sophist (224e6–226a6). But under getting, the interlocutors begin to trace a new branch. This sophist is defined as the person having a share of (1) expertise in (2) getting [implicitly not making] in the manner of (3) competing via (4) battling (not contending) in the sense of (5) disputing (not doing violence) via (6) debating (not pleading) regarding (7) eristic (not the unnamed alternative form [εἶδος, 225c2] entailing

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[110] As Moravcsik 1973 and Brown 2010: 156 note, Plato has the interlocutors refer to the divisions as *kata* or *kat'* ('according to,' or 'into') *eide* (form), *gene* (kind), and *mere* (part). This diversity of terms helps to justify my view via that of Ionescu, described below, that division occurs in accord with different levels of inquiry and understanding.

contracts and the like) resulting in (8) money-making (not mere yammering).[111] (See Appendix 1e for the tableau representing the division of the fifth sophist.)

With his use of the technical term 'εἶδος' (form) in cut (7) at 225c2,[112] the Stranger has made explicit that forms play an important role in guiding the divisions, but this role is debated. Put another way, the question is, are forms that which is divided? Or are they the *guides* for dividing our accounts of particulars? The arguments regarding the ways in which forms are in play divide into two groups, those arguments made by those who believe that forms are divided relative to the properties they designate (following the 'intensional model') and those who believe that forms guide division insofar as they indicate 'classes' in which particulars participate that act as natural joints that the diairetic exercises trace (following the 'extensional model.')[113] Each of these interpretations entails a specific conception of the relationship between forms and particulars, and division indicates some means of specifying this relationship. Thus, more is at stake in such a controversy than merely the function of division alone, insofar

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[111] See Rosen 1983: 118-131 for commentary. Additionally, Klein 1977: 20-26 takes this division to be of central importance to the themes of the dialogue, and his reflections are helpful and insightful. It bears noting that Klein understands this division to have a taxonomical, not simple bifurcatory, structure (see Klein 1977: 25ff).

[112] '*Eidos*' and its cognates appear much more frequently – seven times in total – in the cuts made after the digression, i.e., at 266c3, 264c2, c4, 265a8, 266d6, e4, 267d6. Of these, all but one, 266c3, seem to regard the technical sense of 'form.' (See Chapter 5 for more on this point; cf. Wiitala 2014b: 167-168.)

[113] Cf. Ionescu 2013: 47, whose names for and conceptions of these models I use here. Cohen 1973: 186-191 articulates a clear version of the 'intensional model,' although he believes that the model cannot be mapped onto the *Sophist* divisions without problems. Conceived through the 'intensional model,' division is the process of articulating logical entailments – e.g., if the sophist is the getter of footed prey, then the sophist entails getting and footed prey, etc. – and division thus is an exercise in delineating entailment relations. Thus conceived, forms play a primarily logical role. Advocates of the 'extensional model' include Sayre 2006: 212-213. Thus conceived, forms are that which allow for dividing at the most general class level (e.g., expertise) into more specific class levels (e.g., expertise in making and expertise in getting, etc.) before reaching the furthest level of cutting possible. Forms thus understood are class predicates through which particulars are explained. On Sayre's 'extensional model' reading, this entails dividing particulars with reference to their participation in forms, with forms indicating the natural joints by which particulars are to be cut. For more on the insufficiency of both the 'intensional' and 'extensional' models, see Brown 2010: 155 fn. 12.

as the larger conception of the relationship in Plato's thinking between particulars and

forms is here at play as well. And I note that each of these models ultimately entails an

understanding of particulars as that which is explained via dialectic. The 'extrinsic

model' entails this explicitly, while the 'intrinsic model' entails understanding forms to

disclose logical and predicative relations in which particulars engage.

There are several textual indications within and without the *Sophist* that indicate

the central role of forms in dialectical inquiry, and considering these will help us to see

the limitations of these views. One of these comes in a passage in *Republic* Book VI.

While articulating the well-known divided line analogy, Socrates describes the role of

dialectic in yielding knowledge via forms at the level of *noēsis*:

> By the [highest] segment of the intelligible I mean that which argument grasps
> with the power of dialectic, making the hypotheses not beginnings but really
> hypotheses – that is, steppingstones and springboards – in order to reach what is
> free from hypothesis at the beginning of the whole. When it has grasped this,
> argument now depends on that which depends on this beginning and in such
> fashion goes back down again to an end; making no use of anything sensed in any
> way, but using forms themselves, going through forms to forms, it ends in forms
> too.

> τὸ τοίνυν ἕτερον μάνθανε τμῆμα τοῦ νοητοῦ λέγοντά με τοῦτο οὗ αὐτὸς ὁ λόγος
> ἅπτεται τῇ τοῦ διαλέγεσθαι δυνάμει, τὰς ὑποθέσεις ποιούμενος οὐκ ἀρχὰς ἀλλὰ
> τῷ ὄντι ὑποθέσεις, οἷον ἐπιβάσεις τε καὶ ὁρμάς, ἵνα μέχρι τοῦ ἀνυποθέτου ἐπὶ τὴν
> τοῦ παντὸς ἀρχὴν ἰών, ἁψάμενος αὐτῆς, πάλιν αὖ ἐχόμενος τῶν ἐκείνης
> ἐχομένων, οὕτως ἐπὶ τελευτὴν καταβαίνῃ, αἰσθητῷ παντάπασιν οὐδενὶ
> προσχρώμενος, ἀλλ᾽ εἴδεσιν αὐτοῖς δι᾽ αὐτῶν εἰς αὐτά, καὶ τελευτᾷ εἰς εἴδη.
> (511b3–c2).[114]

If it is right to understand Socrates' articulation of dialectic here with reference to

division, and I hold that it must be (cf. the discussion of division as the dialectical art at

253d1-e3), then dialectic at its highest level is the use of forms themselves that begins

and ends in accounts of forms. Given the reliance of each model on a conclusion that

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[114] Translation taken from the Bloom edition.

does not ultimately rest in forms – i.e., the ultimate explanatory role of particulars in the 'extrinsic model,' and the role of logical explanation of particulars in the 'intrinsic model' – I hold that this passage in the *Republic* indicates that neither of these models of understanding division is sufficient to capture the full force of Platonic dialectic in the form of bifurcatory divisions.

Cristina Ionescu 2013 has posited a view of the object of division as varying relative to the level of understanding corresponding to the divided line analogy in Book VI of the *Republic*, which is closely related to the above passage.[115] I follow Ionescu in my interpretation, preferring it because it is a way of understanding division as a mode of dialectic equipped to yield accounts of a range of concepts corresponding to the level of its usage. Through this interpretation, division is carried out at the level of understanding corresponding to the four segments of the divided line: imaging (*eikasia*), belief (*pistis*), thought (*dianoia*), and understanding (*noēsis*).[116] In other words, division does not entail a commitment to an account that corresponds to any one of these levels, and therefore its results do not entail a commitment to understanding in terms of forms or particulars exclusively. Ionescu uses the example of a novice student and accomplished mathematician both practicing division on a triangle to ascertain its definition.[117] Although each may come upon accounts that are indistinguishable from one another in terms of the words that they contain, the level of understanding will vary between the student who uses *images* of a triangle (i.e., via *eikasia*) to yield an account and that of the expert who relies on *timeless mathematical principles* (i.e., via *dianoia*) to arrive upon

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[115] Ionescu 2013: 42, 47-53.
[116] Ibid 48.
[117] Ibid 49.

her account. This is similar to the distinction between understanding and true belief that Timaeus describes when asserting that it is necessary to posit forms (see section 1.3.1). Among the many upshots of this interpretation is a clear indication of the Stranger's meaning when he says that the method entails pursuing matters both pursue matters both piecemeal (καθ᾽ ἕκαστά) and all over (ἐπὶ πάντα), or through 'particulars' and 'the general.'

2.3.5 The plurality of accounts and the sixth sophist (226b–231e)

The Stranger has one more diairetic account of the sophist to offer before the lengthy digression will be necessary, and considering some of its features and the number of accounts that have now been amassed will help us to address a few remaining interpretive controversies regarding division. The interlocutors again double back, this time to their initial starting point at the form of expertise, but allow the separating art to guide them in making a new series of cuts. These cuts yield a new set of branches extending from expertise beginning with the cut of expertise into that of separating.[118] One effect of this split, which I will consider below, is to leave expertise cut in a 'trifurcatory' manner. The account of the sixth sophist ultimately entails conceiving of the sophist as part of (1) the expertise of (2) separating [implicitly not making or getting] involving (3) cleansing (not merely sorting like from like) the (4) soul (not body) through (5) teaching (not mere correction) in the form specifically of (6) education (not

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[118] For a brief but helpful discussion of the senses in which this cut of expertise into the 'separating' or 'sorting' kind (as opposed to 'making' or 'getting') yields an account of the sophist as engaged with the material conditions upon which the art exercises, and hence builds upon previous accounts, see Sayre 1969: 148-149.

vocational training) via (7) cross-examination regarding sham wisdom (not mere

scolding) (231b3–8).[119]

This leads to the question of why it is acceptable that the Stranger has now cut

expertise into three, and, perhaps more troublingly, why seemingly competing accounts

are being posited and apparently with equal endorsement. I will argue that this account

helps us to understand that the divisions are not exhaustive accounts, nor are they

timeless and axiomatic truths that capture the thing under scrutiny in full. Put differently,

division thus conceived is a *process*, not a tool employable towards a pre-established

conclusion. The goal is to progress towards knowledge, but this progress comes through

the wisdom derived from considering the commingling of forms *qua* understanding, not

in the accounts themselves *qua* answers. Later in the *Statesman*, the Stranger will

indicate that their exercises have ultimately been in the service not of their account of

statesmanship, but instead in the interlocutors' 'becoming more dialectical about all

things' (*Statesman* 285d7).[120] Thus I intend to show that we should not be troubled by

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[119] One popular view among commentators is that the sixth sophist (the 'noble sophist' or 'sophist of a noble lineage') also captures Socrates' practice, a problem of which Plato is aware and deliberately highlighting with the account; advocates of this view include Taylor 1926: 380-381, Cornford 1935: 180, Kerferd 1954, Trevaskis 1955: 36-49, and Ambuel 2007: 57. Rosen 1983: 131 asserts a similar view that this entails a 'sophist-philosopher hybrid.' Giannopoulou 2001 and Brown 2010: 152 fn. 1 discusses the history of this interpretation. Duerlinger 2005: 18-19 argues that the two methods are similar but that the sixth sophist is far less nuanced and analytic than is Socrates in terms of method. Similarly, Crivelli 2012: 22 fn. 34 argues that the progression of the sophist accounts seem increasingly more like the philosopher, but that an overlap is never quite reached. Taylor 2006 boldly suggests that Plato in his "late" phase intended this definition to represent *both* Socrates *and* the sophist, thereby critiquing his master by accusing him of sophistry (!). For an earlier rejection of the view that the sixth sophist is to be connected directly with Socrates and endorsement of the view that the sixth sophist is intended to continue the progression leading from the first five sophists, see Kerferd 1954: 84-90. Ultimately I side with Sayre 1969: 149-157, who points out that the derivation of the sixth sophist's practice from the standpoint of 'expertise' (*technē*) and not scientific knowledge (*epistēmē*) suggests that there must be a separation between the sixth sophist and the philosopher, although our attention is nonetheless being called to the similarities between the two.
[120] ἢ τοῦ περὶ πάντα διαλεκτικωτέροις γίγνεσθαι.

the presence of seven separate accounts of the sophist, or by the presence of revisionary

cuts that seem to conflict with previous accounts.

The notion of dividing *according to* (*kata* or *kat'*) forms suggests that there is

something natural, or "objective," about the cuts made. Elsewhere in other texts, both

Socrates and the Stranger suggest that division (broadly conceived) entails cutting at

natural joints in the manner of a carved animal (at *Phaedrus* 265e1–3[121] and *Statesman*

287d3[122]). Thus, the seeming arbitrariness and whimsy of the Stranger's cuts in the

diptych have troubled some commentators. Among those who take seriously the

outcomes of the divisions, some have tried to resolve this problem by giving precedence

to one particular definition, frequently the seventh sophist, over the others.[123] Others

who are suspicious of the diairetic accounts note that the accounts seem to contradict one

another.[124] In particular, sophists three and four present a challenge. In seeking the

second sophist, the Stranger first divides between the senses of marketing that entail

selling one's own wares ('self-selling,' 223d1) and selling wares made by others

('trafficking,' 223d2). But the Stranger later doubles back to identify the third sophist as

the trafficker within one's own city (224d5–9), and the fourth sophist as the sophist

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[121] τὸ πάλιν κατ᾽ εἴδη δύνασθαι διατέμνειν κατ᾽ ἄρθρα ᾗ πέφυκεν, καὶ μὴ ἐπιχειρεῖν καταγνύναι μέρος μηδέν, κακοῦ μαγείρου τρόπῳ χρώμενον[.]

[122] κατὰ μέλη τοίνυν αὐτὰς οἷον ἱερεῖον διαιρώμεθα. I follow Miller 1999 in interpreting this as a reference to non-bifurcatory division, but the line does help to draw attention to this problem as it relates to division more broadly and hence the method of bifurcatory division as we are here considering it. (See Chapter 5 for more on this.)

[123] Cornford 1935: 187 holds that the first six exercises prepare the way for the 'definitive' seventh sophist. Notomi 1999: 277-278 holds a nuanced version of this view, concluding that the first five exercises disclose the sophist from certain perspectives but nonetheless prepare the way for the seventh sophist as the 'true appearance' of the sophist.

[124] For an argument, contra that of Moravcsik that I endorse above, that the diairetic account entails irresolvable contradictions most tellingly in the cases of the third and fourth sophists through positing the same object (sophistry) to have allegedly contradictory properties (marketing via self-selling and trafficking), see Brown 2010: 157-164. Brown ultimately attributes this problem to sophistry's lacking a true essence.

selling self-made wares (224d10–e3). Thus it seems that the sophist has been placed on

two putatively divided branches, those of the self-selling marketing and marketing via

trafficking (see Appendix 1c below). This problem is similarly related to the sixth

sophist, who, through beginning on a new branch of expertise, seems to challenge the

bifurcatory account of expertise advanced previously, suggesting perhaps that this earlier

account now has been 'erased' by what follows.

But these problems fall away once we consider several important aspects of

division and Plato's thinking more broadly. First, and as J. M. E. Moravcsik 1973 rightly

argues, the method of division yields *logoi* and not 'definitions' in the modern sense of a

singular, "objective," and "exhaustive" account, or the kind of thing found in

dictionaries.[125] Instead, following Moravcsik and our considerations of the role of the

specific interlocutors above (as well as my discussion of definitions in section 1.3.3), the

model for *logoi* that Plato uses is that of mathematics. On the model of mathematical

concepts, a number can be arrived upon in any of myriad ways: for example, 'two' can be

found by adding 'one' to 'one,' removing 'three' from 'five,' etc. Furthermore, a number

can be understood as predicated in different respects relative to others: for example, 'two'

is 'greater' with respect to 'one,' 'lesser' with respect to 'three,' 'half' with respect to

four, etc. A well-known example of this relational structure in Platonic thinking is the

tripartite conception of the soul that Socrates suggests as a means of inquiring into justice

in the *Republic*. Through such a conception, an individual can be (e.g.) inclined to

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[125] Moravcsik 1973: 166 argues that the accounts' status as multiple does not challenge their rootedness in reality. He continues by arguing that Plato "did not operate with the modern dictionary-type definitions. One cannot stress too much the point that Plato's paradigms for conceptual clarification is mathematics. Given the realm of numbers, any one number can be given a number of a different correct unique characterizations in terms of its relations to other numbers and kinds of numbers."

charge into battle with respect to *thumos* while disinclined to do so with respect to *logos*. Thus, where X = 'inclined to charge into battle,' the relational structure that Socrates posits allows for a coherent account of the way in which a thing can be both X and not-X with reference to the nature of the thing's structure. Therefore, there is nothing inherently contradictory about determining that the sophist has a share of marketing with respect to self-selling and trafficking (the opposite of self-selling, and in the case of the fourth sophist) with respect to peddling (the third sophist). This helps us to see "how true it is to say that this beast is complex and, as the saying goes, not to be grabbed with one hand or the other" (226a7–9).

Once this problem has been addressed, we are in the position to see the value of division as a means of deriving accounts rooted in a particular context. Various contexts will yield true insights that are more or less illuminating of the target concept. To put this important idea differently, it will always be the case that an account is one step removed from the actual concept (e.g., sophistry) being disclosed. This mediation between a thing *as such* and a thing *as offered in an account* does not occur in isolation or in a vacuum, but rather entails a distancing that will give shape and context to the resultant account. The accounts upon which we arrive via division are no different, and they reflect the rootedness of accounting in mortal contexts.

Thus we should be attentive to the difference between accounts of the sophist without being concerned about the alleged contradictions in the various accounts. The exercises in diairetic analysis disclose a web of interrelations that offers us insight into the sophist in seven different senses. Division is valuable insofar as it offers insight into

the multiple ways in which commingling of forms give rise to the particular phenomenon of sophistry.

2.4   Chapter 2 Conclusion: Division and nonbeing

With this account stated, I conclude this chapter with an anticipation of the ways in which division has prepared the way for what follows in the dialogue, beginning with the central digression and its first component, the notion of nonbeing. I suggest that the diairetic exercises offer a model of thinking nonbeing not in terms of nonbeing *as such*, but instead of being as defined by difference or otherness in the sense of non-participation in form X, which each account entails. In other words, division is related to the forthcoming digression insofar as it offers a model, however simple, of the role of nonbeing conceived as otherness or non-participation in constituting beings. Thus conceived, the angler *is* the hunter who hooks from below by day insofar as she *is not* the one who hooks from above, or hunts by night, etc. Forms, i.e., the forms being divided when dividing at the highest level of understanding (*noēsis*), have thus been shown to be constitutive both in positive (hooking from below in the case of the angler) and negative (hooking from above) forms. Put differently, the groundwork for conceiving of nonbeing has been laid in two important senses: (i) the sense in which nonbeing is not purely nonbeing *as such*, but instead non-participation (i.e., non-participation in forms); (ii) the sense in which things (e.g., the angler) owe their nature to nonbeing (e.g., the angler is an angler both insofar as she hooks from below and does not hook from above).

Regardless of what we are ultimately to do with the results that the exercise has yielded, practicing division has prepared us to turn to the concepts at play in the central digression in several senses. Considering the webs of interrelations yielded by the

divisions has prepared us to conceive of participation in terms of commingling, and the

account of structure at play in the account of the great kinds. The conception of nonbeing

in terms of non-participation has prepared us to consider the Stranger's account of

nonbeing that is to follow. This will further help draw our minds to the sense of being

that must be and has no opposite, or being *as such*, that the consideration of nonbeing in

the central digression will bring to light.

CHAPTER 3. NONBEING (232A – 241B)

3.1   Chapter 3 Introduction

In this chapter I consider the notion of nonbeing, a central metaphysical concept

at issue in the *Sophist*. I do so by accounting for several different and opposed

conceptions of nonbeing that are tacitly at play in the *Sophist* before turning to the

explicit discussion of nonbeing in the *Sophist* itself (237b–241e). The views of nonbeing

that I will address are (i) a version of the fallacious view of nonbeing at play within

sophistical thinking, (ii) the critical view of the historical Parmenides' regarding mortal

inquiry, and (iii) that in Parmenides' positive account of nonbeing that leads to the insight

regarding the necessity of being. After critically presenting (i) and (ii), the two senses of

flawed thinking about nonbeing, I will consider (iii), Parmenides' positive account,

allowing it frame (iv) the view of nonbeing in the *Sophist*.

My argument is that (1) Parmenides has his narrating goddess articulate two

senses of nonbeing, (a) nonbeing in the sense of utter nonbeing, or what-is-not *as such*,

and (b) the necessary mixedness of being and nonbeing in any instance in which

nonbeing is said or thought, and (2) developing this same distinction is the Stranger's aim

in the *Sophist* digression, and particularly in the passage on nonbeing. This distinction

entails the implication that nonbeing (in a specific sense) *is* in some way, while what-is-

not *as such* cannot be thought or spoken.

One upshot of the considerations, and one of relevance to our study of the history

of philosophy, is that this helps to show that the Stranger's account is not as 'parricidal'

an attack on Parmenides as is sometimes thought.[126] The Stranger, that is, is explicitly

concerned that he might be perceived as a parricide insofar as he might be thought to be

in violation of a central Parmenidean injunction. But as Stanley Rosen has rightly

noted,[127] the Stranger is concerned merely that he might *appear* to be in violation of the

Eleatic tradition, and is not asserting that he *is* offering his account as a parricidal attack.

I will argue that a proper interpretation of his and Parmenides' views indicates that his is

instead a faithful specification of the Eleatic ontological tradition.

It is important to note at the outset of this consideration of nonbeing drawing upon

both Plato and Parmenides that 'being' does not play the exact same role in Plato's and

Parmenides' thinking. For Plato, being is an ontological kind, and hence one form

among others in a network of forms. While being clearly occupies a place of importance

in Plato's ontology, this place is not the center.[128] For Parmenides, conversely, being is

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[126] McCabe 2000 and Ambuel 2007 are two recent commentators who have argued that the *Sophist* represents Plato's definitive challenge to Eleaticism, and hence that the Stranger's 'parricidal' attack of 'father' Parmenides is best understood as such.

[127] As Rosen 1983: 204 rightly notes, the Stranger does not suggest that he *is* attempting parricide against Parmenides, but instead that Theaetetus might *perceive* him to be parricidal. Rosen states that the Stranger emphatically suggests that "Theaetetus must not suppose that the Stranger is turning into a kind of parricide. He [the Stranger] does not assert that he is about to commit parricide. This is important; as we shall see, the Stranger's criticism of Parmenides is not a refutation of his teacher so much as a new doctrine," which I would add is a further specification of the Eleatic view though not "doctrinal" in the strongest sense.

[128] I suggest that the good is an analogous superordinate ontological principle in Plato, but I will not discuss the good in depth in this chapter. I will turn to the good first in Chapter 4 and develop this notion through Chapter 5 and then in the concluding Chapter 6.

the central ontological principle that constitutes the all. In this way, the Platonic account is not purely coextensive with the Parmenidean account, but instead a further specification of the Parmenidean account through a consideration of the necessary plurality of ontological kinds that the 'all' requires when considering the nature of specificity and the framework that such specificity necessarily implies.

In what follows, I consider in section 3.2 the brief transition from the diairetic accounts to the discussion of nonbeing in the *Sophist* (232a–237c). My aim is to discuss the ways in which the problem of nonbeing is associated on the one hand with the sophist, on the other with Parmenides, and to give an account of the relevant fallacies of the former as they appear in a passage of Plato's *Euthydemus*. In section 3.3, I develop the Parmenidean notions of being and nonbeing in more depth by undertaking an excursive consideration of Parmenides' poem. I do this to contrast Parmenides' critical account of mortal inquiry with his prescribed account realized through encountering the impossibility of thinking what-is-not *as such* and turning to its opposite, being *as such.* Finally, in section 3.4, I take these issues as points of entry into the discussion of nonbeing in the *Sophist* digression (237b–241e).

3.2 Nonbeing and the sophist

3.2.1 Groundwork for the digression (232a – 236d)

The notion of nonbeing becomes explicit in the brief transition that connects the diairetic exercises considered in Chapter 2 and the central digression, beginning below.[129]

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[129] Of the contemporary *Sophist* commentators, Notomi 1999: 78–162 gives the most attention to this transitional passage, interpreting it is a central moment. By Notomi's reading, the interlocutors engage in this transitional section in addressing the issue of *appearances*, based (or so the advocate of this view would have it) on the mere appearance of the sophist in the six diairetic exercises in accounts that do not

Here nonbeing is considered briefly in sophistical and Parmenidean senses that set up the turn taken in the digression. The sense of nonbeing will be developed with reference in part to the framework in which it is initially posed, and understanding it entails considering the sophistical and Parmenidean senses of nonbeing.

Thus, we turn to this brief transition. Several key notions at issue in this passage are speech (λόγος), knowledge (ἐπιστήμη), and the distinction between likeness (εἴδωλον) and that which seems-to-be or appears (φάντασμα). As a means of making progress beyond the *aporia* that Theaetetus expresses after the divisions, the Stranger considers the sophist's status as a debater (ἀντιλογικός, first at 232b6) who claims to have the power of disputation regarding all things (τὸ τῆς ἀντιλογικῆς τέχνης ἆρ᾽ οὐκ ἐν κεφαλαίῳ περὶ πάντων πρὸς ἀμφισβήτησιν ἱκανή τις δύναμις ἔοικ᾽ εἶναι, 232e3-5). The Stranger points out to Theaetetus that it is impossible for any mortal being to know all things (233a3-6), raising the question of how exactly it is that sophists appear to have knowledge regarding all things when in fact they do not (233b1-8). In other words, this question regards that which *seems-to-be* but in fact *is not* in a way that plays on the ambiguities of '*to be*' and '*is not.*' Because sophists seem to be in a knowledgeable condition regarding all things, though this is impossible, the Stranger asserts that the sophist "has come to light as someone who has a certain opinion-producing knowledge about all things, but not true knowledge" (δοξαστικὴν ἄρα τινὰ περὶ πάντων ἐπιστήμην ὁ σοφιστὴς ἡμῖν ἀλλ᾽ οὐκ ἀλήθειαν ἔχων ἀναπέφανται, 233c1-12).

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disclose unified nature or definition of the sophist. While I do not agree with Notomi's interpretation of the first six diairetic accounts as failures, I agree with his view that the interlocutors turn to the paradigm of *speech* (*logos*), which in turn gives context to the notion of *appearing,* in the transition and that this new paradigm helps to guide the investigators in what follows. See also Bluck 1975: 58 and Crivelli 2012: 23-27 for discussions of the importance of this transition.

This inquiry is further complicated when the Stranger suggests a division of the imitative arts into two kinds, those arts that produce 'likenesses' and those arts that produce 'apparitions' (235c9-236d10). The Stranger explains that 'likenesses' are those instances in which 'someone produces the generating of an imitation according to the proportions of the model in the length and breadth and depth and, in addition to this, gives it colors that suit each of its parts' (235d7-e2). A likeness, that is, is an image that is 'truly like' the original according to the original's proportions. Conversely – and through the interesting examples of sculpture and (implicitly) architecture that rely on the optical illusion of disproportion to compensate for being seen from a distance – the Stranger describes what 'appears but is not like' (ἐπείπερ φαίνεται μέν, ἔοικε δὲ οὔ) as an 'apparition' (φάντασμα, 236b7-8). The Stranger has differentiated two kinds of images in separating those that are truly like from those that appear to be like but in fact *are not*. The sophist belongs to the latter group, in that sophistry entails making a likeness in speech that appears to be like the truth of the matter, but in fact is not.

3.2.2   The sophist on saying 'is not' (236e – 237a)

While this consideration might seem to offer a potentially viable definition of the sophist, it also leads to a compelling puzzle, the consideration of which will help the interlocutors turn to address nonbeing. The Stranger next points to the sophist's implicit and immediate objection to the claim that the sophist's nature can be defined as the maker of apparitions in speech. Addressing this sophistical objection will allow the Stranger to lay bare the fallacious structure of the sophist's position. The sophist, says

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the Stranger, will respond that it is impossible to say what is not, or to say or opine that

falsehoods *are*. The Stranger formulates the problem of nonbeing as follows:

> The speculation we're in, bless you, is genuinely difficult in every way. For this business of appearing and seeming but not being, and of saying things but not true ones – all these matters are always full of perplexity, now as in time past. For how, in speaking, one is to say or to opine that falsehoods genuinely *are*, and not, in having uttered this, be hemmed in by contradiction – this, Theaetetus, is in every way difficult to understand.
>
> ὄντως, ὦ μακάριε, ἐσμὲν ἐν παντάπασι χαλεπῇ σκέψει. τὸ γὰρ φαίνεσθαι τοῦτο καὶ τὸ δοκεῖν, εἶναι δὲ μή, καὶ τὸ λέγειν μὲν ἄττα, ἀληθῆ δὲ μή, πάντα ταῦτά ἐστι μεστὰ ἀπορίας ἀεὶ ἐν τῷ πρόσθεν χρόνῳ καὶ νῦν. ὅπως γὰρ εἰπόντα χρὴ ψευδῆ λέγειν ἢ δοξάζειν ὄντως εἶναι, καὶ τοῦτο φθεγξάμενον ἐναντιολογίᾳ μὴ συνέχεσθαι, παντάπασιν, ὦ Θεαίτητε, χαλεπόν (236d9–a1).[130]

The Stranger is here considering a version of an ambiguous argument frequently

exploited by sophists. The sophist will argue that it is impossible to say that 'X is false,'

because saying this entails a contradiction in that it draws both on 'is' and 'is not'

simultaneously. The term 'false,' implies the sophist, is equivalent to '*is not*.' Therefore,

the sophist concludes, the claim 'X is false' entails saying 'X is – *is not*.' But the first

'is' at play in 'X is – *is not*' precludes (allegedly) the '*is not*' that follows, and hence (or

so the sophist argues) this claim is incoherent.

    This problem is a recurrent issue in Plato's dialogues, and considering it directly

as it appears elsewhere will help to develop an account of the sophistical senses of being

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[130] Following the normal manuscript tradition. For an argument for the insertion of '*phanai*' at 237e4 (ὅπως γὰρ εἰπόντα χρὴ ψευδῆ λέγειν ἢ δοξάζειν *phanai* ὄντως εἶναι …), see Robinson 1999. In any event, the meaning and proper translation of this passage, one of the utmost importance in the dialogue, have been much contested by scholars. For a helpful distillation of the various types of interpretation of this passage with reference to the so-called 'falsehood paradox' (as well as the rootedness of these interpretations in various translations) for which interpreters have advocated, see Crivelli 2012: 28-36. Because each of the types of interpretations that Crivelli suggests entails a distinction between the so-called 'existential' and 'veridical' senses of the verb 'to be,' I do not endorse any of these interpretations. Crivelli too notes that these interpretations largely entail conjecture, given the lack of textual bases to establish a definitive interpretation of the senses of the verb 'to be' at play in the passage.

and nonbeing and the fallacies entailed therein.[131] The two sophistical brothers in the

Euthydemus address this problem as it relates to true speech directly,[132] and Euthydemus'

argument for the impossibility of lying is a paradigmatic example of the sophistical

conception of nonbeing. The passage is as follows, with my inserted roman numerals

indicating what I take to be the various moves in the argument:

> Why Ctesippus, said Euthydemus, do you think it possible to tell lies?
> Good heavens yes, he said, I should be raving if I didn't.
> When one speaks the thing one is talking about, or when one does not speak it?
> When one speaks it, he said.
> So that (i) if he speaks this thing, he speaks no other one of things that are except the very one he speaks?
> Of course, said Ctesippus.
> And (ii) the thing he speaks is one of those that are, distinct from the rest?
> Certainly.
> Then (iii) the person speaking that thing speaks what is, he said.
> Yes.
> But surely (iv) the person who speaks what is and things that are speaks the truth – so that Dionysodorus, if he speaks things that are, speaks the truth and tells no lies about you.
> Yes, said Ctesippus, but a person who speaks these things, Euthydemus, does not speak things that are.
> And Euthydemus said, But the (v) things that are not surely [are not],[133] no?
> No, they [are not].[134]
> Then (vi) there is nowhere that the things that are not are?
> Nowhere.
> Then (vii) there is no possibility that any person whatsoever could do anything to the things that are not so as to make them be when they are nowhere?
> It seems unlikely to me, Ctesippus said.
> Well then, (viii) when the orators speak to the people, do they do nothing?
> No, they do something, he said.
> Then if they do something, (ix) they also make something?
> Yes.
> (x) Speaking, then, is doing and making?

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[131] Another good example is Meno's suggestion in his eponymous dialogue that inquiry requires that the object of inquiry be known to be inquired into; but if the object is known then it does not require inquiry; and hence the conclusion follows (or so the argument goes) that inquiry is either redundant or impossible.

[132] For a helpful discussion of the context of this argument within the *Euthydemus* broadly and the eristical stretch of text in which appears (283a-288b) more locally, see Sermamoglou-Soulmaidi 2014: 72-87.

[133] Replacing "do not exist" with "are not." Here I reprint the Sprague translation but substitute English verbs that refer only to being, not being in the qualified sense of 'existence,' at 284b3 and b4, following principles that I defend in the introductory section, 1.1.1.

[134] Again replacing "do not exist" with "are not." See previous footnote.

He agreed.
Then (xi) nobody speaks things that are not, since he would then be making something, and you have admitted that no one is capable of making something that is not. So according to your own statement, (xii) nobody tells lies […] (*Euthydemus* 283e7-284c6).

Below I attempt to capture each premise in the argument as I understand it.[135] I am not interested in the validity or cogency of this argument,[136] but instead the question of how the premises considered together can help us to get a handle on the sophistical view of nonbeing, and what has gone wrong in this tricky argument yielding the unintuitive conclusion that lying is impossible. By my account, Euthydemus' argument here has the following implicit structure:

A. <u>On the connection between being and speaking</u>:
(i) The thing spoken of is identical to the thing being spoken (i.e., itself)
(ii) The thing spoken thus *is*, and is self-same and different from the others
(iii) The speaker thus speaks *what is* and
(iv) The speaker thus speaks the truth

B. <u>On nonbeing</u>:
(v) The things that *are not*, *are not* (i.e., in all senses)
(vi) The things that *are not* are *nowhere*
(vii) Being nowhere, the things that *are not* cannot be brought into being (i.e., brought to be)

C. <u>On speaking</u>:
(viii) Speakers, upon speaking*, do* something and (ix) *make* something, and speaking therefore (x) is doing and making
(xi) Speaking cannot be of that which *is not*, since speaking is making and doing, and no one can make what is not, and therefore (xii) lying is impossible.

While there are surely any number of objectionable features to this argument and its premises, two lines of reasoning are especially relevant to consider here. These are the

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[135] Mine is an interpretation that does not entail giving central prominence to the role of existential force, which is to my knowledge unique in the scholarship. For interpretations of this passage with reference to the existential and veridical senses of being, see Sprague 1962:12-20 and Sermamoglou-Soulmaidi 2014: 72-87.
[136] A seminal discussion of these issues is Sprague 1962: 12-20.

sophistical accounts of the connection between being and speaking (A, concluded in [xi])

and the related accounts of nonbeing (B).

First, in Euthydemus' discussion of being, the leap from identity ([i] through [ii])

to being (iii) and truth (iv) is of note. Euthydemus rightly points out in (i) and (ii) that the

speaking of a thing indicates its identity in a way that suggests selfsameness and

difference from others. (i) and (ii) taken together rightly point to the gathering power of

speech, insofar as speech allows one thing to be isolated in itself from the other things.

For example, to speak the English word 'cat' is to pick out a certain feline and

mammalian nature, grasped pre-discursively, and bring it to discourse.[137] But

Euthydemus conflates the truth of the thing's selfsameness with being more broadly (iii)

and truth more broadly (iv). This is fallacious, of course, because the truth of

selfsameness is not the same as the truth of the ways in which one thing can participate in

another thing. For instance, saying 'The cat is flying,' entails truly picking out the kind

'cat,' separate from the others, but it does not follow from this that the kind 'cat'

truthfully entails the possibility of communing with the kind 'flying thing' in the literal

sense that this proposition entails. In other words, though speaking (1) allows us to carve

nature up at the joints in a way that captures the sameness and difference of individuals

and types like 'cat,' 'this cat,' 'flying thing,' etc., it also (2) allows for the further act of

combining individuals and types together in ways that may or may not do justice to the

nature of the individuals and types being collected and combined. (We will consider this

point more in section 6.1 when the interlocutors turn to the function of communing in

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[137] Cf. Gonzalez 1999: 62-93 for an analysis of Plato's *Cratylus* as a defense of the role of the name as doing precisely this, i.e., as a dialectical tool with which nature is carved at the joints and gathers together being and beings in their self-sameness.

speech.) The sophist's sleight-of-hand – or one of them, at any rate – is to take the necessary truth of (1) to imply the more contentious truth of (2) without acknowledging the potential distortion at play in (2).

Second, Euthydemus' discussion of nonbeing from (v) to (vii) entails some fallacies that are instructive for our purposes. (v) entails the suggestion that 'what is not' is *in no way*. That is, the assumption is to take it that saying 'X is not […]' entails 'X is not Y, for all values of Y.' From this, Euthydemus takes it that 'what is not' (vi) is 'nowhere' (i.e., not in space) and (vii) cannot be brought to be from 'nowhereness' into being. (v) therefore entails the assumption that there is only one sense of nonbeing, i.e., what we will later come to call 'what-is-not *as such*' and 'utter nonbeing.' Here the sophist plays on the ambiguity of saying '*is not*' by suggesting that there is only one sense of nonbeing, i.e., being in no way whatsoever. After the interesting spatial metaphor in (vi), the move in (vii) suggests that there is simply no bridge from nonbeing (in the sense of utter nonbeing) to being, since beings must come about through other beings and, presumably, nothing can come from nothing. While this would be correct if nonbeing had only the sense of being in no way whatsoever, we will see that this is not the only sense of nonbeing as Parmenides and Plato each have their speakers work out these issues in their own ways.

This brief consideration of the sophistical views of being and nonbeing has shown us that the sophist conflates self-sameness with participation (A), and takes all conceivable senses of nonbeing to be identical (v). That is, this model of thinking entails failing to draw upon the clarification of ontological kinds and does not allow for the differentiation of nonbeing in the senses of 'what-is-not *as such*' (or utter nonbeing),

difference, and falsity. The sophist thus is able to use equivocations that allow him to come to such perplexing conclusions as the alleged impossibility of lying that results from the implications at play here.

This same sophistical paradox lies just beneath the surface of the discussion in the *Sophist*. The interlocutors have arrived at a version of this problem while attempting to tease out their potential definition of the sophist as the arguer who imitates 'what is' through *logos* but ultimately argues for something that is not. They will now address the ambiguity of saying '*is not,*' and how such a saying is even possible.[138]

3.2.3   The turn to Parmenides (237a – 237c)

To delve deeper into the question of nonbeing, the Stranger will turn toward 'Parmenides the Great' (Παρμενίδης […] ὁ μέγας, 237a5). This move will be under scrutiny for much of the remainder of the chapter, first in considering the historical view of Parmenides (in 3.3) and then by bringing it to bear on the discussion of nonbeing that follows in the *Sophist* (in 3.4). By taking up the Parmenidean framework, we will begin to move away from the fallacious, sophistical thinking of nonbeing and begin to transform our perspective on the matter.[139]

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[138] Whether Plato has the conceptual apparatus necessary to account for negation is a matter of great debate among scholars. I argue that he most certainly does and that we have a lot to learn from his account of nonbeing as participation in difference. Others sharing versions of my view include Cordero 2005 and Wiitala 2014b. Other commentators have been skeptical, most notably including Wiggins 1971 and Vlastos 1973. For the view that the account of negation is founded on "one grand logical mistake" stemming from an inadequate clarification of the meaning of the "incomplete *esti*," see Bostock 1984: especially 90. I hope to show throughout this chapter that a more charitable reading of Plato's view of negation is possible if we free ourselves of the modern distinctions of being in the senses of existence, predication, identity, veracity, and others, and instead try our best to hear the unified sense of being that Plato intends when having his interlocutors speak.

[139] This is the third mention of Parmenides in the dialogue; the first came in the dialogue's first line, when Theodorus first introduced the Stranger as a 'comrade' of those in the circles of his fellow Eleatics

In helping Theaetetus begin to consider the ways in which introducing

Parmenidean notions into a conversation thus far dominated by sophistical thinking, the

Stranger says the following, quoting Parmenides' poem in the process:

> This sentence has dared to suppose that Non-being *is*. For otherwise falsehood
> would not come to be what it is. But Parmenides the Great, my boy, beginning
> when we were boys and to the end, would testify stoutly and speak repeatedly – in
> prose as well as in meter – thus
>
> This [he says] should not ever prevail in your thought: that the things that *are not,
> are*; Rather do keep your mind well shut off from just this way of searching.
>
> So that's the testimony from him; and the account itself, when put to a fair test,
> would show what he means most of all.
>
> τετόλμηκεν ὁ λόγος οὗτος ὑποθέσθαι τὸ μὴ ὂν εἶναι: ψεῦδος γὰρ οὐκ ἂν ἄλλως
> ἐγίγνετο ὄν. Παρμενίδης δὲ ὁ μέγας, ὦ παῖ, παισὶν ἡμῖν οὖσιν ἀρχόμενός τε καὶ
> διὰ τέλους τοῦτο ἀπεμαρτύρατο, πεζῇ τε ὧδε ἑκάστοτε λέγων καὶ μετὰ μέτρων—
> "οὐ γὰρ μήποτε τοῦτο δαμῇ, φησίν, εἶναι μὴ ἐόντα: ἀλλὰ σὺ τῆσδ᾽ ἀφ᾽ ὁδοῦ
> διζήμενος εἶργε νόημα. παρ᾽ ἐκείνου τε οὖν μαρτυρεῖται, καὶ μάλιστά γε δὴ
> πάντων ὁ λόγος αὐτὸς ἂν δηλώσειε μέτρια βασανισθείς (237a3-b2).

Thus, the Stranger has indicated Parmenides' injunction (via the goddess character in

Parmenides' poem who is here quoted in what is known to us as Fragment 7.1-4) against

the saying of nonbeing, or '*is not*.' But as the Stranger points out, we *do* dare to utter

nonbeing. This therefore raises several important questions. The first, not addressed in

the *Sophist*, is the question of what exactly it is that Parmenides is claiming regarding

being, and how, why, and whether it in fact leads to the prohibition of saying nonbeing.

The next question, which the Stranger asks immediately in what follows, is where,

according to the Parmenidean thinker, 'this name "Non-being" should be applied, for

what purpose and for what sort of thing' (237c2-4), given that we do in fact say

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Parmenides and Zeno (216a1-5), while the second came in Socrates' apparent reference to his conversation
with Parmenides depicted in Plato's *Parmenides* dialogue (217c1-8).

nonbeing. We will consider these two questions in turn, beginning with the question of what exactly Parmenides has in mind when seeming to prohibit the saying of nonbeing.

3.3   *Excursus:* Being and nonbeing in Parmenides' poem

3.3.1   The first way – that *'is'*

Thus we turn to Parmenides.[140] In the fragments that survive of Parmenides' only work, a philosophical poem in dactylic hexameter verse, Parmenides has his narrating goddess character articulate a notion of *being* in the sense that must be and cannot not be, and one that turns on a genuine encounter with the impossibility of nonbeing *as such*. Considering what Parmenides means when he has the goddess of the poem identify the '*is*' (ἔστιν, first at line 2.3) as the being that must be and cannot not be and that has no opposite will help us undertake the turn from the sophistical conception of nonbeing to the Eleatic and Platonic conception toward which the considerations in this chapter lead.[141]

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[140] I presented material on my interpretation of Parmenides' poem at the 2019 American Philosophical Association Central Division meeting in Denver and the 2019 Ancient Philosophy Society meeting at Trinity College. I am grateful to participants in these meetings, particularly commentators Thomas Tuozzo and Christopher Paone, for their helpful insights, comments, and questions. Much of the material in this section was developed in conversation with Mitchell Miller, to whom my interpretation owes much. Valuable commentaries on Parmenides on which I draw extensively throughout in this discussion include Mourelatos 1970, Cordero 1979, Miller 1979 and 2006, and Nehamas 1981. For a thorough analysis of recent scholarship on many key issues, I am indebted to Palmer 2009.

[141] My view overlaps, but also contrasts, with two common types of interpretations of Parmenides. These entail understanding Parmenides as either (i) arguing for a type of strict ontological monism, or (ii) introducing the notion of deductive argumentation. Examples of commentators holding view (i) include Tarán 1965: especially 31, who understands Parmenides' "doctrine" as an account of a type of existential monism entailing only one "thing," the "unique and homogeneous Being." A recent articulation of (ii) is that of Wedin 2014, who understands Truth as a proto-deductive modal account flanked by the poetic passages Proem and Doxa. I do not think that either of these views is entirely wrong. I agree with those holding view (i) that at issue for Parmenides is the ultimate homogeneity by which heterogeneity is possible, but I do not agree with Tarán (e.g.) that this is a primarily 'existential' conception. Likewise, I agree with those holding view (ii) that the modality of necessity is at play in the argumentation, but I do not agree that this in the service of what we call deductive argumentation.

The goal of reaching a robust account of this insight is at issue throughout the entirety of Parmenides' poem, and I therefore will consider the poem as a whole with a view to the interdependence of the poem's three sections – the Proem (Fragment 1), Truth (Fragments 2 through 8.51), and Doxa (Fragment 8.51 through 17)[142] – but in a way that allows the framing Proem and Doxa sections to give shape and context to the central insights into being and nonbeing in the Truth section. The Proem begins with the narrating traveler first reaching, and then transcending, the limits of mortal thinking. This the traveler achieves through the account offered to him by the goddess, who herself is exposed when 'avenging Justice' (Δίκη πολύποινος, line 1.14) [143] unbars the 'gates at the roads of Night and Day' (πύλαι Νυκτός τε καὶ Ἤματός εἰσι κελεύθων, line 1.11) to make a '[yawning chasm]' (χάσμ' ἀχανές, line 1.18)[144] beyond them. In Truth, the goddess allows the poetic imagery from the Proem to fall away, using abstract discourse to give an account of that which constitutes the unshaken heart of persuasive truth that she promises in the Proem (line 1.29). The central account of being comes in Fragment 2:

> Come now, I will tell you, and you preserve the story upon hearing it,
> these are the only routes of inquiry there are for knowing (νοῆσαι):
> the one, that […] *is* […] and that is not possible [for] […] not to be […],
> is the path of persuasion, for it attends upon truth,

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[142] Here I do not challenge the traditional ordering of the fragments dating to the 18th century. Cordero 2010 offers the best challenge to this structure of which I am aware; and since Cordero argues for a recontextualization of the Doxa fragments for which I make specific philosophical interpretations below, I suspect that his ordering paradigm, were it to be taken up, would in fact strengthen my own thesis. In any event, I leave the issue unthematized here. In naming convention I follow Mourelatos 1970 and Miller 2006, among others, in preferring "Truth" and "Doxa" over "Way of Truth" and "Way of Doxa," since these ways have already been taken up by the time of these sections. Put differently, the sections do not constitute the *way of* or *way to* truth and doxa, but instead the truth and the doxa themselves.

[143] Parmenides translations throughout are my own, made in close consultation with Gallop 1984, Coxon 1986, the Curd revision of McKirahan 1998, and Miller 2006. For a discussion of my rendering of the *'esti'* of line 2.3, see footnote 143 below.

[144] I follow Miller 2006 in using 'yawning chasm' to replace McKirahan's translation of "*chasm' achanes*" as "gaping gap."

the other, that […] *is not* […] and that is necessary (χρεών) […] not to be […]
this I point out to you to be a path completely unlearnable [alternatively 'from
      which no learning comes']
for you cannot know what is not *as such* (τό γε μὴ ἐόν), as this cannot be brought
      about,
nor could you indicate it.

Εἰ δ' ἄγ' ἐγὼν ἐρέω, κόμισαι δὲ σὺ μῦθον ἀκούσας,
αἵπερ ὁδοὶ μοῦναι διζήσιός εἰσι νοῆσαι·
ἡ μὲν ὅπως ἔστιν τε καὶ ὡς οὐκ ἔστι μὴ εἶναι,
Πειθοῦς ἐστι κέλευθος - Ἀληθείη γὰρ ὀπηδεῖ - ,
[2.5] ἡ δ' ὡς οὐκ ἔστιν τε καὶ ὡς χρεών ἐστι μὴ εἶναι,
τὴν δή τοι φράζω παναπευθέα ἔμμεν ἀταρπόν·
οὔτε γὰρ ἂν γνοίης τό γε μὴ ἐὸν - οὐ γὰρ ἀνυστόν -
οὔτε φράσαις (Fragment 2.1 – 2.8).

He we have our first direct encounter the central notion of '[…] *is* […],' i.e., an

indication of *being*. The goddess isolates '*is*' (ἔστιν) in line 2.3 and its negation, '*is not*'

(οὐκ ἔστιν), in line 2.5, two third-person singular forms of the Greek verb 'to be.' Each

of these verbs is coupled with a second '*is*' and an infinitival form, 'to be' (εἶναι). The

goddess omits names, or subjects and predicates, and says *only* that '[…] *is* […].'[145] The

effect of this is to make explicit what is typically implicit and to call to attention the

grounds by which thought and discourse are possible, that is, through *being*. In other

words, in a sentence of the form 'X is Y,' the two immediately evident components at

play are X and Y; but the goddess highlights the third, 'is,' which is always necessarily in

the background of any saying or thinking, and yet, because of this ubiquity, is easily

missed.

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[145] That is, it is necessarily the case that the goddess' articulation entails an elided subject, e.g., '[Socrates]
is.' It is not necessary that a predicate further be elided, e.g., '[Socrates] is [wise].' But as Brown 1986
shows (building upon previous work, e.g., Kahn 1973), any 'one-term' articulation of being in Greek like
'Socrates is' entails a 'two-term' complement that is not stated, e.g., 'Socrates is [alive],' 'Socrates is
[truly],' etc. For this reason, I find it helpful to insert ellipses following the 'is' that suggest an elided
predicate.

In this sense, the '[…] *is* […]*'* is a route of inquiry, insofar as it allows access to that of which we speak and think, and to reflect upon it is to consider the ultimate ground of understanding. Inquiring into something through the '[…] *is* […]' entails seeking the nature of something, or its whatness. In 'X is Y,' this disclosure occurs as Y lays out the nature of X, but Y is not laid out in full by X. But here, the goddess is not interested in Xs and Ys, or the content of discursivity, but instead the structural *form* of discourse through which terms are laid out with reference to one another and in compelling and disclosing ways. Thus the '[…] *is* […]' should be understood with close reference to the notion of a route of inquiry, as a way of showing the participatory nature of beings in one another. It is, therefore, a seeking of *truth,* as made explicit in line 2.4 and also under consideration throughout the poem.[146]

This further highlights the linguistic sense in which all discourse presupposes the verb 'to be,' and all claims entail a tacit reference to being alongside a second-order concept. For example, the verb 'sits' pairs the notion of being ('is') with 'sitting,' the verb 'eats' pairs the notion of being with 'eating,' etc. This has led some grammarians to call the verb 'to be' the verb *par excellence*, in that it is tacitly at play in all verbs and hence is implicit in all declarative speech.[147] Similarly, in the sense in which an account is a giving-voice to noetic apprehension, thought is likewise dependent on this sense of being. To think is to draw upon being, taking up beings in their relations to one another. In this way, the goddess is identifying the being that grounds beings and showing its self-sameness to that which is given to thought and speech.

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[146] Cf. Mourelatos 1970: 67-68 for a discussion of the term '*dizesis*' and its meaning in Parmenides' poem.
[147] Aristotle makes this point at *De Interpretatione* 21b9 and *Metaphysics* V7 1017a 26-31. Cf. Kahn 1972, 1981, and 2003. See also Kahn 1970: 96, who makes this distinction with reference to the Port Royal Logic text of 1662.

In addition to positing it in isolation, the goddess describes the '[…] *is* […]' with reference to its apparent opposite, '[…] *is not* […],' or 'what-is-not *as such*' (line 2.7). In a motif that the goddess uses elsewhere in the poem, the realization of being is opened up by the identification of the impossibility of its opposite.[148] In other words, the goddess here describes the sense in which attempting to take up what-is-not *as such* and constitute it as an object is impossible. This indicates the necessity of its opposite, being *as such*, in an important regard.

What-is-not *as such* is a path both 'unlearnable' and 'from which no learning comes' (line 2.6), and I argue that both senses of this clause are at play in the goddess's account. In the first sense, what-is-not *as such* cannot be brought to thinking or speech, for precisely when one seeks to 'indicate' '*it*,' one brings 'it' to the minimal determinacy of thinghood required for some*thing* to be an *it*. But any minimal determinacy entails that what-is-not *as such* has been lost, since what is indicated is an *it*, or precisely what what-is-not *as such* is not. It follows from this inability to take up nonbeing *as such* that thinking must turn onto nonbeing's opposite, being *as such*, which is the sense of being identified above and through which inquiry and knowing are possible. Because what-is-not *as such* is 'unlearnable,' thinking is turned to knowing in the opposite sense. (Below I will develop an account of the sense in which no learning comes from this way of inquiry.)

The goddess has shown that what-is-not *as such* is itself impossible, both for thinking and being. Nothingness cannot be brought about, as all determinacy of any kind

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[148] Cf. Miller 2006 for discussion of other instances of this motif in the poem.

entails at least a tacit sense of being. And yet, the goddess continues, mortals have missed this.

3.3.2 The second way – that of mortals

Fully grasping this way of inquiry entails a consideration of the flaws and limitations of mortal inquiry, since the realization of the impossibility of what-is-not *as such* entails a simultaneous realization of these flaws and limitations. Hence we turn to consider the path of mortal inquiry more broadly. In Fragment 6, the goddess further describes the necessity of the '*is*' and the ways that mortals fail to take it up, and instead err by following a different type of thinking. Here she says:

> It is right for that which is given to speech and thought to be,
>   for it is there to be,
> but nothingness cannot be. This is what I bid you to consider.
> For [I begin for you from][149] this first route of inquiry,

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[149] Reading 'ἄρξει' with Nehamas 1981. This verb has been lost, as all manuscript traditions preserving Simplicius' *Commentary on Aristotle's* Physics through which the passage (145.1-146.25) survives are characterized by this omission. This suggests either that Simplicius himself omitted the sentence's verb or that the verb was missing from the edition of the poem from which Simplicius was quoting. The sentence reads, 'Πρώτης γάρ σ' ἀφ' ὁδοῦ ταύτης διζήσιος […],' and its meaning would largely be determined by the missing verb that ended the clause. Any verb suggested by subsequent commentators to complete the clause is necessarily conjectural, and choices must entail answering to the requirements of the poetic meter, literary parallelisms, and the dictates of the logical and ontological schema at play in the poem. Beginning with a 16th century Renaissance edition and later followed by Diels's influential adoption in 1879, the missing verb has most commonly been inferred to be εἴργω ('I restrain'), which complements the sentence's poetic meter. (For an interesting discussion of the editorial style of the Renaissance editors who apparently first inserted this verb, see Cordero 1979: 125. For a critique of Diels's previously authoritative defense of the εἴργω conjecture on philological grounds, see Cordero 1979: 116-117.) Thus construed, the sentence appears to read, 'For I restrain you from this first route of inquiry,' suggesting that the goddess now refers back to the 'barred' route of inquiry, i.e., (ii). The goddess continues to discuss a 'next route' in line 6.4, 'on which mortals wander, knowing nothing, two headed[.]' That the goddess refers now to what was previously called the 'second route' as the 'first' [πρώτης], only to return again to referring to it as 'second' in Fragment 8, thus became a quirk that required explanation. A second line of conjectural addition has opened in recent decades that is more promising. Working independently, Cordero (1979) and Nehamas (1981) have respectively suggested that the missing verb in line 6.3 is ἄρξει ('you will begin'), or its cognate ἄρξω ('I will begin'), and a minority of other commentators have taken up this line of interpretation.   Thus construed, the goddess says in line 6.3 either that 'You will begin' or 'I will begin for you' 'from this first route of inquiry[.]' (These translations also require interpretations of the elided s' in 6.3. For discussion, see Palmer 2009: 66-67.) If this or something like it is correct, the 'next' route

but next from the route on which mortals, knowing nothing (εἰδότες οὐδὲν,
    alternatively 'knowing nothingness'),
two-headed, wander. For helplessness in their
chests guides their wandering mind. But they are carried on
equally deaf and blind, bewildered, a rabble lacking judgment,
for whom both to be and not to be are taken to be the same and
not the same, and the path of all is backward-turning.

Χρὴ τὸ λέγειν τε νοεῖν τ' ἐὸν ἔμμεναι· ἔστι γὰρ εἶναι,
μηδὲν δ' οὐκ ἔστιν· τά σ' ἐγὼ φράζεσθαι ἄνωγα.
Πρώτης γάρ σ' ἀφ' ὁδοῦ ταύτης διζήσιος <ἄρξει>,
αὐτὰρ ἔπειτ' ἀπὸ τῆς, ἣν δὴ βροτοὶ εἰδότες οὐδὲν
[6.5] πλάττονται, δίκρανοι· ἀμηχανίη γὰρ ἐν αὐτῶν
στήθεσιν ἰθύνει πλακτὸν νόον· οἱ δὲ φοροῦνται
κωφοὶ ὁμῶς τυφλοί τε, τεθηπότες, ἄκριτα φῦλα,
οἷς τὸ πέλειν τε καὶ οὐκ εἶναι ταὐτὸν νενόμισται
κοὺ ταὐτόν, πάντων δὲ παλίντροπός ἐστι κέλευθος (Fragment 6.1 – 6.9).

This account of the wrongheaded method of mortal inquiry in which mortals take being

and nonbeing to be the same and not the same is opaque, and thus our reading will

require significant interpretive work. Because the goddess had described the 'routes of

inquiry' (ὁδοὶ … διζήσιος) in line 2.2 and she repeats this wording here in Fragment 6.3

(ὁδοῦ … διζήσιος), nearly all commentators take it that the goddess reintroduces the two

routes from Fragment 2 here in Fragment 6. [150] But where each begins and ends, and

whether a third is introduced, are debated. Here the 'negative' path is described insofar as

it regards taking 'both to be and not to be' to be 'the same and not the same' (6.8-9), and

it is called the 'backward-turning' path (6.9) on which mortals wander (6.4-5). In this

described in line 6.4 is the first route to be barred, and what follows is a further elaboration from the
goddess of this route. This interpretation or something like it helps us to make sense of the clear
parallelism between Fragments 2 and 6, while considering the contingency of the verb at line 6.3 also
suggests one reason as to why the 'three-route' interpretation has held sway in recent decades. But the
Cordero-Nehamas conjecture has been met with much resistance. (Palmer 2009: 65-69 includes a
discussion of the criticism of this view.) By my reading, one issue in the arguments of both Cordero and
Nehamas is that each takes the 'negative' route in Fragment 2 to be identical to, or otherwise inextricable
from, the 'negative' route in Fragment 6. By contrast, I argue the two routes each hinge on a particular
response to the problem of what-is-not as such that is first considered in Fragment 2.)
[150] Cf. Cordero 1979: 97-98 for discussion of this consensus.

sense it is difficult to understand exactly what we are to do with the path of inquiry that

the goddess bars throughout these two fragments. Primarily, I suggest, this is because it

is not clear how exactly we are to understand the negative route through the seemingly

incompatible articulations in Fragments 2 and 6 once we attempt to map the routes onto

one another. In other words, it seems strange to suggest that the 'what-is-not *as such'* of

Fragment 2 somehow is coextensive with the negative, 'backward-turning' path

described in Fragment 6. At the very least, more has apparently been added in Fragment

6 to the mere 'what-is-not *as such*' at issue in Fragment 2.

I want to suggest a novel path toward conceiving of these routes, and I begin by

considering the issue of the 'backward-turning' path of Fragment 6, first at a broad level.

One element of the path that begins to be developed at line 6.4, which I take to be

uncontroversial, is the sense in which the path constitutes the route of inquiry of mortals

specifically. If nothing else, we can say with certainty that the path is the one taken by

mortals. I hold ultimately that this is the key insight needed to address these questions

and understand this route, and that a consideration of this route with reference to mortal

inquiry generally will help us to make progress regarding this issue.

To consider the nature of mortal inquiry at play in Fragment 6, I turn our attention

here to several key passages in the Doxa, a stretch of text in which the goddess considers

mortal thinking in depth.[151] I hope to illustrate in these considerations that this view

entails a failure to understand what-is-not *as such,* and hence to take up the noetic insight

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[151] There has been much speculation among commentators regarding which mortals, if any, Parmenides
has in mind when having the goddess posit Doxa. For arguments regarding the connection between the
thinking described in Doxa and that of other Presocratics, see Long 1963, Curd 1998, and Palmer 2009.
Here I take it that Parmenides has in mind a general tendency of mortal thinking, as opposed to a particular
view held by one individual or group among the mortals. Given that Parmenides never has the goddess
single out one mortal over another, this seems to me to allow us to make the best sense of the text.

into necessary being that the goddess describes in Fragment 2. The goddess accounts for mortal inquiry as taking 'to be and not to be […] to be the same and not the same' (lines 6.8-9), and thus what is at play in the 'backward-turning path' is a general tendency of mortals to misapprehend the nature of determinacy, as well as the sense(s) in which sameness and difference affect the relations among beings.

In Doxa's opening beginning at line 8.53, the goddess states that

They [mortals] have decided to name two forms,
one of which it was not right to name, and in this way they have gone astray[.]

Μορφὰς γὰρ κατέθεντο δύο γνώμας ὀνομάζειν·
τῶν μίαν οὐ χρεών ἐστιν - ἐν ᾧ πεπλανημένοι εἰσίν[.]

This notion of the 'two forms' becomes central in the description of the thinking of mortals that follows. The goddess has in mind that the mortal view is essentially oriented by the notion of plurality, and will develop an account of the deficiencies in thinking that are evident in the ways in which mortals take the plural elements. She considers the naming of two forms directly in Fragment 9:

But since all things have been named light and night
and that which accords with their powers (δύναμεις) has been assigned to these
    things and those,
all is full of light and obscure night together,
as both being equals, since neither partakes in nothing(ness).[152]

Αὐτὰρ ἐπειδὴ πάντα φάος καὶ νὺξ ὀνόμασται
καὶ τὰ κατὰ σφετέρας δυνάμεις ἐπὶ τοῖσί τε καὶ τοῖς,
πᾶν πλέον ἐστὶν ὁμοῦ φάεος καὶ νυκτὸς ἀφάντου

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[152] I interpret the '*isōn amphoterōn*' that opens line 9.1 as a reference to the equality of light and obscure night ('as both being equals'). This contrasts with other interpretations, such as that of McKirahan-Curd, who take this to refer to equal distribution ('of both equally.') Given the cosmology elsewhere in the poem, for example Fragment 12 in which the goddess describes 'narrow cosmic wreaths filled with unmixed fire' (Αἱ γὰρ στεινότεραι πλῆντο πυρὸς ἀκρήτοιο [12.1]), it seems to me implausible to assume that the goddess imagines equal distribution of light and night in all bodily beings. Furthermore, as I argue below, we have good reason to believe that the two forms are equal and co-constitutive, and hence equals in this sense. Secondly, the final clause in line 9.4, οὐδετέρῳ μέτα μηδέν, is ambiguous and controversial; cf. Miller 2006: 17 and Mourelatos 1970: xxxv and 85-86 for discussions of the strengths of the type of translation that I offer as supported by details in Doxa.

ἴσων ἀμφοτέρων, ἐπεὶ οὐδετέρῳ μέτα μηδέν.

The goddess suggests in this passage that the two forms have undergirded the naming of all things by mortals with reference to the 'powers' of each of the two constitutive elements, here[153] called by the names 'light' and 'night.'[154] To know the two forms is to know the essential structure of the 'all' (πᾶν, 9.3), since all things are composed of the two forms relative to their powers (9.1-9.2). That is, the insight of seeing the all to be composed of the two forms is the product of an ordering mortal intelligence that can gather together the seemingly disparate elements of lived experience with a dianoetic grasp of the underlying powers that these experiences share.

But this account is deficient in an important sense, and this deficiency indicates the errors entailed in mortal ontology that are exposed throughout Doxa. Mortal ontology is founded on a divided heterogeneity, in that 'all' things are understood in terms of a mixed co-presence of the two forms, while the things of experience are constituted by an intermixing of the two forms in the accord with their powers. Mortals have not established the relationship *between* the two forms, and in this way they have gone astray.

To grasp the problem here, let us consider the 'equality' (ἴσων, 9.4) of the two forms,[155] which I argue is a sense of equality that sets the two forms into relation – or, more accurately, a *lack* of relation – with one another. The goddess describes this sense

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[153] The two forms elsewhere in the poem are named elsewise, as in the examples of 'fire' and 'night' in lines 8.56 to 8.59 and 'Night' and 'Day' in the gates passed through in line 1.11. But I take this plurality of names to indicate the shifting nature of the terms at play in the mortal account, set up in opposition to the non-shifting nature of Truth.

[154] Cherubin 2005 offers a thorough and helpful consideration of the notions of light and night in the poem, as well as the ways in which commitments to various manuscript traditions will affect our understanding of the goddess' articulation of these notions. I am indebted to her research in this discussion.

[155] Note that this equality is not the equality that the goddess had spoken of just a few lines earlier in Truth when stating that there is not "a way in which what is could be more here and less there, since it is all inviolate" (οὔτ' ἐὸν ἔστιν ὅπως εἴη κεν ἐόντος / τῇ μᾶλλον τῇ δ' ἧσσον, ἐπεὶ πᾶν ἐστιν ἄσυλον, lines 8.47-48).

of equality at play in mortal thinking in Fragments 8.55-59, shortly after beginning the

Doxa, where she says:

> …and they (mortals) distinguished things opposite in body, and established signs
> separate from one another – for, on the one hand, the aetherial fire of flame,
> yielding,[156] very light, self-same in all directions,
> but not the same as the other; but on the other hand, that which is by itself and
> is opposite – dark night, a dense and heavy body.
>
> τἀντία δ' ἐκρίναντο δέμας καὶ σήματ' ἔθεντο
> χωρὶς ἀπ' ἀλλήλων, τῇ μὲν φλογὸς αἰθέριον πῦρ,
> ἤπιον ὄν, μέγ'ἐλαφρόν, ἑωυτῷ πάντοσε τωὐτόν,
> τῷ δ' ἑτέρῳ μὴ τωὐτόν· ἀτὰρ κἀκεῖνο κατ' αὐτό
> τἀντία νύκτ' ἀδαῆ, πυκινὸν δέμας ἐμβριθές τε.

The goddess describes the two 'equal' forms (here 'aetherial flame of fire' and 'dark

night') as 'opposite' (line 8.59) and 'opposite in body' (line 8.55), 'separate' (line 8.56),

and 'not the same' (ἑτέρῳ, line 8.58). As 'equals,' each has been said to be co-

constitutive of 'all things' (line 9.1); but the two forms themselves are fundamentally

opposed and separated, yielding an ontological heterogeneity. In other words, each of the

two forms stands on its own, 'the same as itself in every direction' (line 8.57), while

standing 'separated' from one another, without compositional or constitutional reference

to one another as the terms by which each nature is defined.

Mortals thus have accounted for 'all things' without reference to their grounding

sameness, insisting instead on a fundamental and unreconciled difference composed of

two self-same 'equal' but 'opposite' forms. We can speak to two errors here. The first

error lies in mortals' failing to see the co-constitutiveness of the two forms they posit.

The problem thus is that mortals have failed to recognize the co-constitution of light and

night. To *know* light is to understand that light owes its nature to night, and to see that

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[156] For a justification for rendering ἤπιον as 'yielding,' see Miller 2006: 37 fn. 55.

the 'two' are, at the deepest level, *one*, insofar as the being of one entails the being of the other. Light cannot be posited as a self-sufficient element, since its being entails constitution from without, i.e., by night. Therefore, any saying of '*is*,' as in the example 'the flame *is* light,' entails for mortals an (implied) saying of '*is not*,' as in 'the flame *is not* night;' but this '*is not*' is based on a fundamental confusion about the sense in which flame is constituted by the being, as absence, of night.

The second error can only be indicated for now, though we will consider it in more depth when turning back to the *Sophist*. If it were true that two *are*, it would furthermore be true that a first (light) *is* and that a second (night) also *is*. The being of two thus suggests something that is some sense common to the two, or the same regarding the two. This mortal error will be especially apparent when the Stranger embarks upon his critique of pluralism (considered in section 4.2.1) and posits a different kind of ontological complexity (considered especially in section 5.3.1).

In this way, mortals have named two, but according to the goddess, 'to identify one of these is not right,' and therefore mortals 'have gone astray' (lines 8.53-54). In the Parmenidean terms of the two forms, this represents the failure to see that night is not self-sufficient, but instead is the privation of light, and vice versa. The mortal inquirer takes light and night to be 'the same' merely insofar as they are equally constitutive of beings, and 'not the same' insofar as they fundamentally opposed and do not share a common sameness, e.g., being. Insisting on ontological heterogeneity and ignoring the necessary, prior homogeneity that makes heterogeneity possible is the profound mortal error, representing mortals' insistence on naming two when only one need be named.

3.3.3 Being and being given to thought and speech

This consideration of the nature of mortal inquiry will, I hope, help to show the natures of the two routes of inquiry that the goddess describes. That is, inquiry can either take up the noetic impossibility of what-is-not *as such* and hence turn to the necessary sense of being, as in the positive routes of Fragment 2 and 6, or fail to do so, as in the 'backward-turning' path and the Doxa. Failing to take up the noetic impossibility of what-is-not *as such* entails missing the necessary and prior ontological homogeneity. In the case of light and night, this is the necessity with which the being of light requires the being of night. But what is this necessary homogeneity to which the sameness-in-difference of light and night calls our mind? When answering this question, we are turned back to the first route, '[…] *is* […].' The sameness of light and night, in other words, precisely is the sameness of 'being as it draws near to being' (line 8.25), or being *as such*. Therefore, our attempt to trace and correct the errors of mortal thinking has led us back to the route of '*is*,' the route that attends upon truth.

In drawing together this account, it is important to note that what-is-not *as such* cannot be taken up as a means of inquiry. Precisely as the inquirer attempts to take 'it' up as the content of discursivity, 'it' is lost. Any attempt to inquire with reference to what-is-not *as such* therefore has two possible results. Either (1) the inquirer will grasp the impossibility of what-is-not *as such* and hence be turned to the '[…] *is* […]' in its necessary sense; or (2) the inquirer will lose the sense of nonbeing '*as such*' and hence lapse into the path described in Fragment 6, in which being and nonbeing are taken to be the same and not the same. Any indication of the concept 'what-is-not' necessarily

entails a mixing of being and nonbeing, since any act of saying (in the sense of *logos*) is a simultaneous indication of the being of that which is said. Hence, to say that 'X is not Y' is first to posit X in terms of its being, and then to indicate its being in terms of its nonbeing in the sense of otherness. Conversely, to say that 'X is not Y, for all values of Y' is to attempt to take up X with reference to what-is-not *as such;* but such a means of inquiry simply cannot be brought about, insofar as positing X in a way that allows for its negation first requires its being posited with reference to its *being.*

In this sense, the mortal route is a route 'from which no learning comes.'[157] What presents itself as inquiry through this sense of nonbeing is in actuality no inquiry at all, since the very fact that an object has been indicated suggests that it *is* at least in some sense. Therefore, what presents itself as a route of learning is in fact a mode of inquiry of a different kind.

Let us briefly take a step back from the context in which Parmenides' goddess spoke and consider this instead by revisiting some modern metaphysical notions that I brought up in the introduction (1.1.1). These terms will be incongruous, but I hope that they will also be instructive for our purposes. I submit that we should learn from the goddess that putative inquiry into the 'existence' of an object or concept is, in reality, an inquiry of a different kind. I suggest therefore that we learn from the goddess that the question, "Does X exist?", where 'exist' means 'be in any sense, be something other than nothing,' is incoherent. This is because the mere indication of X suggests that X *is*, i.e.,

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[157] Mourelatos 1970 argues for an account of this insight as, in my own words, the unhelpfulness of negative predication. For example, to know that a thing is a non-cat is so vague as to offer no insight into the positive nature of the thing under scrutiny. While his account is not the same as my own, I think that this is a helpful and similar way of getting at the problem of mortal inquiry that I develop in the discussion of the Doxa above. I take it, that is, that failing to know a thing with respect to its nonbeing in the sense of its negative predication is closely related to the failures of mortals that I describe above.

X exists, at least in some weakly existential sense. On my reading, the question from which we will truly learn instead regards the structure of X's being. "Is X," we ask, "dependent on mind for its being, as in the paradigmatic case of Pegasus? Or, instead, is it dependent on (other) ontological and ontic kinds and categories, and if so, which kinds and categories?" The goddess has shown that the inquiry from which learning comes is of the form, "What *is* it?", and not, "*Is* it?" This prescribed mode of inquiry, I take it, contrasts with the type of inquiry that entails failing to see the necessary impossibility of nonbeing in the sense of what-is-not *as such*.

This understanding of the goddess' prescribed mode of inquiry is further supported by an interpretation of Fragments 3 and 4.[158] In Fragment 3, the goddess says,

[…] for the same is there to grasp through mind and to be.

... τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἐστίν τε καὶ εἶναι.

Here the goddess makes explicit the relationship of 'sameness' (τὸ […] αὐτὸ) between what it is to be available for apprehension by thought (νοεῖν) and to be (εἶναι). I take the goddess here to be implying that being given to thought and speech *is* being.[159] In other words, that an object is grasped by mind and speech is sufficient to indicate its being in some sense.[160] Given its being in some sense, this leads to the question, 'What *is* it?'

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[158] Diels 1897: 67 takes Fragment 3 to complete Fragment 2 both logically and metrically. For a more recent argument that Fragments 2 and 3 bear a logical and stylistic relationship, see Wedin 2014: 21.

[159] Here I adapt a version of the view espoused by Kahn 1969: 721-4. Kahn interprets the relationship of being and *thought itself* as that of identity. Coxon 1986 holds a similar view. Long 1996 defends a qualified version of this thesis. Sedley 1999: 123 calls this "the most outlandish metaphysical thesis" in Truth, but nonetheless interprets Parmenides to hold this view. My view that *availability to thought* is identical to being thus is closest to that of Kahn and Coxon, with the understanding of 'thought' recast as that which is available to thought, rather than thought itself. For the view that Parmenides' thesis is that "Being is mind," see Vlastos 1953: 168. Tarán 1965: 41-44 reviews 19th and early-mid 20th century philological and philosophical interpretations.

[160] Two passages in Fragment 8 further give flesh to the sense in which this is the case. The goddess says, "Thinking and the thought that it is are the same" (Ταὐτὸν δ' ἐστὶ νοεῖν τε καὶ οὕνεκεν ἔστι νόημα, line 8.34). In this instance, the goddess is making explicit the sameness of thinking and thinking being. That is, all thinking is thinking of being, and hence being is identical to being given to thought. The goddess's use

Such a question, of course, is of the type of the prescribed route of inquiry that we have been tracing. That Fragment 3 read in this way reinforces the view that the inquiry into X begins with inquiry into its whatness, not the question of whether it *is* or *is not*, in the sense of what-is-not *as such*.

Similarly, in Fragment 4, the goddess says,

Consider that which, although absent, is steadily present to mind
for [mind] will not cut of what *is* from holding to what *is*
for [what *is*] neither scatters in all ways everywhere in order
nor solidifies. [161]

Λεῦσσε δ' ὅμως ἀπεόντα νόῳ παρεόντα βεβαίως·
οὐ γὰρ ἀποτμήξει τὸ ἐὸν τοῦ ἐόντος ἔχεσθαι
οὔτε σκιδνάμενον πάντη πάντως κατὰ κόσμον
οὔτε συνιστάμενον.

Our account of the goddess's understanding of the co-constitutive nature of beings allows us to begin to understand the senses in which beings are present while absent, and that a robust account of what is must entail an account of that which is not *present* and yet nonetheless *is,* as is evident by the nature of what is present. The terms ἀπεόντα ('what is absent') and παρεόντα ('what is present') in line 4.1 capture two parallel but contrasting senses of being with their -όντα suffixes, and these two senses are drawn together in line 4.2 with ἐόντος ('what is.') Thus understood, the goddess is seeking to bring together two senses of being, the absent and the present, into a single sense of being that will not 'cut off' (οὐ […] ἀποτμήξε[ν]) either sense.

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of 'to think' (νοεῖν) here echoes her use of the same infinitive in line 3.1 (…τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἐστίν τε καὶ εἶναι) and line 6.1 (Χρὴ τὸ λέγειν τε νοεῖν τ' ἐὸν ἔμμεναι· ἔστι γὰρ εἶναι.) Shortly thereafter, the goddess says that "it is with reference to it (i.e., being) that all things have been named" (τῷ πάντ' ὄνομ' ἔσται, line 8.36). Speaking, construed as the act of formulating and articulating names, is the act of dividing being itself into constituent parts and asserting the relations that adhere among beings. To speak is to take up what is given, and to be is to be given to speech and the act of naming and asserting relations of names. Thus, in these instances, we find the goddess further elaborating the senses in which being is identical to being given to thought (line 8.34) and to speech (line 8.36).

[161] My interpretation and translation here borrow heavily from Miller 2006.

The relevant sense of this absence and presence relates to the co-constitution of opposites. As indicated by the transcendence of mortal thinking, that which is engaged in the type of being we call 'absence' (ἀπεόντα, line 4.1) is nonetheless engaged in being (-όντα.) As the goddess says in line 4.2, what is (τό ἐόν) cannot be cut off from its being insofar as it *is*. The reflecting mind, upon grasping the scope of the '[…] *is* […]' in Fragment 2, understands that the being that is absent nonetheless still *is*, and makes possible the nature of those beings that are present through its own nature. For example, upon reflecting on the light present in the day, the reader who understands the goddess's insight will understand that the night is co-constitutive of the present light and hence that the night *is,* as evidenced by the presence of the light. I take it here that the goddess further develops her account of the interrelation of being and being given to mind. The absence of a given being, i.e., the nonbeing of a being in a particular space and at a particular time, does not indicate its total nonbeing in the sense of what-is-not *as such*. Instead, its steady presence to mind suggests its continued being, albeit not necessarily in the sense of material being that is subjected to the physical forces of scattering and solidifying. In other words, the steady presence to mind of that which is absent reinforces the sense of the necessary being of a given object of discourse that simply cannot be negated. To put the matter one final way, that an object is present to mind suggests that it cannot not be *as such*, but instead that its being must be characterized with reference to its sameness and difference regarding various ontological and ontic categories.

If this interpretation is well taken, then I suggest that we can read Fragments 3 and 4 as further developments of the positive route of inquiry, that which transcends

mortal inquiry, that the goddess indicates in Fragments 2 and 6. These fragments in Truth help us to develop an account of the '[…] *is* […],' or the inquiry from which learning truly comes.

Before returning to Plato's *Sophist*, it is worth briefly contrasting the Parmenidean account with the sophistical account considered in 3.2.2 above. Both Euthydemus (representing sophistical thought) and Parmenides take it that that which is said must *be*, and that nonbeing is impossible. But they mean this is very different senses and their respective views have very different entailments. For Euthydemus, any utterance whatsoever must constitute truth; for Parmenides, by contrast, simple objects given to thinking and speech must *be* in some sense, but truly *knowing* them and not merely opining in regard to them entails understanding their structure with reference to others, or the true structure of their participation in others. (For example, day is truly known as co-constituted by the privation of night, and hence its participation in nonbeing, etc.) Additionally, the sophistical claim that nonbeing is impossible has been qualified; for while Parmenides has shown that nonbeing *as such* is impossible, he has further shown that nonbeing is a more complex issue than this in Fragment 6. This is precisely because mortal inquiry entails mixing being and nonbeing in an important sense. Plato will have the Eleatic Stranger develop an account of this problem and its solution; for now, it is important to note that the sense in which nonbeing is impossible has been clarified by the discussion of Parmenides' poem.

3.4   That nonbeing is

3.4.1   The *aporia* regarding saying 'what is not' (237b – 237e)

With these Parmenidean senses of being, nonbeing, and mortal inquiry

considered, we are prepared to return to Plato's *Sophist*. After citing Parmenides' poem

in the context of Parmenides' claims regarding nonbeing, the Stranger presents an

argument in several parts that leads to the ultimate conclusion that "Non-being in some

respect *is* and that Being in turn *is not* in some way" (βιάζεσθαι τό τε μὴ ὂν ὡς ἔστι κατά

τι καὶ τὸ ὂν αὖ πάλιν ὡς οὐκ ἔστι πῃ, 241d8-9).[162] The Stranger worries that his account

might be taken as a 'parricidal' attack on Parmenides' injunction against saying 'what is

not' at lines 7.1-4, but I hope to show that the two accounts are in greater accord than is

often supposed.

The argument concluding that nonbeing in some respect *is* (τό τε μὴ ὂν ὡς ἔστι)

includes several steps, each of which involves the Stranger leading Theaetetus and their

audience through a series of puzzles that point to the necessary being of nonbeing in an

important sense. The interrelation of these arguments has been understood in numerous

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[162] Commentators disagree widely regarding the scope and meaning of this passage. There is no consensus
regarding answers even to very basic questions, such as whether the Stranger is here discussing ontology or
language, whether the Stranger ultimately endorses or rejects the claim that being and nonbeing are
intertwined, and whether these arguments are intended by the Stranger (or Plato) to be in earnest or in
sophistical jest. My reading deviates from most commentators in that I take the argument to continue until
241d; that is, I take the Stranger's explicit return to Parmenides on the subject nonbeing to be the resolution
of this issue. (Wiitala 2014b: 60-84 holds a similar view, albeit with a modified structure and based on
premises regarding the Stranger's pedagogical response to Theaetetus' implicit view of being that I am not
here discussing.) Other interpretations abound. For the view that this passage is concerned only (or
primarily) with the linguistic utterance of 'utter nonbeing' (τὸ μηδαμῶς ὂν), see de Rijk 1986: 84-90. For
interpretations of this passage as entailing ultimate agreement with Parmenides in his alleged injunction
against thinking 'what is not,' see Cornford 1935: 203-209. For a review of interpretations of this passage
related to modern conceptions of being, see Crivelli 2012: 28-70.

ways,[163] and I will here break the argument down into three steps, two negative and one positive. In each of these moments, the Stranger experiments with different ways of conceiving of nonbeing, at first discussing nonbeing in the sense of 'utter nonbeing' (τὸ μηδαμῶς ὂν, which I will connect to the goddess' notion of what-is-not *as such*) before showing this to be absurd and thus that nonbeing must be conceived of in different terms. Put differently, the Stranger will show that nonbeing is not what-is-not *as such,* but instead something else. Reconceiving of nonbeing will be the task in what follows.

The structure of the argument is as follows:

(1) In the first, *aporetic* moment (237b7-e8), the Stranger articulates the absurdity of speaking of nonbeing as utter nonbeing or what-is-not *as such*, concluding that 'nonbeing' taken in this sense cannot have a referent and inferring from this the absurd conclusion that 'nonbeing' (thus conceived) cannot be spoken.

(2) In the second (238a1-239a12), the Stranger considers via a *reductio* argument the unacceptable consequences of asserting that nonbeing cannot be spoken by considering the absurdity of the notion that nonbeing does not blend with either quantity or being.

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[163] Nearly all commentators of whom I am aware break this bit of the dialogue into sub-sections, and the divisions suggested by Crivelli 2012: 28-70 and Wiitala 2014b: 60-84 come closest to my own breakdown. Crivelli and Wiitala each understand this argument as dividing into four parts: (i) the discussion of the lack of referent for, and hence impossibility to say, 'what is not' (237b7-e7); (ii) a reductio argument for the necessary 'numberlessness' or 'uncountability' of 'what is not' (238a1-c12); (iii) a second reductio argument for the necessary blending of 'what is not' with being (238d1-239a12); and (iv) the discharge of the preceding assumptions and hence the assertion of their opposite, namely, that 'what is not' must be and be capable of being said (239b1-241c6). I however opt to take (ii) and (iii) together as a single moment in the argument, given several textual clues suggesting that (ii) has not been resolved by the time of (iii) and hence that (ii) and (iii) constitute a single argument about the necessary blending of 'what is not,' i.e., with count words and with being. For example, at 239a3-4, the Stranger says, "In attaching 'to be' [to 'nonbeing,'] wasn't I conversing with it as though it were a one?" (Cf. 239a6-7 and 239a9-12, where the Stranger treats the issues of count words and being as inherently connected.) Because of the close relationship between the issues of count words and being, and the reliance of each point on the other, I here treat what Crivelli and Wiitala separate into (ii) and (iii) as a single phase of the argument (section 3.4.2 below).

(3) In the third, *positive* moment (239b1-241c6), the interlocutors discharge the

assumptions shown to be absurd by the preceding considerations, which forces a shift to

understanding nonbeing in a new sense. When they consider images and false opinions,

their findings entail that nonbeing must *be* in some sense. This will allow for the

interlocutors to turn to their positive account of being, in which they will determine that

being is not itself one of the beings but instead is of a different kind, and *to be* a

countable thing is to participate in a causal network of relations, the causes of which are

conceptually prior to and independent of the caused.

First within the three-part argument regarding nonbeing, the interlocutors address

the problem of nonbeing and the *aporia* that it entails:

> ES: […] And tell me: I suppose we do dare to pronounce Utter-non-being [τὸ
> μηδαμῶς ὄν, or 'what in no way is']?
> THEA: Of course.
> ES: If, then, not as a point of contention or a joke but in earnest, one of
> Parmenides' listeners had to think it out and to answer the question, "Where must
> this name Non-being be applied?," how do we think he would use the name – for
> what purpose and for what sort of thing? And how would he show this to the one
> who inquired?
> THEA: You ask a hard question, one that leaves someone like me, I might say,
> entirely at an impasse.
> ES: But this at last is clear: that "Non-being" must not be applied to any beings.
> THEA: How could it be?
> ES: Now if it could not be applied to a being, then anyone who applied it to
> "some" would not apply it correctly.
> THEA: How could he?
> ES: And this is in any case apparent to us: that we always use this expression
> "some" of a being. For to use it alone, naked and isolated, as it were, from all the
> beings – that's impossible. Or isn't it?
> THEA: It's impossible.
> ES: Are you then agreeing because you see that there's a necessity for him who
> says "some" to being saying "some *one*"?
> THEA: Just so.
> ES: For you will say that singular "some" is in fact a sign of one, dual "some" of
> two, and plural "some" of many.
> THEA: Of course.
> ES: And so it's utterly necessary, it seems, that he who says "not some" is saying

no-thing at all.
THEA: Utterly necessary.
ES: Then we mustn't grant even this much: that such a man speaks although he says nothing. Mustn't we instead declare that whoever tries to pronounce non-being does not even speak?
THEA: Then the account would reach its ultimate perplexity.

Ξένος: ἀλλὰ χρὴ δρᾶν ταῦτα. καί μοι λέγε: τὸ μηδαμῶς ὂν τολμῶμέν που φθέγγεσθαι;
Θεαίτητος: πῶς γὰρ οὔ;
Ξένος: μὴ τοίνυν ἔριδος ἕνεκα μηδὲ παιδιᾶς, ἀλλ᾽ εἰ σπουδῇ δέοι συννοήσαντά τινα ἀποκρίνασθαι τῶν ἀκροατῶν ποῖ χρὴ τοὔνομ᾽ ἐπιφέρειν τοῦτο, τὸ μὴ ὄν, τί δοκοῦμεν ἂν εἰς τί καὶ ἐπὶ ποῖον αὐτόν τε καταχρήσασθαι καὶ τῷ πυνθανομένῳ δεικνύναι;
Θεαίτητος: χαλεπὸν ἤρου καὶ σχεδὸν εἰπεῖν οἴῳ γε ἐμοὶ παντάπασιν ἄπορον.
Ξένος: ἀλλ᾽ οὖν τοῦτό γε δῆλον, ὅτι τῶν ὄντων ἐπί τι τὸ μὴ ὂν οὐκ οἰστέον.
Θεαίτητος: πῶς γὰρ ἄν;
Ξένος: οὐκοῦν ἐπείπερ οὐκ ἐπὶ τὸ ὄν, οὐδ᾽ ἐπὶ τὸ τὶ φέρων ὀρθῶς ἄν τις φέροι.
Θεαίτητος: πῶς δή;
Ξένος: καὶ τοῦτο ἡμῖν που φανερόν, ὡς καὶ τὸ 'τὶ' τοῦτο ῥῆμα ἐπ᾽ ὄντι λέγομεν ἑκάστοτε. μόνον γὰρ αὐτὸ λέγειν, ὥσπερ γυμνὸν καὶ ἀπηρημωμένον ἀπὸ τῶν ὄντων ἁπάντον, ἀδύνατον. ἦ γάρ;
Θεαίτητος: ἀδύνατον.
Ξένος: ἆρα τῇδε σκοπῶν ξύμφης ὡς ἀνάγκη τόν τι λέγοντα ἕν γέ τι λέγειν;
Θεαίτητος: οὕτως.
Ξένος: ἡνὸς γὰρ δὴ τό γέ 'τὶ' φήσεις σημεῖον εἶναι, τὸ δὲ 'τινὲ' δυοῖν, τὸ δὲ 'τινὲς' πολλῶν.
Θεαίτητος: πῶς γὰρ οὔ;
Ξένος: τὸν δὲ δὴ μὴ τὶ λέγοντα ἀναγκαιότατον, ὡς ἔοικε, παντάπασι μηδὲν λέγειν.
Θεαίτητος: ἀναγκαιότατον μὲν οὖν.
Ξένος: ἆρ᾽ οὖν οὐδὲ τοῦτο συγχωρητέον, τὸ τὸν τοιοῦτον λέγειν μέν τι, λέγειν μέντοι μηδέν, ἀλλ᾽ οὐδὲ λέγειν φατέον, ὅς γ᾽ ἂν ἐπιχειρῇ μὴ ὂν φθέγγεσθαι;
Θεαίτητος: τέλος γοῦν ἂν ἀπορίας ὁ λόγος ἔχοι (237b7-e8).

First, it is important to consider the central notion of 'utter nonbeing,' (τὸ μηδαμῶς ὂν, or

'what in no way is,' 237b9), which the Stranger notes that we 'dare to pronounce.' The

precise meaning of this phrase is ambiguous and admits of two possible construals, and

the term plays a central role in what follows. I argue that each of the dual meanings of

this phrase in Greek should be heard when the Stranger uses this term.[164] The first sense

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[164] Cf. Rosen 1983: 180 for discussion of the two possible construals in Greek, and hence double meaning, of τὸ μηδαμῶς ὂν. By contrast, Seligman 1974: 14-16ff interprets this as a specifically Eleatic notion that

is what Rosen calls the '*nihil absolutum*,' which I take to mean the same as the goddess'

'what-is-not *as such*.'[165] This, in other words, is notion of nonbeing *itself*. The second

sense is, as I would describe it, 'What is not X, for all values of X.' This is, to put the

matter imprecisely, "a particular instance" of nonbeing. It is important to hear both of

these senses of the phrase in what follows, since either construal in English may

potentially offer passage into an understanding of the Stranger's meaning in a given

instance. Furthermore, upon philosophical reflection, I think we can see the oneness of

these two senses. To take the second sense first, any given "instance" of 'not X, for all

values of X' is in fact no "instance" at all, for if it was indeed an "instance," it would

have at least one value of X, i.e., the value of being an "instance." 'What is not X, for all

values of X' thus lacks any"thing" to differentiate "itself" from the first sense, or what-is-

not *as such*. In this way, these two senses are two seemingly distinct ways of getting at

the same notion.

 With this stated, we can consider the rest of the passage. After framing the

problem, the Stranger states that nonbeing cannot be said of a being, and hence neither

'some' (τί, which implies a being) nor quantity are applicable to it. Since 'not some' (μὴ

τί) implies no-thing (μηδὲν), it seems that the person saying 'nonbeing' refers to not even

one thing ('λέγειν […] μηδέν,' alternatively 'says nothing' or 'says nothing [of particular

value or interest.]')[166]

Plato intends to attack, but I take it instead to be the sort of "common-sense" interpretation of nonbeing
(e.g., one that the sophist plays on) that the Stranger intends to address and subsequently reject.
[165] Rosen 1983: 180.
[166] The ambiguity of 'μηδέν λέγειν' has been a focus of commentators, and I here indicate three ways in
which this phrase has been rendered. Ultimately I am not convinced that commitment to any of the
possible renderings affects my argument, and because each sense helps to give shape to the overall
argument in its way, I suspect that Plato has the Stranger draw upon this ambiguity deliberately. For
discussions of this ambiguity, see Cornford 1935: 205 and de Rijk 1986: 84-85.

Because this passage draws on abstractions and a Greek vocabulary that does not

map on directly to linguistic and conceptual frameworks in English, it is worth pausing

here to consider the reception of this crucial passage among commentators. The

Stranger's exact meaning in this passage has puzzled and divided scholars, particularly

when trying to map these claims onto certain senses of being (εἶναι and its cognates),

speech (λέγειν), and nonbeing (μηδέν and its cognates). Following one popular line of

interpretation, the Stranger is here guilty of an equivocation, conflating different senses

of 'being.'[167] That is, according to those following this interpretation, the Stranger seems

to be saying that falsehood cannot be, since falsehood is equivalent to what is not and to

say 'what-is-not *is*' entails a contradiction; this contradiction derives (or so the argument

goes) from multiple senses of 'is' at play in the claim 'what-is-not *is*.'[168] Interpreters

arguing for this type of reading depend on modern distinctions regarding the senses in

which being is said. That is, the Stranger is here guilty (either unintentionally due to his

alleged sophism or intentionally and for pedagogical reasons) of confusing veridical

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[167] The reticence among commentators, particularly in the mid to late 20th century, to accept this argument as valid and not fallacious is perhaps best stated by Wiggins 1971:169, who takes it as granted that "it is highly dubious that Plato had the logical apparatus to disentangle these perplexities in exactly the way we now should[.]" I will argue in what follows that these commentators misapprehend Plato's point due to the muddles regarding the thinking of being in our own time, and that we would do well to listening to Plato's interlocutors on the subject.

[168] Prominent arguments for the fallaciousness or invalidity of this argument include Wiggins 1971: 268-271 and Moravcsik 1962: 26. Wiggins holds that the Stranger is fallaciously equivocating regarding the meaning of 'saying something' when saying 'that such a man speaks though he says nothing,' meaning first the bare speech act devoid of content and second the identification of some indexical. Moravcsik holds that the Stranger invalidly infers the meaninglessness of 'what is not' due to the emptiness of its extension (echoed in Crivelli 1990 and 2012: 40fn43). But I hold that these commentators miss several important points. First, the Greek *'legein'* does not map cleanly onto our English 'to say,' in that *'legein'* suggests a response to an ordering principle as implied by the notion of a 'laying out' that which is already there. Therefore, concepts like bare speech acts are not especially relevant to understanding the Stranger's claims. Secondly, this entails missing the greater perspective regarding being and nonbeing for which I argue throughout, as evidenced by Moravcsik's notion of the 'empty extension,' a term (referring as it does to non-existence) that would not have made sense to the Stranger (or Plato). Invoking the principle of charity, I hope to offer the framework herein for understanding the Stranger's arguments not as fallacious or invalid, but instead as internally consistent.

being and existential being, saying first 'what is not' veridically, and second '*is*'

existentially. But as argued above (see section 1.1.1), these distinctions do not hold for

Plato, and readings that entail imposing the modern distinctions onto the notion of being

articulated in the dialogue threaten to distort the text and cause us to lose sight of its

valuable insights regarding the unified sense of being as participation.

Hence I will be arguing for an alternative interpretation, which I think better

captures the force of the argument. I take it that, most basically, the Stranger is saying

that 'what is not' cannot be brought to thinking and speaking in some important sense.

The Stranger wants to establish that nonbeing in the sense of utter nonbeing (τὸ μηδαμῶς

ὄν) cannot be pronounced and hence cannot be taken as an object of thought, much the

same as the goddess demonstrated the impossibility of what-is-not *as such*. We again see

that as soon as anything is said 'to be,' i.e., said to be intermixed with 'is,' nonbeing in

the sense of unpredicated being or pure privation is impossible. Furthermore, as the

Stranger has begun to establish and will later further develop, nonbeing cannot be said to

be 'some,' because 'some' implies quantity (either singular, dual, or plural), and quantity

entails being. Thus 'nonbeing' cannot be brought to speech or quantification, since both

entail being; and if we are to take 'nonbeing' to be pure privation, we are hemmed in by

contradiction.

Theaetetus twice identifies the aporetic character of these discussions in this

passage, first at 237c6 and second at 237e8, and these references frame this phase of the

argument. The first 'impasse' Theaetetus indicates follows the question as to where the

name 'nonbeing' must be directed. That is, 'nonbeing' is a name, and a name indicates a

countable, individual unity with a particular nature or essence, and an essence

presupposes a definition and the capacity for admitting of true predication.[169] And yet

this name is puzzling because it seems to negate the possibility of definition, insofar as it

seems to indicate a nature contrary to definition. This is because definition entails

drawing on being, or disclosing the structure of a given unity in *logos,* while nonbeing in

the sense of utter nonbeing suggest a structure that does not draw on being in any way.

As a preliminary step toward resolving this problem, the Stranger indicates that

'nonbeing' cannot name or otherwise pick out any one of the beings (237c7-8). This is

important, and the Stranger will never reject this claim. Instead, this shows that the

Stranger has now taken up his project of differentiating things that possess certain

properties from the properties themselves, indicated by the insight that nonbeing is not

one of the beings, though it remains to be shown that nonbeing's not being one of the

beings does not (merely) entail that nonbeing *is not.* But it remains incumbent upon the

Stranger to show what (if anything) nonbeing *is,* if not *a* being. For now, the Stranger

adds that the status of 'nonbeing' as something other than a being also entails that

'nonbeing' cannot be identified via the term 'some' (τί), since 'some' implies a *whatness*

(i.e., it implies structured being) and number, be it one, two, or many.

Given these difficulties, the Stranger has Theaetetus address the seeming

conclusion, that nonbeing's exclusion from counting implies that it must be understood as

'not some,' and hence that whoever says this 'says no-thing at all' (παντάπασι μηδὲν

λέγειν, or 'in all ways says not even one [thing]', (237e2).[170] When the Stranger

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[169] Cf. McCabe 1994: especially 197. McCabe interprets aspects of this argument differently, but
nevertheless offers a helpful discussion of the entailments of named individualization in Plato's thinking.
[170] Or, following Duerlinger 2005: 34, "what lacks any unity" (παντάπασι μηδὲν). Duerlinger's discussion
of the implications of this formulation for the logic of unity is valuable in teasing out another of the implicit
senses carried in the Greek and not possible to convey in the English translation.

concludes that 'whoever tries to pronounce (φθέγγεσθαι) nonbeing does not even speak,'[171] Theaetetus indicates the aporetic character of these puzzles for the second time, stating that the account has reached its ultimate 'perplexity' (ἀπορίας, 237e5-8). In other words, the Stranger has suggested that 'pronouncing' nonbeing does not constitute a speech act. Theaetetus finds this to constitute an impasse, but this impasse is ultimately provocative and productive,[172] as the Stranger has begun to lay the groundwork for an understanding of the being of nonbeing.

3.4.2   Nonbeing as uncountable and unmixed? (238a – 239a)

The interlocutors have addressed the problem of saying nonbeing, insofar as nonbeing cannot be said to be 'some,' since 'some' implies quantity, while its opposite 'not-some' refers to no-thing at all. The Stranger next leads Theaetetus through a *reductio* argument that demonstrates the impossibility of taking nonbeing to be unmixed with either quantity or being. This argument contains two closely related parts. The Stranger states the first half of his argument immediately after Theaetetus has claimed that the argument has reached its 'ultimate perplexity.' It concerns the necessary sense in which nonbeing must partake of quantity, and is as follows, with my roman numerals marking claims that I will address below:

> ES: Don't start talking big yet. For, bless you, the biggest and first of perplexities in these matters is still before us. For this perplexity turns out to be about the very beginning of the matter.
> THEA: What do you mean? Speak and don't hold anything back.
> ES: I suppose that (i) one of the things that *are* may come to be joined with

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[171] For a discussion of the various ways in which 'φθέγγεσθαι' has been and should be translated, including entailments for our understanding of the passage as a whole, see Crivelli 2012: 34-36.
[172] Cf. Crivelli 2012: 32.

another?

THEA: Of course.

ES: But (ii) will we claim that one of the things that *are* can come to be joined to non-being?

THEA: How could that be?

ES: Now (iii) we set down number as a whole among the things that *are*.

THEA: Certainly, if we must set down anything else as being.

ES: Then (iv) let us in no way attempt to apply plurality or unity of number to Non-being.

THEA: The account asserts, it seems, that it would not be right for us to attempt this.

ES: How, then, could someone utter through his mouth or even grasp in his thought
Non-beings or Non-being apart from number?

THEA: Say where number comes in.

ES: (v) Whenever we say "non-beings," aren't we attempting to add plurality of number
to them?

THEA: Certainly.

ES: And (vi) whenever "non-being," unity?

THEA: Very clearly.

ES: And yet, we claim it's neither just (δικαίον)[173] nor correct to link being with non-being.

THEA: You speak very truthfully.

ES: Do you see then, (vii) that it's not possible correctly to utter or speak or think Non-being [in] itself[174] – that it is unthinkable and unspeakable and unutterable and irrational?

THEA: That's altogether so.

Ξένος: μήπω μέγ᾽ εἴπῃς· ἔτι γάρ, ὦ μακάριε, ἔστι, καὶ ταῦτά γε τῶν ἀποριῶν ἡ μεγίστη καὶ πρώτη. περὶ γὰρ αὐτὴν αὐτοῦ τὴν ἀρχὴν οὖσα τυγχάνει.

Θεαίτητος: πῶς φής; λέγε καὶ μηδὲν ἀποκνήσῃς.

Ξένος: τῷ μὲν ὄντι που προσγένοιτ᾽ ἄν τι τῶν ὄντων ἕτερον.

Θεαίτητος: πῶς γὰρ οὔ;

Ξένος: μὴ ὄντι δέ τι τῶν ὄντων ἆρά ποτε προσγίγνεσθαι φήσομεν δυνατὸν εἶναι;

Θεαίτητος: καὶ πῶς;

Ξένος: ἀριθμὸν δὴ τὸν σύμπαντα τῶν ὄντων τίθεμεν.

Θεαίτητος: εἴπερ γε καὶ ἄλλο τι θετέον ὡς ὄν.

Ξένος: μὴ τοίνυν μηδ᾽ ἐπιχειρῶμεν ἀριθμοῦ μήτε πλῆθος μήτε ἓν πρὸς τὸ μὴ ὂν προσφέρειν.

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[173] The use of 'δικαίον' here is a rare moment of seemingly normative language in the Stranger's ontology, and it somewhat recalls the role of justice in mediating between being and nonbeing the Parmenides poem (cf. Fragments 1.14 and 8.14, as well as the 'moral necessity' [χρή] invoked at lines 1.28, 1.33, 2.5, 6.1, 8.9, 8.11, 8.45, and 8.54).

[174] Here I deviate from the Brann, et al. translation and render "τὸ μὴ ὂν αὐτὸ καθ᾽ αὑτό" as 'Nonbeing in itself' to capture the force of 'αὐτὸ καθ᾽ αὑτό.'

Θεαίτητος: οὔκουν ἂν ὀρθῶς γε, ὡς ἔοικεν, ἐπιχειροῖμεν, ὥς φησιν ὁ λόγος.
Ξένος: πῶς οὖν ἂν ἢ διὰ τοῦ στόματος φθέγξαιτο ἄν τις ἢ καὶ τῇ διανοίᾳ τὸ παράπαν λάβοι τὰ μὴ ὄντα ἢ τὸ μὴ ὂν χωρὶς ἀριθμοῦ;
Θεαίτητος: λέγε πῇ;
Ξένος: μὴ ὄντα μὲν ἐπειδὰν λέγωμεν, ἆρα οὐ πλῆθος ἐπιχειροῦμεν ἀριθμοῦ προστιθέναι;
Θεαίτητος: τί μήν;
Ξένος: μὴ ὂν δέ, ἆρα οὐ τὸ ἓν αὖ;
Θεαίτητος: σαφέστατά γε.
Ξένος: καὶ μὴν οὔτε δίκαιόν γε οὔτε ὀρθόν φαμεν ὂν ἐπιχειρεῖν μὴ ὄντι προσαρμόττειν.
Θεαίτητος: λέγεις ἀληθέστατα.
Ξένος: συννοεῖς οὖν ὡς οὔτε φθέγξασθαι δυνατὸν ὀρθῶς οὔτ᾿ εἰπεῖν οὔτε διανοηθῆναι τὸ μὴ ὂν αὐτὸ καθ᾿ αὑτό, ἀλλ᾿ ἔστιν ἀδιανόητόν τε καὶ ἄρρητον καὶ ἄφθεγκτον καὶ ἄλογον;
Θεαίτητος: παντάπασι μὲν οὖν (238a1-c12).

In (i), the Stranger asserts that being entails intermixing, meaning that to be entails the possibility of joining with another.[175]   In (ii), the Stranger asserts that nonbeing (which he is still treating in the sense of 'utter nonbeing,' or 'what-is-not *as such*') necessarily excludes intermixing, since any instance of intermixing would entail some kind of being. Since, as stated in (iii), number *is* and hence intermixing with number entails the kind of intermixing prohibited for nonbeing identified in (ii), the Stranger concludes in (iv) that nonbeing excludes intermixing with number (as a thing that *is*). Given that all uttering, speaking, and thinking (apparently) entails speaking of things in quantities, either (vi) as a one (i.e., a whole unity) or (v) as multiple, it follows (vii) that nonbeing is barred from uttering, speaking, thinking, and hence from *logos*.

The notion of joining or intermixing (here 'προσγένοιτο' 238a6 and 'προσγίγνεσθαι' at 238a9, both forms of 'προσγίγνομαι,' more literally rendered as 'coming to be attached to') marks a return to the considerations of the bifurcatory

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[175] A point that he will flesh out later when considering the view of the late learners, that is, the view that being excludes intermixing and all being is identity (see section 5.2.2).

divisions, in that division is the study of the intermixing of sameness and difference. If we were to assume that nonbeing does not admit of the relationship of intermixing (either with being or quantity), we would be left with a conception of nonbeing as unattached to anything except 'itself.' Hence the Stranger characterizes it as impossible correctly to utter or speak or think nonbeing alone, since it is 'unthinkable' (ἀδιανόητόν), 'unspeakable' (ἄρρητον), 'unutterable' (ἄφθεγκτον), and 'irrational' (ἄλογον). In other words, if this were right, nonbeing would be unmixable with anything else, including thought, speech, utterance, and *logos*, and the account would lead us to assert that nonbeing in itself (τὸ μὴ ὂν αὐτὸ καθ᾽αὑτό) has purely an independent nature that does not draw upon other forms to instantiate itself. These contentious notions will be challenged in what follows.

The structure of this stretch of argumentation is similar in many ways to that of the sophistical argument for the impossibility of lying considered above (in 3.2.2). There, Euthydemus had reached the troubling conclusion that lying is impossible, precisely because 'what-is-not' cannot be said. Here, by contrast, the Stranger has reached the (for now perhaps also troubling) conclusion that 'what-is-not' cannot be said, but this view will be clarified with respect to the goddess' insight regarding the impossibility of what-is-not *as such*, or utter nonbeing. Doing so allows the Stranger to show the sense in which nonbeing *is* said.

The Stranger therefore continues accounting for the absurdity of nonbeing's unmixedness in the *reductio* argument. To do so, the Stranger makes explicit that the resultant account of nonbeing as incapable of mixing entails its own absurdities:

> ES: Then did I speak falsely just now when I said I was going to speak of the biggest perplexity concerning it?

THEA: Can we speak of one still bigger than this?

ES: You're marvelous! Don't you see that by the very things we've said, Non-being puts its refuter too into perplexity, and that as a result, whenever someone attempts to refute it, he's compelled to contradict himself about it?

THEA: What do you mean? Speak still more clearly.

ES: You mustn't look for greater clarity within me. For while supposing that Non-being must participate in neither one nor many, a little while ago and right now I've spoken of it as one. For I am saying "Non-being." You do understand?

THEA: Yes.

ES: And yet just a little while ago, I claimed: It *is* unutterable and unspeakable and irrational. Do you follow me?

THEA: Of course I follow.

ES: Then in trying to attach "to be," I was contradicting what was said earlier.

THEA: Apparently.

ES: What about this: In attaching "to be," wasn't I conversing with it as though it were a one?

THEA: Yes.

ES: And furthermore, in calling it irrational and inexpressible and unutterable, wasn't I making my speech as though to a one?

THEA: Of course.

ES: But we are affirming that if indeed someone is to speak correctly, he must not mark it off either as one or as many or even summon it at all; for even with this very act of accosting he'd be addressing it in the form of a one.

THEA: Altogether so.

Ξένος: ἆρ᾽ οὖν ἐψευσάμην ἄρτι λέγων τὴν μεγίστην ἀπορίαν ἐρεῖν αὐτοῦ πέρι, τὸ δὲ ἔτι μείζω τινὰ λέγειν ἄλλην ἔχομεν;

Θεαίτητος: τίνα δή;

Ξένος: ὦ θαυμάσιε, οὐκ ἐννοεῖς αὐτοῖς τοῖς λεχθεῖσιν ὅτι καὶ τὸν ἐλέγχοντα εἰς ἀπορίαν καθίστησι τὸ μὴ ὂν οὕτως, ὥστε, ὁπόταν αὐτὸ ἐπιχειρῇ τις ἐλέγχειν, ἐναντία αὐτὸν αὑτῷ περὶ ἐκεῖνο ἀναγκάζεσθαι λέγειν;

Θεαίτητος: πῶς φῄς; εἰπὲ ἔτι σαφέστερον.

Ξένος: οὐδὲν δεῖ τὸ σαφέστερον ἐν ἐμοὶ σκοπεῖν. ἐγὼ μὲν γὰρ ὑποθέμενος οὔτε ἑνὸς οὔτε τῶν πολλῶν τὸ μὴ ὂν δεῖν μετέχειν, ἄρτι τε καὶ νῦν οὕτως ἓν αὐτὸ εἴρηκα: τὸ μὴ ὂν γὰρ φημί. συνίης τοι.

Θεαίτητος: ναί.

Ξένος: καὶ μὴν αὖ καὶ σμικρὸν ἔμπροσθεν ἄφθεγκτόν τε αὐτὸ καὶ ἄρρητον καὶ ἄλογον ἔφην εἶναι. συνέπῃ;

Θεαίτητος: συνέπομαι. πῶς γὰρ οὔ;

Ξένος: οὐκοῦν τό γε εἶναι προσάπτειν πειρώμενος ἐναντία τοῖς πρόσθεν ἔλεγον;

Θεαίτητος: φαίνῃ.

Ξένος: τί δέ; τοῦτο προσάπτων οὐχ ὡς ἑνὶ διελεγόμην;

Θεαίτητος: ναί.

Ξένος: καὶ μὴν ἄλογόν γε λέγων καὶ ἄρρητον καὶ ἄφθεγκτον ὥς γε πρὸς ἓν τὸν λόγον ἐποιούμην.

Θεαίτητος: πῶς δ᾽ οὔ;

Ξένος: φαμὲν δέ γε δεῖν, εἴπερ ὀρθῶς τις λέξει, μήτε ὡς ἓν μήτε ὡς πολλὰ διορίζειν αὐτό, μηδὲ τὸ παράπαν αὐτὸ καλεῖν: ἑνὸς γὰρ εἴδει καὶ κατὰ ταύτην ἂν τὴν πρόσρησιν προσαγορεύοιτο.
Θεαίτητος: παντάπασί γε (238da-239a12).

Here the Stranger shows the necessary intermixing, at least in some sense, of being and nonbeing. Nonbeing had been conceived previously in the discussion only as utter nonbeing, which has been shown to entail the inability to mix broadly and more specifically the inability to mix with being and with quantity. But the Stranger now shows that this cannot stand. This is because the very terms at play in this account entail that nonbeing is posited with reference to quantity, insofar as 'nonbeing' entails unity and hence oneness, and being, insofar (e.g.) as predicative claims about nonbeing like 'nonbeing *is* irrational' must draw upon being. Thus nonbeing's being given to utterance, speech, and thought entails that some*thing* must *be*, in some sense, to be drawn upon in the account. Likewise, this entails that that sense of nonbeing at play in the account, whatever it may be, must *it*self draw upon being and quantity in some significant sense, since *it is* in a manner that is at rest as a unity available to noetic apprehension and hence to discourse.

The argument beginning from the assumption that nonbeing *is not*, does not admit of the relationship of mixtures, and hence does not intermix with quantity, has been shown to be absurd, on the basis of the absurdity (and impossibility) of each conjunct in the assumption. Thus nonbeing cannot be conceived narrowly as utter nonbeing, or what-is-not *as such*. Instead, in any instance in which nonbeing is said, the structure of being and quantity must be at play at least in some sense, and our attempts at getting at utter nonbeing, or what-is-not *as such*, always fail to constitute this sense of nonbeing to our apprehension.

More broadly, the Stranger has continued to demonstrate that being does not reduce to being a thing. The Stranger is in the midst of helping his audience sort out the differences between possessing a quality (i.e., being a thing) and what makes possessing qualities possible in the first place (i.e., forms as causes). Nonbeing cannot be a being, and yet, given that it is available in some important sense to utterance, speech, and thought, it remains an object for discourse. That is, nonbeing is not a being, and yet nonbeing *is*, although the sense in which it *is* has not yet been made clear. (We will turn our attention to this issue in the next chapter.)

A final, important point should be considered before turning to the Stranger's discussion of what nonbeing *is*. The Stranger has also shown, although he does not here draw this out, that being is being given thought and speech, recalling Parmenides's view. In other words, anything that can be the subject of *noesis* and discourse must *be*, at least in some sense, and as has been proven by this exercise. These faculties, thinking and speaking, are structured by being and draw upon being for their very possibility. This again is because all speaking and thinking presuppose the structure of being, as all statements (e.g., 'Theaetetus sits') can be reformulated as statements drawing explicitly on being (e.g., 'Theaetetus is sitting,' 'Theaetetus is the kind of thing for which sitting is possible,' etc.) Thus we have begun to gain positive ground in our overall account of being, insofar as being has been shown to be the same as being given to thought and speech, and that it has been shown to be of a different ontological kind than all the beings themselves.

3.4.3   Saying 'what is not' (239b – 241e)

What remains is to determine what exactly nonbeing *is*, and the interlocutors begin to make significant progress in the concluding section of the argument when considering what nonbeing must *be*. Following a brief dramatic interlude in which the interlocutors reflect on the enormous difficulty of this issue (239b1-239c10), the Stranger suggests that Theaetetus take a more active role to summarize the issue of the apparition-making art by accounting for the definition of the image. Theaetetus, making a mistake characteristic of many secondary Platonic interlocutors,[176] responds by listing examples, offering "the images in water and in mirrors, and what's more, painted ones and sculpted ones and all the other things which, although not of this sort, are different" (239d7-10). When the Stranger points out the deficiency of Theaetetus' mode of response, Theaetetus asks in somewhat desperate language, "But stranger, what would we say an image was if not another such thing made similar to the true one?" (240a9-11). This distinction between 'the similar' and 'the true' will allow the interlocutors to break through this aporetic moment by clarifying the distinction between truth and likeness, as well as the notion of privation to which this distinction gives rise.

This distinction is drawn as follows by the Stranger and Theaetetus, the latter perhaps at his most active in the conversation thus far:

> ES: Are you saying "another such true one," or in what sense are you using "such?"

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[176] E.g., Euthyphro at *Euthyphro* 5d8-e2, Meno at *Meno* 71e1-72a4, etc. Theaetetus himself had made a similar on the preceding day when seeking an account of knowledge with Socrates, first "defining" knowledge as "the things that Theodorus teaches […], geometry and the subjects you enumerated right now. Then again there are the crafts such as cobbling, whether you take them together or separately" at *Theaetetus* 146c9-d2.

THEA: No way in the sense of "true," but rather "like."
ES: But by "the true" you mean "what genuinely *is*"?
THEA: Just so.
ES: Well then, isn't the "not true" the contrary of the true?
THEA: Certainly.
ES: Then you say the like genuinely *is not*, if you call it "not true."
THEA: Yet in some way it *is*, after all.
ES: But not truly, as you say.
THEA: No, I admit, except it's genuinely a likeness.[177]

Ξένος: ἕτερον δὲ λέγεις τοιοῦτον ἀληθινόν, ἢ ἐπὶ τίνι τὸ τοιοῦτον εἶπες;
Θεαίτητος: οὐδαμῶς ἀληθινόν γε, ἀλλ᾽ ἐοικὸς μέν.
Ξένος: ἆρα τὸ ἀληθινὸν ὄντως ὂν λέγων;
Θεαίτητος: οὕτως.
Ξένος: τί δέ; τὸ μὴ ἀληθινὸν ἆρ᾽ ἐναντίον ἀληθοῦς;
Θεαίτητος: τί μήν;
Ξένος: οὐκ ὄντως οὐκ ὂν ἄρα λέγεις τὸ ἐοικός, εἴπερ αὐτό γε μὴ ἀληθινὸν ἐρεῖς.
Θεαίτητος: ἀλλ᾽ ἔστι γε μήν πως.
Ξένος: οὔκουν ἀληθῶς γε, φής.
Θεαίτητος: οὐ γὰρ οὖν: πλήν γ᾽ εἰκὼν ὄντως (240a12-b11).

The interlocutors tease out this distinction as holding between 'the true' and 'the like.' This opposition is between as 'what (genuinely) is' and 'the merely like.' The opposition between these two terms implies that the like is not what (genuinely) is, and hence is non-genuinely true. And yet, as Theaetetus himself recognizes, the privatives 'non-' and 'not' do not entail 'utter nonbeing' (τὸ μηδαμῶς ὂν). Instead, the merely like '*is* in some way' (ἔστι γε μήν πως). Put differently, the merely like has genuine being, but its genuine being is characterized by its genuine participation in likeness, as opposed to 'genuine' being in the sense of that being in which its original participates. Thus, the interlocutors have begun to consider the as-structure through which being can be understood relatively. In other words, qua the genuine being of the original, the merely like does not participate. But qua participation in likeness, the merely like participates.

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[177] For a discussion of the grammatical difficulties of this passage and arguments for why a construal similar to that of Brann et al. is best, see Runciman 1964: 68.

This is a return to the as-structure developed in the division exercises, as (e.g.) the angler *is* expertise qua getting and *is not* expertise qua making, etc. The interlocutors at first fear that this leads to sophistical paradox (240c1-6) but will soon come to realize that this inchoate account of the as-structure of being will ultimately offer the way out of the sophistical paradox regarding one thing's being both X and non-X simultaneously.

The interlocutors return to the issue of apparitions and determine that the sophist's expertise in apparitions entails a sort of 'deception-inducing,' leading the beholder 'to opine falsely' (ψευδῆ δοξάζειν), or to opine 'the contrary of things that *are*' (240d1-7). After a brief consideration of four different senses of falsity (240e1-241a2), the interlocutors consider the sophistical objection when accounting for being and nonbeing as intermixed. But the Stranger addresses the necessary entailments of the arguments as follows:

> In defending ourselves we'll be compelled to put the argument of my father Parmenides to the test, and to force our way to the conclusion that Non-being in some respect *is* and that Being in turn *is not* in some way. […] For as long as these things are neither refuted nor agreed upon, hardly anyone who talks about false speeches or opinions – whether about images or likenesses or imitations or apparitions themselves or about all the arts that concern them – hardly anyone will be able to avoid being ridiculous, since he'll be compelled to contradict himself (241d6-9, d12-e6).

The project of making sense of this seeming "contradiction" will continue as the interlocutors progress deeper into the investigation, turning next to the nature of being and its necessary structure. To summarize for now, the interlocutors have determined that 'to be' is not merely to be a being, since they have shown that being is being given to thought and speech and hence that nonbeing must *be* in a sense. Given this, it must be the case that being is aspectual, and there must be a particular as-structure by which being in seemingly opposed senses can be simultaneously co-present.

This will help the interlocutors address the problem of being and nonbeing of apparitions, which *are like* their original but *are not* their original. Apparitions in this way demonstrate the necessary intermixing of being and nonbeing in that they *are,* as evidenced by their *being* in the mode of likeness, and they *are not,* as is apparent by their *not being* the original. Given that 'nonbeing' in some sense *is,* it became necessary to clarify the nature of nonbeing with respect not to its opposition to being (since Parmenides' goddess has shown that this is impossible), but instead its status as differentiation between things that are, or *difference*, in a sense that will be sorted out in what follows. The point of the passage will furthermore be for the Stranger to show that nonbeing cannot be thought *as a being*, because all being *is* in a certain way and nonbeing, were it itself to be a being, would necessarily *be* in no way. But because nonbeing *is* spoken and thought, it must *be* in some way. This way, we will learn, is as the form otherness, later to be clarified as constitutive and determinate negation (see section 5.3.2). Finally, this is significant insofar as it indicates the proper and improper way of thinking about forms, like the form of otherness (nonbeing). The improper way of thinking of forms entails thinking of them in terms of their own self-predication, or as participants in their own nature, suggesting (e.g.) that nonbeing must itself *not be*. Instead, the proper way of thinking of forms is as timeless *causes*, which cause (among other things) the nature of spatiotemporal things that participate in the forms' nature. The Stranger will continue to develop these conceptions as he turns to thinking of being and structure in what follows.

3.5   Chapter 3 Conclusion: Ways of thinking nonbeing

To conclude Chapter 3, let us retrace the four views of nonbeing that we have considered herein, noting their entailments for our view of being and value (if any) in what follows, and then consider the transformed perspective of nonbeing that such considerations have yielded. The four views of nonbeing are as follows:

I. <u>The sophistical view of being and nonbeing</u>. Upon this view, nonbeing – and, *a fortiori*, lying – are impossible, because anything spoken must *be*, i.e., be true. From this it follows that any complex proposition that is said must be and cannot not be, because any indication whatsoever entails being and truth. But this view is flawed insofar as it conflates self-sameness with claims about the truth of the structure of a being, e.g., it entails suggesting that a structured claim 'X is Y' must be true insofar as 'X' and 'Y' are truly picked out in their respective instances of self-sameness. In other words, on this view, because 'X' is truly X and 'Y' is truly Y, 'X is Y' must be true. But truly picking out discrete entities in their self-sameness does not entail truly identifying their nature, structure, or participation in forms other than sameness. Hence this view of being based upon an alleged but fallacious sense of nonbeing is deficient.

II. <u>The Parmenidean account of the mortal view</u>. Upon this view, entities are understood with reference to their sameness across instances that accords with the powers of those basic ontological constituents that compose beings with reference to their constitutive, elemental powers. This view is an improvement upon the sophistical view in that it introduced the notion of sameness across beings with reference to a kind of participation that is lacking in the sophistical view, which entailed treating all instances

of intermixing among beings as equally true. This mortal view is deficient, however, insofar as it entails failing to see the co-constitutive unity and sameness (in some sense still to be determined) of the basic ontological elements themselves. Mortals miss that light's *not being* night is possible precisely insofar as night's nonbeing (in the sense of constitutive absence) makes possible the *being of* light. In this way, the mortal view lacks an account of the *being of* the ontological elements, and therefore entails missing the role of nonbeing as an ontological kind.

III. <u>The Parmenidean account of '[…] *is* […]'</u>. This route of inquiry is made possible by moving beyond the mortal view (II) by trying to take up the notion of what-is-not *as such*, and, upon finding it impossible, seeing the necessity of being in the sense in which being is unopposed. Like (I), this entails that that which is given to speech and thought must *be* in a sense, but only insofar as it is given as a discrete entity and not a complex assertion of the kind 'X is Y.' That is, III entails seeing the necessary being of a given simple entity, but does not entail the troubling, necessary truth of any complex proposition as was the case in (I); this is because it does not hinge on the confusion between self-sameness and participation in (other) forms evident in (I).

IV. <u>The Platonic account of nonbeing</u>. This view of nonbeing so far has been established on the basis of the impossibility of saying nonbeing in the sense of utter nonbeing or what-is-not *as such*, along with the further need for an explicit account of nonbeing following the self-evident truth of nonbeing's availability to thinking and speech in some important sense. This account will continue to be developed in what follows, and the notion of nonbeing in this account will ultimately be situated as a mode within the form of *otherness,* one of the necessary ontological kinds. Nonbeing in this

sense is not opposed to being, but instead is opposed to *sameness*, and will be shown to be *equally as necessary as is being* for the givenness of beings in space and time.

These considerations have demonstrated that nonbeing *is,* and hence that nonbeing is subject to structure of intermixing as much as other entities. The impossibility of what-is-not *as such* has demonstrated the necessary intermixing of being with nonbeing, and hence the structure of intermixing more broadly, in any instance in which being is said. But these considerations have also shown that nonbeing cannot be a being, but instead must be of a different kind. The Stranger will develop his account of the kind of nonbeing as a necessary ontological constituent, and the nature and significance of necessary ontological kinds more broadly.

CHAPTER 4. BEING (242A – 249D)

4.1   Chapter 4 Introduction: The 'history' of thinking being (242a – 243d)

After transforming their perspective of nonbeing, the interlocutors turn to the central notion of being (242a – 249d).[178] In this chapter I discuss the views of being that the interlocutors find within the 'history' of thinking being and subsequently critique, as well as the key distinctions between thing and form, the account of wholeness, and the notion of goodness that are developed throughout and act as the groundwork for the positive view of being as the power (δύναμις) to affect and be affected (247d8-e5) that the interlocutors establish. In this way, this section of the dialogue on being contains

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[178] Klein 1977: 40 rightly notes that therefore being is at the textual, as well as the conceptual, center of the dialogue.

both a critical account of the 'previous' ways of thinking of being and a positive account of being that arises from these considerations and is developed both explicitly and implicitly in the discussion. After introducing each of these threads separately here in the introduction, I will trace them out as they are developed together in the rest of the chapter.

The critical account in this stretch of text entails addressing four previous ways of conceiving being. The first two of these views regard the 'how much' or 'count' (πόσα) of being, which are (1) the 'pluralist' view that being is many and (2) the 'monist' view that being is one; this is followed by discussion of two further views regarding the 'whatness' (ποῖα) of being, which are (3) the view attributed to the 'giants' that being is coextensive with and exhausted by bodily nature; and (4) the view attributed to the 'friends of forms' that being is only that which is permanent and changeless, and hence that all bodily nature is truly characterized as a kind of becoming that is somehow 'outside' being. The Stranger shows that each of these is deficient insofar as each entails an 'exclusionary' ontology, i.e., is an account of which beings qualify as being in the 'proper' sense. Furthermore, the Stranger shows that many of these views entails erroneously conceiving of being on the model of a thing in space and time.[179]

That the previous ontologists are committed to a view of being on the model of things in space and time allows the Stranger to develop an alternative that sets up his positive account. The Stranger introduces the distinction between what it is to *participate* in being in a certain way and what it is to *be* in that sense. Put differently, he introduces the distinction between what it is for *X to be F* and what it is *to be F*. A second, related

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[179] Cf. Seligman 1974: 23-24, D. Miller 2004.

distinction that the Stranger develops is between what it is to *change*, and what it is to *cause* to change. In other words, the Stranger works out the distinction between what it is for *X to become Y* and what it is *to cause to become Y*. Finally, the Stranger works out what it is to be a whole that is composed by a part structure that does not compromise the whole's identity as a one. Using this distinction, he will show that structured wholeness characterizes not only things in space and time, but also forms (i.e., natures and causes) as well in the sense in which forms are given to knowing and speech. These distinctions give shape to the Stranger's explicit definition of being as the power to affect and be affected (or simply 'being as power'). Stated as such, the form being can be understood as the essence of what it is to be, and participants in being as those who *are* and are *caused to be*. I will argue that the interlocutors ultimately show that this power is the power of commingling, or the power of participation. That is, to be is to have the power either to affect or be affected by that which lies without, both of which entail self-and-other relations with that which is outside oneself. Therefore, to be is to be engaged in a relationship of participation with the structures of determinacy that lie without. Finally, these relations can be engaged with either well or poorly, and thus the account requires a consideration of the ontological nature of goodness. These conceptions will guide the interlocutors as they turn to ontological structure (considered below in Chapter 5).

Before addressing the four views and by way of setup, the Stranger and Theaetetus begin by considering these issues with reference to the 'history' of thinking being in the broader Greek tradition up to their time, including some implicit and explicit references to mythology and the views held by those who are known in our day as

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Presocratic philosophers.[180] Because this setup is of much historical and philosophical

interest to this discussion, it is worth reviewing briefly here. The Stranger begins by

stating that "Parmenides and everybody else[181] talked to us casually when they rushed

into a judgment about marking off the 'how many' and the 'what sort' [πόσα τε καὶ ποῖα]

of beings" (242c5-8). He considers the 'stories' told to us previously, beginning with the

account that 'beings are three' and engaged in war, strife, marriage, and consummation

(242c11-d2); next that 'beings are two – "wet and dry" or "hot and cold"' (242d3-4); and,

third, the view that the Stranger associates with 'the Eleatic tribe […] starting with

Xenophanes and even before that' that entails holding that 'all things' are one (242d4-8).

The Stranger associates the final possibility with the 'Ionian and later some Sicilian

Muses' and describes it as the 'woven-together' view that 'being is both many and one,

and that it is held together by enmity and friendship' (242e1-3).[182] The 'softer'

alternative to the fourth view is that 'sometimes, under the influence of Aphrodite, the All

is one and friendly, and other times it is many and at war with itself through some strife'

(242e4-243a2).

    The Stranger seems to imply that these views are exhaustive of the ways in which

one could account for being as ontological composition in terms of a countable number,

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[180] Much work has been done to address the question of whom the Stranger implicitly has in mind in describing these competing ontologies. Because it is beyond the scope of my questions regarding the nature of being here, I will generally remain agnostic regarding the identities of unnamed ancient ontologists in this passage. My only firm stance regarding these issues is negative in character, in that I hold (*pace* McCabe 2000) that the Stranger does not intend attacks on Parmenides specifically except instances in which he makes this explicit. For discussions of some possible implicit identities of these ontologists described in the Stranger's exposition on the 'history' of thinking being, see Fowler 1912: 371, Seligman 1974: 22-23, Bluck 1975: 81-82, Klein 1977: 39, Notomi 1999: 216, and McCabe 2000: 64-65.

[181] As Rosen 1983: 205 rightly notes, this passage demonstrates that the Stranger and Theaetetus are not 'at war' solely with Parmenides, but instead with *all* predecessors.

[182] The Stranger does not go on explicitly to discuss the view that being is 'one and many,' but the model that he uses to describe this view seems to be simply a combination of the views that being is one and that it is many, i.e., in both cases in terms relevant to beings in space and time. Therefore, a hybrid of the Stranger's critiques of these two views separately is applicable.

be it one, two, many, or both one and many. At the very least, such possibilities seem

logically exhaustive on the surface of things, of which the Stranger is very likely aware.

He indicates various ways of describing being's whatness but will focus on the broad

ontological categories of (i) the bodily and (ii) the unchanging (ἀκίνητος)[183] and hence

non-bodily when addressing the possible 'whatness' views directly. With this general

'historical' narrative stated, the interlocutors are prepared to turn to each of the most

promising views and consider their strengths and weaknesses.

4.2   Being's 'how much' (242a – 245e)

4.2.1   The pluralists (243d – 244b)

The Stranger addresses the deficiency of each of these views in turn, beginning

with the pluralists,[184] or those 'who say that all things are hot and cold or some such two'

(243d9-10).[185] Put differently, the Stranger is concerned here to attack the view that the

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[183] The Greek verb κινέω and noun κίνησις cover a semantic range that is difficult to capture in English. This includes both 'I move' and 'I change,' in the transitive sense, and 'movement' and 'change,' respectively. At the risk of muddying the picture, in what follows I often replace these Greek terms with references either to motion or change to suit the context of a given claim. They should be understood in a univocal sense, however.

[184] The view that the Stranger describes is, properly speaking, a dualist view, and the Stranger speaks of it consistently as such. The critique of this position in dualist terms applies *a fortiori* to pluralists positing more than two atomic elements as being, however, and because of this I take it that the point is to show the error inherent in any pluralistic account (cf. Crivelli 2012: 70-75). Hence here I understand this passage as a critique of pluralism broadly, not dualism specifically, and refer to the view and thinkers who hold it accordingly. Nevertheless, dualism is a relevant version of pluralism for many reasons, especially in this context for its echoing the errors of mortals in positing two 'separate' but 'equal' forms that Parmenides' goddess describes (see section 3.3.2).

[185] Whether these need be understood as material principles is ambiguous, but I follow Moravcsik 1962: 29 and Bluck 1975: 69 in assuming that nothing decisive hinges on this distinction, since the problems that the Stranger and Theaetetus will identify relate (here at least) to number, not the nature of the thing being counted. I suspect, moreover, that this ambiguity is meant to draw our attention to the fact that these issues have not been thought through properly by the ontologists advocating for such views, preparing the way for

all can be explained through a list of a certain kind of causally prior thing, namely, elements in space and time that constitute bodies but themselves are not (according to those holding this view, anyway) constituted by anything prior or more basic. His rejection of this view receives little space in the dialogue, since even when given the benefit of several different interpretations, the pluralistic account is quickly shown to entail contradiction or impossibility. The discussion nevertheless is illuminative of the central mistake regarding thinking being at play throughout the history that the Stranger covers, that is, the mistake of thinking of being in terms proper to beings in space and time.[186] It also presents the occasion to reflect on the value of Parmenides' goddess' account of the deficiencies of mortal scientific inquiry. The Stranger speaks for the pluralists, representing their view on the matter in the following exchange, with my roman numerals indicating the three interpretive responses that the Stranger anticipates and that I will unpack below:

> ES: "Come then, all of you who say that all things are hot or cold or some such two – what are you uttering that applies to both, when you declare each to *be*? How are we to understand this 'to be' of yours? Is it (i) a third besides those two, and should we posit that, according to you, the All is three and no longer two? For surely (ii) when you call the one or the other of the pair Being, you're not saying that both simultaneously *are*. For in both cases, the pair would be pretty much one but not two."
> THEA: What you say is true.
> ES: "But (iii) do you want to call both together being?"
> THEA: Perhaps.
> ES: "But friends," we'll declare, "even so, the two would be said very clearly to be one."
> THEA: You've spoken very correctly.
>
> Ξένος: 'φέρε, ὁπόσοι θερμὸν καὶ ψυχρὸν ἤ τινε δύο τοιούτω τὰ πάντ' εἶναί φατε, τί ποτε 'ἄρα τοῦτ' ἐπ' ἀμφοῖν φθέγγεσθε, λέγοντες ἄμφω καὶ ἑκάτερον εἶναι; τί τὸ

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the Stranger's turn to an ontology based on principles that cannot be conceived on the model of space and time.

[186] Cf. D. Miller 2004: 341-343 for a discussion of this mistake in this context. Miller phrases this problem in terms of the entailments of dualism, but I suggest that this problem spans pluralism more broadly.

εἶναι τοῦτο ὑπολάβωμεν ὑμῶν; πότερον τρίτον παρὰ τὰ δύο ἐκεῖνα, καὶ τρία τὸ πᾶν ἀλλὰ μὴ δύο ἔτι καθ᾽ ὑμᾶς τιθῶμεν; οὐ γάρ που τοῖν γε δυοῖν καλοῦντες θάτερον ὂν ἀμφότερα ὁμοίως εἶναι λέγετε: σχεδὸν γὰρ ἂν ἀμφοτέρως ἕν, ἀλλ᾽ οὐ δύο εἴην.᾽
Θεαίτητος: ἀληθῆ λέγεις.
Ξένος: ‘ἀλλ᾽ ἆρά γε τὰ ἄμφω βούλεσθε καλεῖν ὄν;᾽
Θεαίτητος: ἴσως.
Ξένος: ‘ἀλλ᾽, ὦ φίλοι,᾽ φήσομεν, ‘κἂν οὕτω τὰ δύο λέγοιτ᾽ ἂν σαφέστατα ἕν.᾽
Θεαίτητος: ὀρθότατα εἴρηκας. (243d11-e7).

Here the Stranger points to the difficulty of advocating for pluralistic accounts of being generally. He suggests three possible interpretations of the pluralistic view of multiple elements as constituting being most basically, which are as follows:

(i) the being that is common to each of the elements when saying that the elements ‘are’ is an additional element, i.e., one that adds to their count;

(ii) one or another of the elements *is* being most essentially while the other(s) *is not* or *are not*;

(iii) the conglomeration of the elements together is itself being.

The Stranger quickly shows each of these to be untenable. As I discuss the passage, I will use the Stranger’s paradigm of hot and cold[187] (although this critique would of course apply equally to the elements of any pluralistic account)[188] to consider these possibilities to illustrate the Stranger’s reasoning as I understand it. The Stranger will show that each of these fails even on its own terms, either because it leads to an infinite regress or lapses back into monism. To indicate the deeper failure of these ways of

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[187] It is unclear whether the Stranger here has in mind the hot and cold as masses of hot and cold stuff (as argued by Frede 1996: 186-187) or the kinds the hot and the cold (as argued by Cornford 1935: 219, Crombie 1963: 390, D. Miller 2004: 341, and Crivelli 2012: 75). My own view is that the pluralists have failed to think through precisely this distinction, forcing them into muddled and inconsistent thinking regarding the difference between these two categories; cf. Crivelli 2012: 75 fn. 12.
[188] Cf. Wedin 1980: 268, Crivelli 2012: 73.

thinking, I will connect them to our previous discussion of Parmenides' goddess's account of mortal inquiry.

The first possible interpretation of the pluralist account is (i) that the being that is indicated and at play in a pluralistic account like 'the hot and cold *are*' is an additional thing to be counted. That we now have one more than we started with – that is, now hot and cold, *plus* being – is troubling, and leads to several possibilities. If, on the one hand, the additional element (being) is taken just to add to the 'count' of the elements that constitute being, then we at least face an infinite regress, since another entity will need to be posited by which hot, cold, and being all are*, ad infinitum.* More deeply, we are reminded here of the goddess' critique of mortal inquiry for its entailing the failure to grasp the underlying oneness that makes plurality possible. In other words, this account entails missing the goddess' insight that ontological elements must share in something in common, both constitutively and fundamentally.

If, on the other hand, the pluralists grasp this problem and acknowledge the rootedness of two elements (hot and cold) in the third (being), then the account as it now stands has lapsed back into a kind of monism. This is because it entails positing one of the three elements as more 'elemental' than, or conceptually and causally prior to, the others, insofar as being is that which explains the others in their commonness.[189] That is,

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[189] The most significant interpretive issue regarding this passage as related to pluralism more broadly as opposed to dualism more narrowly regards the Stranger's first refutation (i), that is, of the possibility that the account that the hot and the cold together *are* entails that a third thing, namely being, must also be at play in this ontology. If the interlocutors' main task in this section is to critique dualism, then the mere mention of a third thing (being) suggests that the account has faltered. But in my interpretation, accounting for the mere presence of a third thing is insufficient for capturing the nature of this critique. The problem is not that more than two things are present, but instead that one of the things (being) has a kind of conceptual priority over all the other things (hot and cold). Thus construed, this critique would apply to any pluralistic account, e.g., the claim that fire, earth, water, and air all *are*, insofar as it entails positing a fifth entity (being) with a greater level of conceptual priority than the other four elements; cf. Sallis 1975: 490, though Sallis discusses this issue in terms of dualism. Notomi 1999: 215 has a similar view. Crivelli 2012: 73-75

this is no longer an account of multiple constitutive elements, but instead a single constitutive element (being) and its role in supporting other further, subservient elements (hot and cold). Therefore, this account has lapsed into monism and is no pluralistic account at all.

Another possible interpretation of the pluralist account is (ii) that one element *is* most essentially while the other(s) *is not* or *are not*, e.g., hot *is*, cold *is not* (as the Stranger points to the possibility of "call[ing] the one or the other of the pair Being" at 243e4-6). In this case, one element (e.g., hot) indicates being, or more precisely *is* being, and the other(s) (e.g., cold) indicate(s) the privation of being. But in this interpretation, being is again one, e.g., hotness, while its opposite *is not*. Thus it has again lapsed into monism. But to consider the deeper implication, this account has become incoherent insofar as one element has laid claim to the grounds by which all elements had been posited at the expense of the others. In other words, it entails a fundamental misapprehension of the nature of the hotness to suggest that only it truly *is* in the constitutive sense while its opposite, coldness, simply *is not*. Granted, any instance of heat entails the absence of coldness in *this* particular instance. But constitutively, the goddess has taught us that the being of the hot is determined from without by the being in the form of non-presence of the cold. Again, this view has failed insofar as it has lapsed back into monism; but more profoundly, we see that this is not in fact an account of being at all, but instead an account of material conditions that entails missing that upon which materiality depends in the first place.

discusses several rival interpretations of the Stranger's point in this passage. Perhaps the best articulation of the rival view – that the dualist position is rejected because it entails that one element must participate in its opposite – is Moravcsik 1962: 29. For an alternative interpretation of the reasons why the third entity of being challenges this account that Crivelli does not cite, see Ray 1984: 20-21.

Finally, it could be the case (iii) that being simply *is* the tension between hot and cold as opposites, as the Stranger suggests when asking whether the monists simply want to call being the two taken together (244a1-2). While this is an appealing alternative, it too lapses into monism, as being is now one (that which sustains the hot and the cold equally), not multiple. This further suggests the need for the kind of account that the goddess gave when critiquing mortal inquiry, since the 'tension' between hot and cold indicates the foundedness of the two elements upon something common and causally prior to them both.

The pluralistic account has therefore been shown to be untenable. The Stranger has demonstrated that any pluralistic conception of being requires a prior conceptual unity through which each can be posited. Any account of a self-sufficient plurality is explanatorily inadequate insofar as it neglects the ground by which a plurality could simultaneously *be*, or *be* in the alleged mode of self-sufficiency, etc.[190] Furthermore, this has offered the opportunity to reflect on the persistent error in ontological thinking of conceiving of being as a thing in space and time. The pluralists have failed to differentiate between heat as a *property* and heat as an *object that exhibits that property*. The pluralists, that is, treat their constitutive ontological elements as self-predicating and explanatorily self-exhaustive, i.e., not caused by anything prior and not explained with reference to anything further.

The Stranger summarizes his response to the pluralists' view by addressing them as follows:

> Then since we've reached an impasse, you make sufficiently apparent to us what in the world you want to point to whenever you utter 'being.' For it's clear that you've recognized these things for a long time, while we supposed we knew

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[190] Cf. Flower 1984: 7.

earlier, but have now reached an impasse. So teach us this very thing first of all, so that we may not opine that we understand what's said by you when the complete contrary is the case.

ἐπειδὴ τοίνυν ἡμεῖς ἠπορήκαμεν, ὑμεῖς αὐτὰ ἡμῖν ἐμφανίζετε ἱκανῶς, τί ποτε βούλεσθε σημαίνειν ὁπόταν ὂν φθέγγησθε. δῆλον γὰρ ὡς ὑμεῖς μὲν ταῦτα πάλαι γιγνώσκετε, ἡμεῖς δὲ πρὸ τοῦ μὲν ᾠόμεθα, νῦν δ᾽ ἠπορήκαμεν. διδάσκετε οὖν πρῶτον τοῦτ᾽ αὐτὸ ἡμᾶς, ἵνα μὴ δοξάζωμεν μανθάνειν μὲν τὰ λεγόμενα παρ᾽ ὑμῶν, τὸ δὲ τούτου γίγνηται πᾶν τοὐναντίον (244a4-b1).

The account demands a clarification of the means by which the allegedly opposed elements have been simultaneously posited. As a potential means of clarification, the interlocutors turn to the monists, whose view seems promising on the surface of things for helping to get through the current impasse but will lead to complications of its own.

4.2.2   The monists: names (244b – 244d)

The interlocutors thus turn to monism. They speak of throughout in what I will call its 'naïve' form, which is the view that the claim 'all is one' entails the further supposition that 'all is not many.'[191] Of course, monistic accounts are closely associated with the Stranger's fellow Eleatic thinkers, including certain longstanding traditions of interpreting Parmenides, Zeno, and their 'comrades.'[192] Thus, through the Stranger's

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[191] I use the term 'naïve monism' throughout to name the kind of monistic account that entails taking it that being is *entirely* one and hence lacks complexity of any kind. The meaning of this will, I hope, become clear in what follows.

[192] Because of this, many consider this stretch of argument to be against Parmenides himself (see, e.g., Brown 1998: 185 and McCabe 2000: 66-73.) But I think it is a mistake to associate this critique of monism too closely with a critique of Parmenides. Although the Stranger does invoke a claim of Parmenides' to flesh out the monistic account, he is nevertheless careful to describe his response as directed at "those" who posit a monistic account, in contrast to other moments in the text when makes clear that he is addressing Parmenides' account more specifically (cf. 241d, 258c). In the *Parmenides* dialogue, Plato takes similar measures to separate Parmenides' claim that 'all is one' from the subsequent Eleatic claim that 'all is not many' (cf. Miller 1980: 25-36, Sanday 2009). Furthermore, there is good reason to think that the Stranger is referring to the Parmenides poem merely as a rhetorical device when attributing to the monists the view that the One is a whole of parts, and strong evidence to suggest that Parmenides in fact held an opposing view to that which the Stranger suggests here. Therefore, I take it, *pace* McCabe and others, that this is not a critique of Parmenides specifically but instead of naïve monism in the Eleatic tradition.

Eleatic connections, the discussion in the *Sophist* is cast dramatically in the context of the history of this view. Despite himself being rooted in and therefore indebted to this tradition through his Eleatic identity, the Stranger will ultimately show the impossibility of positing a naïvely monistic account, therefore indicating the necessity of an alternative. He will show ultimately that necessary being must entail structure, and hence plurality, in a meaningful sense. The sense of this plurality will come from his clarification of nature of wholeness and part-whole structure.

The Stranger presents two interconnected reasons for the failure of naïve monism in separate but parallel moments in his dialectical argument.[193] The first of these is the problem of the pluralizing effect of names (244b6-244d13),[194] and the second related to structure (244d14-245e2);[195] these are followed by a brief summary of the difficulties regarding thinking being that these two problems indicate (245e3-246a2).[196] The Stranger's argument addressing the first problem is that a properly monistic account cannot be articulated, as any account entails disclosing the causally and conceptually prior and posterior structure of the accounted object in terms that explain the object but that object itself does not explain. His argument in response to the second problem is that objects both imply and necessarily require a given structure to instantiate their nature, as the Stranger will demonstrate by considering the problem of parts and wholes. In other words, the Stranger shows that both accounts and beings entail a kind of complexity that

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[193] Cf. Bluck 1975: 72-82, who explains the interconnections of these moments of the argument in depth and *contra* those who take these to be strictly separate arguments, such as Moravcsik 1962: 31 and Runciman 1964: 74.

[194] Called the 'semantic argument' by some (e.g., Ambuel 2007, Wiitala 2014b).

[195] There is much corruption and disagreement within the manuscript tradition regarding this passage. I follow the Robinson edition (in Duke, et al. 1995). For discussions of the entailments of various manuscripts and their interpretations, see Bluck 1975: 72 and Crivelli 2012: 78 fn. 39.

[196] Cf. Harte 2002: 101 and D. Miller 2004: 343-344 for further discussion of this passage that I draw on throughout this section.

monistic ontologies (i.e., in their naïve form) cannot capture. The Stranger thus will

suggest that a different kind of account is required, and one that entails positing the

necessary composite structure that allegedly primary ontological components (e.g., 'the

hot') require.

Furthermore, the Stranger will continue to develop his implicit account of the

problem in the history of ontology of accounting for being in terms proper to beings. To

this end, in this section the Stranger first identifies the distinction between an object's

being in a certain way ('*X is F*') and a certain way of being (what it is '*to be F.*') This

comes in an introductory form in the distinction between a thing's being a One and what

it must mean to be One *itself*.

The Stranger begins by considering the issue of the plurality of names.

Addressing 'those who say that the All is one,'[197] the Stranger asks 'what in the world'

being would be according to such a view:

> ES: […] "I suppose you claim that one alone *is*." "We do," they will claim. Isn't
> this so?
> THEA: Yes.
> ES: "What about this: Do you call something 'being'?"
> THEA: Yes.
> ES: "Is it the very thing you call 'one' – using two names for the same thing – or
> what?"
> THEA: What's their answer to this, Stranger?
> ES: It's clear, Theaetetus, that it's not at all easy for the man who assumes this
> hypothesis to answer what's now being asked – or anything else.
> THEA: How so?
> ES: I suppose it's ridiculous for the man who posits nothing but one to agree that
> two names *are*.
> THEA: Of course.
> ES: And all in all it would not be reasonable to be receptive to one who says that
> any name *is*.
> THEA: In what way?
> ES: I suppose that in positing the name as other than the thing, he asserts a pair.

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[197] For a helpful discussion of this dialectical method (*methodos*) of address, see McCabe 2000: 66-67,
especially footnotes 27 and 31.

THEA: Yes.

ES: Moreover, if he posits the name as the same as the thing, either he'll be compelled to say that it's the name of nothing; or if he claims that it's the name of something, it will follow that the name is only the name of a name and of nothing else.

THEA: Just so.

ES: And "the One" will be the name that goes with One; and the One will in turn go with the name.

THEA: That's necessary.

Ξένος: τί δέ; παρὰ τῶν ἓν τὸ πᾶν λεγόντων ἆρ᾽ οὐ πευστέον εἰς δύναμιν τί ποτε λέγουσι τὸ ὄν;

Θεαίτητος: πῶς γὰρ οὔ;

Ξένος: τόδε τοίνυν ἀποκρινέσθων. 'ἕν πού φατε μόνον εἶναι;' — 'φαμὲν γάρ,' φήσουσιν. ἦ γάρ;

Θεαίτητος: ναί.

Ξένος: 'τί δέ; ὂν καλεῖτέ τι;'

Θεαίτητος: ναί.

Ξένος: 'πότερον ὅπερ ἕν, ἐπὶ τῷ αὐτῷ προσχρώμενοι δυοῖν ὀνόμασιν, ἢ πῶς;'

Θεαίτητος: τίς οὖν αὐτοῖς ἡ μετὰ τοῦτ᾽, ὦ ξένε, ἀπόκρισις;

Ξένος: δῆλον, ὦ Θεαίτητε, ὅτι τῷ ταύτην τὴν ὑπόθεσιν ὑποθεμένῳ πρὸς τὸ νῦν ἐρωτηθὲν καὶ πρὸς ἄλλο δὲ ὁτιοῦν οὐ πάντων ῥᾷστον ἀποκρίνασθαι.

Θεαίτητος: πῶς;

Ξένος: τό τε δύο ὀνόματα ὁμολογεῖν εἶναι μηδὲν θέμενον πλὴν ἓν καταγέλαστόν που.

Θεαίτητος: πῶς δ᾽ οὔ;

Ξένος: καὶ τὸ παράπαν γε ἀποδέχεσθαί του λέγοντος ὡς ἔστιν ὄνομά τι, λόγον οὐκ ἂν ἔχον.

Θεαίτητος: πῇ;

Ξένος: τιθείς τε τοὔνομα τοῦ πράγματος ἕτερον δύο λέγει πού τινε.

Θεαίτητος: ναί.

Ξένος: καὶ μὴν ἂν ταὐτόν γε αὐτῷ τιθῇ τοὔνομα, ἢ μηδενὸς ὄνομα ἀναγκασθήσεται λέγειν, εἰ δέ τινος αὐτὸ φήσει, συμβήσεται τὸ ὄνομα ὀνόματος ὄνομα μόνον, ἄλλου δὲ οὐδενὸς ὄν.

Θεαίτητος: οὕτως.

Ξένος: καὶ τὸ ἕν γε, ἑνὸς ὄνομα ὂν καὶ τοῦ ὀνόματος αὖ τὸ ἓν ὄν.

Θεαίτητος: ἀνάγκη (244b6-244d13).

Here the interlocutors consider the question of how it is that the monists can address the problem of names, given that all is asserted to be 'one.'[198] The Stranger presents a *reductio* argument showing the necessary absurdity of the monists' position that all is not

[198] Cf. McCabe 2000: 66-73 and Crivelli 2012: 77-79.

many. The result of the argument is an indication that discourse and the plurality of names shows the necessity of complex structure in some meaningful sense, and that any argument against complexity (i.e., that all is not merely 'one' but also 'not many') is absurd insofar as it is incoherent and cannot be articulated. Furthermore, the Stranger shows that the mere separation between signifier (name) and signified (that which is named) indicates the necessity of plurality in some meaningful sense, given that a name is not identical to that which it names. More deeply, the Stranger is indicating something meaningful about being by pointing to the role of names. If all was truly one and not many, then names would not be necessary, since all would simply be being. In this sense, names not only themselves pluralize, but indicate that being is somehow structured in a meaningful way that needs to be disentangled by language. Therefore, names indicate that naïve monism is untenable.

The moves in the Stranger's dialectical argument here is as follows. The person that asserts that the all is one must grapple with the self-evident fact that there is being, given that the monist asserts that the one *is*. (Here the interlocutors do not even address the question of whether the monist would deny that being *is*.)[199] Given this, this account at the very least entails two names, 'one' and 'being.' The monist will deny, as is necessary, that both names *are*. But even folding the names into one still yields two, that is, the one itself and the name 'the one.' Finally, the Stranger argues that the monist will be unable to fold these two things – the one itself and its name – into one. Folding the name and the thing named into one would imply one of two things. Perhaps (i) the name names nothing; but in this case, it is no name. Alternatively, (ii) it names itself only; but

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[199] This issue is addressed in the first hypothesis in the *Parmenides* dialogue. See *Parmenides* 137c-142a and Miller 1990: 80-98.

in this case we are discussing it as a separate entity from that which it names. In either

case, the account entails that we must have two, not one. [200]

The Stranger is here identifying the role of discourse in pointing to the necessity

of composite ontological structure, and the impossibility of articulating a naïvely

monistic account due to the plurality that accounts entail.[201] Discourse is necessarily

about the composite structure of being; e.g., 'the kettle is hot' indicates that one being

(this particular entity) partakes of others (e.g., the natures of kettle, hotness, and being).

Indeed, the very act of discoursing with the monists indicates that being has a composite

structure in some meaningful sense, given that the monists must argue that the One *is* in a

certain way but *is not* in another. In other words, this discursive exercise must entail

showing the specific type of nature in which the One does not partake, and hence

indicates the absurdity of their position. The Stranger's *reductio* argument here recalls

Socrates' playful critique of Zenonian monism in the *Parmenides* dialogue, in which

Socrates describes the 'many proofs' that 'each' support Zeno's hypothesis that 'things

are not many' (οὐ πολλά ἐστι, *Parmenides* 127e8-10), tacitly indicating the necessary

complexity entailed by discourse.

In this way, the Stranger has drawn attention to the sense in which discourse, as

an intertwining of names, demands an account that is at least in some significant sense

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[200] Due to problems with the original manuscript, this final claim in the argument is difficult to unpack. Regardless of which manuscript tradition they follow, most commentators of which I am aware take it that the Stranger concludes that this view results in 'nonsense' in one way or another (see Notomi 1999: 215 and Crivelli 2012: 74 for discussions of this point and its reception by commentators). McCabe 2000: 68 offers a more nuanced interpretation that I follow below, although her interpretation is not in any way at odds with the interpretations of this passage as resulting in 'nonsense.' The discussion in Crivelli 2012: 77-79 is well-rooted in recent interpretations of the passage.

[201] For an iconoclastic and valuable discussion of the implications of this for the possibility of philosophical dialogue more broadly, and the sense in which the necessities for dialogue are at issue throughout this discussion of the four inadequate conceptions of being, see Notomi 1999: 211-221.

pluralistic. Superficially, as the case of names suggest, this includes both name and thing named. But more deeply, the very need for naming indicates that things must be many to be distinguished from one another, and thus that the all cannot be one and not many in the strict sense.

4.2.3   The monists: structure (244d – 245e)

Both to critique the monists and give fuller shape to his own, positive account of being, the Stranger next turns to problem of parts and wholes that the monist faces.[202] Negatively, the Stranger here shows that the part-whole structure that the monists' One must exhibit to be an object of knowledge invalidates monism in its naïve form. Positively, the Stranger uses this account of part-whole structure to distinguish between the senses of being in a certain way and a certain way of being, the latter of which he will use to develop a conception of being that does not entail treating being as a thing in space and time. Thus, this stretch of the text marks the place in which the Stranger's critique of the previous ontologists decisively begins to give rise to his own account.

The Stranger's consideration of the part-whole structure in light of monism comprises three parts.[203] First, and with reference to Parmenides, the Stranger considers

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[202] Many 20th century commentators interpret this passage as a discussion of the *names* 'being,' 'one,' and 'whole,' e.g. Bluck 1975 and de Rijk 1986. Against this kind of reading, I follow other commentators (e.g., McCabe 2000, Harte 2002, D. Miller 2004, and Wiitala 2014b) in arguing that this discussion concerns the ontological entity *itself* for which the monists argue.

[203] My interpretation of the structure of this argument is closest to Moravcsik 1971 and Harte 2002. Moravcsik focuses on the non-identity of being (what he calls "existence") and the one and being and the whole, while Harte argues for the non-identity of being, the one, and the whole, as well as any possible dyad taken from within the three. Other discussions of this argument include Cornford 1935: 220-223, Bluck 1975: 73-88, Bondeson 1976: 3-4, and Palmer 1999: 171-183. I follow the interpretation of the structure of this passage advanced by Harte 2002: 102-103.

the possibility (A) that the monistic One is a whole of parts (244d14-245b3). Second, he

rejects this assumption and assumes instead (B1) that the One is not a whole of parts, and

that wholeness *is* but the One lacks it (245b4-c10).[204] Third, he assumes finally that (B2)

the One is not a whole of parts because wholeness *is not*, and hence that the One

necessarily lacks it (245c10-245d10). Considering each of these moves will help us to

see the direction in which the Stranger is moving.

In (A), the Stranger quotes Parmenides' poem (from what is now known to us as

Fragment 8) to address, and subsequently discharge, the assumption that the whole has

parts.[205] The discussion goes as follows:

> ES: And what about this: Will they claim that the Whole is other than the One that *is* or the same as it?
> THEA: They surely will and do claim that it's the same.
> ES: Well then, if the Whole is, just as Parmenides too says,
>> Like to the mass of a sphere nicely rounded from every direction, out from the center well-matched in all ways. For no greater nor smaller it needs must turn out, both on this and on that side[,]
>
> then in being such, Being as a center and extremes, and in having these, it must with every necessity have parts. Or how is it?
> THEA: Just so.
> ES: Still, nothing prevents that which is divided into parts from being affected [πάθος] by the One over all its parts, and from being in this way one, since it is both all and whole.
> THEA: Certainly.
> ES: But isn't it impossible for what is so affected to be itself the One itself?

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[204] This structure represents a reversal of the first two hypotheses in the *Parmenides* dialogue, in which the Parmenides character first considers oneness itself insofar as it is not a whole and in fact *is not*, before addressing the senses in which oneness itself necessarily entails a whole-part structure. See Miller 1990: 80-98. The two senses of oneness in the *Parmenides* and *Sophist* are similar but not coextensive, given that they arise in different contexts.

[205] This use of Parmenides' poem by the Stranger does not indicate that Parmenides actually believed that the 'whole' of being, to the extent to which this term even applies to Parmenidean ontology in any straightforward way, actually admitted a whole-part structure. (Cf. Harte 2002: 103 fn. 90; Ray 1984: 25-26 makes a similar observation to support a very different kind of claim regarding the nature of what he calls the 'existence' of the Parmenidean whole.) Given that the goddess had earlier stated that her final descriptions of being were to be mere 'signposts' (line 8.2) indicating but not capturing the nature of being, and given that the goddess earlier had called being 'indivisible' (οὐδὲ διαιρετόν, line 8.22), I argue that we can assume that it is likely that this view is not properly attributable to Parmenides and that the Stranger is merely drawing upon this passage as a rhetorical device for presenting one possible conception of the part-whole structure of necessary being.

THEA: How's that?
ES: Surely, it is necessary that the truly One be declared entirely partless, according to the correct account.
THEA: It must be.
ES: But that other sort of one, since it is made out of many parts, will not harmonize with this account.
THEA: I understand.

Ξένος: τί δέ; τὸ ὅλον ἕτερον τοῦ ὄντος ἑνὸς ἢ ταὐτὸν φήσουσι τούτῳ;
Θεαίτητος: πῶς γὰρ οὐ φήσουσί τε καὶ φασίν;
Ξένος: εἰ τοίνυν ὅλον ἐστίν, ὥσπερ καὶ Παρμενίδης λέγει,"πάντοθεν εὐκύκλου σφαίρης ἐναλίγκιον ὄγκῳ, μεσσόθεν ἰσοπαλὲς πάντῃ: τὸ γὰρ οὔτε τι μεῖζον οὔτε τι βαιότερον πελέναι χρεόν ἐστι τῇ ἢ τῇ, τοιοῦτόν γε ὂν τὸ ὂν μέσον τε καὶ ἔσχατα ἔχει, ταῦτα δὲ ἔχον πᾶσα ἀνάγκη μέρη ἔχειν: ἢ πῶς;
Θεαίτητος: οὕτως.
Ξένος: ἀλλὰ μὴν τό γε μεμερισμένον πάθος μὲν τοῦ ἑνὸς ἔχειν ἐπὶ τοῖς μέρεσι πᾶσιν οὐδὲν ἀποκωλύει, καὶ ταύτῃ δὴ πᾶν τε ὂν καὶ ὅλον ἓν εἶναι.
Θεαίτητος: τί δ᾽ οὔ;
Ξένος: τὸ δὲ πεπονθὸς ταῦτα ἆρ᾽ οὐκ ἀδύνατον αὐτό γε τὸ ἓν αὐτὸ εἶναι;
Θεαίτητος: πῶς;
Ξένος: ἀμερὲς δήπου δεῖ παντελῶς τό γε ἀληθῶς ἓν κατὰ τὸν ὀρθὸν λόγον εἰρῆσθαι.
Θεαίτητος: δεῖ γὰρ οὖν.
Ξένος: τὸ δέ γε τοιοῦτον ἐκ πολλῶν μερῶν ὂν οὐ συμφωνήσει τῷ ὅλῳ λόγῳ.
Θεαίτητος: μανθάνω. (244d14-245b3).

The interlocutors here begin with the assumption that the monistic One can be understood as a whole that has parts, as suggested by Parmenides' goddess in her description of the 'center' and 'extremes' of being that she discusses within the series of 'signposts' (σήματα, line 8.2) offered to give indications as to how to conceive of being. Hence, presumably in following this appeal to the authority of Parmenides, these monists have accepted this account of the whole having parts and now must defend it by arguing that the whole is the same as its parts, as is necessitated by their monism.[206] On the basis of this, the Stranger points to two problems. These are that (i) each part is subject to affectation (πάθος) by the One,[207] and (ii) the whole itself is subjected to the *character* of

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[206] Much of my analysis in this discussion draws on Harte 2002.
[207] Affectation will become a central component of the Stranger's positive account; see section 4.3.2.

Oneness, or *being One*. That is, (i) each part is not self-sufficient, but instead derives its nature from its role in the One, and therefore is affected by the One as the source of a normative ordering principle outside of it as a part that defines its nature as a part. In other words, the nature of wholeness suggests that the whole's parts do not answer simply to internal standards for their own being, but instead derive their nature and the standards by which their nature is instantiated from without. In the language of causal priority, this suggests that the whole is causally (though not necessarily temporally) prior to the parts; and this (non-temporal) priority necessarily indicates an ordered multiplicity, with whole (non-temporally) prior to part.

Let me put this important matter one more way, taking the signpost of the goddess as an example. The 'middle' of the 'circle' gets its character *as* middle *because of* the requirements of the given circle, as well as the precise character of the 'extremes.' Without both the principle of ordered wholeness that is the notion of circularity and the co-constitutive nature of the other parts, the middle could not be the middle. So given the apparent presence of parts into which the whole divides (on this model of thinking of the whole, at least), each constituent part is subjected to affectation both by the One of which it is a part and those other parts like it in kind.

Second, this realization suggests that (ii) that which is whole is both affected by the One and is *separate from* the One itself (τὸ ἓν αὐτὸ, 245a6) since the discrete whole that is One owes its character of being whole to something outside of itself that it is not, namely, *the principle of the One* or *oneness* (τὸ ἓν αὐτὸ). *This* one, that is, can only be one because of *oneness itself* (τὸ ἓν αὐτὸ). Importantly, the Stranger here has shown that an account of the being of an object, here the monists' One, must entail reaching outside

of the object itself to account for it as it is. For just as names suggest necessary plurality

by pointing outside the object named in several senses, so too does an account of an

object necessarily point outside itself by requiring a further explanatory principle, here

the meaning of Oneness (τὸ ἓν αὐτὸ). In other words, the Stranger has shown that there

are two senses of 'oneness,' the thing that is one, and oneness itself (τὸ ἓν αὐτὸ), which

must be as it itself is for the All to be one.

This is an extremely significant move for the ontological account that the Stranger

will develop in more depth as the dialogue continues, and this distinction will play a large

role in the interlocutors' success in getting beyond the errors of mortal ontology and

positing their own account. More locally, this distinction is significant for the Stranger's

argument against the monists for two reasons. The Stranger has shown that the monists

have lost their monism and are left with two, the monists' One and oneness itself (τὸ ἓν

αὐτὸ). The Stranger is still in the process of demonstrating the inadequacy of thinking of

being in terms proper to beings, and therefore the monists, who are guilty of this mistake,

cannot distinguish between their One and oneness more broadly. Therefore, the whole of

parts and the One must be separate, and the monists have lost their claim to monism by

being forced to posit two.

The Stranger's next move is to see what follows from the supposition that the

monists' One is not a whole of parts, but that wholeness nevertheless *is*:

> ES: Then is it the case that Being will be both one and whole in this way – by
> being affected by the One? Or shall we deny that Being is in any way whole?
> THEA: You've thrown a tough choice before us.
> ES: Certainly, what you say is very true. For Being, if it is *affected* so as to be
> somehow one, will show itself to be not the same as the One, and all things will in
> fact be more than one.
> THEA: Yes.
> ES: And yet, if indeed Being is not a whole through having been affected by the

One, and if the Whole itself *is*, then it turns out that Being lacks itself.
THEA: Entirely so.
ES: And so, according to this account, Being, since it is deprived of itself, will be non-being.
THEA: Just so.
ES: And again, all things come to be more than one, since both Being and the Whole have separately taken on a nature particular to each.
THEA: Yes.

Ξένος: πότερον δὴ πάθος ἔχον τὸ ὂν τοῦ ἑνὸς οὕτως ἕν τε ἔσται καὶ ὅλον, ἢ παντάπασι μὴ λέγωμεν ὅλον εἶναι τὸ ὄν;
Θεαίτητος: χαλεπὴν προβέβληκας αἵρεσιν.
Ξένος: ἀληθέστατα μέντοι λέγεις. πεπονθός τε γὰρ τὸ ὂν ἓν εἶναί πως οὐ ταὐτὸν ὂν τῷ ἑνὶ φανεῖται, καὶ πλέονα δὴ τὰ πάντα ἑνὸς ἔσται.
Θεαίτητος: ναί.
Ξένος: καὶ μὴν ἐάν γε τὸ ὂν ᾖ μὴ ὅλον διὰ τὸ πεπονθέναι τὸ ὑπ᾽ ἐκείνου πάθος, ᾖ δὲ αὐτὸ τὸ ὅλον, ἐνδεὲς τὸ ὂν ἑαυτοῦ συμβαίνει.
Θεαίτητος: πάνυ γε.
Ξένος: καὶ κατὰ τοῦτον δὴ τὸν λόγον ἑαυτοῦ στερόμενον οὐκ ὂν ἔσται τὸ ὄν.
Θεαίτητος: οὕτως.
Ξένος: καὶ ἑνός γε αὖ πλείω τὰ πάντα γίγνεται, τοῦ τε ὄντος καὶ τοῦ ὅλου χωρὶς ἰδίαν ἑκατέρου φύσιν εἰληφότος.
Θεαίτητος: ναί. (245b4-c10)

The Stranger here begins by repeating that the monists' Being cannot be the same as the One in the sense of oneness (τὸ ἓν αὐτὸ), since this results in a plurality. But the Stranger argues that if the monists' Being is not whole, and yet wholeness *is* (i.e., it is a property that something could have), the monists' Being lacks something that *is* and hence in some sense *is not*. That is, the Stranger here suggests that an account of being must encompass all things that *are,* and not merely a list of some things that are that excludes others.[208] This is, in a sense, a very similar problem to that which the pluralists faced when trying to argue that the hot *is* while the cold *is not.* Even more troublingly, the monists have

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[208] The Stranger's claim that being would then lack itself is difficult to interpret, and commentators have suggested various possibilities. For arguments that this point is directed at a Parmenidean ontology that the Stranger is here attacking, see Wedin 1980: 290-291 and Crivelli 2012: 84. For the view that the Stranger means that being will lack itself because it will lack the attribute of wholeness, which is a being, see Cornford 1935: 225 and Ambuel 2007: 211. For the view that it will lack itself because it is not whole, see Bluck 1975: 85-86 and Harte 2002: 103. I take this latter interpretation to be strongest.

again lost their monistic account, since this modified account entails both their One and wholeness (or 'the Whole,' ὅλος, 245c8), which according to this account must be outside of the One. Hence, the account cannot sustain their conception of the One as partless given that an alternative, wholeness, also *is* in the resultant account.

As a final way of attempting to preserve the monists' account of the partless One (Being), the Stranger assumes that wholeness *is not*. But he will show the absurdity of this view by demonstrating that being entails being a whole at least in some decisive sense. To be, in other words, is to be a whole structured by parts at least in some sense. As always, this indicates that the Stranger is not unaware of the problem of what moderns would now call 'non-existence,' but instead that he recognizes that such a problem is banal and masks deeper and more compelling problems. The text is as follows:

> ES: But if the Whole *is not* at all, these same difficulties pertain to Being. And in addition to not being, it could not even have ever come to be.
> THEA: Why is that?
> ES: What came to be has always come to be as a whole.[209] So that if someone doesn't posit the Whole among the things that *are*, he must address neither beinghood nor becoming as something that *is*.
> THEA: That seems to be altogether the case.
> ES: And furthermore, it's necessary that the Non-whole not be "so much" at all. For if it is "so much," however much that might be, it is necessarily that much as a whole.
> THEA: Exactly.
>
> Ξένος: μὴ ὄντος δέ γε τὸ παράπαν τοῦ ὅλου, ταὐτά τε ταῦτα ὑπάρχει τῷ ὄντι, καὶ πρὸς τῷ μὴ εἶναι μηδ᾽ ἂν γενέσθαι ποτὲ ὄν.
> Θεαίτητος: τί δή;
> Ξένος: τὸ γενόμενον ἀεὶ γέγονεν ὅλον: ὥστε οὔτε οὐσίαν οὔτε γένεσιν ὡς οὖσαν δεῖ προσαγορεύειν τὸ ἓν ἢ τὸ ὅλον ἐν τοῖς οὖσι μὴ τιθέντα.
> Θεαίτητος: παντάπασιν ἔοικε ταῦθ᾽ οὕτως ἔχειν.
> Ξένος: καὶ μὴν οὐδ᾽ ὁποσονοῦν τι δεῖ τὸ μὴ ὅλον εἶναι: ποσόν τι γὰρ ὄν, ὁπόσον ἂν ᾖ, τοσοῦτον ὅλον ἀναγκαῖον αὐτὸ εἶναι.
> Θεαίτητος: κομιδῇ γε (245c10-245d10).

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[209] Here I deviate from the Brann, et al. translation to reflect subtle ambiguities in tense. See Harte 2002: 113 fn. 101 for more on this point.

Here the Stranger assumes that wholeness or 'the Whole' *is not*, but considers the unacceptable consequences of such a view. He suggests now that beinghood and becoming are impossible, since (the Stranger claims) coming-to-be always entails coming-to-be as a whole, and likewise being entails being as a whole.[210] Furthermore, the Stranger seems to imply that beinghood and becoming, as entities taken to be wholes, cannot be posited without the tacit understanding that their very being posited suggests that they have been posited as a unified whole, as any positing through which an object can be taken up in thought and speech points to their being posited as a whole. If beinghood and becoming are not wholes, that is, then it is not clear what they are or how they can *be* at all.

Finally, the Stranger shows that an account that entails rejecting the notion of wholeness also entails rejecting all aspects of quantity, since any 'so much' (ποσόν) also points to a quantity in which a given thing is a whole. In other words, all being in quantitative terms requires the notion of wholeness, in the sense of a sum if not in the sense of completion, and an account in which the possibility of wholeness is rejected necessarily further entails rejecting the possibility of quantity of any kind. And thus while the monists had initially set out to answer the 'how much?' (τι πόσα;) question regarding being, their attempt to do so has in the end yielded an account that necessarily excludes the possibility of quantity (ποσόν). Having exhausted the possibilities of a monistic account with reference to the problems of names and structure, the Stranger

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[210] This is a controversial claim. For discussions of this controversy, see Harte 2002: 112 and Crivelli 2012: 79-85. In my interpretation, I take it that the Stranger is merely indicating the incoherence of trying to do away with wholeness in an ontological account. The Stranger seems to recognize that discursivity entails wholeness and separation, and that any ontological account that entails rejecting the notion of wholeness is thus doomed to incoherence by its failure to allow for a basic principle of discursivity.

rejects this final assumption before remarking on the many difficulties facing anyone advocating for an account of being with reference to quantity (πόσα). The interlocutors will next turn to those who advocate for conceptions of being with reference to quality (ποῖα).

4.3 Being's 'whatness' (246a – 249d)

4.3.1 The giants (246a – 247c)

The results of the interlocutors' addressing the puzzle regarding the 'counting' of being showed that being is not something that is itself countable, either as a one or as a many, but must be understood in different ways. Now the interlocutors will grapple with another problem, that is, the problem of the 'whatness' of being, and in doing so the Stranger will be able to continue to develop a better account of being. Rosen rightly notes that at this turn the Stranger begins to refer to being as '*ousia*' and its cognates, a term that had appeared only once in the previous discussion.[211] Covering a broad semantic range in English, this term is typically translated either as 'being' or as 'substance,' and often invokes a sense of being that is not grounded in anything else. By my interpretation, this is likely the result of the interlocutors' having established the necessary connection of being and wholeness in their exchange with the monists, and thus a turn toward being in a fundamental sense in the attempt to distinguish the countable from that grounding sense of being (or substance) that makes counting possible.

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[211] The previous use occurred at 245d4. See Rosen 1983: 212 for further discussion.

This happens in the context of what the Stranger calls the 'Battle of the Gods and Giants' (γιγαντομαχία, 246a3-5),[212] an imagined war between those holding two radical views regarding the whatness of being. The Stranger describes the two views at play in this 'battle' as consisting of the following sides:

> ES: Those on the one side drag all things down out of the heavens and the invisible realm, literally grabbing at rocks and trees with their hands. They grasp all such things and maintain strenuously that that alone *is* which allows for some touching and embracing. For they mark off beinghood and body as the same; and if anyone from the other side says that something is that has no body, they despise him totally and don't want to listen to anyone else.
> THEA: These certainly are terrible men you've told of. For even I have already run into packs of them.
> ES: That's why those who dispute with them defend themselves very cautiously out of some invisible place on high, forcing true beinghood to be certain thought-things and disembodied forms. But the bodies of their opponents and what these men call truth, they bust up into small pieces in their arguments and call it, instead of beinghood, some sort of swept-along becoming. And between these two, Theaetetus, a tremendous sort of battle over these things has forever been joined.
> THEA: True.

> Ξένος: οἱ μὲν εἰς γῆν ἐξ οὐρανοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἀοράτου πάντα ἕλκουσι, ταῖς χερσὶν ἀτεχνῶς πέτρας καὶ δρῦς περιλαμβάνοντες. τῶν γὰρ τοιούτων ἐφαπτόμενοι πάντων διισχυρίζονται τοῦτο εἶναι μόνον ὃ παρέχει προσβολὴν καὶ ἐπαφήν τινα, ταὐτὸν σῶμα καὶ οὐσίαν ὁριζόμενοι, τῶν δὲ ἄλλων εἴ τίς τι φήσει μὴ σῶμα ἔχον εἶναι, καταφρονοῦντες τὸ παράπαν καὶ οὐδὲν ἐθέλοντες ἄλλο ἀκούειν.
> Θεαίτητος: ἦ δεινοὺς εἴρηκας ἄνδρας: ἤδη γὰρ καὶ ἐγὼ τούτων συχνοῖς προσέτυχον.
> Ξένος: τοιγαροῦν οἱ πρὸς αὐτοὺς ἀμφισβητοῦντες μάλα εὐλαβῶς ἄνωθεν ἐξ ἀοράτου ποθὲν ἀμύνονται, νοητὰ ἄττα καὶ ἀσώματα εἴδη βιαζόμενοι τὴν ἀληθινὴν οὐσίαν εἶναι: τὰ δὲ ἐκείνων σώματα καὶ τὴν λεγομένην ὑπ᾽ αὐτῶν

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[212] The competing views discussed in this passage have gone by various names in the scholarship, including the 'Titans' and 'Olympians' (Klein 1977: 43-47), the 'materialists' and 'idealists' (e.g., D. Miller 2004), the 'gods' and 'giants,' and the 'giants' and the 'friends of forms.' I choose the latter, since 'materialism' and 'idealism' suggest baggage in modern thinking that is not relevant to Plato's philosophical epoch. Furthermore, unlike idealists from the modern era, the friends of forms apparently understand being not as most essentially non-bodily, but instead as most essentially permanent and unchanging, which entails but is not anchored by non-embodiment (cf. Rosen 1983: 213). But referring to those advocating forms as 'gods' gives more weight to these thinkers than the Stranger seems to want to allot them, despite what I take to be a playful invocation of this battle from the Greek mythological tradition. (For good discussions of this 'war,' albeit in more serious terms than those of the playfulness that I am here suggesting, see Rosen 1983: 213 and Notomi 1999: 217). Crivelli 2012: 86 notes the connection between philosophers and gods drawn earlier in the text (218a) and suggests that this implies that we are to take the friends of forms seriously as philosophers. To be sure, their view seems akin in some key ways to that which is typically attributed to Plato.

ἀλήθειαν κατὰ σμικρὰ διαθραύοντες ἐν τοῖς λόγοις γένεσιν ἀντ᾽ οὐσίας
φερομένην τινὰ προσαγορεύουσιν. ἐν μέσῳ δὲ περὶ ταῦτα ἄπλετος ἀμφοτέρων
μάχη τις, ὦ Θεαίτητε, ἀεὶ συνέστηκεν.
Θεαίτητος: ἀληθῆ. (246a7-246c5).

That is, this battle is between those 'giants' who advocate for a purely bodily conception

of being,[213] and those 'friends of forms' who argue that being is only 'truly' that which is

timeless and unchanging (ἀκίνητος), while the embodied is most essentially becoming

and perishing and hence in the proper sense *is not*.[214] The Stranger had indicated in his

consideration of the 'history' of thinking being that this problem could be taken up in any

number of ways, but he chooses here to consider the problem of the 'whatness' of being

through the question of the relationship between being and bodily nature, including the

closely related issue of change (κίνησις) over time. This will ultimately allow the

interlocutors to consider the essence of all possible accounts of being's whatness by

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[213] Cf. Brown 1998 for a thorough discussion of this view as Plato has the interlocutors present it. Those who have tried to connect the giants to known historical figures or schools include Cornford 1935: 231-233, Taylor 1961: 43, Seligman 1974: 31, Bluck 1975: 89-91, and Klein 1977: 43. For a discussion of relationship between the giants' view and that of the historical empiricists of modern philosophy, see Moravcsik 1962: 35. Ray 1984: 28 makes the good point that identifying the giants too closely with any school or group is probably a mistake, since Theaetetus suggests that it is common to run into packs of them. (Certainly the history of philosophy is littered with packs of them, but I digress.) Finally, it bears mentioning that the giants seem similar to, or perhaps the same as, those described at *Theaetetus* 155e3-6 who believe that "nothing *is* but what they can grasp with both hands; people who refuse to admit that actions and processes and the invisible world in general have any place in reality," who are contrasted with those 'more sophisticated' people who believe that all is change.

[214] The connection between the friends of forms and various historical figures and schools is debated. One possibility – in my view an untenable one – is that Plato has the Stranger here attack his 'earlier' conception of forms. Some arguments for this popular view include Cornford 1935: 247, Ross 1951: 207, Seligman 1974: 31, Bluck 1975: 94, McPherran 1986: 244, Brown 1998, and Notomi 1999: 219-220. For its rebuttal, closer to my own view, see Leigh 2010: 67-72. Even positing for the sake of argument that Plato indeed had an 'earlier' theory of forms (see section 1.2.2 for my discussion of developmentalism) and that this 'earlier' theory is at play in dialogues like the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*, it could not be the case that the view of the friends is coextensive with Plato's so-called 'earlier' view because Plato has Socrates describe forms as *causes* (cf. *Phaedo* 100c-103a), while the friends' view entails that forms cannot be understood as causes because they do not commune with anything outside themselves (cf. Kuenne 2004: 311, Crivelli 2012: 88). For an interesting, albeit speculative, consideration of the friends of forms as members of Plato's academy that hold untenable versions of his own view, see Gerson 2006: 291-292. Crivelli 2012: 86 catalogues several arguments from the late 19th and early 20th centuries regarding the connections between the friends of forms lesser-known ancient Greek ontologies. For further discussions of the relationship between the friends of forms and Plato's own ontology that are especially helpful, see Wiehl 1967: 189, Politis 2006: 157, Miller 2007, and Hestir 2016: 108.

addressing two versions of the issue's most radical views, i.e., that being is merely that which is given in bodily experience and that being is that which is absent from bodily sensation but instead stands 'invisibly' 'on high' and 'beyond' that which is given in sensation.

A minor problem in the 'count' ontologies becomes a major problem here. This is that each account is exclusionary in some sense. That is, each ontological view entails holding that beings with a certain property – either bodily nature in the case of the giants or unchanging permanence in the case of the friends of forms – *are*, while entities found that lack this quality *are not*.[215] In this way, the Stranger will show that each ontological view entails an account of *beings*, and which beings compose the whole of being, but not *being itself*. Proponents of each view will be able only to make claims about what can be said properly to be beings, and not about what being itself *is*. Thus, like the pluralists, they are in a sense only able to posit an account of being by counting up the beings, but do not have a means of explaining what underlies all of the beings such that they together co-compose the whole of being, or that they *are*.

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[215] Although all scholars of whom I am aware take the giants to be exclusionary, the status of the friends of forms as exclusionary is debated. For cases in favor of this reading, which I follow, see D. Miller 2004: 347-348 and Leigh 2010. For arguments against this view, see Politis 2016: 157 and Wiitala 2018: 7-9. Although I agree that the friends of forms have an exclusionist ontology, I argue that this is not a question regarding *existence*. In other words, some (e.g., Leigh and Wiitala) have taken the interpretation of the friends of forms as exclusionary ontologists to entail existential force, that is, to regard the question of what '*exists.*' Instead, I am arguing that the ontologists address the question not of what 'exists' but instead what has a greater share of reality, or what *is* in the truest sense. As Politis notes, the friends must necessarily recognize that bodily objects 'exist' in that bodily objects are predicated in some way, i.e., predicated of becoming (e.g., their titular description at 246b10-c3, where they are said to take it that bodies are posited as 'some sort of swept-along becoming.') So I agree that they cannot be concerned primarily with 'existence.' Nonetheless, I take it that commentators like D. Miller and Leigh are right to recognize that the friends of forms make dogmatic assertions that entail a muddle regarding the nature of participation, while I also agree with commentators like Politis and Wiitala that this view cannot ultimately be anchored primarily in questions regarding 'existence.'

The Stranger will show the necessary failure of any exclusionist view of being by indicating that exclusionism must entail an incoherent account. For example, for the sake of consistency the friends of forms are forced to assert that 'Bodily nature *is* merely a form of becoming;' but this claim entails drawing upon the being of bodily nature (via the verb '*is*') to assert that bodily nature lacks being, and hence is incoherent. Likewise, the Stranger will show that any claim regarding what allegedly '*is not*' rests first upon an invocation of being and second upon an invocation of otherness, and hence indicates the necessary incoherence of an exclusionist ontology. The Stranger will help to push past such exclusionary accounts by refocusing the discussion onto being itself, as opposed to beings. As an alternative and truer way of conceiving of being, the Stranger will continue to draw out the implications he developed when considering the two senses of being one to show that an account of being entails thinking in inclusionary terms of *what it means to be* while also following Parmenides in recognizing the sense of being in which it is necessary and does not have an opposite.

The interlocutors address those holding each radical ontological view in turn. The Stranger says that the giants are particularly difficult to converse with due to their forceful insistence on maintaining their stance; thus he begins by dividing off the giants' view in its strictest interpretation from what he calls a 'more law-abiding' (νομιμώτερον, 246d7) version of the view, in which the giants do not cling dogmatically to their claims but instead are more willing to engage in discourse and accept truth when it appears.[216] The Stranger, that is, chooses to represent the view through its most charitable adherents, and the view's dogmatists are not subsequently invoked in what follows.

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[216] For a thorough and judicious consideration of the philosophical significance of this move, see Rosen 1983: 214.

The Stranger shows that with their dogmatism set aside, the giants are easily

overtaken. Furthermore, the moves that the Stranger makes to overtake them indicate the

path he will take toward giving the preferable account. The giants' view entails that all

that is not bodily *is not*, or, more accurately, that there *is* nothing beyond what is given in

sensation. But these 'law-abiding' giants must admit the apparently self-evident truth not

challenged here that mortal bodies are ensouled,[217] and hence that souls *are* (246e1-10).

Since souls are apparently non-bodily, the Stranger could have rested his case against the

giants here by stating that at least one non-bodily entity, the soul, has been found *to be*.

But the Stranger anticipates a potential objection that Theaetetus will suggest shortly, that

is, that to the giants "the soul itself seems to them to possess a sort of body" (247b9-10).

In other words, the Stranger recognizes that the mere indication of the being of the soul

does not alone defeat the giants' claim, since the giants will try to argue that what we call

the soul could at least in principle be conceived in purely bodily terms.[218]

Furthermore, the Stranger does not rest his case here because he is in the process

of developing a deeper point, and thus must continue on to show that regardless of the

bodily nature (if any) of the soul, there is an important sense in which bodily being is

made possible through non-bodily being. To show this, the Stranger will draw on his

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[217] The Greek view of the soul as necessary and self-evident is not a subject that I can discuss in depth
here, but it warrants mentioning that the soul for the Greeks is that which stands above the aggregate of life
functions and thus makes the life functions possible. In this way, the soul is an example of the nature of
wholeness and unity that the interlocutors had previously been considering. As I understand it, the thinking
that apparently lies behind the use of the word 'soul' in ancient Greek is roughly as follows. That the body
can function as it does indicates some normative principle that allows for the maintenance of normative
ratios that sustain life; since this overall function does not reside in one particular function of the body (e.g.,
metabolism, thought, etc.) nor in all functions taken together as a heap, a higher-order principle is required.
Merely this principle, whatever its nature may turn out to be, is that which is signified by the Greek word
'soul.'
[218] Cf. Strawser 2012: 224.

prior distinction between the two senses of oneness, partaking of oneness and being that

by which oneness is possible. The Stranger continues:

> ES: What about this: Don't [the giants] affirm that one soul is just and another
> unjust, and that one is thoughtful and another thoughtless?
> THEA: Certainly.
> ES: But don't they affirm that each soul becomes just by the possession and
> presence of justice, and becomes the contrary by the possession and presence of
> their contraries?
> THEA: Yes, they also affirm these things.
> ES: Yet surely they'll affirm that what has the power [δυνατόν] to become present
> to or absent from something certainly *is* something.
> THEA: They certainly do affirm this.
> ES: Then since justice and thoughtfulness and the rest of virtue and their
> contraries *are*, and since, moreover, the soul within which these arise *is*, do they
> affirm that any of them is visible and touchable or that all are invisible?
> THEA: That hardly any of these at least is visible.
>
> Ξένος: τί δέ; ψυχὴν οὐ τὴν μὲν δικαίαν, τὴν δὲ ἄδικόν φασιν εἶναι, καὶ τὴν μὲν
> φρόνιμον, τὴν δὲ ἄφρονα;
> Θεαίτητος: τί μήν;
> Ξένος: ἀλλ᾽ οὐ δικαιοσύνης ἕξει καὶ παρουσίᾳ τοιαύτην αὐτῶν ἑκάστην
> γίγνεσθαι, καὶ τῶν ἐναντίων τὴν ἐναντίαν;
> Θεαίτητος: ναί, καὶ ταῦτα σύμφασιν.
> Ξένος: ἀλλὰ μὴν τό γε δυνατόν τῳ παραγίγνεσθαι καὶ ἀπογίγνεσθαι πάντως εἶναί
> τι φήσουσιν.
> Θεαίτητος: φασὶ μὲν οὖν.
> Ξένος: οὔσης οὖν δικαιοσύνης καὶ φρονήσεως καὶ τῆς ἄλλης ἀρετῆς καὶ τῶν
> ἐναντίων, καὶ δὴ καὶ ψυχῆς ἐν ᾗ ταῦτα ἐγγίγνεται, πότερον ὁρατὸν καὶ ἁπτὸν
> εἶναί φασί τι αὐτῶν ἢ πάντα ἀόρατα;
> Θεαίτητος: σχεδὸν οὐδὲν τούτων γε ὁρατόν. (247a2-247b5).

Here the Stranger describes justice and thoughtfulness, along with the rest of the virtues

and their contraries, as *being*, and, because of their being, as making possible the

partaking of them. This distinction is the same as the one earlier posited between the two

senses of being one, that is, between that which is one (taking the form '*X is F'*) and

oneness itself (i.e., *what it is to be F*). Here the Stranger makes this same distinction

between justice in the case of a just soul (e.g., '*Soul X is just'*) and justice in itself (i.e.,

what it is *to be just*).[219] For a given soul to be just, it must be the case that justice in itself

has the *power* (δυνατόν, from δύναμις, 244a10)[220] to become present or absent to

something like a soul.[221] In other words, that a given soul acts justly presupposes

something other than the soul, namely justice itself, which has a certain power to affect a

soul.[222] And, furthermore, this implies that justice itself would *be* regardless of any given

soul, e.g., Soul X, to which it might become manifest. Soul X in this way depends on the

being of justice, but justice itself does not depend on Soul X for it to be what it is. Justice

itself is in this sense a cause of the nature of Soul X.[223] Thus the Stranger has now begun

to argue that this power indicates the being of something non-bodily, i.e., the just itself,

and the preceding discussion of the distinction between that which is One and oneness

itself has helped the Stranger to show that that which is just and justice itself must be

separate in some meaningful sense.

The being of justice itself as a power above and beyond the soul of course

threatens the giants' view. The interlocutors have forced the giants either (I) to relinquish

their position regarding the coextensiveness of body and being, or (II) to try to retain it

either (IIa) by defending the view that justice itself is bodily, or (IIb) by arguing that

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[219] As stated above, the Stranger is here discussing not only justice, but also 'justice and thoughtfulness
and the rest of the virtues and their contraries' (247b1-2). For the sake of simplicity, however, I will
consider only the case of justice in what follows, as the distinction between justice itself and just actions is
sufficient to capture the force of the Stranger's argument here.

[220] This is an early appearance of the notion of power that will become central in what follows when the
Stranger offers his own positive account of being (see section 4.3.2).

[221] Cf. Miller 2010 for a discussion of the Platonic understanding of soul in terms of parts and wholes
developed in the *Republic* and *Philebus*.

[222] Here I do not commit to a view on the question of whether it is best to understand the virtues as
something that become *present in* a given soul, or whether they instead are merely norms to which a soul
aims. Either interpretation would, I think, support my view, since in either case, the virtue affects the soul,
whether by becoming "present in it" or by showing itself as an external norm.

[223] The Stranger's account of the causal force of the form of justice, or justice itself, thus echoes Socrates'
description at *Phaedo* 102b-103a of forms as causes, e.g., of the form of the tall as the cause of tallness in
Simmias.

justice itself *is not* (247b7-247c8). In other words, if the giants do not surrender here,

they must either (IIa) admit that justice itself *is* and offer an account of it in bodily terms,

or (IIb) mount the argument that the Stranger's distinction between the particular soul

and the power of justice is somehow false, presumably because the Stranger has posited

an entity (justice itself) that *is not*.

The interlocutors do not develop either (IIa) or (IIb) and instead leave the exercise

for any who wish to defend the giants' positions. Considering why each view would

necessarily fail helps to set up the Stranger's positive argument that he is about to offer,

so I briefly address each here. (IIa) would require a strange account of justice itself,

presumably as somehow broken up into bits in each of its just instances that are in space

and time.[224] Perhaps even more damningly, this account would merely reduce justice

itself to the status of countable thinghood together in the world of bodily entities. Both of

these problems suggest that this account would entail another regressive inquiry into the

question of what it is that allows a given soul and justice itself both *to be*. (IIb) would

have the strange implication that justice itself can be spoken of, as evidenced by the

interlocutors' indicating it to the giants, and yet nonetheless it *is not* in any way. (IIb)

indicates the absurdity of exclusionary accounts of being, which require incoherent

accounts of alleged 'nonbeings' like justice itself in terms of what they *are* and *are not*

(e.g., 'Justice itself *is* merely that of which the Stranger is here speaking, although he

speaks of nothing,' a claim that draws upon being to assert nonbeing.) Therefore, (IIa)

and (IIb) are each untenable. Instead, the interlocutors have shown that justice must be as

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[224] For the critique of this conception of forms, see the Parmenides character's response to the young
Socrates' inchoate account of forms in *Parmenides* 130b-134e.

a causal and non-bodily entity, given that it is spoken of and noetically grasped. Being, therefore, is not just the bodily bits that compose sensation.

4.3.2   Being as power (247c – 248a)

The Stranger makes his most explicit contribution to his positive account of being when turning his considerations to (I), that is, the possibility of the giants' willingness to grant that justice itself *is* despite being non-bodily. He addresses this possibility by stating that "if they're willing to grant that any of the things that *are*, however small, is bodiless, that's enough. Then they must tell us what is the inborn nature common to both these things and those that have body, that is, what they have in view when they assert that both *are*" (246c9-d3). That is, the interlocutors must now determine what is common to both the just soul and justice itself by which each can be said to *be*. As I suggested above, the problem is similar to that which the pluralists faced when arguing for a pluralistic conception of being insofar as multiple distinct kinds have been shown *to be*. But here the Stranger is prepared to define that which is common to both through a single account that does not fall victim to that which had troubled the pluralists in offering their responses. The Stranger's definition, of central importance, is as follows:[225]

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[225] In my interpretation, this definition represents a sincere, original contribution from the Stranger, is therefore of central importance to the dialogue and to the considerations of being, and is offered by Plato to be taken seriously but not in a manner that exhausts Plato's 'own view' on the subject of being. No aspect of my interpretation falls within a consensus view held by all scholars, however. The questions of whether the Stranger is here articulating 'his own' view and, if so, whether this is the view that Plato endorses, or whether this merely represents an articulation of the giants' view, have been hotly debated. For endorsements of the 'orthodox' view that the Stranger here speaks (simply, exclusively, and in a more-or-less univocal sense) for Plato, see Frede 1996: 142 and Leigh 2010: 63 fn 3. Owen 1971: 116 states an influential view that the Stranger is offering a serious definition that Plato nevertheless does not endorse. For the view that the Stranger merely offers the definition to placate the giants and Theaetetus, see McCabe

I say, then, that what possesses any sort of power – whether for making anything at all, of whatever nature, other than it is or for being affected even the least bit by the meagerest thing, even if only once – I say that this *is* in its very being. For I set down as a boundary [ὅρον][226] marking off [ὁρίζειν] the things that *are*, that their being is nothing else but *power*.

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 (247d9-e4).

The Stranger here twice echoes a concept he had first introduced at 244a10 of being as a

power (δύναμις),[227] once each at 247d9 and 247e4.[228] At 247d9, the Stranger elaborates

that he has in mind this definition of being as a power in at least one of two senses,

including either (i) 'for making (ποιεῖν) anything at all, of whatever nature, other than it

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2000: 74-89. Crivelli 2012: 89 argues that the friends of forms force the interlocutors to renounce this definition and that it does not appear later in the dialogue. Commentators who accord the passage with little significance include de Rijk 1986 and White 1993. I generally follow the interpretive principles espoused by Blondell 2002: 18-21 and take it that the Stranger here is offering something that Plato finds interesting and deeply valuable, though this does not warrant taking the *Sophist* to be a treatise or the Stranger to be Plato's mouthpiece. (For further helpful discussions of this interpretive principle with respect to the Eleatic Stranger's discussions of ontology specifically, see Stenzel 1963: 75-78 and Miller 1980: x-xiii.) As far as I am aware, however, my argument that 'being is power' is true and endorsed without its being offered by the Stranger or Plato as an exhaustive account of being is not a repetition of any other interpretation of this passage. Nevertheless, my interpretation is indebted to that of Leigh 2010, who interprets the passage as a moment of central importance in the ontological account that contains the best articulation of the Stranger's (and hence Plato's) actual view of being. For a helpful discussion of the textual and linguistic evidence for this, see especially Leigh 2010: 65-67. Other similar endorsements of this view as serious yet nonetheless not simply coextensive with Plato's view include Sallis 1975: 495, Ray 1981: 21, Lentz 1997: 99, and Brown 1998: 189.

[226] The meaning of ὅρον (from ὅρος) has been debated. The term has been understood either to suggest 'definition' (and hence a definitive mark of being) or instead a mere 'boundary' (and hence a sufficient but not necessary mark of being). Those advocating for the strong sense include Owen 1971: 421, de Rijk 1986: 101, Notomi 1999: 218, D. Miller 2004, and Leigh 2010. Those advocating for the latter include Cornford 1935 238-239, Bluck 1975: 93, and Brown 1998: 192-193. My own view lies somewhere in the middle, as I take this to be a sincerely offered definition that nonetheless is not an exhaustive account of being.

[227] Socrates considers the notion of power (*dunamis*) at *Republic* 477c, saying, "We will assert that powers are a certain class of beings by means of which we are capable (δυνάμεθα) of what we are capable (δυνάμεθα), and also everything else is capable of whatever it is capable. […] In a power I see no color or shape or anything of the sort such as I see in many other things to which I look when I distinguish one thing from another for myself. With a power I look only to this – on what it depends and what it accomplishes; and it is on this basis that I come to call each of the powers a power; and that which depends on the same thing and accomplishes the same thing, I call the same power, and that which depends on something else and accomplishes something else, I call a different power" (*Republic* 477c1-d5). For a helpful discussion of this notion of *dunamis* across the *Sophist* and *Republic*, see Sallis 1975: 495-498.

[228] Cf. Aristotle, *Topics* 5.9 and 6.7.

is' or (ii) 'being affected (παθεῖν) even the least bit by the meagerest thing, even if only once' (247d9-e1).[229] At 247e4, the Stranger summarizes this view simply as holding that 'being is power.' This definitional account, to which I refer henceforth as the view simply that 'being is power,' entails that the nature of being is to be such as to affect or be affected by something other.[230] In other words, (i) suggests that to be is to cause change, either to self or to other, while (ii) suggests that to be is to be by nature receptive to being changed by what is other.

To be sure, this account is preferable to the ontological accounts offered previously in the dialogue. This is the case for several reasons. First, being has been accounted for not in terms appropriate to beings, but instead as something of a different ontological kind. In this way, this definition allows for conceiving of being without merely reducing it to the status of another being in the world alongside all the others (e.g., the hot thing, the cold thing, etc.), but instead as the *grounds* by which these other entities actualize their natures. In this way, the account of being as power has allowed the interlocutors to move beyond the problems faced by the counting ontologies by positing something that is by nature not countable.[231] Similarly, it allows the interlocutors to move beyond the problems of exclusionary ontologies, in which certain entities are given precedence as 'true' beings over others that are not. This definition has

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[229] For a discussion of the connections between this passage and the earlier consideration of the views of the monists and pluralists, see Moravcsik 1973: 37.

[230] The nature of affect in Plato's thinking broadly and this passage more locally are much debated. Many commentators understand affect weakly in terms of properties (e.g., Moravcsik 1962: 37, Bondeson 1976: 5.) Instead in what follows I will be arguing for an understanding of affectation on the model of causation (cf. Brown 1998: 199).

[231] For an excellent and woefully under-cited discussion of the sense in which 'being as power' offers an account of being as something uncountable rooted in concepts found in ancient Greek mathematics – and indeed something foreshadowed in the preceding mathematical discussion early in the *Theaetetus* – see Flower 1984.

therefore captured what is common to all, and offers the shared terms through which the interlocutors are able to account for all things, forms, and noetic unities together. Similarly, the Stranger's definition of being as power echoes the account of Parmenides' goddess regarding being as being given to thought and speech. That is, anything available to thought and speech must have this power at least in some sense, given that it self-evidently has the power to affect thinking and speech.

The Stranger's account of being as power is thus a response to the recurrent deficiencies in thinking being that are on display throughout the *Sophist*. In my interpretation, it therefore should be taken seriously as a positive contribution to the problem of thinking being, and it will show itself to offer profound explanatory insight in its allowing the interlocutors to work through the entailments of such a conception. Nevertheless, I argue that it would be a mistake to take this view to be exhaustive of the account of beinghood that is being sketched here. In other words, I am arguing that the claim that this definition captures Plato's own view is true, but that the claim that it *exhausts* Plato's own view I take to be false. Just as bifurcatory division offered insightful accounts into the sophist that each had merits and imperfections, I suggest here that the conception of being that Plato has his interlocutors sketch in this dialogue is conceptually unified but not exhausted by any particular definitional account. We have seen previously that there is value, and no contradiction, in defining being both (a) as necessary and unopposed and (b) as being given to thought and speech, two definitions of being articulated by Parmenides' goddess and additionally at play (so I argue) tacitly in Plato's *Sophist*. Furthermore, in what follows I will argue that in addition to (c) being as power, the texts suggest at least two further another definitional accounts of being,

namely, that (d) being is *communing*[232] and that (e) being is *participation*.[233] Given the

plurality of definitions of being, each of which captures something essential about being

in the unified sense but does not exhaust it, I argue that to *reduce* the Stranger's account

(or Plato's view) of being to the definition that 'being is power' would be too hasty.

Plato indeed has the interlocutors indicate that this definition, though of extreme

significance, is open to revision and hence need not be taken dogmatically. Shortly after

giving it, the Stranger hedges that "[p]erhaps later some other [boundary] may become

apparent to us and to them. For now, let this stand as something agreed upon by us and

those men" (ἴσως γὰρ ἂν εἰς ὕστερον ἡμῖν τε καὶ τούτοις ἕτερον ἂν φανείη. πρὸς μὲν οὖν

τούτους τοῦτο ἡμῖν ἐνταῦθα μενέτω συνομολογηθέν, 247e7-248a2). This boundary that

has become apparent does not settle the matter, but instead allows the interlocutors to

break through their impasse and continue their inquiry.[234]

As readers, this provocation forces us to ask in what ways, if any, the Stranger's

suggested revision regarding the boundary of being appears or is suggested in the text.

For now, I can suggest two insights into being that this account lacks or does not make

explicit. The first is that this account cannot capture the unopposed nature of being that

Parmenides' goddess describes and that is later uncovered in the account of the great

kinds, in which being is shown to be necessary and unopposed. While the goddess

establishes that being in its grounding sense cannot be thought in its privation and hence

that being in its most fundamental sense is unopposed, the Platonic interlocutors will only

later conclude that being is shown to be unopposed, while nonbeing is a kind of otherness

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[232] See section 4.3.3.
[233] Cf. Flower 1980.
[234] The Stranger indicates at 247d4, i.e., immediately before offering the 'being is power' definition, that the course of the interlocutors' investigation had left them at an impasse.

or difference opposed by sameness. Though the definition of being as power can be teased out to show the unopposed nature of power, this is a merely implicit aspect of the definition, and does not follow explicitly, since it seems in principle that a power (say, *qua* ability) could be fundamentally opposed by a lack of power (say, inability).

Second, the goddess indicates similarly that being in its grounding sense is necessary, and this new account of being as power cannot capture this aspect of being. In other words, the definition of being as power also lacks an explicit account of the *necessary* ground by which power as pure potentiality can be present to be actualized. This necessary sense of being will also be uncovered in the ontological inquiry that yields the great kinds, since being will be shown to be necessary in all participants (including participating forms). For these reasons, I argue that we are warranted in taking the definition of being as power to be a true means of getting beyond the various impasses that the history of thinking being has entailed, but that we are nevertheless not justified in taking this account therefore to be exhaustive or ultimately definitive. The interlocutors' task in what follows is to allow the truth of this definition to guide them into further truth, without succumbing to the urge to treat this truth as ultimately exhaustive of the nature of the concept that they are pursuing.

Before considering the role this definition plays in responding to and refuting the friends of forms, one further feature of this definition that will be at play in the positive account that follows requires consideration. This is the sense in which the Stranger has here begun to differentiate between (i) the power to *cause* change and (ii) the receptivity to (or the act of) *being changed*. These two poles indicate the two senses of *power* at play in the Stranger's definition of being as power. The Stranger here shows their

interconnected unity, insofar as the two taken together constitute the sense of power that

discloses the nature of being in this definitional account. Confusions regarding this

distinction had been at play in the thinking of the earlier ontologists, as in the case of the

pluralists who could not distinguish between the hot and cold and that which caused them

to actualize their nature (i.e., being). Here, the Stranger has begun to work toward

teasing them apart and following the entailments regarding the discreteness and

necessarily intertwined nature of each as a component of the unified conception of being

that will inform his ultimate account. In other words, that being entails both the cause of

change and the receptiveness to being changed, but that each are in an important sense

separate, will be a facet of being that the Stranger will unpack when turning his attention

to the necessary composite structure that being entails. This distinction will work with

the earlier distinction between being One ('*X is F*') and what it is to be one (what it is *to*

be F) to allow the Stranger to frame his account of ontological structure that follows in

the discussion of the great kinds. Specifically, he will show that the causal sense of

affection (ποιεῖν) is causally prior, albeit in an atemporal sense, to that which is receptive

(παθεῖν), and that the sense of what it is to be one (e.g., justice itself) is in an important

sense that which causes the one (e.g., Soul X that is just). The meaning and significance

of this distinction are further worked out in the Stranger's address to the friends of forms.

4.3.3   The friends of forms (248a – 249c)

Having stated the definition of being as the power to affect and be affected, the

Stranger turns back to the friends of forms to consider the entailments of this definition

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for their view of the whatness of being.[235] Of course, the friends of forms must reject the

account of being as power, since such an account entails that bodily entities *are* while the

friends of forms argue that only that which is unchanging (ἀκίνητος) and hence bodiless

is in the proper sense (248c4-6). For the friends of forms, being entails the impossibility

of change (κίνησις, or 'motion'),[236] since an entity's participation in change suggests that

it is in some sense engaged in becoming, from which the friends of forms believe being is

categorically restricted. Therefore, they are willing to grant that becoming has the power

to affect and be affected, but they will not grant that being has this power because this

entails an understanding of being not as static but instead as dynamic.

The Stranger is prepared to refute the friends of forms through two interrelated

moves.[237] First, he will show that the alleged separation between being and becoming,

like the separation of the atomic elements at play in the account of the pluralists, is in fact

rooted in something that the two share, and that this shared capacity is closely related to

the definition of being he has been developing in the account of power.[238] Second, the

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[235] There is considerable debate regarding the role of the critique of the friends of forms in the *Sophist* and in Platonic metaphysical thinking more broadly. For a helpful overview of the scholarship, including a summary of the three major lines of interpretation, see Wiitala 2018. I consider each line of interpretation below.

[236] As I suggest above, κινέω, the Greek word translated here as 'I move' or 'I change,' is difficult to capture in a single English translation. In any event, its meaning is always transitive (cf. LSJ, Aristotle *Physics* 7.1, Wiitala 2018: 4 fn. 8.) Thus, we should not be surprised that the friends of forms must deny this possibility to being, since it would imply by transitive property that being was moved in the act of moving.

[237] Whether the Stranger's critique of the friends of forms entails retaining the definition of being as power is debated. I follow Sayre 1969: 168, Lentz 1997: 90, Brown 1998, and Wiitala 2014b: 111 in arguing that Stranger retains this view and uses it to help defeat the friends. For the opposing view that the Stranger ultimately rejects this view, see Klein 1977: 47 and Crivelli 2012: 87-90.

[238] In this sense I am siding with those who (following the term coined by Wiitala 2018) advocate for the 'becoming-as-being' interpretation of this passage, or the view that the Stranger seeks to show that the friends of forms have excluded something, i.e., that which becomes, from their ontology. Adherents of this view include Cornford 1935: 245, Ross 1951: 111, D. Miller 2004, and Leigh 2010. Importantly, my version of the 'becoming-as-being' view does not entail existential force, or at most entails existential force only weakly. In other words, I am not arguing that the Stranger here is making a claim about what 'exists' that is at odds with what the friends of forms take it 'exists.' Instead, I am arguing that the Stranger is marking off a boundary of what is implied when being is said, i.e., an ontological (not semantic) boundary

Stranger will show the necessary interrelation between being and motion, or that an account of utterly unmoved being is implausible.[239] In other words, the Stranger will criticize the friends for advancing a conception of forms that does not entail their intermingling, similarly to the late learners' claims about identity (discussed below in section 5.2.1). The distinctions established through these two moves will help the Stranger to unfold the ontology that follows in the account of the great kinds.

First, the Stranger addresses the allegedly irreconcilable divide between being and becoming for which the friends of forms argue. He summarizes the friends of forms' view as entailing the separation between becoming and being, in which the body communes with becoming and that which changes, and the soul communes with being as that which persists in the same condition (248a10-13). But, he continues, this raises the question as to what this 'communing' (κοινωνεῖν, 248a10 and 248b2) is that spans both being and becoming. The Stranger suggests that the answer to this question regarding the communing that spans both is precisely that which the interlocutors had previously called 'power,' restated now as '[a] being affected or a doing from some power and whose source is the coming together of things, one against the other' (πάθημα ἢ ποίημα ἐκ δυνάμεώς τινος ἀπὸ τῶν πρὸς ἄλληλα συνιόντων γιγνόμενον, 248b6-7). Defining being as power therefore entails the closely related definition of being as *communing*. The friends of forms will disagree with this assessment – they continue to hold that becoming can affect and be affected while being is unmoved – but the Stranger has now given a

that primarily has predicative and veridical force, and existential force weakly at most. Therefore, in my view the Stranger is advocating for an ontological horizon that captures being (i.e., one that includes both forms and particulars in time and space) in opposition to the friends, addressing the question of what 'exists' only coincidentally at most.

[239] In this sense I am siding with Wiitala 2018: 9-28 regarding the failure of the friends of forms to recognize that forms must be interrelated and partake in one another. Therefore, mine is a hybrid of two of the three lines of interpretation that Wiitala identifies.

second account of being as communing that is of central importance. That is, the Stranger has offered a new version of the previous definition of being as communing with what is other in some significant sense. In this regard, the Stranger has expanded his improved ontology that captures that which is common to all beings through an inclusionary account. In other words, just as bodily nature has the power to affect and be affected, so too do timeless non-bodily entities insofar as they act in the capacity of affecting bodily being, as in the example of justice itself and its power to affect a given soul.

The interlocutors reckon that the friends of forms will not accept this claim, however, and the Stranger must take further steps to refute their view. Thus, his second move is to challenge the view of beinghood that stands utterly independent of change (motion), showing instead that being entails motion and vice versa. To do so, the Stranger begins with the sense in which the forms are for the friends the objects of knowledge, a view that the friends do not challenge (cf. 238c11-d3).[240] Given that the forms are the objects of knowledge for the friends, it must be that the forms enter into an affective relationship with the knowing mind, and the Stranger will argue that this entails a challenge to the friends' view. Speaking as if to the friends, he sets up the problem as follows:

> ES: […] "Do you declare that recognizing [γιγνώσκειν] or being recognized [γιγνώσκεσθαι] is a doing, or a being affected, or both? Or that one is a being affected and the other a doing? Or that neither has a share in either of these in any way whatsoever?"
> THEA: Clearly that neither has a share in either, or else they'd be contradicting what was said earlier.
> ES: I understand. This at least is the case: that if in fact to recognize is to do something, then it follows in turn that the thing recognized necessarily is affected. Now beinghood, according to this account, is recognized by the act of

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[240] Cf. Leigh 2010: 67.

recognition; and insofar as it is recognized, it is to that extent *moved* through being affected, which, we declare, would not have come about for what keeps still.
THEA: Right.

Ξένος: τί δέ; τὸ γιγνώσκειν ἢ τὸ γιγνώσκεσθαί φατε ποίημα ἢ πάθος ἢ ἀμφότερον; ἢ τὸ μὲν πάθημα, τὸ δὲ θάτερον; ἢ παντάπασιν οὐδέτερον οὐδετέρου τούτων μεταλαμβάνειν;
Θεαίτητος: δῆλον ὡς οὐδέτερον οὐδετέρου· τἀναντία γὰρ ἂν τοῖς ἔμπροσθεν λέγοιεν.
Ξένος: μανθάνω· τόδε γε, ὡς τὸ γιγνώσκειν εἴπερ ἔσται ποιεῖν τι, τὸ γιγνωσκόμενον ἀναγκαῖον αὖ συμβαίνει πάσχειν. τὴν οὐσίαν δὴ κατὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦτον γιγνωσκομένην ὑπὸ τῆς γνώσεως, καθ᾽ ὅσον γιγνώσκεται, κατὰ τοσοῦτον κινεῖσθαι διὰ τὸ πάσχειν, ὃ δή φαμεν οὐκ ἂν γενέσθαι περὶ τὸ ἠρεμοῦν.
Θεαίτητος: ὀρθῶς. (248d5-248e7).

Theaetetus grants that the friends' view necessitates their denying that forms can have a share in recognizing (γιγνώσκειν) or being recognized (γιγνώσκεσθαι), since these apparently entail affecting and being affected.[241] But the Stranger suggests that forms *qua* objects of knowledge are recognized by the friends, and hence the forms act (ποίημα) upon the friends when the friends are doing the recognizing.[242] This allows the Stranger

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[241] Because γιγνώσκειν and γιγνώσκεσθαι both suggest a coming-to-know, i.e., an occurrence of knowing (cf. LSJ), these terms strongly suggest motion. For more on the possible relationships between recognizing, being recognized, and affecting, see Brown 1998: 196. Sallis 1975: 500-503 offers a helpful discussion of why the sense of motion at play in this passage does not entail the sense of generation entailed by γιγνώσκειν (as well as other further conceptions that commentators have wrongfully read into this passage). Although I do not agree with Sallis's ultimate assertion that the sense of motion relevant here relates to what Sallis calls "self-showing," I agree with many other aspects of this interpretation.
[242] The question of how to understand this change is controversial. One popular line of interpretation is to take it that the Stranger here is asserting something akin to what contemporary metaphysicians call 'Cambridge change,' or a change to something that does not affect its own nature but instead merely affects its relational predicates. For example (following the description in Wiitala 2018: 1-7), if Mary comes to know the form of justice at time t2, then it is true of the form of justice that it is known by Mary at t2 but not true of it at the earlier time t1. Versions of this view are held by Moravcsik 1962: 39-40, Owen 1966: 338-339, Reeve 1985: 61, Thomas 2008: 644, Gill 2012: 237-238, and Hestir 2016: 120, among others. I am suspicious of this kind of interpretation because it entails importing concepts from contemporary metaphysics onto the ancient text. For arguments against such an interpretation on textual grounds, see Leigh 2012: 244 and Wiitala 2018: 4-7. These arguments against this interpretation include pointing to the absence of mentions of time in this passage and the insufficiency of such an interpretation for situating this passage in the broader ontological project at play in the dialogue. I ultimately argue that the Cambridge change interpretation is misleading insofar as it assumes that the knowing mind is the primary agent of change and the forms are the primary recipients of the change, instead of vice versa as advocated for by commentators like Leigh 2010: 242-244 and Wiitala 2018.

to develop the sense of affecting and being affected, first initiated in the distinction drawn between the One and oneness itself and further developed in his discussion with the giants, that will be relevant to his critique of the friends. Now the Stranger has worked out the causal relationship between the affecting agent and the affected receiver in terms of *motion* (248e5), which will act as a paradigm in what follows.[243]

Seeing the sense in which forms entail affecting is easy in the case of their status as objects of knowledge, insofar as they affect the mind and therefore are agents of motion for the mind. For this reason we should not be surprised that the Stranger has chosen this example to use to illustrate his point. Understanding the sense in which forms themselves are affected, however, is decidedly more difficult. Following a recent interpretation offered by Michael Wiitala,[244] I understand this sense of motion not to be change explicable in terms of time and space, but instead in terms of the causal priority, outside time and space, of the mover over the moved. In the case of the motion of the forms, the Stranger will show that forms are 'moved' insofar as they participate in one another in their posterior sense as that which is grasped by mind and hence structured, and thus they hold causal priority and posteriority as regards one another. Although forms have their own simple and unique nature that is not a whole of parts in the primary sense, their givenness to thinking and speech requires their participation in other forms, and hence their instantiation exhibits a structure of causal priority and posteriority. In this sense, forms "move" one another. The Stranger will develop the sense in which

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[243] For discussions of the nature of this conception of motion and its role at this point in the argument, see Hestir 2016: 116-121 and Wiitala 2018: 15-17.

[244] Wiitala 2018, especially 15-17. For further support of this interpretation, see also Hestir 2016: 116-122. For an account of the conflicting view that motion entails change over time or space for the Stranger, see Leigh 2010: 77-78.

forms "move" one another when considering commingling and the necessary composite structure of forms (see sections 5.2.1 and 5.3). For now, taking the Stranger's mundane example of the ways in which recognition of the forms as objects of knowledge necessarily entails their motion is sufficient to understand his point that the friends' exclusionary ontology of motionless forms will fail.

The Stranger continues by showing the ways in which the conception of motion entails challenges for the friends' exclusionary ontology:

> ES: What the Zeus! Shall we be that easily persuaded that motion and life and soul and thought are truly not present in utterly complete Being? That it neither lives nor thinks; but awful and holy, not possessed of mind, it stands there, not to be moved?
> THEA: That, Stranger, would be a terrible account to grant.
> ES: But are we to say that it has mind and not life?
> THEA: How could we?
> ES: But do we say that both of these are in it, and then go on to deny that it has them in a soul?
> THEA: And in what other way would it have them?
> ES: Then we will really say that it has mind and life and soul and yet, although ensouled, stands entirely immovable?
> THEA: To me that appears entirely irrational.
> ES: So we must grant that the moved and motion are things that *are*.
> THEA: Of course.

> Ξένος: τί δὲ πρὸς Διός; ὡς ἀληθῶς κίνησιν καὶ ζωὴν καὶ ψυχὴν καὶ φρόνησιν ἦ ῥᾳδίως πεισθησόμεθα τῷ παντελῶς ὄντι μὴ παρεῖναι, μηδὲ ζῆν αὐτὸ μηδὲ φρονεῖν, ἀλλὰ σεμνὸν καὶ ἅγιον, νοῦν οὐκ ἔχον, ἀκίνητον ἑστὸς εἶναι;
> Θεαίτητος: δεινὸν μεντἄν, ὦ ξένε, λόγον συγχωροῖμεν.
> Ξένος: ἀλλὰ νοῦν μὲν ἔχειν, ζωὴν δὲ μὴ φῶμεν;
> Θεαίτητος: καὶ πῶς;
> Ξένος: ἀλλὰ ταῦτα μὲν ἀμφότερα ἐνόντ᾽ αὐτῷ λέγομεν, οὐ μὴν ἐν ψυχῇ γε φήσομεν αὐτὸ ἔχειν αὐτά;
> Θεαίτητος: καὶ τίν᾽ ἂν ἕτερον ἔχοι τρόπον;
> Ξένος: ἀλλὰ δῆτα νοῦν μὲν καὶ ζωὴν καὶ ψυχὴν ἔχειν, ἀκίνητον μέντοι τὸ παράπαν ἔμψυχον ὂν ἑστάναι;
> Θεαίτητος: πάντα ἔμοιγε ἄλογα ταῦτ᾽ εἶναι φαίνεται.
> Ξένος: καὶ τὸ κινούμενον δὴ καὶ κίνησιν συγχωρητέον ὡς ὄντα.
> Θεαίτητος: πῶς δ᾽ οὔ; (248e8-249b6)

In this dense, difficult, but crucially important stretch of text,[245] the Stranger challenges the friends' claims that 'utterly complete Being' lacks motion (as an affectation) in all senses and insofar as that which *is* in the complete sense lacks mind, life, and soul. He will imply that the necessity with which that which *is completely* entails mind, life, and soul indicates the necessity of accounting for complete being in dynamic terms. Although there is some ambiguity regarding the meaning of the phrase 'utterly complete being' (τῷ παντελῶς ὄντι, 248e10),[246] I take it that here that the Stranger has in mind that which 'completely *is*,' in the sense of being unchanging and completely self-same, like that which the friends call 'forms.' Thus conceived, the Stranger is arguing that an account of that which is in the 'complete' sense must include reference to its participation in motion, mind (νοῦς, or 'intellect'), life, soul, and body.[247] This is because being for the friends must clearly contain its own normative principles by which it allows for objects participating in its nature to become. To state this difficult matter provisionally, I suggest that the Platonic notion of form is an ordering ratio by which a given form actualizes itself in a good manner, as in the form of angling that is actualized well with

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[245] For a particularly helpful discussion of this passage's difficulties and several senses in which it can and has be interpreted, see Bluck 1975: 95-101.

[246] For discussions of this ambiguity, see Politis 2006: 150-160 and Wiitala 2018: 18-20. Two ways of reading this have been proposed. On the 'extensive' model, the Stranger here is referring to the totality of things that *are*, taken together. On the 'intensive' model, the Stranger is referring to that which completely or in all ways *is*, i.e., the forms. Either construal is consistent with my argument, however, since in the former case the Stranger is challenging the view of the friends (as I suggest he is) and in the latter case he is explicating being in its necessary and complete sense in anticipation of the discussion of the composition of forms in terms of their participation in other forms (as I also suggest he is). For good reasons argued for by Politis and Wiitala, I follow the 'intensive' model, though I hold that nothing in my argument would be significantly affected by taking up the alternative 'extensive' interpretation. In considering this controversy it also bears noting that Neo-Platonists beginning with Plotinus (cf. *Enneads* VI.7[38].12.1-4) have assumed the 'intensive' interpretation and that the 'extensive' interpretation derives from modern scholarship.

[247] Cf. Politis 2006:150-160, Wiitala 2018: 18-20.

reference to the forms of expertise, getting, etc.[248] The good therefore is a further

principle in the ontological schema, as it suggests not merely unity and structure, as was

the case with the discussion of the One, but a structure that responds to higher-order a

normative principle. The introduction of mind, therefore, shows that the account of being

is not completed merely by considering the notion of wholeness, but requires an appeal to

the further notion of goodness. This notion will be developed further as we continue.

The connection between Platonic forms and mind has been strongly articulated by

Lloyd Gerson, who says that "the forms and intellect (νοῦς) are inseparable," because the

relationship of forms *qua* participation in one another and ratios that suggest further

norms "is just the activity of intellect (νοῦς)."[249] Furthermore, elsewhere in the *Sophist*,

the interlocutors demonstrate this inclination to understand the cosmos as governed by a

principle of mind (cf. 265c1-e2). Thus, here the interlocutors address the possibility that

the account of the unmoving 'utterly complete Being' would necessitate that being itself

lacks a normative principle of self-sustenance, and that they find this possibility to be

both implausible and 'awful.'

While this passage draws upon a robust and nuanced understanding of Platonic

metaphysics, its role more locally is to demonstrate the unacceptable implications for an

account of being as something that does not allow its own self-instantiation as the source

of a normative ordering principle. Similarly, Theaetetus grants the Stranger's account of

'complete' being entails that it must have life and a soul. Life is described in *Laws* X at

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[248] This is a difficult but critical part of the argument. For helpful discussions of the role of *nous* in
Platonic ontology generally and in other texts, see Apelt 1891a 78-79, de Vogel 1953: 65-67, Perl 1998:
87-88, Carpenter 2003: 105, Gerson 2006: 298, Perl 2014, Sanday 2015b: 366 fn. 9, and Wiitala 2018: 20-
21.
[249] Gerson 2006: 298.

895a6-c10 as that which is capable of moving itself, while soul is described shortly

thereafter at *Laws* X 895e10-896a5 as that principle that grants motion to what is

moved.[250] The Stranger and Theaetetus thus seem to have a similar conception of these

principles at play here, as their account has determined that this complete sense of being

entails principles of motion and self-motion, just as it did an account of normative

principles of self-sustenance.

    With these implausible and unacceptable conclusions regarding the friends'

conception of being, the Stranger addresses further entailments of their own positive

conception of being they are sketching:

> ES: Thus the outcome is, Theaetetus, that if the things that *are* are immovable, there is mind in nothing about nothing nowhere.
> THEA: Exactly.
> ES: And yet, if we grant that all things are borne about and moving, we shall exclude, by that very account, this same mind from the things that *are*.
> THEA: How?
> ES: Do you think that being in the same respect and in like manner and about the same thing would ever come to be apart from rest?
> THEA: Never.
> ES: Well then, without these do you see how mind could *be* or ever come to be anywhere?
> THEA: Not in the least.
>
> Ξένος: καὶ μὴν ἐὰν αὖ φερόμενα καὶ κινούμενα πάντ᾽ εἶναι συγχωρῶμεν, καὶ τούτῳ τῷ λόγῳ ταὐτὸν τοῦτο ἐκ τῶν ὄντων ἐξαιρήσομεν.
> Θεαίτητος: πῶς;
> Ξένος: τὸ κατὰ ταὐτὰ καὶ ὡσαύτως καὶ περὶ τὸ αὐτὸ δοκεῖ σοι χωρὶς στάσεως γενέσθαι ποτ᾽ ἄν;
> Θεαίτητος: οὐδαμῶς.
> Ξένος: τί δ᾽; ἄνευ τούτων νοῦν καθορᾷς ὄντα ἢ γενόμενον ἂν καὶ ὁπουοῦν;
> Θεαίτητος: ἥκιστα.
> Ξένος: συμβαίνει δ᾽ οὖν, ὦ Θεαίτητε, ἀκινήτων τε ὄντων νοῦν μηδενὶ περὶ μηδενὸς εἶναι μηδαμοῦ.
> Θεαίτητος: κομιδῇ μὲν οὖν. (249b6-c5).

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[250] Cf. Wiitala 2018: 20.

The Stranger here begins by indicating the necessity of motion for an account of being that entails mind. But now he also points out that rest, seemingly the opposite of motion, is equally necessary. This is because one must be at rest (in a sense) in one's own nature to be self-same, and for others to be like. For example, justice must be at rest (in a sense) first for it itself to be justice, and second for the just act to be like it. Thus, having shown the joint necessity of motion and rest, the Stranger has continued to work out his account of the necessary part-whole structure that extends from his account of necessary being. Given that being is power, and that power entails both affecting (moving) and being affected (being moved), the Stranger has made significant progress towards articulating the composite structure that the unified notion of being suggests. For now, and in response specifically to the friends, the Stranger summarizes his findings thus far by stating that "we must surely fight, using every argument, against him who makes knowledge or thoughtfulness or mind disappear and then makes strong assertions about anything in any way" (249c6-8). In other words, the view of being as 'awful,' 'holy,' and unmoved advocated by the friends of forms is unacceptable, and a dynamic account of being in keeping with the findings of the interlocutors' consideration of being as power is required, and has indeed already begun.

4.4   Chapter 4 Conclusion: Transformed perspective of being (249c-d)

Through the course of their engagement with the 'previous' ontologists, the interlocutors have transformed their perspective of the notion of being. This required several steps. First, they needed to rid themselves of the tendency to treat being as one of the beings by clarifying the differences between being in a certain way and a certain way of being, and, later, the difference between causing to be and being caused to be.

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Through analyzing what it means to be a whole of parts and showing that this nature

characterizes forms at least in an important sense, and introducing (for now in a cursory

way) the notion of goodness, they were able to establish that being is not a countable

thing but is of a different ontological kind, i.e., one that we might call power, the power

of communion, or the power of participation. The Stranger summarizes the conclusion of

the discussion with the four groups of conjured ontologists as follows, emphasizing the

necessary resolution of the battle between the giants and the friends of forms:

> Then for the man who is philosophical and thus most respects these things, there
> is every compulsion, it seems, just because of them, not to be receptive to people
> who say that the All is at rest either as a one or even in many forms. Nor again
> must he listen at all to those who move Being every which way. But he must
> assert – as in the children's prayer "whatever is immovable and moved" – that
> Being and the All consist of both together.[251]
>
> τῷ δὴ φιλοσόφῳ καὶ ταῦτα μάλιστα τιμῶντι πᾶσα, ὡς ἔοικεν, ἀνάγκη διὰ ταῦτα
> μήτε τῶν ἓν ἢ καὶ τὰ πολλὰ εἴδη λεγόντων τὸ πᾶν ἑστηκὸς ἀποδέχεσθαι, τῶν τε
> αὖ πανταχῇ τὸ ὂν κινούντων μηδὲ τὸ παράπαν ἀκούειν, ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὴν τῶν
> παίδων εὐχήν, ὅσα ἀκίνητα καὶ κεκινημένα, τὸ ὄν τε καὶ τὸ πᾶν συναμφότερα
> λέγειν. (249c10-d4).

The Stranger has pursued an inclusionary account of being that does not reduce being to a

count. This account thus has demanded a middle position between the giants and friends

of forms in which both bodily being and timeless forms are taken *to be*, as is implied by

the unknown children's prayer that the Stranger apparently references. But this account

of being is not merely monistic, and it demands an account of the further structure that

this unified definition of being as power implies. The Stranger's pointed reference to the

philosopher (249c10) indicates that the development of this ontology will be both

difficult and centrally important, and a specifically philosophical project. It is to this

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[251] There are many grammatical ambiguities in this passage. For discussions of possible interpretations,
see Cornford 1935: 242, Crivelli 2012: 94, Perl 2014: 152, and Wiitala 2018: 25-27. Here I continue to
follow Brann, et al. De Rijk 1986: 13-14ff takes this to be the central thesis of the dialogue.

complex ontological structure and our means of accessing it noetically that the interlocutors will now turn.

CHAPTER 5. STRUCTURE (249D – 259E)

5.1   Chapter 5 Introduction

In this chapter I discuss the notions of commingling and necessary ontological structure that extend from the preceding accounts of the being of nonbeing (Chapter 3) and being as power (Chapter 4), considering the senses in which they suggest a complex ontology and corresponding notions of noetic intuition and dialectical method that build upon and expand that which was possible in bifurcatory division (Chapter 2). At issue throughout will be both the metaphysical necessity of the commingled structure of forms and the epistemological sense in which this commingling guides our inquiry and discourse via our noetic grasp of its objects. By considering commingling and structure, we will see how the account has led to a transformed perspective in which being, as something structuring and structured, must now be understood with reference to *goodness*. I will trace out these threads as they appear in the stretch of text from 249d to 259e, from (5.2.1) the explicit turn to considering this new kind of 'pluralism,' (5.2.2) the establishment of its necessity and (5.2.3) the account of dialectic that is responsive to it, into (5.3.1) the discussion of five of the necessary ontological kinds that must be at play in this account and (5.3.2) the concluding discussion of being as necessarily unopposed and nonbeing as constitutive and determinate otherness that these considerations occasion.

5.2 Communing and dialectic (249d – 254b)

5.2.1 A new kind of 'pluralism' (249d – 250d)

The first task is to consider the necessity of structure as a new kind of pluralism that the account has demanded. This occurs in the context of the Stranger's developing account of five great ontological kinds: being, otherness, motion, rest, and sameness.[252] These terms have arisen previously in the discussion, as clarifying the nature of nonbeing entailed working out an account of otherness (see Chapter 3), while being (see Chapter 4) entailed the necessary components of motion and rest (see 248a10-249c6 and 4.3.3). The Stranger has also hinted that these also entail the notion of sameness (e.g., at 249b12-c1).[253] Before fully developing this composite ontology, the Stranger must show that the preceding discussion of the difference between beings in a certain way and certain ways of being (forms) has freed the interlocutors of the problems facing the pluralists (see section 4.2.1). In other words, the Stranger must show that this type of apparent 'pluralism' is of a different kind than that of those advocating for a plurality of elements that had failed previously. This is because the account now demands a plurality of distinct ways of being that necessarily require one another for their instantiation. The Stranger turns his attention to some of these ontological kinds as follows:

> ES: Well then: Don't you say that Rest and Motion are most contrary to one another?
> THEAE: Of course.
> ES: And yet you claim this at least: that both and each of them alike *are*.
> THEAE: I certainly do claim this.

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[252] In what follows I will argue that the five great ontological kinds considered explicitly in the dialogue should not be taken to be exhaustive.

[253] Here the Stranger had asked, "Do you think that being in the same respect and in like manner and about the same thing would ever come to be apart from rest?"

ES: Is it the case, whenever you grant that they *are*, that you mean that both and each of them are in motion?

THEAE: In no way.

ES: But do you mean to indicate that both of them are at rest when you say that both *are*?

THEAE: How could I?

ES: Then do you posit Being as some third thing in the soul beyond these, as if Rest and Motion were embraced by it? And is it through taking them together and focusing on the community of their beinghood that you say that both of them *are*?

THEAE: We truly do seem to divine that Being is some third thing, whenever we say that Rest and Motion *are*.

ES: Therefore Being is not Motion and Rest both together but something other than these.

THEAE: It seems so.

ES: Then according to its own nature, Being is neither at rest nor in motion.

Ξένος: εἶεν δή, κίνησιν καὶ στάσιν ἆρ᾽ οὐκ ἐναντιώτατα λέγεις ἀλλήλοις;
Θεαίτητος: πῶς γὰρ οὔ;
Ξένος: καὶ μὴν εἶναί γε ὁμοίως φῂς ἀμφότερα αὐτὰ καὶ ἑκάτερον;
Θεαίτητος: φημὶ γὰρ οὖν.
Ξένος: ἆρα κινεῖσθαι λέγων ἀμφότερα καὶ ἑκάτερον, ὅταν εἶναι συγχωρῇς;
Θεαίτητος: οὐδαμῶς.
Ξένος: ἀλλ᾽ ἑστάναι σημαίνεις λέγων αὐτὰ ἀμφότερα εἶναι;
Θεαίτητος: καὶ πῶς;
Ξένος: τρίτον ἄρα τι παρὰ ταῦτα τὸ ὂν ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ τιθείς, ὡς ὑπ᾽ ἐκείνου τήν τε στάσιν καὶ τὴν κίνησιν περιεχομένην, συλλαβὼν καὶ ἀπιδὼν αὐτῶν πρὸς τὴν τῆς οὐσίας κοινωνίαν, οὕτως εἶναι προσεῖπας ἀμφότερα;
Θεαίτητος: κινδυνεύομεν ὡς ἀληθῶς τρίτον ἀπομαντεύεσθαί τι τὸ ὄν, ὅταν κίνησιν καὶ στάσιν εἶναι λέγωμεν.
Ξένος: οὐκ ἄρα κίνησις καὶ στάσις ἐστὶ συναμφότερον τὸ ὂν ἀλλ᾽ ἕτερον δή τι τούτων.
Θεαίτητος: ἔοικεν.
Ξένος: κατὰ τὴν αὑτοῦ φύσιν ἄρα τὸ ὂν οὔτε ἕστηκεν οὔτε κινεῖται. (250a9-250d5).

The Stranger draws upon his preceding implicit account of the distinction between 'things that are X' and 'what it is to be X' in positing motion and rest as 'what it is to be in motion' and 'what it is to be at rest,' i.e., as the forms motion and rest. That is, he is not advocating for an account like that of the pluralists that is ambiguous regarding the meaning of material principles like 'hot' and 'cold,' where 'hot' (e.g.) entails

simultaneously the senses of 'a hot thing' and 'the principle of heat.' Instead, his

opposed elements are motion and rest themselves (i.e., the forms motion and rest) as

explicitly separated from the material principles that also go by this name. If the Stranger

were discussing embodied material principles rather than forms, his argument would be

incoherent, since no embodied material principle can ever said to be most essentially

motion or rest.[254] For example, in the case of a resting cat, the cat is not most essentially

rest but instead is most essentially cat, since the cat's catness will always be causally

prior to her resting. Speaking of rest must be speaking of a way of being, that is, and not

one of the beings, and it is therefore clear that they have forms and not particulars in

mind.

In considering these forms, the interlocutors conclude that 'according to its

nature' (κατὰ τὴν αὐτοῦ φύσιν),[255] what it means 'to be' itself is neither to be in motion

nor to be at rest (250c6-8). Being as such, that is, is not what it is to be motion as such

nor rest as such, and thus each of these must be posited as separate forms that are neither

coextensive nor constitutive in the most basic sense. But the interlocutors had

determined previously that 'utterly complete being' (τῷ παντελῶς ὄντι, 248e10, see

section 4.3.3) *entailed* motion in a meaningful sense. This implies first that motion as

such cannot *not be,* and second that being must *participate* in motion in some sense.

Therefore, being as such and motion as such must both *be* despite not being coextensive,

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[254] Cf. Wiitala 2014b: 127 for a discussion of what this would entail and why it necessarily fails. Many commentators have understood this account quite differently and have upon their differing interpretations posited competing accounts of the various possible ambiguities and fallacies at play in this passage given different ways of interpreting the Stranger's meaning here. Crivelli 2012: 97-101 offers a helpful overview of these construals.

[255] Cf. Cornford 1935: 250, Seligman 1972: 41-42, and Crivelli 2012: 98-100. One common way of interpreting this passage is to assume that Plato is conscious of a fallacy regarding the relationship of being, motion, and rest for which the Stranger is arguing. For versions of this view, see Bluck 1975: 152, Frede 1992: 399-400, and Crivelli 2012: 98-100.

since being *is* and it entails motion though it is not itself motion. Since they are opposites in every way, the being of motion as such entails the being of rest as such (as Parmenides' goddess had taught us and as discussed in 3.3). In other words, without motion, rest would not be rest but instead would just be being; but this contradicts the interlocutors' findings in this passage. Therefore, the interlocutors have found three ontological kinds that must *be*.

To understand further the nature of what I am calling this 'new kind' of 'pluralistic' account, it is helpful to consider the Stranger's parenthetical remark regarding the joint relationship of these ontological kinds. This passage warrants our attention due both to its offering the occasion for a better understanding of the ontology of communion to be worked out in what follows, and for its allowing me to address the senses in which the kinds must be understood jointly with reference to the particularly influential reading of G. E. L. Owen 1971 (1965).[256] The text reads:

> ES: [W]hen we were asked to what in the world one must apply the name Non-being, we were hemmed in by total perplexity. Do you remember?
> THEAE: Of course.
> ES: We're not in any less perplexity now about Being, are we?
> THEAE: To me, Stranger, if I may say so, we appear to be in greater perplexity.
> ES: Well then, let this matter be set down here as utterly perplexing. And since Being and Non-being have both had an equal share in perplexity, there's now hope that in whatever way one of them comes to light more dimly or more clearly, so the other will come to light. And again, if we're able to see neither of them, we'll at least push our account through both at once as fittingly as we can.
>
> Ξένος: ὅτι τοῦ μὴ ὄντος ἐρωτηθέντες τοὔνομα ἐφ᾽ ὅτι ποτὲ δεῖ φέρειν, πάσῃ συνεσχόμεθα ἀπορίᾳ. μέμνησαι;
> Θεαίτητος: πῶς γὰρ οὔ;

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[256] Owen's 1971 paper is a revision and expansion of an earlier paper written in 1965. For Owen's own account of the development of his view, see Owen 1971: 223 fn. 1. Of the many responses that this influential view has elicited, those that have influenced my own reading most are Flower 1980 and Brown 1986. Flower argues that Plato's notion of being does not equivocate between predication and identity as Owen suggests but is rich enough to capture both, while Brown shows that any statement of predicative being entails at least weak existential force. Critical discussion of Owen's interpretive problems with respect to the distinction between predication and identity includes Bluck 1975: 19-21.

Ξένος: μῶν οὖν ἐν ἐλάττονί τινι νῦν ἐσμεν ἀπορίᾳ περὶ τὸ ὄν;
Θεαίτητος: ἐμοὶ μέν, ὦ ξένε, εἰ δυνατὸν εἰπεῖν, ἐν πλείονι φαινόμεθα.
Ξένος: τοῦτο μὲν τοίνυν ἐνταῦθα κείσθω διηπορημένον· ἐπειδὴ δὲ ἐξ ἴσου τό τε
ὂν καὶ τὸ μὴ ὂν ἀπορίας μετειλήφατον, νῦν ἐλπὶς ἤδη καθάπερ ἂν αὐτῶν θάτερον
εἴτε ἀμυδρότερον εἴτε σαφέστερον ἀναφαίνηται, καὶ θάτερον οὕτως
ἀναφαίνεσθαι· καὶ ἐὰν αὖ μηδέτερον ἰδεῖν δυνώμεθα, τὸν γοῦν λόγον ὅπῃπερ ἂν
οἷοί τε ὦμεν εὐπρεπέστατα διωσόμεθα οὕτως ἀμφοῖν ἅμα. (250d8-251a3)

Beginning with Owen, this passage has been taken to indicate that the problems of being and nonbeing in the *Sophist* are conceptually intertwined. I am in complete agreement with this. But more specifically, through the so-called 'Parity Assumption,' commentators following Owen have taken it that a solution to the problem of being would equally be a solution to the problem of nonbeing, and vice versa.[257] By Owen's interpretation, the Stranger suggests here "that any light thrown on either being or nonbeing will equally illuminate the other."[258] While I agree that it is true to say that the problems of being and nonbeing are intertwined, I do not think that this works in the way that Owen does. Owen's interpretation suggests that an understanding of being could as easily be achieved through an understanding of nonbeing as it could be through being itself, but I hold that there are many reasons to challenge this. First, as discussed in Chapter 3, nonbeing emerges in the dialogue not as pure privation of being, or that which *is* in no way (*to medamos on*), but instead as a kind of *difference* or *otherness*. In this way, and as I argue throughout, being for Plato is unopposed and what seems on the surface to oppose being in fact opposes *sameness*. If we were to take the Stranger's claim about the equal shares of perplexity regarding being and nonbeing to suggest that

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[257] See Owen 1971: 229-231. Discussions of this include Brown 1986 and 2006, Notomi 1999, and Gill 2006. Owen's interpretation is still viable among commentators; see Crivelli 2012: 100 for a recent endorsement.
[258] Owen 1971: 230.

the two are posited against one another and explained exclusively through one another, we would lose sight of this redefinition of nonbeing worked out earlier in the dialogue.

Instead, I argue that it is better to understand this moment as an indication of the necessary intertwining of each great kind with one another, as the Stranger will soon describe it. Thus conceived, an understanding of being entails bringing to light the necessity with which the form being must commune with the form otherness, both in its nature insofar as it is and to be given to *logos*.[259] Put differently, shedding light on being will involve shedding light on a host of other forms that do not accord strictly with the nature of the form of being, and yet are required for bringing the form being to being and to inquiry (i.e., the posterior sense of being). Therefore I argue *pace* Owen that the Stranger's remark about the perplexity running through being and nonbeing indicates to us not that the two are opposed to one another and equally viable for shedding light on one another, but instead that they are wrapped up in the same question regarding necessary structure.

5.2.2   The late learners (251a – 252e)

The Stranger establishes the necessity of ontological 'pluralism' entailing distinct but interdependent kinds of commingling causal being (forms) with reference to those who deny the very possibility of commingling. Doing so provides the opportunity to reflect on commingling broadly, and the Stranger shows (i) that commingling is not unrestricted but instead entails a responsiveness to the nature of the things being mixed,

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[259] These are also the senses respectively worked out in hypotheses two and five in the *Parmenides*; cf. Sanday 2018: 6-11.

and (ii) that *logos* itself indicates the necessity of commingling. The deniers of

commingling are called the 'late learners'[260] and they argue (to use somewhat

incongruous language for now) for a conception of predication and identity as co-

extensive.[261] The Stranger first sets up the problem as a consideration of the 'habit' of

calling things by many names (251a3):

> [W]e speak of man, I suppose, but give him many titles: we add colors to him and shapes and sizes and vices and virtues. In all these attributions and thousands of others, we declare him to be not only man but also good and infinitely many other things. And the same account holds for other things as well: we assume that each thing is one but take it back by speaking of it as many and with many names. Which is exactly why, I imagine, we've furnished a feast for youths and for oldsters late in learning. For it's handy enough for anyone to get a direct grip on the fact that it's impossible both for the many to be one and for the one to be many. And no doubt, I suppose, these people delight in not letting anyone say that man is good but only that good is good and man is man.

> λέγομεν ἄνθρωπον δήπου πόλλ᾽ ἄττα ἐπονομάζοντες, τά τε χρώματα ἐπιφέροντες αὐτῷ καὶ τὰ σχήματα καὶ μεγέθη καὶ κακίας καὶ ἀρετάς, ἐν οἷς πᾶσι καὶ ἑτέροις μυρίοις οὐ μόνον ἄνθρωπον αὐτὸν εἶναί φαμεν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀγαθὸν καὶ ἕτερα ἄπειρα, καὶ τἆλλα δὴ κατὰ τὸν αὐτὸν λόγον οὕτως ἓν ἕκαστον ὑποθέμενοι πάλιν αὐτὸ πολλὰ καὶ πολλοῖς ὀνόμασι λέγομεν. ὅθεν γε οἶμαι τοῖς τε νέοις καὶ τῶν γερόντων τοῖς ὀψιμαθέσι θοίνην παρεσκευάκαμεν· εὐθὺς γὰρ ἀντιλαβέσθαι παντὶ πρόχειρον ὡς ἀδύνατον τά τε πολλὰ ἓν καὶ τὸ ἓν πολλὰ εἶναι, καὶ δήπου χαίρουσιν οὐκ ἐῶντες ἀγαθὸν λέγειν ἄνθρωπον, ἀλλὰ τὸ μὲν ἀγαθὸν ἀγαθόν, τὸν δὲ ἄνθρωπον ἄνθρωπον[262] (251a8-c2).

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[260] τοῖς ὀψιμαθέσι, from ὀψιμαθής, at 251b8. For general discussions regarding the possible historical identities of the so-called 'late learners,' see de Rijk 1986: 115-117 and Crivelli 2012: 104. For the view that this critique is directed at Antisthenes, see Campbell 1867: 137-138, Cornford 1935: 254, Adorno 1961: 161, and Klein 1977: 49. For the view that the late learners are related to the brothers in the *Euthydemus* dialogue, see Taylor 1961: 54 and Ray 1984: 120 (though Ray also has much to say about the role of Antisthenes; see Ray 1984: 12ff).

[261] Cf. Bordt 1991: 522-523. There are other ways of interpreting exactly what the late learners are here claiming. A different and popular interpretation, one laid out clearly by Bostock 1984: 99-100, is that the late learners have in mind the specific speech act by which a thing is named. While the Stranger mentions 'speaking of' certain entities like 'person' and 'good,' I do not take the emphasis to be on speech acts but instead take it to be on ontology and the discourse that is in response to it, and I think that this sort of interpretation makes better sense of the overall movement of the dialogue.

[262] There are conflicts in the manuscript tradition regarding the wording here. For a defense of this reading of the manuscript, see Crivelli 2012: 103 fn. 1.

The late learners' view most essentially is that it is impossible both for the many to be one and for the one to be many.[263] On the basis of this, they hold that modes of being do not mix or commune with one another, and that the use of a name to separate off a thing (i.e., anything that is in some sense whole, the extension of which I intentionally leave ambiguous here) from the other things implies that the named thing is ontologically separate in every regard from the other things separated off by the name.[264] Put simply, the late learners will refute any claim that 'X is Y,' such as 'the person is good,' and suggest instead that person is (only) person, good is (only) good, etc.[265]

In a sense, the late learners have an assumption similar to the naïve monists that unity (here, the thing named) and plurality are incompatible, but with the conclusion that unities are not in any sense plural.[266] Their view is also similar in a sense to the

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[263] This problem is also addressed by Socrates and Protarchus in the *Philebus,* particularly from 12b-16b. For helpful discussions of this issue in this context, see Cornford 1939, Meinwald 1996, Carpenter 2009: 103-129, and Garner 2017: 5-31. The authoritative discussion of the whole-part or one-many problem as it extends throughout this related cluster of Plato's dialogues is Harte 2002.

[264] But note that *contra* a long interpretative tradition, I am not arguing that the late learners have mistaken the 'is' of predication with the 'is' of identity. (For influential early articulations of this view, see Ackrill 1957: 2, Owen 1971, Vlastos 1973: 288.) Instead, and as I describe below, I believe that the problem is an ontological one, i.e., the late learners have staked out a position regarding the composition of being (cf. Brown 2008: 440-443 and Wiitala 2014b: 136 fn. 74). For arguments as to why the language of the late learners does not suggest separate senses of being, e.g., predication and identity, see Malcolm 2006: 281 and Brown 2008: 442-443.

[265] There is a controversy among commentators as to whether forms or individuals are at play in this passage. Much of this controversy surrounds the question of whether the ἄνθρωπον of which the Stranger speaks in 251a8 refers to a particular person or the form (or kind) 'person.' Those taking this to refer to particulars, by far the more common view, include Cornford 1935: 253-255, de Rijk 1986: 113, Brown 2008: 441, and Crivelli 2012: 104. Perhaps the best case for the alternative view is offered by Wiitala 2014b: 133-135. While I think there are good textual reasons to think that the Stranger is explicitly talking about forms at least elsewhere in this passage (note that the use of ἄνθρωπον at 251c1 is particularly suited to such an interpretation; cf. Crivelli 2012: 108 and Wiitala 2014b: 133 fn. 67), I am not especially concerned about this issue, since the Stranger's points are at the very least true of the notion of unified identity broadly but can be and will be applied to our understanding of the communion of forms more specifically as the text progresses. In other words, the literal meaning of ἄνθρωπον at 251a8 in this passage is not important in my reading, because in any event, the analysis calls to mind the kind of understanding necessary for offering an account of the communion of forms, i.e. here the form 'person,' which is the true subject of interest here in any event; cf. Seligman 1974: 45ff. I do note, however, that if the late learners take themselves to be considering forms *only*, then their view is very similar to that of the friends of forms.

[266] Many interpreters understand this moment as the turn from 'negative' to 'positive' moments in the Stranger's account. This includes Crivelli 2012: 104. I am arguing instead that positive moments in the

sophistical view of nonbeing discussed in section 3.2.2. There, the sophistical thinker

had argued that anything that is named must *be,* but fallaciously inferred from that that

any complex of names joined together must also *be*, i.e., be intermixed truthfully as the

sentence speaker asserts. The late learners have, in a sense, inverted this view by

suggesting that any naming of a thing that *is* entails splitting off the named thing from all

else in a way that decisively isolates the named thing and sets it irreconcilably apart from

the others.

This view ultimately proves to be untenable. The Stranger shows the necessity of

intermixing according to nature as follows and by considering the impossibility of its

alternatives, unmixedness and unbounded intermixing, with my Arabic numerals

separating off the three possibilities to be considered in what follows:[267]

> "In our own accounts, are we (1) to attach neither beinghood to Motion and Rest
> nor at all to anything else whatsoever but posit things as unmixed and incapable
> of having a share in each other? Or are we (2) to bring them all together into the
> same place, treating them as though they were capable of communing with each
> other? Or (3) are some capable and others not?"

> πότερον μήτε τὴν οὐσίαν κινήσει καὶ στάσει προσάπτωμεν μήτε ἄλλο ἄλλῳ μηδὲν
> μηδενί, ἀλλ᾽ ὡς ἄμεικτα ὄντα καὶ ἀδύνατον μεταλαμβάνειν ἀλλήλων οὕτως αὐτὰ
> ἐν τοῖς παρ᾽ ἡμῖν λόγοις τιθῶμεν; ἢ πάντα εἰς ταὐτὸν συναγάγωμεν ὡς δυνατὰ
> ἐπικοινωνεῖν ἀλλήλοις; ἢ τὰ μέν, τὰ δὲ μή; (251d5-e1).

Here the Stranger presents three options. All of that which is named by names (be they

forms, qualities, predicates, etc.) are either (1) unmixed and unmixable or (2) capable of

mixing in every instance; or instead (3) some of those that are named by names are

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Stranger's account extend at least as far back as his claim that nonbeing must somehow *be*, i.e., as a mode
of otherness (240c).

[267] For a discussion of the various Greek verbs used to describe intermixing and their essential
equivalency, see Rosen 1983: 253 and 263 fn. 16. Herein I similarly use various English verbs
interchangeably, such as 'to intermix,' 'to combine,' and 'to commune.' These should be understood as an
instance of (but not coextensive with) participation.

capable of mixing while others are not.[268] To put the same matter somewhat differently, either (1) intermixing *is not;* or instead either (2) intermixing *is* and does not entail a responsiveness to the nature of that which is intermixed precisely because it is unrestricted or (3) intermixing *is* but it entails a responsiveness to the nature of that which intermixes because it is restricted.

Possibility (1) is the possibility for which the late learners must necessarily advocate, given that they do not allow that 'person' and 'good' can intermix but instead that they must always remain alone and in isolation.[269] This view quickly proves to be absurd, as the interlocutors show through the examples of motion, rest, and being. If (1) is true, then motion and rest cannot commune with being and hence they *are not*. Of course, this conclusion is unacceptable, for if motion and rest *are not,* then all entities are neither at rest in their nature nor engaged in the process of change (among other problems). That is, if motion and rest *are not,* then it is difficult indeed to say what an entity is with reference to itself and to time.

To consider this problem from another angle, this view is simply unutterable and unthinkable, since even claiming that "motion *is* unmixed with being" entails asserting being of motion, and furthermore implies a structure of motion insofar as its nature partakes of being (via 'is'), unmixedness, and unmixedness with respect to being. In other words, the late learners' view fails both because it yields an incoherent ontology and because it itself cannot even be articulated without enacting a contradiction. The

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[268] Klein 1977: 50 associates these with (1) Heraclitus, (2) Parmenides, and (3) Empedocles. Although I do not take the Stranger to have these thinkers in mind specifically (and furthermore note that Klein's interpretation of Parmenides does not map onto my own), I find this to be an interesting observation, particularly regarding the possible role of Empedocles in this account, though I will not develop this any further.
[269] Cf. Cornford 1935: 257, Frede 1967: 42, Crivelli 2012: 111.

Stranger emphasizes this latter point when addressing the necessary failure of the late

learners' view:

> [The late learners are] compelled, I suppose, to use "to be" and "apart" and "from
> the others" and "by itself" and thousands of other expressions about all things.
> Since they're powerless to keep these out of and not to bring them into their
> speeches, they don't need others to refute them. But, as the saying goes, they
> have their enemy and future opponent right at home, and as they make their way,
> they always carry around something uttering speech from deep inside, like that
> absurd ventriloquist [Eurycles].[270]

> τῷ τε 'εἶναί' που περὶ πάντα ἀναγκάζονται χρῆσθαι καὶ τῷ 'χωρὶς' καὶ τῷ 'τῶν
> ἄλλων' καὶ τῷ 'καθ' αὐτὸ' καὶ μυρίοις ἑτέροις, ὧν ἀκρατεῖς ὄντες εἴργεσθαι καὶ
> μὴ συνάπτειν ἐν τοῖς λόγοις οὐκ ἄλλων δέονται τῶν ἐξελεγχόντων, ἀλλὰ τὸ
> λεγόμενον οἴκοθεν τὸν πολέμιον καὶ ἐναντιωσόμενον ἔχοντες, ἐντὸς
> ὑποφθεγγόμενον ὥσπερ τὸν ἄτοπον Εὐρυκλέα περιφέροντες ἀεὶ πορεύονται.
> (252c2-9).

The Stranger here argues that the late learners cannot even articulate their view because

doing entails asserting relations among that which is named by names.[271] This is because

discourse regards the composite structure of being in all instances, and therefore any

attempt even to articulate this view would require taking up the composite structure of

plurality against which the late learners take themselves to speaking.[272] To illustrate this,

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[270] The Stranger's reference to the ventriloquist Eurycles here marks a rare instance in which the Stranger
draws on a contemporary figure to make his point. In this way the Stranger differs from other primary
Platonic interlocutors like Socrates, who frequently draw on contemporary, mythological, and literary
figures to give shape and context to the discussion. The other contemporaneous source on Eurycles is
Aristophanes' *Wasps* 1017-1020. Here Aristophanes has his chorus address the audience directly to
humorous effect by their likening his (Aristophanes') prophetic insight delivered through an indirect source
to "the prophet Eurycles, who speaks through others." Plutarch also mentions Eurycles when discussing
ventriloquism and its relationship to divine prophesy at *Moralia* 414c. For more on Eurycles, see Campbell
1867: 141-142 and Nails 2002: 149. (While Brann et al. transliterate this person's name as 'Euricles,' I
follow the more common transliteration used, e.g., by Nails.)
[271] For further discussion of what has gone wrong with the late learners' view, see Heinaman 1982: 175-
184, Clark 1994: 40, and Crivelli 2012: 113-114.
[272] Commentators have disagreed as to how exactly this refutation works. Some (e.g., Denyer 1991: 162-
163) argue for this failure with reference to the impossibility of the view insofar as any speech act will
show it to be false; others (e.g., Bordt 1991: 523, Notomi 1999: 233, and Crivelli 2012: 113-114) argue
with reference to the truth value, i.e., that a positive truth value for the claim would thereby falsify it.
Because I do not see evidence that the Stranger is concerned with speech acts or truth value in the sense of
Aristotelian logic in this passage, I do not give precedence to either of these possible interpretations.
Vlastos 1973: 274-279 argues that this passage and the moves that follow are clouded by a confusion

the Stranger uses the metaphor of ventriloquism, suggesting that the late learners must speak from a voice other than their own even to state their own view, concluding that the view must necessarily fail.

With (1) set aside, the interlocutors turn their attention to (2). When the Stranger asks whether they should "allow all things to have the power for community with one another" (252d2-3), Theaetetus responds that this is easily answered, for this would entail that "Motion itself would be altogether at rest, and Rest in turn would itself be in motion, if the two of them were to follow upon each other" (252d6-8), which the Stranger deems to be "impossible" (252d10). It is significant that Theaetetus here offers the refutation of (2), since the Stranger will go on to show in fact that motion (i.e., the form motion) is at rest in some significant sense, while rest (i.e., the form rest) is also in motion in some significant sense.[273] But here in this moment in the discussion, Theaetetus seems to have something in mind similar to Socrates in the *Republic* when Socrates asserts that opposites cannot be co-present at the same time in the same place and in the same respects (*Republic* IV 436a1-437a8). In any event, the Stranger allows Theaetetus' rejection of (2) to stand, for surely whatever relationship motion and rest share is not 'altogether' coextensiveness. The interlocutors take it as evident that unlimited mixing, or mixing in all cases, is not possible, and thus will turn their considerations to the questions of whether and how mixing is restricted, and what does and does not constitute a *good* mixture. That mixing is restricted, in other words, indicates a principle of

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regarding two senses of predication, 'ordinary' and 'Pauline.' For a response that addresses the deficiencies and confusions in this view, see Rosen 1983: 35-38.

[273] Later, at 256b6-c5, the Stranger will argue that there is a sense in which motion (i.e., the form motion) rests, insofar as it partakes of rest. Cf. Bluck 1975: 111-115. For now, the Stranger leaves the issue unexplored.

normativity that has continued to be at play in the dialogue and that will come to the fore in what follows.

The account suggests that intermixing cannot be radically unrestricted precisely because its capacity extends from the nature of that which is mixed. For example, the nature of 'cat' allows for intermixing with 'greyness,' 'six-ness,' and 'companion-ness' due to the nature of each of these elements, but 'cat' cannot mix with 'cow-ness,' 'infinitude,' or 'liar-ness.' Moreover, this suggests that the intermixing of natures entails a structure of causal priority of one kind over another, like the form 'animal' that explains but is not itself explained by the form 'cat.' The form 'grey,' conversely, is a nature that is open to but not required by the nature of the form 'cat' for the instantiation of a given cat.

The Stranger uses the paradigm of letters ('*stoicheia,*' or 'elements')[274] to allow for further consideration of intermixing relative to that which is necessitated by the structures of their natures, and the dialectician's philosophical art of understanding their communing and division. The interlocutors consider the issue as follows:

> ES: Now since some things are amenable to doing this [i.e., intermixing] and others are not, they'd be a lot like letters. For I take it that in the case of letters, too, some don't fit with one another and others do.
> THEAE: Of course.
> ES: And the vowels differ from the others in passing through them all as a sort of

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[274] Letters are a common paradigm for thinking through metaphysical and epistemological issues in Plato's dialogues. In Smith 2019 I have discussed the *stoicheion* paradigm's role in setting up the major moments of Platonic education and turning from things to forms depicted in the *Theaetetus, Sophist, Statesman,* and *Philebus*. In short, I will say here that this passage connects to at least three other passages in Plato regarding the elements (στοιχεία) on the one hand and knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) and art (τέχνη) on the other. In *Theaetetus* 202e7-208c4, Socrates and Theaetetus consider knowledge with reference to a familiarity of parts (e.g., syllables) and recognizing the appearances of parts in given contexts. In *Statesman* 278a8-c1, the Stranger and Socrates the Younger consider the ways in which letters act as paradigms to guide the learner from knowledge of the known into knowledge of the unknown. In *Philebus* 18b6-d2, Socrates describes the sense in which each element derives from its positioning in the letter spectrum and hence owes its nature to that by which it is constituted from without, i.e., to the other elements like it in kind within the letter spectrum. Other discussions of letters include Ryle 1960, Bondeson 1973, Gómez-Lobo 1977, Miller 1992, Notomi 1999, Gill 2006, and Sanday 2015a.

bond, so that without some one of them it's impossible for the others to fit, one with another.

THEAE: Very much so.

ES: Then does everyone know which letters can commune with which, or does the man who means to join them need an art?

THEAE: He needs an art.

ES: Which one?

THEAE: The "spelling art."

Ξένος: ὅτε δὴ τὰ μὲν ἐθέλει τοῦτο δρᾶν, τὰ δ᾽ οὔ, σχεδὸν οἷον τὰ γράμματα πεπονθότ᾽ ἂν εἴη. καὶ γὰρ ἐκείνων τὰ μὲν ἀναρμοστεῖ που πρὸς ἄλληλα, τὰ δὲ συναρμόττει.

Θεαίτητος: πῶς δ᾽ οὔ;

Ξένος: τὰ δέ γε φωνήεντα διαφερόντως τῶν ἄλλων οἷον δεσμὸς διὰ πάντων κεχώρηκεν, ὥστε ἄνευ τινὸς αὐτῶν ἀδύνατον ἁρμόττειν καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἕτερον ἑτέρῳ.

Θεαίτητος: καὶ μάλα γε.

Ξένος: πᾶς οὖν οἶδεν ὁποῖα ὁποίοις δυνατὰ κοινωνεῖν, ἢ τέχνης δεῖ τῷ μέλλοντι δρᾶν ἱκανῶς αὐτό;

Θεαίτητος: τέχνης.

Ξένος: ποίας;

Θεαίτητος: τῆς γραμματικῆς. (252e10 – 253a14).

Two important points arise in this discussion. The first regards the structure of intermixing, and the second regards the art (τέχνη) of discerning this structure. First, certain letters can be voiced on their own, like vowels. Other letters are dependent on one another to instantiate themselves, including both the sounded consonants that are dependent on vowels and the mutes that are dependent on both vowels and consonants. Furthermore, while each letter has its own simple (i.e., irreducible) and unique nature, these natures vary. Some tend to fit well with others, such as 'G' and 'R' in the first syllable of 'grammar,' whereas others, such as 'G' and 'P,' do not.[275] This suggests that the certain simple and unique nature of each element (letter) implies a fittingness for communion with others like it in kind, on the basis of the nature of the other. In other

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[275] Plato does not have his interlocutors make this part of the account specific, but this seems to be implied. Cf. Galligan 1983: 269 and Crivelli 2012: 115-116.

words, 'what it is to be G' is, in a sense, distinct from the vowels and consonants with which it can be combined; and yet simultaneously, 'what it is to be G' requires both the necessary co-presence of other letters for a given G to be made manifest *and* a general readiness for further combination in some cases (e.g., that of 'R') and aversion to further combination in others (e.g., that of 'P.') Therefore, in these senses G has an identity that is both independent and dependent and that allows it to commune well, poorly, or not at all.

That these elements have such natures and such conditions for fittingness entails, secondly, an art (τέχνη) of studying the nature of each element and its fittingness for communion. The interlocutors call this the art of the grammarian. In other words, the natures of these elements allow for study, and they admit of the possibility of expertise for the person who noetically grasps the meaning of these appearances and thereby develops an understanding of the elements' natures. And because the natures imply a certain fittingness for blending with others, the art of the grammarian entails attending to the normativity at play in the blending of the elements. The art of the grammarian is therefore characterized in the primary sense by the mode of *responsiveness* to the elements composing the field of study. In this way, this normativity is not imposed by humans on the model of what is called 'constructivism' in contemporary metaethical philosophy, where 'constructivism' roughly means judgments regarding good and bad founded most basically on the best human opinion regarding such matters.[276] Instead, this sort of normativity is something fundamental and to which mortal experts must be

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[276] For a helpful discussion of the role of what is now called constructivism and its critique in Plato's dialogues, see Evans 2012: especially 1-3 and 32-34.

attentive and responsive, most akin to what in contemporary philosophy is called

'primitivism.'[277]

The interlocutors next consider tones as a second notion that entails communing

and an art that responds to it, and their considerations yield further insight into the issue.

The text reads:

> ES: Well then, isn't it the same with high and low sounds? The man who has the
> art of recognizing those sounds that do and do not blend is musical, while the man
> who doesn't comprehend is unmusical?
> THEAE: Just so.
> ES: And in all the other arts and non-arts, we'll find other things like these.
> THEAE: Of course.
> ES: Well then, since we've agreed that the kinds too are in the same condition
> regarding their mixing with one another, isn't it necessary for the man who
> intends to show rightly which of them harmonize with which and which do not
> receive one another, to make his way through accounts with some sort of
> knowledge? Isn't this especially so if he intends to show whether there are some
> kinds which, present throughout, hold the other kinds together, so that they can
> intermix, and again whether there are other kinds which, where there are
> divisions, are causes of division throughout the whole?
> THEAE: Of course he needs knowledge, and perhaps very nearly the greatest.

> Ξένος: τί δέ; περὶ τοὺς τῶν ὀξέων καὶ βαρέων φθόγγους ἆρ᾽ οὐχ οὕτως; ὁ μὲν
> τοὺς συγκεραννυμένους τε καὶ μὴ τέχνην ἔχων γιγνώσκειν μουσικός, ὁ δὲ μὴ
> συνιεὶς ἄμουσος;
> Θεαίτητος: οὕτως.
> Ξένος: καὶ κατὰ τῶν ἄλλων δὴ τεχνῶν καὶ ἀτεχνιῶν τοιαῦτα εὑρήσομεν ἕτερα.
> Θεαίτητος: πῶς δ᾽ οὔ;
> Ξένος: τί δ᾽; ἐπειδὴ καὶ τὰ γένη πρὸς ἄλληλα κατὰ ταὐτὰ μείξεως ἔχειν
> ὡμολογήκαμεν, ἆρ᾽ οὐ μετ᾽ ἐπιστήμης τινὸς ἀναγκαῖον διὰ τῶν λόγων
> πορεύεσθαι τὸν ὀρθῶς μέλλοντα δείξειν ποῖα ποίοις συμφωνεῖ τῶν γενῶν καὶ
> ποῖα ἄλληλα οὐ δέχεται; καὶ δὴ καὶ διὰ πάντων εἰ συνέχοντ᾽ ἄττ᾽ αὔτ᾽ ἐστιν,
> ὥστε συμμείγνυσθαι δυνατὰ εἶναι, καὶ πάλιν ἐν ταῖς διαιρέσεσιν, εἰ δι᾽ ὅλων
> ἕτερα τῆς διαιρέσεως αἴτια;
> Θεαίτητος: πῶς γὰρ οὐκ ἐπιστήμης δεῖ, καὶ σχεδόν γε ἴσως τῆς μεγίστης;
> (253a15-253c6).

Like letters, musical tones involve a set of norms through which certain notes are able to

blend well with one another and others not. In this way, the musician or musical

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[277] Cf. Evans 2012: 1-2.

composer who is adept in the art of musical tonality responds to the nature of the elements of her field of study in such a way as to allow the meaning and value of relations between elements to show themselves. The various musical scales act as underlying structures through which certain melodies can be derived for the sake of disclosing the virtues of the prior structural scale.[278] The tone analogy therefore helps to show further that structure (here the scale) allows for both the noetic grasp of the structuring nature and the artful practice of the mortal expert whose familiarity with the elements and their scales allows her to disclose the truth and virtues of their relations.[279]

With these examples stated, the interlocutors turn their attention to forms and the analogous sense in which their givenness to thought and speech implies structure and an art that is responsive to this structure.[280] The interlocutors' investigation has prepared them to consider the knowledge of forms' intermixing and the ways in which these elements call for the simultaneous co-presence of others like them in kind in given instances. These issues will occupy the interlocutors in much of what follows and

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[278] Note that this is not a historical account regarding the ways in which certain scales have come about in certain cultures, but instead an account of the ways in which any scale is a manifestation of the tone continuum that underlies all human musical practice. In this sense, it continues to be not a constructivist account but instead a primitivist account.

[279] Later in the dialogue, from 266b1-d5, the interlocutors will consider the ways in which this human making is analogous to divine making.

[280] Although the Stranger speaks analogously of letters and tones, on the one hand, and forms on the other, the exact nature of the analogy has been much debated. Many interpret the Stranger as offering 'being' and 'otherness' as the 'vowel forms' that run through all other forms, with 'being' responsible for combination or communion (see Ryle 1960: 445 and Bondeson 1973: 16-17) and 'otherness' responsible for division (see Cornford 1935: 261-262, Ross 1951: 113, Owen 1971: 236, Frede 1967: 37-38, Gómez-Lobo 1977: 38-45, Gómez-Lobo 1982: 82, and Notomi 1999: 242). I will argue that motion, rest, and sameness are also "vowel forms" in the sense intended by these commentators in that they are necessary in all instances (cf. Lentz 1997: 103 and Wiitala 2014b and 2018). Because a given vowel (e.g., one of the group 'a, e, i, o, u, and y' in English), however, is not a *necessary* component of all words but instead is a merely a *sufficient* condition for voicing consonants, and instead any one member of the vowel kind is necessary, I avoid the terms 'vowel form' and 'vowel kind' in my own analysis.

ultimately allow them to return to their diairetic investigation into the nature of the sophist, clarifying and expanding the scope of this investigation in the process.

5.2.3   Dialectic and the philosopher (253c – 254b)

The interlocutors will draw upon their accounts of being as power and necessary commingling to address the questions of the dialectician and dialectical knowledge regarding the intertwining of forms.[281] Doing so will allow them to expand the method of dialectical inquiry begun in the bifurcatory division exercises. The dialectician passage is a central moment in the text that will lead to a transformed perspective on division and help shape the accounts of being and goodness that will ultimately result.

Following the discussions of the kinds of knowledge of the grammarian and musician, Theaetetus states in response to the Stranger that the dialectician must also have a distinct kind of knowledge. Regarding this, the Stranger provocatively asks, "What in turn shall we call this knowledge, Theaetetus? Or by Zeus, have we stumbled without noticing it on the knowledge that belongs to free men? And have we, while seeking the sophist, by some chance found the philosopher first?" (τίν᾽ οὖν αὖ νῦν προσεροῦμεν, ὦ Θεαίτητε, ταύτην; ἢ πρὸς Διὸς ἐλάθομεν εἰς τὴν τῶν ἐλευθέρων ἐμπεσόντες ἐπιστήμην, καὶ κινδυνεύομεν ζητοῦντες τὸν σοφιστὴν πρότερον ἀνηυρηκέναι τὸν φιλόσοφον; [253c7-11].) This passage has been the site of much scholarly attention, thanks in large part to this tantalizing reference to the philosopher, which had been said at the beginning of the dialogue to be in need of being separated off from the sophist and

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the statesman through their respective accounts. Its contents are provocative, but also

dense and difficult. I argue that the Stranger's account of that which the dialectician

'adequately views' from *Sophist* 253d1-e3 ties together the bifurcatory division exercises

earlier in the dialogue and the conception of complex ontology to which the interlocutors

are about to turn explicitly, signaling a deeper kind of dialectic on the horizon.[282]

Although this passage has typically been understood by commentators to involve *either*

bifurcatory division *or* the communion of great kinds, mine is something of a hybrid view

that the passage involves *both*, taking what was valuable from the earlier bifurcatory

division exercises and laying the groundwork for a higher-order dialectic guided by the

noetic grasp of forms with reference to communion.[283] I argue that the dialectician

passage concerns division broadly conceived, i.e., not merely as bifurcatory division, and

that it furthermore helps us to see that division broadly conceived entails an investigation

into the nature of a given form with reference to its ontological structure, disclosing its

being (i.e., in what forms it participates) and its constitutive nonbeing or otherness (i.e.,

from what forms it is determinately separate), allowing for a more complex ontological

schema than that which was possible through bifurcation. My interpretation will require

a close reading of the short passage through my own translation and borrowing from the

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[282] That the Stranger's description of the dialectician is of central importance to our understanding of the metaphysics and method in the *Sophist* is granted in one way or another by the majority of commentators. The minority who take it to be of little importance includes de Rijk 1986, Notomi 1999, and Wiitala 2014b.
[283] Mine is not the first hybrid view. Ionescu 2013: especially 53-60 articulates a similar view to which I am much indebted in all of what follows. There are also elements of both lines of interpretation at play in Stenzel 1964 [1931] and Ackrill 1970: 95-96. Stenzel is convinced that bifurcatory division entails establishing a 'pyramid-like' structure through which the dialectician discloses an account of the form in question from bottom to top, and in this way does not have a reading strong enough to capture the function of communing specifically that I will emphasize in what follows. Ackrill, conversely, generally states his view regarding this connection without working it out (so far as I am aware).

interpretive work of several previous commentators, most significantly Alfonso Gómez-Lobo (1977) and Mitchell Miller (2016).

My translation of the text from 253d1 to 253e3 is as follows, with roman numerals and letters indicating the moments that I will use to divide and set up the structure of the passage with regard to dialectical method (indicated by roman numerals) and dialectical knowledge (indicated by letters). I have omitted Theaetetus's brief response at 235d4,[284] which will not factor into my discussion. The text reads: [285]

253d	1	(a) τὸ κατὰ γένη διαιρεῖσθαι καὶ (b) μήτε ταὐτὸν
	2	εἶδος ἕτερον ἡγήσασθαι (c) μήτε ἕτερον ὂν ταὐτὸν μῶν
	3	οὐ τῆς διαλεκτικῆς φήσομεν ἐπιστήμης εἶναι;
	5	οὐκοῦν ὅ γε τοῦτο δυνατὸς δρᾶν [i] μίαν ἰδέαν
	6	διὰ πολλῶν, ἑνὸς ἑκάστου κειμένου χωρίς, πάντῃ
	7	διατεταμένην ἱκανῶς διαισθάνεται, [ii] καὶ πολλὰς
	8	ἑτέρας ἀλλήλων ὑπὸ μιᾶς ἔξωθεν περιεχομένας,
	9	[iii] καὶ μίαν αὖ δι' ὅλων πολλῶν ἐν ἑνὶ συνημμένην, [iv] καὶ
253e	1	πολλὰς χωρὶς πάντῃ διωρισμένας: τοῦτο δ' ἔστιν,
	2	(d) ᾗ τε κοινωνεῖν ἕκαστα δύναται καὶ (e) ὅπῃ μή,
	3	διακρίνειν κατὰ γένος ἐπίστασθαι.

253d	1	Should we not say that to dialectical knowledge belongs (a) [the ability] to divide according to kinds [κατὰ γένη διαιρεῖσθαι] and (b) not to take the same form to be a different [form] or (c) a different [form] to be the same?
	5	Therefore the person with this power will have in adequate view [i] one form extended in every way through many, each of which lies separated [χωρίς], and [ii] many [forms][286] other than one another [while] embraced by one [form] from without; and again [αὖ] [iii] one [form] through many wholes gathered into a one, and
253e	1	[iv] many [forms] separated off [χωρὶς … διωρισμένας] in every way. This is the ability to judge which [form has] (d) the power (δύναται) to combine (κοινωνεῖν) and (e) which does not [have this power] according to kind.

I take 253d1-3 ([a]-[c] above) and 253e1-3 ([d]-[e] above) to connect to and to modify the account of the 'adequate viewing' described in the passage's center from 253d5-9 ([i]-[iv] above).[287] The effect of this is to take the methodological description in [i]-[iv] to be an indication of the way that the noetic insight described in (a)-(e) is enacted. I argue that this shows that the passage concerns the ability of the dialectician to discern the structure of a form as given to mind via the kind of mutual constitution that will be worked out with reference to combining (κοινωνεῖν) in the forthcoming discussion of the great kinds.

The characteristic abilities of one who possesses dialectical knowledge that the Stranger describes (253d1-3 and 253e1-3) are as follows:

(a) To divide (διαιρεῖσθαι) according to kinds
(b) Not to take the same form to be a different form
(c) Not to take a different form to be the same form
(d) To judge the power [of forms] to combine according to kind
(e) To judge the inability [of forms] to combine according to kind

These five characteristics of the possessor of dialectical knowledge flank four criteria of discernment regarding what the dialectician adequately views (253d5-e1). The person who can attain dialectical knowledge does so by attaining an adequate view of:[288]

[i] One form extended in every way through many [forms], each of which lies
    separated
[ii] Many [forms] other than one another while embraced by one [form] from
    without
[iii] One [form] through many wholes gathered into a one
[iv] Many [forms] separated off in every way.

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[287] Contrast Gómez-Lobo 1977: 29-30, who (following interpretive principles in Ross 1951: 117) divides these sections into 'prologue' (253d1-3), 'passage' (253d5-9), and 'epilogue' (253e1-3). Gómez-Lobo 1977: 35 fn. 23 cites Ross 1951: 117 in support of his view that his 'prologue' concerns identity while his 'epilogue' concerns combination. I will argue below instead that they are structurally interconnected and that the so-called discussion of 'identity' is in fact a consideration of identity with reference to combination, i.e., the identity that is derived from co-constitution.

[288] This construction entails grouping together the two nominative clauses at 253d5 and 253d7, to which the four subsequent accusative phrases from 253d7 to 253e1 are subordinated. Cf. Gómez-Lobo 1977: 30.

I follow the majority of translators in taking the αὖ in 253d9 to function as an adversative and hence act as the structural center of the passage, positioning the set of [i]-[ii] separately from [iii]-[iv] and pairing the two groups together.[289] The pairs [i]-[ii] and [iii]-[iv] each include reference to the one (μίαν) form ([i] and [iii]) with that of the many (πολλάς) forms ([ii] and [iv]),[290] and reference to forms gathered together ([ii] and [iii]) and those separated ([i] and [iv]). The task is to decipher the meanings of their oneness, many-ness, togetherness, and separation.

Many have interpreted this passage generally as indicating a return to the considerations of bifurcatory division, as signaled most immediately by the reappearance of the term διαιρεῖσθαι, a form of διαιρέω, at 253d1 (in [a]).[291] In connecting this passage to division, many have argued that [iii]-[iv] describe the kinds of bifurcatory cuts the Stranger and Theaetetus had made earlier in the dialogue,[292] and I will endorse this view using the Stranger's paradigmatic account of the angler (see section 2.3.1 and Appendix 1a below) to illustrate the meaning of the [iii]-[iv] couplet as I understand it.[293]

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[289] Cf. Miller 2016: 2-3 and fn. 3. Miller notes that this structure is nearly the consensus among translators. The exception he indicates, White 1993, reflects an interpretive principle closer to Stenzel 1964 regarding the separation between [i] and [ii]-[iv] (see above). In the reprint of White at Cooper 1997: 276 fn. 21, Cooper indicates the alternative and favored grouping in a footnote.

[290] These four points have been taken to be the heart of the passage by numerous commentators, including Stenzel 1964 [1931], Cornford 1935, Sayre 1969 and 2006, Gómez-Lobo 1977, Notomi 1999, and Miller 2016.

[291] Discussions of this textual element are at play, e.g., in Stenzel 1964 [1931] and Cornford 1935.

[292] For a clear and concise version of this view, see Sayre 2006: 43. Versions of this view date back at least to Stenzel 1964 (1931) and Cornford 1935. Others holding this view include Cornford Ackrill 1970, Vlastos 1973, and Miller 2016.

[293] It is helpful here to consider these divisions through the influential interpretive model of Stenzel 1964 (1931). According to an interpretive model like that of Stenzel, the angler account can be represented by the kind of pyramid-like structure depicted in Appendix 1h. (Stenzel does not, so far as I am aware, include any diagrams of division as he understands it. This is my interpretation of the kind of description that Stenzel offers. See especially Stenzel 1964 (1931): 86-95.) This structure represents Stenzel's interpretation of division in 'pyramid' form, at the top of which sits the logically 'atomic' form disclosed in isolation from all else. Stenzel takes this to follow from what the Stranger later describes as splitting "the proposed kind in two, always keeping to the right hand part of the section and hold[ing] fast to the

The description in [iii] of the dialectician's gathering one form through many wholes fits squarely with the division of the angler, in that the one form 'angler' has been disclosed through its participation in the many forms of expertise, getting, manipulation, etc. The diairetic investigation into the angler progresses by way of one form (angler) that moves through many wholes by identifying a series of further specified samenesses, e.g., the angler's sameness as 'expertise,' sameness as 'getting,' etc. Doing so has allowed the interlocutors to account for precisely what is described in [iii], which is the gathering together (συνημμένην) of one form together through its appearances in many wholes. The term συνημμένην furthermore echoes several terms that the Stranger uses in describing his own bifurcatory diairetic cuts, such as συμπλέξαντες ('woven together') at *Sophist* 268c6, and συνείρωμεν ('we shall connect') at *Statesman* 267a4.[294] Therefore [iii] fits both with the method of bifurcatory division that the Stranger employs and the language that he uses to describe his cuts. Similarly, the account of the angler entails leaving a series of discarded 'left-side' forms (e.g., the forms of making, willingness, hunting, etc.), thereby yielding the 'many forms separated off in every way' that the Stranger describes in [iv]. That is, if we are to take [iii] to describe the angler as bifurcatory division shows it to be a one form gathered together through many wholes and into a one via investigation into the form's samenesses, [iv] thus suggests the complementary act of dividing off the othernesses, i.e., the left-hand forms, in which the angler was shown not to participate as well. There is, in other words, a very clean fit between [iii]-[iv] and bifurcatory division.

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community to which [the sought form] belongs, until we've stripped away all his common features and left him in his indwelling nature" (264e1-265a1).
[294] Cf. Miller 2016: 5.

Interpreting [i]-[ii] is, however, more difficult. Commentators who take [iii]-[iv] to be a description of division have frequently taken [i]-[ii] to be a description of collection.[295] I discuss collection in section 2.3.1 and will repeat here that whatever the role (if any) of collection in the division acts in the *Sophist,* it does not seem to be on the simple model of 'division and collection' in the *Phaedrus,* and attempts to account for [i]-[ii] with reference to this method have been, on my view, unsuccessful.[296] In his 2016 paper, Mitchell Miller has given the far more promising interpretation of [i]-[ii] as being related to the kind of non-bifurcatory division that the Stranger takes up beginning at *Statesman* 287c.[297] Briefly stated, there the Stranger divides the form of care into fifteen discrete moments with reference to the determining poles of care for material needs of the community and care for the spiritual needs of the community, including providing (1) raw materials, (2) tools, (3) containers, (4) bearers, (5) defenses, (6) playthings, and (7) nourishments, into the services provided by (8) slaves, (9) traders and merchants, (10) heralds and clerks, (11) priests and mantics, (12) orators, (13) generals, (14) judges, and (15) statesmen. (See Appendix 1i for the schematic rendering of this non-bifurcatory account.) Each of these points (1-15) represents a distinct ratio of care for the mortal community, through meeting the community's material needs (1-7), the precise intersection of care for material and spiritual needs (8), and meeting their spiritual needs (9-15). Moving through each in order, each point gradually begins to admit of a greater degree of care for the spiritual needs of the mortal community relative to the lessening of care for the material needs of the community. For example, raw materials are precisely

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[295] These include Stenzel 1964 (1931), Cornford 1935, Ackrill 1970, and Vlastos 1973.
[296] Cf. Miller 2016: 323-329 for discussion of this view and ways in which it obscures rather than elucidates several key textual and conceptual issues.
[297] Miller 2016: especially 340-345.

that which can support the community in material terms, while tools represent materials

deliberately shaped to perform certain tasks and thus admit of a greater degree of

intentionality. Slaves, the exact midpoint, are both possessions and human agents, hence

both 'material' (in the sense of a material possession) and constituted by soul. To jump

to a further point along the spectrum, generals must strategize for the bodily preservation

of the community while judges must adjudicate with reference to higher-order concepts,

etc. [298]

What results is a spectrum of modes of care that are separate from one another

and yet bound together by the care that 'runs through' (or more literally is the same in)

each and structured by their relative degrees of materiality and spirituality. Care is, to put

it metaphorically, 'stretched out' through each of these fifteen points, with each point

both defined by the ratios of care for the relative measures of care for the material and

spiritual needs of the community, yet in another sense discrete elements. Tools are other

than containers (for example), and yet they are the same insofar as they are characterized

by the same care that is common to them both.

Miller argues that this kind of non-bifurcatory division undertaken in the

Statesman is what is described in [i]-[ii]. He holds that the διατεταμένην at 253d7

captures the sense in which the one form care is extended through the many forms of care

(e.g., raw materials, tools, containers, etc.), which themselves lie separated, precisely as

is stated in [i]. [299] Likewise, Miller argues that the many forms other than one another are

the 15 isolated moments, embraced by the form care, capturing the sense of [ii].

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[298] This description is cursory by necessity, and I discuss this non-bifurcatory division a bit more in the concluding section 6.2. For more on this non-bifurcatory account, see Miller 1990, 1999, and 2016: 340-345, and Smith 2019: 18-22.
[299] Miller 2016: 347.

I take the significance of [i]-[ii] to follow from the clarifications of the difference

between beings in a certain way and a certain way of being, along with the notion of

being as power. Previously, the interlocutors had divided via gathering wholes into ones

[iii] and observing the wholes separated off in every way [iv]. In this case, the

bifurcatory account disclosed the relations of causal priority and posteriority in each

instance. For example, 'expertise' is causally prior to 'getting,' which is causally prior to

'manipulation,' etc. In the switch to non-bifurcatory division, the object of inquiry is

conceived no longer as merely a whole, but instead as a certain power to be in a certain

way, suggesting the ordered eidetic field to which the dialectician attends. This is

because relations have been disclosed not merely in terms of causal priority, but also

further in the sense in which the identity of each moment is in some sense independent

and a nature in itself. For example, care for the material and spiritual needs of the mortal

community is causally prior to tools, but tools are neither causally prior nor posterior to

containers. Put differently, care explains tools and containers in a sense, but tools and

containers do not explain one another. This is analogous to the previous distinction

between motion and rest, in that the being of motion is the same as the being of rest, and

yet the two are other than one another. Being, in this sense, 'holds the two together'

despite the two being fundamentally apart. Similarly, the care of tools is the same as the

care of containers, though tools and containers are other than one another. In this way,

care 'holds the many together' though they are separated apart in themselves.

Noting the appearance of the notions of 'sameness' and 'otherness' that have

arisen, we can do further work to understand this passage as it opens up the

considerations of the great ontological kinds that follows with reference to an alternative

interpretive tradition of the dialectician passage that began with Alfonso Gómez-Lobo's

influential 1977 paper. Gómez-Lobo understood the passage specifically with reference

to discussion of the interconnection of necessary ontological kinds, and especially the

discussion of great kinds and a differentiation between the kinds that combine with all

other forms and those that combine only under certain circumstances, that follows in the

dialogue.[300] Though Gómez-Lobo took his account to be opposed to those who interpret

this passage as related to division that I endorse above, I nevertheless want to draw on

this kind of reading to show its value for our purposes.[301]

In addition to the more subtle senses of sameness and otherness I tried to indicate

above, the connection between the dialectician and communion of kinds passages is

especially apparent in the section on dialectical knowledge, 253d1-3 and 253e1-3, which

I have labelled as (a) through (e). Among these five characteristics of dialectical

knowledge, (a) acts as an orienting concept that is at play throughout the entire passage.

In other words, under discussion here throughout is the capacity of the dialectician to

allow forms to guide the inquiry. That (a) should be taken to be structurally connected to

the set of [i]-[iv] the Stranger indicates by introducing the dialectical methods of [i]-[iv]

at 253d5 by referring back to 'this capacity' [τοῦτο δυνατός, 253d5]. The noetic grasp of

the dialectician through which thinking traces divisions is oriented by an understanding

of the power of forms to combine, as in the analogies of the grammarian and the

musician. Thus, in this sense, at issue in dialectical knowledge is the powers of

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[300] In this paper, Gómez-Lobo follows Stenzel's pyramid model of the divided form.
[301] This kind of interpretation remains viable among commentators. For recent defenses of this kind of interpretation, see Notomi 1999 and Wiitala 2014b. Ionescu 2013: especially 53-60 has previously noted that this kind of interpretation is not as firmly at odds with that of those who interpret division to be at play in this passage as Gómez-Lobo took it to be when formulating it.

combination and division according to kinds, both for the forms themselves that combine

and for the dialectician who discerns their combination and can thus follow their

divisions noetically in giving a definitional account of the identity of the given form.

In addition to (a), the description of dialectical knowledge includes two pairs, (b)-

(c) and (d)-(e), each of which clarifies the nature of the dialectician's capacity for

dividing according to kind. The first pair, (b)-(c), regards the discernment between the

sameness and difference of forms.[302] This indicates, that is, that the dialectician

practicing bifuractory division traces the sameness of the right-hand forms while

discarding the 'other' left-hand forms. Likewise, the dialectician locates the sameness

across elements such as the sameness of the form care common both to tools and

containers, while also identifying the otherness between tools and containers, via non-

bifurcatory division.

In (d)-(e), the Stranger makes explicit the connection between the power of forms

to combine and the ability of the dialectician to discern their combination, i.e., the noetic

grasp with which the dialectician allows inquiry to divide (διαιρεῖσθαι, in [a] at 253d1) in

response to the power of the forms to combine (κοινωνεῖν, in [e] at 253e2) or resist

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[302] One issue of interpretation is that commentators like Stenzel and Gómez-Lobo have taken (b)-(c) to
concern an understanding of a given form only, as opposed to the relationships between forms. For
example, Gómez-Lobo 1977: 41 argues that the purpose of division is to avoid false identities, i.e., between
the sophist, statesman, and philosopher; but while I agree, I argue that this is avoided through disclosing an
account of identity as it is situated in inner-relational accounts of being and nonbeing, and not simply as an
identity posited in isolation as at the top of a pyramid structure in the manner argued for by Stenzel and
adopted by Gómez-Lobo. Another way to put this problem is that this couplet has been misunderstood on
the basis of a confusion regarding the nature of *sameness.* It has been taken to concern the dialectician's
knowing a given form's *self-sameness* (as in [b]) and not misapplying an account of its *self-sameness* (as in
[c]). If this were right, then (b)-(c) would not concern knowledge of the relations among participants in
given forms, but instead only the identity of a single form, i.e., one compatible with that of Stenzel's. I
take it that the sameness at issue here, however, is not self-sameness, but instead the sameness across
participants in a given form *qua* their participation in that form. For example, tools and containers are the
same *qua* participants in care. This is to say that it is the same care that constitutes the tools as that which
constitutes the containers. Given this, I think that we must read (b)-(c) differently and as I suggest above.

combination. In other words, (d)-(e) acts with (a) to draw together the dialectician's

diairetic art and the combination of the forms, indicating that the dialectician grasps the

forms as structuring natures that imply fittingness or a lack of fittingness for combination

with one another. Thus conceived, the dialectician draws upon the power of certain ways

of being (i.e., forms) to indicate both their own nature and their connection to other ways

of being.

This passage thus has proven to be a central moment in the *Sophist*. By referring

back to the bifurcatory division exercises, we are again invited to consider the sense of

the ontological composition of entities and inquiry in which entities are sought with

reference to their composing one another. But the dialectician passage also draws upon

the important distinctions that have arisen in the meantime, indicating the new, higher-

order kind of ontological inquiry that will soon be possible. First, the interlocutors must

develop their account of necessary structure itself.

5.3   Great kinds and the structure of being (254b – 258b)

5.3.1   The great kinds (254b – 256e)

Having established the necessity of commingling and following the account of the

dialectical art that traces the noetic field of commingled forms, the interlocutors are

prepared to turn to the question of the great ontological kinds. The Stranger foregrounds

the discussion with three points regarding the communion of forms and kinds: (i) some

forms are amenable to communing with one another and others not; (ii) some forms will

commune with a few forms while others with many, and (iii) some forms (to be called

'kinds') commune with all forms (254b5-8). Previously, (i) was shown to be necessary

through the failure of the view advocated for by the late learners, since it can neither be the case that communing is impossible nor that communing is unrestricted. That communing is the case among forms is also evident on the basis of the interlocutors' consideration of the friends of forms, which showed that being must participate in motion and rest in a meaningful sense while itself not being motion and rest. (ii) was a consequence of the takeaway from the late learners' view regarding the restrictedness of blending, and (iii) will ground the turn to ontological kinds on the horizon. The Stranger anticipates this turn when stating the following:

> Let's look, not into all the forms – so that we don't get confused among the many – but only into some, having selected those spoken of as greatest. Let's first look into what sorts of things they are individually, then into what holds for their power for community with one another. The result will be that if we don't have the power to take hold of both Being and Non-being with complete clarity, we'll at least not come out lacking an account for them, as far as our present way of looking allows. Let's see whether it's in some way permissible for us to say the following and come off unpunished: that Non-being *is*, even though in its very being it *is not*.

> τὸ δὴ μετὰ τοῦτο συνεπισπώμεθα τῷ λόγῳ τῇδε σκοποῦντες, μὴ περὶ πάντων τῶν εἰδῶν, ἵνα μὴ ταραττώμεθα ἐν πολλοῖς, ἀλλὰ προελόμενοι τῶν μεγίστων λεγομένων ἄττα, πρῶτον μὲν ποῖα ἕκαστά ἐστιν, ἔπειτα κοινωνίας ἀλλήλων πῶς ἔχει δυνάμεως, ἵνα τό τε ὂν καὶ μὴ ὂν εἰ μὴ πάσῃ σαφηνείᾳ δυνάμεθα λαβεῖν, ἀλλ᾽ οὖν λόγου γε ἐνδεεῖς μηδὲν γιγνώμεθα περὶ αὐτῶν, καθ᾽ ὅσον ὁ τρόπος ἐνδέχεται τῆς νῦν σκέψεως, ἐὰν ἄρα ἡμῖν πῃ παρεικάθῃ τὸ μὴ ὂν λέγουσιν ὡς ἔστιν ὄντως μὴ ὂν ἀθῴοις ἀπαλλάττειν (254c2-254d2).

Here the Stranger indicates several key points. First, he states that the following consideration will not entail an investigation of all forms, for they are too numerous. Instead, the interlocutors will be interested in those that are 'greatest' (μέγιστα at 254d3).[303] These will turn out to be those forms considered in (iii), that is, those forms

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[303] The Stranger introduces the greatest kinds first as 'those spoken of as greatest' (τῶν μεγίστων λεγομένων) at 254c5 and then simply as the 'greatest' (μέγιστα) at 254d3. I interpret these articulations as not indicating a salient difference; in other words, I take it that we are justified in referring to these as 'great kinds,' despite the Stranger's introducing them through the notion of speech at 254c5.

that commune with all other forms (kinds). Put differently, these 'greatest' forms will be those forms in which all other forms must necessarily commune in all instances.[304] The Stranger proposes that they investigate the nature of each great kind and let this analysis inform their consideration of the ways in which each nature guides the given form's power for communion. In other words, the task for the interlocutors will be to consider each form in its own identity and then turn to the meaning of this identity for its nature as derived from its positioning within the noetic network of interrelated forms.

After reintroducing the sense in which nonbeing is (254d1-2 above), the Stranger sets up the task regarding the kinds with reference to the concepts of motion, rest, and being that had led to the refutation of the late learners, tying together the discussion of nonbeing as otherness with that of the discussion of motion, rest, and being. When considering the late learners, the interlocutors had established that being, motion, and rest *are*, since while rest and motion both in their nature exclude one another as opposites, both *are*, and therefore both mix with being, which must be a third (254d4-14). But these three necessarily entail at least two more, which the Stranger argues as follows:

> ES: Then each of them (i.e., each of the 'three' of being, motion, and rest) is other than the remaining pair but itself the same as itself.
> THEAE: Just so.
> ES: But how in the world have we just used these terms "same" and "other"? Are they themselves a certain pair of kinds different than the first three yet always necessarily intermixed with them; and are we to look into five and not three as being the kinds that *are*? Or are we unwittingly addressing one of those three when we say "same" and "other"?

> Ξένος: οὐκοῦν αὐτῶν ἕκαστον τοῖν μὲν δυοῖν ἕτερόν ἐστιν, αὐτὸ δ᾽ ἑαυτῷ ταὐτόν.
> Θεαίτητος: οὕτως.
> Ξένος: τί ποτ᾽ αὖ νῦν οὕτως εἰρήκαμεν τό τε ταὐτὸν καὶ θάτερον; πότερα δύο γένη τινὲ αὐτώ, τῶν μὲν τριῶν ἄλλω, συμμειγνυμένω μὴν ἐκείνοις ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἀεί, καὶ περὶ πέντε ἀλλ᾽ οὐ περὶ τριῶν ὡς ὄντων αὐτῶν σκεπτέον, ἢ τό τε ταὐτὸν

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[304] For discussion of the sense in which this passage contains the vocabulary of grounding and fundamentality, see Seligman 1974: 55-56.

τοῦτο καὶ θάτερον ὡς ἐκείνων τι προσαγορεύοντες λανθάνομεν ἡμᾶς αὐτούς; (254d15-255a2).

The Stranger begins by positing the three, i.e., being, motion, and rest, as most 'elemental.' This is not surprising, since the nature of a given form entails *being* in all cases, and hence a form must participate in being insofar as it is a form. Similarly, its natural structure (which thus far has been worked out only with reference to its own nature and its participation in being) must also entail rest, since this nature is not in motion but instead is at rest in itself. The sense in which its structure entails motion is somewhat more elusive, but as I mention in the discussion of the friends of forms (section 4.3.3 above), I follow Wiitala in interpreting this sense of motion as the sense of non-temporal causal priority with which one form partakes of another, or insofar as its noetically instantiated nature is moved in the sense of participating in relations of causal priority and posteriority with other forms that structure it.[305] In other words, insofar as (e.g.) being must partake of (e.g.) rest to structure it as given to instantiation, it is 'moved' by rest, albeit not in the temporal sense.

Thus being, motion, and rest are the first great kinds that the interlocutors have identified. But the Stranger finds furthermore that his account necessitates the clarification of additional terms, i.e., 'same' and 'other.' For to say that being is not rest is to say that being is other than rest, while being is the same as being. The Stranger, that is, finds that the very act of asserting these elemental three forms entails at least two more, sameness and otherness, which like motion and rest are seemingly opposed.

It is not initially clear to the interlocutors whether these two new terms conceptually fold into any of the three posited thus far, and so in what follows, the

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[305] Wiitala 2018.

Stranger will address and reject two hypotheses regarding the possibility that either or both of these new two conceptually reduce to, are redundant with, or are identical to any of the three that have thus far been set down as elemental. First, he argues that motion and rest cannot be sameness and otherness (255a4-b7). He states that were this to be the case, then "[m]otion will be at rest, and Rest in turn will be in motion. With respect to both, whichever member of the pair becomes the other will compel the other to flip into the contrary of its own nature, since it will participate in the contrary" (κίνησίς τε στήσεται καὶ στάσις αὖ κινηθήσεται: περὶ γὰρ ἀμφότερα θάτερον ὁποτερονοῦν γιγνόμενον αὐτοῖν ἀναγκάσει μεταβάλλειν αὖ θάτερον ἐπὶ τοὐναντίον τῆς αὑτοῦ φύσεως, ἅτε μετασχὸν τοῦ ἐναντίου, 255a10-b1).[306] In other words, motion and rest cannot be sameness and otherness, because if sameness (e.g.) were to *be* rest, then otherness, as the contrary of sameness, would be motion. But if otherness were motion, then all manner of undesirable entailments would follow, including otherness now being understood as something that entails change, which otherness clearly does not. For example, D flat is other than A flat, but this otherness does not entail motion or change in any sense. Hence, given the oppositions of motion to rest and sameness to otherness, the Stranger argues that neither pair of opposites can be mapped on to one another without losing the identity of both members of either pair.

Next, the Stranger argues against the possible claim that being and sameness are one (255b8-c8). He will show that this necessarily entails a contradiction, for "if 'Being' and 'Same,' as a pair, signify nothing different, then when we turn back to Motion and

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[306] The Greek in this passage is elliptical, and various construals have been proposed. For discussions of the text and its possible construals, see Bluck 1975: 138 and Crivelli 2012: 118. Here I continue to follow Brann et. al; for a discussion of this type of reading, see Cornford 1935: 280.

Rest and say that both *are*, by the same token we shall be calling both the same, since they both *are*" (ἀλλ᾽ εἰ τὸ ὂν καὶ τὸ ταὐτὸν μηδὲν διάφορον σημαίνετον, κίνησιν αὖ πάλιν καὶ στάσιν ἀμφότερα εἶναι λέγοντες ἀμφότερα οὕτως αὐτὰ ταὐτὸν ὡς ὄντα προσεροῦμεν, 255b11-c1). The Stranger states that the problem here is that to be is not coextensive with being the same. Motion and rest are both the same insofar as they both *are;* or, to put it differently, the being of motion is the same as the being of rest. But they themselves are not the same.[307] In other words, we must separate the principle of being as the power to commune with others from the principle of sameness as the sense in which the oneness of identity can occur across instances. Given these considerations, the interlocutors take it that sameness must be posited as a fourth in addition to the previous three (255c5-7).

Finally, they return to the notion of otherness and the question of whether being and other are self-same (255c9-e2), concluding that they are not. The discussion is as follows:

> ES: Well then, must we say that the Other is a fifth? Or is it necessary to think of "Other" and "Being" as two distinct names for one kind?
> THEAE: Maybe.
> ES: But I imagine you grant that of the things that *are*, some are always said to be themselves by themselves (αὐτὰ καθ᾽ αὑτά), while others are always in relation to others (πρὸς ἄλλα).
> THEAE: Certainly.
> ES: And what is other is always in relation to an other, isn't it?
> THEAE: Just so.
> ES: This wouldn't be the case if Being and the Other, as a pair, were not entirely different. But if the Other partook of both the forms you granted, [then just as with Being], there would sometimes also be [something other] among the others

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[307] Cf. van Eck 2000: 66-69. This much-discussed passage has yielded many interpretations. For other discussions similar to my own, see Owen 1971: 236-241, Bluck 1975: 143-145, Sallis 1975: 519, McCabe 1994: 229-230, and Crivelli 2012: 137-140. Other, conflicting interpretations include Vlastos 1973: 286 and Bostock 1984: 91.

that is [not said in relation to something other].[308] And yet it has now inescapably
fallen out for us that whatever is [other] is what is necessarily through [something
other].

THEAE: You're saying it just the way it is.

ES: Then the nature of the Other must be said to be a fifth among the forms we're
selecting.

Ξένος: τί δέ; τὸ θάτερον ἆρα ἡμῖν λεκτέον πέμπτον; ἢ τοῦτο καὶ τὸ ὂν ὡς δύ᾽ ἄττα
ὀνόματα ἐφ᾽ ἑνὶ γένει διανοεῖσθαι δεῖ;

Θεαίτητος: τάχ᾽ ἄν.

Ξένος: ἀλλ᾽ οἶμαί σε συγχωρεῖν τῶν ὄντων τὰ μὲν αὐτὰ καθ᾽ αὑτά, τὰ δὲ πρὸς
ἄλλα[309] ἀεὶ λέγεσθαι.

Θεαίτητος: τί δ᾽ οὔ;

Ξένος: τὸ δέ γ᾽ ἕτερον ἀεὶ πρὸς ἕτερον· ἦ γάρ;

Θεαίτητος: οὕτως.

Ξένος: οὐκ ἄν, εἴ γε τὸ ὂν καὶ τὸ θάτερον μὴ πάμπολυ διεφερέτην· ἀλλ᾽ εἴπερ
θάτερον ἀμφοῖν μετεῖχε τοῖν εἰδοῖν ὥσπερ τὸ ὄν, ἦν ἄν ποτέ τι καὶ τῶν ἑτέρων
ἕτερον οὐ πρὸς ἕτερον· νῦν δὲ ἀτεχνῶς ἡμῖν ὅτιπερ ἂν ἕτερον ᾖ, συμβέβηκεν ἐξ
ἀνάγκης ἑτέρου τοῦτο ὅπερ ἐστὶν εἶναι.

Θεαίτητος: λέγεις καθάπερ ἔχει.

Ξένος: πέμπτον δὴ τὴν θατέρου φύσιν λεκτέον ἐν τοῖς εἴδεσιν οὖσαν, ἐν οἷς
προαιρούμεθα (255c8-255e1).

Here the Stranger begins by distinguishing two ways in which something can be. The

first is to be 'oneself by oneself' (αὐτὰ καθ᾽ αὑτά), while the other is to be 'in relation to

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[308] In translating this sentence I deviate from the Brann et al. translation and instead follow that of Wiitala
2014b. Much hinges on the question of whether 'μετεῖχε τοῖν εἰδοῖν' in 255d5 is intended in the technical
sense of participating in a form, or instead in the non-technical sense of partaking of a look. I follow the
minority of commentators in assuming the former (cf. Rosen 1983: 269 and Wiitala 2014b: 165-171.) The
majority of commentators respond to the difficulty in construing the text in such a way as to capture the
force of the conditional in 255d4-d6 without suggesting that the forms 'being' and 'other' do not participate
in one another by assuming that the Stranger here is not talking about forms, but instead a different mode of
participation. (For early and influential versions of this view, see Campbell 1867: 152 and Taylor 1961:
161. For more recent articulations of this kind of interpretation, see Notomi 1999: 242 fn. 70 and Malcolm
2006: 275.) Wiitala 2014b: 168 rightly points out that 47 of the 48 uses of '*eidos*' in the *Sophist* are in a
technical sense implying forms (at 219a9, c2, d4, 220a7, a8, e6, 222d6, e3, 223c6, c9, 225c2, 226c11, e1,
e5, 227c7, c8, d13, 229c2, 230a9, 234b2, b3, 235d1, 236c6, d2, 239a10, 246b8, c8, 248a4, 249d1, 252a7,
253d1, 254c2, 255c5, d4, e1, 256e5, 258c3, d6, 266c3, 264c2, c4, 265a8, 266d6, e4, 267d6) while only one
is non-technical (266c3). Furthermore, Wiitala 2014b: 168-170 offers a plausible rendering of the
conditional sentence at 255d4-d6 in which the technical sense of 'μετεῖχε τοῖν εἰδοῖν' is captured without
unacceptable entailments for our understanding of the ontology at play in the Stranger's argument.
Because I think this allows us to make much better sense of the overall course of the text, I follow Wiitala
here.

[309] The various manuscript traditions disagree as to whether this term is '*pros alla*' or '*pros allēla,*' with
the latter most recently defended on philosophical grounds by Duncombe 2012. I continue to follow the
Duke manuscript and infer '*pros alla*,' but I do not think that my argument in what follows would be
challenged by reading '*pros allēla*' here.

another' (πρὸς ἄλλα). This passage has been the site of much scholarly debate,[310] and I take it that the Stranger is not here primarily aiming to make a technical distinction but instead is making a point about the metaphysics of being and otherness that shows that the two are not coextensive with reference to two different ways in which a participant can participate in a form.[311] That which participates in being *is* qua participant in being without reference to another (αὐτὰ καθ᾽ αὐτά). For example, as a participant in being, the letter G *is* only with reference to itself, not with reference to the letter R or anything else. *Qua* participant in being a participating entity can, at least in a sense, admit of an αὐτὰ καθ᾽ αὐτά relation. But there is no participant in otherness that, *qua* participant in otherness, admits of an αὐτὰ καθ᾽ αὐτά relationship. In other words, the participant in

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[310] Much has been made of the αὐτὰ καθ᾽ αὐτά and πρὸς ἄλλα distinction, and Crivelli 2012: 144-147 distinguishes five major types of interpretation. These are: (1) Plato is marking off the difference between being in the 'complete' (or, alternatively, 'existential') sense and being in the 'incomplete' (or, alternatively, 'predicative' sense), respectively. (See Brown 1986: 462 for a helpful discussion of the distinction between complete and incomplete senses of being. For a critical account of Plato's understanding of being with reference to his alleged failure to distinguish properly between these senses in the modern distinction between existence and predication, see Bostock 1984: 92-94). (2) The distinction is between that which *is* self-sufficiently and that which *is* with reference to another. For example, a finger is a finger only with reference to itself (or so the interpretation goes), while large is so only with reference to another, for example the pointer finger with reference to the ring finger. (Cornford 1935: 282 gives a helpful and early articulation of this kind of view, and the discussion in Bluck 1975: 145-150 represents a particularly strong version of this view, insofar as Bluck describes the rootedness of these two senses in a shared conception of being in a robust sense that is not oriented by the notion of existence. Vlastos 1970: 290 gives a more critical account.) (3) The distinction is related to the logical structure of a sentence as captured in modern predicate logic notation. Sentences regarding shared being, like '(a) Anna and (m) Maria are (O) 25 years old,' can be formalized as a conjunction, i.e., 'Oa & Om,' whereas sentences regarding shared difference, like 'Anna and Maria are (D) different,' cannot be formalized as a conjunction but only as a predicate with two shared subject terms, i.e., 'Dam.' (For this view, see de Vries 1988: 390-392.) (4) The Stranger is here identifying the distinction between statements of identity, i.e., X is X, from statements of predication, i.e., X is Y. (Owen 1971 represents a seminal articulation of this view.) (5) The Stranger is here differentiating between 'definitional' invocations of being and 'ordinary' invocations of being. (Meinwald 1991 offers a particularly clear articulation of this view. For a cautious and thorough defense of this interpretation, see Crivelli 2012: 145-149). My view is closest to (2), though I think that it requires an account of the distinction between modes of participation in forms that Cornford seems to have in mind but does not quite make explicit. I furthermore take this passage not to indicate anything like a doctrine of ways of being, but instead just a simple observation that allows the Stranger to make his point that otherness is other than being.

[311] In my understanding of the meaning of this distinction I am much indebted to Michael Wiitala, both for private correspondence and for his sharing with me an unpublished draft of a paper in which he advocates for a similar view.

otherness is always a participant in otherness *qua* a πρὸς ἄλλα relation with at least one

other. For example, the letter G is a participant in otherness with reference to the letter R,

but cannot possibly be a participant in otherness with reference only to itself. This is

similar to the relative forms discussed in the *Phaedo*, where Socrates is shown to be a

participant in smallness relative to his πρὸς ἄλλα relationships with Phaedo and Simmias.

This shows that some forms like being – and perhaps additional forms like unity and

sameness – can be participated in through αὐτὰ καθ᾽ αὐτά relations, while forms like

otherness, smallness, and coldness can only be participated in through πρὸς ἄλλα

relations. Given that being and otherness differ in this key regard, the Stranger shows

that they cannot be coextensive. Otherness, therefore, must be a fifth ontological kind

(255e3-6).

     With this, the Stranger summarizes the five kinds and the senses in which they are

not co-extensive but necessarily entail participation in one another. As Lesley Brown

2008 has shown,[312] this articulation neatly captures the necessary structuring relations of

the great kinds. The text is as follows:

> ES: So let's pronounce on the five in this way, taking them up one by one.
> THEAE: How?
> ES: First Motion – that is altogether [different] than Rest. Or how should we say
> it?
> THEAE: Just so.
> ES: Then it is not Rest.
> THEAE: In no way.
> ES: But it *is,* at any rate, because it participates in Being.
> THEAE: It is.
> ES: Now again, Motion is [different] than the Same.
> THEAE: That's about it.
> ES: Then it is not the Same.
> THEAE: No indeed.
> ES: But surely it was the same, since all things in turn participate in the same.
> THEAE: Very much so.

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[312] Brown 2008: 444-445.

ES: Then we must agree and also not find it distressing that Motion is the same and is not the Same. For it's not the case, when we say it's the same and not the Same, that we've used the term [in the same way].313 Rather, whenever we say Motion is the same, we speak of it that way because of its participation in the Same with respect to itself. And whenever we say it is not the Same, this in turn because of its community with [Difference], because of which community, Motion is separated off from the Same and has become not it but [different]. So that again it is correctly said to be *not* the Same.

THEAE: By all means.

ES: Then even if Motion itself were in some way to have a share in Rest, it would not be absurd to call it "resting"?

THEAE: That's very right, if indeed we're going to grant that some of the kinds are amenable to mixing with one another while others are not.

ES: And surely we've achieved the demonstration of this point before our present inquiry, by proving that it's this way according to nature.

THEAE: Of course.

ES: Then let's say it again: Motion is different than [Difference], just as it was different from both the Same and Rest?

THEAE: That's necessary.

ES: Then according to our present account, it is in some way *not* [different] as well as [different].

THEAE: True.

ES: Then what about the next thing: Since we've agreed that there are five kinds we've proposed to look at and look among, shall we claim that Motion is [different] than the three yet deny that it is [different] than the fourth?

THEAE: How could we? For it's impossible to grant that their number is less than what's come to light.

ES: Shall we therefore say and content fearlessly that Motion is other than Being?

THEAE: Most fearlessly.

ES: Then isn't it clearly the case that Motion in its very being is not-being – and also being, since it partakes of Being?

THEAE: It's as clear as can be.

ES: Therefore it's necessarily the case that Non-being *is,* both in the case of Motion and with respect to all the kinds. For with respect to all, the nature of [Difference], by producing each as [different from] Being, makes each not-being. So in this sense we will correctly say that all things are for the same reasons not-being and again, because they partake of Being, that they both *are* and [are beings].314

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313 Replacing Brann et al.'s 'similarly' with 'in the same way' in translating 'ὁμοίως' at 256a12, as this term (I think) better captures the stronger sense of sameness that the Stranger intends, and hence allows us to make better sense of the text.

314 Here I correct an apparent typo in the Brann et al. edition, which reads "…that they both *are* and are being" in translating 256e4. Since the Stranger concludes his sentence with the clause εἶναί τε καὶ ὄντα, i.e., with ὄντα in the plural, it is unclear to me as to why Brann et al. would translate this as "are *being*" rather than "are *beings*" (my emphasis).

Ξένος: ὧδε δὴ λέγωμεν ἐπὶ τῶν πέντε καθ᾽ ἓν ἀναλαμβάνοντες.
Θεαίτητος: πῶς;
Ξένος: πρῶτον μὲν κίνησιν, ὡς ἔστι παντάπασιν ἕτερον στάσεως. ἢ πῶς λέγομεν;
Θεαίτητος: οὕτως.
Ξένος: οὐ στάσις ἄρ᾽ ἐστίν.
Θεαίτητος: οὐδαμῶς.
Ξένος: ἔστι δέ γε διὰ τὸ μετέχειν τοῦ ὄντος.
Θεαίτητος: ἔστιν.
Ξένος: αὖθις δὴ πάλιν ἡ κίνησις ἕτερον ταὐτοῦ ἐστιν.
Θεαίτητος: σχεδόν.
Ξένος: οὐ ταὐτὸν ἄρα ἐστίν.
Θεαίτητος: οὐ γὰρ οὖν.
Ξένος: ἀλλὰ μὴν αὕτη γ᾽ ἦν ταὐτὸν διὰ τὸ μετέχειν αὖ πάντ᾽ αὐτοῦ.
Θεαίτητος: καὶ μάλα.
Ξένος: τὴν κίνησιν δὴ ταὐτόν τ᾽ εἶναι καὶ μὴ ταὐτὸν ὁμολογητέον καὶ οὐ δυσχεραντέον. οὐ γὰρ ὅταν εἴπωμεν αὐτὴν ταὐτὸν καὶ μὴ ταὐτόν, ὁμοίως εἰρήκαμεν, ἀλλ᾽ ὁπόταν μὲν ταὐτόν, διὰ τὴν μέθεξιν ταὐτοῦ πρὸς ἑαυτὴν οὕτω λέγομεν, ὅταν δὲ μὴ ταὐτόν, διὰ τὴν κοινωνίαν αὖ θατέρου, δι᾽ ἣν ἀποχωριζομένη ταὐτοῦ γέγονεν οὐκ ἐκεῖνο ἀλλ᾽ ἕτερον, ὥστε ὀρθῶς αὖ λέγεται πάλιν οὐ ταὐτόν.
Θεαίτητος: πάνυ μὲν οὖν.
Ξένος: οὐκοῦν κἂν εἴ πῃ μετελάμβανεν αὐτὴ κίνησις στάσεως, οὐδὲν ἂν ἄτοπον ἦν στάσιμον αὐτὴν προσαγορεύειν;
Θεαίτητος: ὀρθότατά γε, εἴπερ τῶν γενῶν συγχωρησόμεθα τὰ μὲν ἀλλήλοις ἐθέλειν μείγνυσθαι, τὰ δὲ μή.
Ξένος: καὶ μὴν ἐπί γε τὴν τούτου πρότερον ἀπόδειξιν ἢ τῶν νῦν ἀφικόμεθα, ἐλέγχοντες ὡς ἔστι κατὰ φύσιν ταύτῃ.
Θεαίτητος: πῶς γὰρ οὔ;
Ξένος: λέγωμεν δὴ πάλιν: ἡ κίνησίς ἐστιν ἕτερον τοῦ ἑτέρου, καθάπερ ταὐτοῦ τε ἦν ἄλλο καὶ τῆς στάσεως;
Θεαίτητος: ἀναγκαῖον.
Ξένος: οὐχ ἕτερον ἄρ᾽ ἐστί πῃ καὶ ἕτερον κατὰ τὸν νυνδὴ λόγον.
Θεαίτητος: ἀληθῆ.
Ξένος: τί οὖν δὴ τὸ μετὰ τοῦτο; ἆρ᾽ αὖ τῶν μὲν τριῶν ἕτερον αὐτὴν φήσομεν εἶναι, τοῦ δὲ τετάρτου μὴ φῶμεν, ὁμολογήσαντες αὐτὰ εἶναι πέντε, περὶ ὧν καὶ ἐν οἷς προυθέμεθα σκοπεῖν;
Θεαίτητος: καὶ πῶς; ἀδύνατον γὰρ συγχωρεῖν ἐλάττω τὸν ἀριθμὸν τοῦ νυνδὴ φανέντος.
Ξένος: ἀδεῶς ἄρα τὴν κίνησιν ἕτερον εἶναι τοῦ ὄντος διαμαχόμενοι λέγωμεν;
Θεαίτητος: ἀδεέστατα μὲν οὖν.
Ξένος: οὐκοῦν δὴ σαφῶς ἡ κίνησις ὄντως οὐκ ὄν ἐστι καὶ ὄν, ἐπείπερ τοῦ ὄντος μετέχει;
Θεαίτητος: σαφέστατά γε.
Ξένος: ἔστιν ἄρα ἐξ ἀνάγκης τὸ μὴ ὂν ἐπί τε κινήσεως εἶναι καὶ κατὰ πάντα τὰ γένη: κατὰ πάντα γὰρ ἡ θατέρου φύσις ἕτερον ἀπεργαζομένη τοῦ ὄντος ἕκαστον οὐκ ὂν ποιεῖ, καὶ σύμπαντα δὴ κατὰ ταὐτὰ οὕτως οὐκ ὄντα ὀρθῶς ἐροῦμεν, καὶ πάλιν, ὅτι μετέχει τοῦ ὄντος, εἶναί τε καὶ ὄντα. (255e8-256e4)

Brown has shown that, in this passage, the Stranger distinguishes between the senses of being that characterize motion, as a sample great kind, to explain the communion of kinds.[315] That is, she indicates that the Stranger's argument in the text takes the following form: (i) Motion is different from rest (255e10) so motion is not rest (255e14) but motion is (256a1) because motion participates in being (256a1); (ii) Motion is different from the same (256a3) so motion is not the same (256a5), but motion is the same (256a7) because motion participates in the same (256a7-b1); (iii) Motion is different from difference (256c5) so motion is not difference (256c8), but motion is different (256c8) [because motion participates in difference (255e1-6)];[316] (iv) Motion is different from being (256d5), so motion is not being (256d8), but motion is being (256d8-9) because motion participates in being (256d9). In other words, Brown's structural rendering of the passage shows the careful ways in which the Stranger distinguishes motion from the other forms while indicating its necessary participation in the other forms.

The five kinds have therefore been shown to be necessary ontological constituents of any entity, including any form. The Stranger has inaugurated a new kind of pluralism, but one based on kinds of being as opposed to material elements, and furthermore one in which the co-constitution of the kinds is asserted. Before concluding the discussion of the great kinds, I note that the Stranger nowhere suggests that this list of five is exhaustive. Whether there are other great kinds is not discussed, and other dialogues give

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[315] Ibid, substituting 'motion' for Brown's 'change' in translating *kinēsis* and 'rest' for Brown's 'stability' in translating *stasis*.
[316] While Brown argues that this claim is not explicitly in the text, I argue that it was stated explicitly earlier, i.e., at 255e1-6.

us good textual hints that suggest that additional great kinds will be necessary when we continue the discussion further. For example, the Parmenides character considers likeness, unlikeness, wholeness, and multitude in similar terms alongside the five great kinds mentioned in the *Sophist* (e.g., at *Parmenides* 129d2-130b8).[317] I suggest that there is certainly no reason to think that any of these four additional terms from the *Parmenides* would not yield to the same or nearly the same kind of analysis that the Stranger offers regarding the great kinds in the *Sophist*.[318] The value of the *Sophist* discussion of the great kinds is its indicating the necessity of structure and the sense in which necessary being does not entail a simple ontological principle or naïve monism, rather than (for example) the view that the count of 'five' was the proper ontological count that previous ontologists had missed. That is, the Stranger does not offer a mere pluralistic ontology with five great kinds in a reductive or conclusive way but is instead here aiming to indicate the necessity of composite structure that any ontologically primary term like 'being' necessarily entails. This will become further evident when the interlocutors turn their attention to the sense in which the nonbeing of a given form is 'unlimited' (ἄπειρον), as they are about to do.

5.3.2   Otherness and structure (256e – 258b)

With these distinctions regarding structure established, the interlocutors are prepared to return to the notions of nonbeing and being with a transformed perspective.

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[317] Cf. Smith 2019: 7 fn. 20.

[318] For example, wholeness is other than rest, so wholeness is not rest; but wholeness *is* because wholeness participates in being, etc. Because the hypotheses in the *Parmenides* take up the notion of wholeness (or oneness) specifically, this seems like a particularly apt ontological principle to add to the 'list' of the great kinds. And yet Plato does not have the Stranger do this here.

They will conclude their account that being is necessary and unopposed and that that

which seemingly opposes being in fact opposes sameness. They will furthermore show

the meaning of the earlier claim that nonbeing *is* and being *is not*, and offer the context

for a new understanding of the goodness of being in terms of its necessary structure. The

Stranger continues to expand the account of being and nonbeing with reference to the

clarifications yielded by the discussion of the great kinds as follows:

> ES: Then regarding each of the forms, [being] is many (πολύ), while [nonbeing] is unlimited in multitude (ἄπειρον […] πλήθει).[319]
> THEAE: So it seems.
> ES: Then we must also say that Being itself is [different] than the [different ones].
> THEAE: Necessarily.
> ES: And also that however many the [different] are, in relation to so many, Being *is not*. For insofar as it is not those [different ones], it is itself one; and again it *is not* in relation to those [different ones], which are unlimited in number.
> THEAE: That's pretty much the case.
> ES: Then we must not be distressed at this either, since it is the nature of the kinds to have community with one another.

> Ξένος: περὶ ἕκαστον ἄρα τῶν εἰδῶν πολὺ μέν ἐστι τὸ ὄν, ἄπειρον δὲ πλήθει τὸ μὴ ὄν.
> Θεαίτητος: ἔοικεν.
> Ξένος: οὐκοῦν καὶ τὸ ὂν αὐτὸ τῶν ἄλλων ἕτερον εἶναι λεκτέον.
> Θεαίτητος: ἀνάγκη.
> Ξένος: καὶ τὸ ὂν ἄρ᾽ ἡμῖν, ὅσαπέρ ἐστι τὰ ἄλλα, κατὰ τοσαῦτα οὐκ ἔστιν· ἐκεῖνα γὰρ οὐκ ὂν ἓν μὲν αὐτό ἐστιν, ἀπέραντα δὲ τὸν ἀριθμὸν τἆλλα οὐκ ἔστιν αὖ.
> Θεαίτητος: σχεδὸν οὕτως.
> Ξένος: οὐκοῦν δὴ καὶ ταῦτα οὐ δυσχεραντέον, ἐπείπερ ἔχει κοινωνίαν ἀλλήλοις ἡ τῶν γενῶν φύσις. (256e6-257a10).

Here the Stranger offers a succinct articulation of the ontological structure that he has

been sketching throughout the dialogue of the sense in which a form entails both the

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[319] Here I deviate from the Brann et al. translation. Brann et al. take the τὸ ὄν and τὸ μὴ ὄν in 256e6-7 to refer to the forms Being and Nonbeing respectively. I hold instead that there is good reason to take them to refer instead to the being and nonbeing of each form. I think that this certainly allows us to make better sense of the preceding clause, περὶ ἕκαστον ἄρα τῶν εἰδῶν, or 'Then regarding each of the forms,' i.e., in their being and nonbeing. I think it also makes better sense of what follows. Cf. Cornford 1935: 288 fn. 1, Duerlinger 2005: 127 and 149 fn. 65, Ambuel 2007: 232, and Wiitala 2014b: 172. For alternative interpretations among translators, see Fowler 1921: 414 and White in Cooper 1997: 280.

primary principle of its nature, which is its identity as a form, and its reliance on other

forms to be given to instantiation and hence constitution from without. He begins by

distinguishing between the being of a form as 'many' (πολύ) and its nonbeing as

'unlimited in multitude' (ἄπειρον πλήθει).[320] That is, the being of a form is many insofar

as the form is structured by the given forms in which it participates. For example, the

form 'cat' *is* insofar as its determinate nature requires its instantiation partake of being,

motion, rest, sameness, difference, life, mammalian life, four-footedness, multitude, and

many other forms besides. The Stranger will soon unpack the exact sense in which the

nonbeing of the form is 'unlimited in multitude' (more on this below).

In the case of the form being, which is specifically at issue in this passage, the

matter is no different, as the being of being is many. This is because the form being in its

posterior sense entails being, motion, rest, sameness, difference, and presumably other

forms such as unity, wholeness, etc. This, then, is a central lesson from the *Sophist*.

Being is both the primary ontological ground *and* is itself many, insofar as it requires a

structure for instantiation. Thus, the naïve monists had offered an explanatorily

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[320] The meaning of this difficult passage has been much debated. One interpretation is that of Cornford 1935: 288 and Bluck 1975: 157-158, who that it that the Stranger here means that "there is much that a form *is* and all manner of things that it *is* not," i.e., that nonbeing here is indeterminate and refers to anything other. Cornford takes this to be established to prove that the same is true for "Existence itself" (Cornford 1935: 288 fn.1) while Bluck takes the latter clause to suggest that there are many forms different than the form in question (Bluck 1975: 158). I am instead taking the alternative view of otherness as determinate negation, best captured by Lee 1972. Considering the paradigmatic example of the parts of knowledge, Lee describes the relationship between knowledge itself and an object of knowledge (say, sound) as structuring the relationship between the two and yielding a certain kind of knowledge (say, music). This, he argues, is fundamentally the same as the relationship between otherness itself and a given object (say, X), the mediation of which is the otherness relation (not-X). In this sense, music is what he calls a "construct" (273), derived from the sound and (what I would call the form) knowledge, while a given instance of otherness is analogously a construct derived from otherness itself and that from which it is other. Lee therefore argues that, instead of having X and not-X posited with relation to one another, Plato has the Eleatic Stranger present "an opposition mediated by Otherness" (273). My understanding of otherness throughout draws heavily on Lee's view. For discussion of the relationship between this passage and the 'indeterminate dyad' of which Aristotle writes, see Sallis 1975: 519-522; other relevant texts on the connection between the 'indeterminate dyad' and Eleatic dialogues include Miller 1999 and 2016: especially 337-349.

inadequate account. An explanatorily adequate account of being requires forms, and hence some sense of pluralism. But that the nonbeing of a given form is 'unlimited' (ἄπειρον) suggests the impossibility of offering an ontological system with reference to count. In other words, the Stranger has not given us a counting ontology, but instead a framework for thinking of being in a primarily unified sense that also entails a composite structure of mutually co-constitutive forms. This is the thrust of the Stranger's next comments, that is, that "Being itself is other than the other ones" and hence "it *is not* in relation to these other ones" (257a1-a7). The account of the ontological primacy of being has in this way forced the interlocutors to grant that being itself depends on co-constitution from without in a meaningful sense. And yet, "insofar as being is not those other ones, it is itself one" (257a5-6). It is this very nexus of interrelated forms and the structuring relationship of otherness (nonbeing) between forms that ensures that being is itself one.

The Stranger continues next by making explicit the conception of negation that this consideration of nonbeing has demanded. Determinate negation will later be at issue as the interlocutors turn to determinate negation as a constitutive element, first in a preliminary way in the non-bifurcatory cuts in the account of divine and human making (265a3-266b1, see section 6.2), and more decisively later when making their non-bifurcatory cuts in the *Statesman*.[321] The discussion is as follows:

> ES: Whenever we say ['what is not'], as it seems, we don't say something
> contrary to ['what is'] but only other.[322]

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[321] I discuss this in the concluding section, 6.2. For more on what supports the change between dialectical methods and the role of determinate negation in the *Statesman*, see Miller 1999 and 2016 and Smith 2018 and 2019.

[322] Here I deviate from Brann et al. and take the τὸ μὴ ὂν and ὄντος in 257b3-4 to refer respectively to the conditions of nonbeing and being, rather than the forms of nonbeing and being. Cf. Crivelli 2012: 179-180.

THEAE: How so?
ES: For instance, whenever we say that something is "non-great," do we appear to you at that moment to mean by this phrase the small any more than the equal?
THEAE: How could we?
ES: Then whenever the negative is said to signify a contrary, we won't grant it, but only this: that "non" and "not," when placed before the names that come after them, proclaim something other than those names, or rather proclaim something other than the things to which the names uttered after the negative are given.

Ξένος: ὁπόταν τὸ μὴ ὂν λέγωμεν, ὡς ἔοικεν, οὐκ ἐναντίον τι λέγομεν τοῦ ὄντος ἀλλ᾽ ἕτερον μόνον.
Θεαίτητος: πῶς;
Ξένος: οἷον ὅταν εἴπωμέν τι μὴ μέγα, τότε μᾶλλόν τί σοι φαινόμεθα τὸ σμικρὸν ἢ τὸ ἴσον δηλοῦν τῷ ῥήματι;
Θεαίτητος: καὶ πῶς;
Ξένος: οὐκ ἄρ᾽, ἐναντίον ὅταν ἀπόφασις λέγηται σημαίνειν, συγχωρησόμεθα, τοσοῦτον δὲ μόνον, ὅτι τῶν ἄλλων τὶ μηνύει τὸ μὴ καὶ τὸ οὒ προτιθέμενα τῶν ἐπιόντων ὀνομάτων, μᾶλλον δὲ τῶν πραγμάτων περὶ ἅττ᾽ ἂν κέηται τὰ ἐπιφθεγγόμενα ὕστερον τῆς ἀποφάσεως ὀνόματα (257b3-c3).

Here the Stranger is addressing the ontology of nonbeing.[323] First, he points out that 'nonbeing' does not mean 'contrary to being.' In other words, it might seem on the surface of things that 'nonbeing' signifies 'what is in no way' (*to medamos on*), as in the persistent error of mortals that Parmenides has his goddess consider. But the privative 'non-' here does not signify contrariness to being. (Indeed, the Stranger will soon make explicit that being is unopposed and nonbeing in this sense is impossible.) Instead, 'nonbeing' signifies a specific kind of otherness. The Stranger's example is that 'non-great' signifies both 'small with respect to' and 'equal with respect to.' The same is true regarding nonbeing, since saying that something '*is not*' does not entail contrariness to being, but instead difference with respect to being in such a way. To put the matter in

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I think this is the more natural interpretation, especially given that these conditions and not the forms themselves are what are at issue in the passage immediately following.

[323] Many commentators take it that the Stranger is here shifting his discussion from 'negative identity statements' to 'negative predication statements.' These include Moravcsik 1962: 66, Wiggins 1971: 201, McDowell 1982: 67, Ray 1984: 69-77, Ferejohn 1989: 257-282, and Frede 1996: 405-412. I disagree and argue that the Stranger (and Plato) continue to use 'being' in a consistent sense that is robust enough to capture both identity and predication. Cf. van Eck 1995: 25-37.

modern terms, saying that 'X *is not*' in the 'complete'[324] sense corresponding to the complete sense of 'X *is*' is impossible, because the very presence of a subject term and the verb 'to be' indicate that the subject must be in some sense and cannot not *be* in the 'complete' sense.

   To see how this must be the case, let us consider an example. To say that (e.g.) 'they *are not*' must mean that they are different with respect to being in a particular mode, though it is elided in this particular sentence or clause. Indeed, this construction appears in the *Sophist* at 233c8, where the Stranger says the precise phrase 'they *are not*' (οὐκ ὄντες γε) explicitly.[325] But construing this in the sense of pure contrariness to being is incoherent. In other words, this cannot mean "they *are* in absolutely no way whatsoever.' This is because, as Parmenides has shown, anything that is brought to thinking and speech *is* at least in some sense. Instead, it must be the case that a term has been suggested or elided in the saying of 'they are not.' Indeed, this is the case at 233c8, where the Stranger is eliding the predicate term from the preceding sentence to make his point, as he had previously said that sophists 'appear wise to their students in all things' (πάντα ἄρα σοφοὶ τοῖς μαθηταῖς φαίνονται, 233c6). Rather than suggesting the impossibility of negative predication, the Stranger has shown the true meaning of the privative 'non-' in the context of nonbeing by indicating that it is still a coherent and valuable way of speaking, given that it does suggest some positive content, i.e., 'otherness with respect to the given mode of being.'[326]

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[324] Following Brown 1986.
[325] Cf. Brown 1986.
[326] In modern logic, 'non-' is used as a 'term-complement' to suggest all objects opposed to a certain predicate. That is, in modern logic the set of X and non-X is taken to be exhaustive of all things that are. But the Stranger rightly points out that certain values of 'X' do not indicate opposition, but instead merely difference, as in the example of the 'non-great' encompassing both 'less' and 'equal.'

We see once again that otherness was the principle that the bifurcatory division

exercises entailed tracing earlier in the dialogue. As a constitutive ontological element

separating one whole from another, otherness is what separates (e.g.) the senses of

hunting through striking from above from hunting through hooking from below that

allowed the interlocutors initially to account for the angler. In other words, the sense of

being in its grounding and fundamental sense has required an account of its co-

constitution through nonbeing. Put yet another way, the Stranger shows that it must be

the case that nonbeing is a constitutive form that is causally prior to other forms and to

particulars.

> Given this, the Stranger turns to the nature of difference as follows:
>
> ES: It appears to me that the nature of the Other is all chopped up – just like knowledge.
> THEAE: How so?
> ES: Knowledge is also one, I suppose; but each marked-off part of it that applies to some subject matter has a certain title peculiar to it. For this reason there are many so-called arts and sciences.
> THEAE: By all means.
> ES: Then the parts of the nature of the Other are also in this same condition, even though this nature is one.
>
> Ξένος: ἡ θατέρου μοι φύσις φαίνεται κατακεκερματίσθαι καθάπερ ἐπιστήμη.
> Θεαίτητος: πῶς;
> Ξένος: μία μέν ἐστί που καὶ ἐκείνη, τὸ δ᾽ ἐπί τῳ γιγνόμενον μέρος αὐτῆς ἕκαστον ἀφορισθὲν ἐπωνυμίαν ἴσχει τινὰ ἑαυτῆς ἰδίαν: διὸ πολλαὶ τέχναι τ᾽ εἰσὶ λεγόμεναι καὶ ἐπιστῆμαι.
> Θεαίτητος: πάνυ μὲν οὖν.
> Ξένος: οὐκοῦν καὶ τὰ τῆς θατέρου φύσεως μόρια μιᾶς οὔσης ταὐτὸν πέπονθε τοῦτο. (257c8-d5).

Here the Stranger addresses an aspect of otherness that has arisen in the account.

Otherness is 'chopped up' (κατακεκερματίσθαι) insofar as it acts to divide things like one

another in kind. The example of things like one another in kind that the Stranger chooses

is knowledge (ἐπιστήμη), which is itself 'one,' and yet is divided into many because of

otherness.[327] Otherness is, as the Stranger says, that which 'marks off' each 'part of it that applies to some subject matter' and 'has a certain title peculiar to it' (257c11-d2). In other words, otherness is the principle of ontological specificity that structures a whole (here, knowledge) from within such to differentiate its various parts in relation to one another (here, the various modes of knowledge, like chemistry, veterinary science, etc.) For this reason, i.e., because of otherness, there are many arts and sciences, just as the tone continuum represented an ontological unit structured by otherness separating off the various notes from one another. Likewise, given the necessary failings of naïve monism, otherness must be introduced as a principle that separates off the natures of each constitutive ontological element from one another.[328]

The Stranger makes one final move in articulating the account of otherness as follows:

> ES: Is there some part of the Other that is opposed to the Beautiful?
> THEAE: There is.
> ES: Shall we say that this is nameless or that it has some title?
> THEAE: That it has one. For what in each case we call "non-beautiful" is other than the nature of the Beautiful and of nothing else.
> ES: Come then, and tell me this.
> THEAE: What?
> ES: Has the Non-beautiful turned out to be just this – a certain other [thing][329] that is marked off from one certain kind among the things that *are* and again is opposed to a certain one of the things that *are*?
> THEAE: Just so.
> ES: Then, as it seems, the Non-beautiful turns out to be a certain opposition of

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[327] For a helpful consideration of the relationship between difference and knowledge as 'chopped up,' see Lee 1972: especially 269-276, who argues that this analogy is fundamental for understanding the notion of otherness. See also footnote 318 above.

[328] By this I mean that a pluralistic ontologist advocating for an account of the all in terms of the hot and the cold fails to recognize that one must posit the further principle, namely otherness (nonbeing), that allows for the separation of the natures of the two elements, in addition to the sense of commonness that the Stranger identified when addressing the pluralists.

[329] The translation of ἄλλο τι at 257e2 is controversial, but here I follow the general schematic interpretation used by Brann et al., deviating only insofar as I add 'thing.' *Pace* Owen 1971: 223 n. 31, I do not take it that here the Stranger is considering the form of the Non-beautiful, but instead is merely describing the non-beautiful as it is opposed to beauty to establish that it is among the things that *are*.

being against being.
THEAE: Quite right.
ES: What then: According to this account, is the Beautiful for us any more one of the things that *are* and the Non-beautiful any less?
THEAE: Not at all.
ES: Then the Non-great as well as the Great itself must likewise be said to *be*.
THEAE: Likewise.
ES: And in the same way, then, mustn't the Non-just be posited with the Just, in that the one *is* in no way more than its other?
THEAE: Certainly.
ES: And we shall speak of the others in the same way, since the nature of the Other has shown itself to be among the things that *are*. And if that nature *is*, it is also necessary to posit that its part in no less degree *are*.
THEAE: Of course.
ES: Then, it seems, the opposition between the nature of a part of the Other and the nature of Being (in that they are set against each other)[330] has beinghood to no less degree – if there is sanction for saying so – than Being itself. For it signifies not the contrary of Being only this much: its other.
THEAE: That's very clear.
ES: What then should we call this nature?
THEAE: Clearly Non-being, the very thing we were seeking because of the sophist.

Ξένος: ἔστι τῷ καλῷ τι θατέρου μόριον ἀντιτιθέμενον;
Θεαίτητος: ἔστιν.
Ξένος: τοῦτ᾽ οὖν ἀνώνυμον ἐροῦμεν ἤ τιν᾽ ἔχον ἐπωνυμίαν;
Θεαίτητος: ἔχον· ὃ γὰρ μὴ καλὸν ἑκάστοτε φθεγγόμεθα, τοῦτο οὐκ ἄλλου τινὸς ἕτερόν ἐστιν ἢ τῆς τοῦ καλοῦ φύσεως.
Ξένος: ἴθι νυν τόδε μοι λέγε.
Θεαίτητος: τὸ ποῖον;
Ξένος: ἄλλο τι τῶν ὄντων τινὸς ἑνὸς γένους ἀφορισθὲν καὶ πρός τι τῶν ὄντων αὖ πάλιν ἀντιτεθὲν οὕτω συμβέβηκεν εἶναι τὸ μὴ καλόν;
Θεαίτητος: οὕτως.
Ξένος: ὄντος δὴ πρὸς ὂν ἀντίθεσις, ὡς ἔοικ᾽, εἶναί τις συμβαίνει τὸ μὴ καλόν.
Θεαίτητος: ὀρθότατα.
Ξένος: τί οὖν; κατὰ τοῦτον τὸν λόγον ἆρα μᾶλλον μὲν τὸ καλὸν ἡμῖν ἐστι τῶν ὄντων, ἧττον δὲ τὸ μὴ καλόν;
Θεαίτητος: οὐδέν.
Ξένος: ὁμοίως ἄρα τὸ μὴ μέγα καὶ τὸ μέγα αὐτὸ εἶναι λεκτέον;
Θεαίτητος: ὁμοίως.
Ξένος: οὐκοῦν καὶ τὸ μὴ δίκαιον τῷ δικαίῳ κατὰ ταὐτὰ θετέον πρὸς τὸ μηδέν τι μᾶλλον εἶναι θάτερον θατέρου;
Θεαίτητος: τί μήν;

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[330] Crivelli 2012: 216 fn. 122 discusses the difficulty in translating this sentence on purely linguistic grounds, given that it is grammatically opaque. Here I continue to follow Brann et al.

Ξένος: καὶ τἆλλα δὴ ταύτη λέξομεν, ἐπείπερ ἡ θατέρου φύσις ἐφάνη τῶν ὄντων οὖσα, ἐκείνης δὲ οὔσης ἀνάγκη δὴ καὶ τὰ μόρια αὐτῆς μηδενὸς ἧττον ὄντα τιθέναι.
Θεαίτητος: πῶς γὰρ οὔ;
Ξένος: οὐκοῦν, ὡς ἔοικεν, ἡ τῆς θατέρου μορίου φύσεως καὶ τῆς τοῦ ὄντος πρὸς ἄλληλα ἀντικειμένων ἀντίθεσις οὐδὲν ἧττον, εἰ θέμις εἰπεῖν, αὐτοῦ τοῦ ὄντος οὐσία ἐστίν, οὐκ ἐναντίον ἐκείνῳ σημαίνουσα ἀλλὰ τοσοῦτον μόνον, ἕτερον ἐκείνου.
Θεαίτητος: σαφέστατά γε.
Ξένος: τίν᾽ οὖν αὐτὴν προσείπωμεν;
Θεαίτητος: δῆλον ὅτι τὸ μὴ ὄν, ὃ διὰ τὸν σοφιστὴν ἐζητοῦμεν, αὐτό ἐστι τοῦτο. (257d6-258b9).

Here the Stranger continues to expand the account of otherness by considering the ways in which its participants partake of it in relation to other forms. He chooses the example of the "non-beautiful"[331] to describe the way in which partaking of difference with reference to beauty 'marks off' the given participant from the opposed form (here, beauty) through participation in otherness,[332] and in turn this entails that the thing be 'set against' the form beautiful.

With this established, the interlocutors continue as the Stranger argues that that which is modified by a negative term has an equal share of being as that which does not. So for example, the Beautiful and Non-beautiful, Great and Non-great, and Just and Unjust all have an equal share of being. Each is a form that is structured through its participation in various forms from within the web of the communion on forms, including

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[331] The meaning of this is debated. Cornford 1935: 293 took this to refer to the full set of forms other than the form of the beautiful. Runciman 1962: 101 argues *contra* Cornford that this must imply otherness with respect to the beautiful. For a helpful discussion of why this passage must entail an understanding of the beautiful *qua* the form beauty and why this entails a so-called 'gradational ontology,' see Bluck 1975: 168-171.

[332] Commentators debate as to whether this 'marking off' entails simply participation in the form otherness (or some version of such an interpretation of the form of nonbeing as it is at play in this passage), or if it entails marking the non-beautiful thing off from a host of incompatible forms that includes the beautiful. Here I follow Owen 1971: 223 fn. 31 in arguing that the former must be the case. For an overview of this overall interpretive problem, see Crivelli 2012: 191-192. Crivelli discusses this general interpretive problem in depth, citing and evaluating different ways in which various interpretations of this passage have been taken up.

(at least) the five great kinds (and presumably other necessary forms as well). They

should not be concerned that the sophist will reject the claim that he partakes of the form

'non-wise' because non-wisdom *is not*, because the interlocutors have established that

this '*is not*' does not mean being-in-no-way, but instead an elided second-place term that

indicates that through which the subject is engaged in a πρὸς ἄλλα relation, i.e., in the

case of the non-wise, wisdom. In other words, the parts of otherness signify only

otherness with relation to a given term, not to being itself, since this is impossible.

5.4   Chapter 5 Conclusion (258b – 259b)

The Stranger concludes via rhetorical questions soliciting Theaetetus' agreement

that nonbeing 'falls short of none of the others in beinghood' (258b10-b12), and hence

that 'Non-being *was* and *is* non-being, to be counted as one form among the many things

that *are*" (258c3-c6). He concludes his 'conversation' with the conjured Parmenides,

again pointing to their being perceived to be 'disobeying' Parmenides' injunction against

thinking 'that things that are not, *are*' (258c8-d3) and summarizes their findings

regarding being in its necessary, fundamental, and unopposed sense and the necessary

structure that this entails as follows:

> [L]et no one tell us that we are declaring Non-being to be the contrary of Being
> and then are daring to say that this contrary *is*. For way back we bade farewell to
> speaking of some contrary to Being, whether it *is* or it *is not*, whether is speakable
> or altogether unspeakable. But as for what we've just said Non-being is, let
> someone either persuade us that we haven't spoken well by refuting us or – so
> long as he can't – he too must say just what we do: The kinds intermix with one
> another; and because Being and the Other have passed through all and one
> another, the Other, since it has participated in Being, *is* on account of this
> participation, yet is not that in which it has participated, but other; and since it is
> other, it must very clearly be non-being. On the other hand, Being, since it has
> had a share in the Other, would be other than the other kinds; and since it is other

than all those, it is not each of them nor all of them taken together, but itself. As a result, Being in turn indisputably *is not* in thousands upon thousands of cases; and the others too, taken one by one and all together, in many cases *are* and in many cases *are not*.

μὴ τοίνυν ἡμᾶς εἴπῃ τις ὅτι τοὐναντίον τοῦ ὄντος τὸ μὴ ὂν ἀποφαινόμενοι τολμῶμεν λέγειν ὡς ἔστιν. ἡμεῖς γὰρ περὶ μὲν ἐναντίου τινὸς αὐτῷ χαίρειν πάλαι λέγομεν, εἴτ᾽ ἔστιν εἴτε μή, λόγον ἔχον ἢ καὶ παντάπασιν ἄλογον· ὃ δὲ νῦν εἰρήκαμεν εἶναι τὸ μὴ ὄν, ἢ πεισάτω τις ὡς οὐ καλῶς λέγομεν ἐλέγξας, ἢ μέχριπερ ἂν ἀδυνατῇ, λεκτέον καὶ ἐκείνῳ καθάπερ ἡμεῖς λέγομεν, ὅτι συμμείγνυταί τε ἀλλήλοις τὰ γένη καὶ τό τε ὂν καὶ θάτερον διὰ πάντων καὶ δι᾽ ἀλλήλων διεληλυθότε τὸ μὲν ἕτερον μετασχὸν τοῦ ὄντος ἔστι μὲν διὰ ταύτην τὴν μέθεξιν, οὐ μὴν ἐκεῖνό γε οὗ μετέσχεν ἀλλ᾽ ἕτερον, ἕτερον δὲ τοῦ ὄντος ὂν ἔστι σαφέστατα ἐξ ἀνάγκης εἶναι μὴ ὄν· τὸ δὲ ὂν αὖ θατέρου μετειληφὸς ἕτερον τῶν ἄλλων ἂν εἴη γενῶν, ἕτερον δ᾽ ἐκείνων ἁπάντων ὂν οὐκ ἔστιν ἕκαστον αὐτῶν οὐδὲ σύμπαντα τὰ ἄλλα πλὴν αὐτό, ὥστε τὸ ὂν ἀναμφισβητήτως αὖ μυρία ἐπὶ μυρίοις οὐκ ἔστι, καὶ τἆλλα δὴ καθ᾽ ἕκαστον οὕτω καὶ σύμπαντα πολλαχῇ μὲν ἔστι, πολλαχῇ δ᾽ οὐκ ἔστιν. (258e6-259b7).

Here the interlocutors conclude their investigation into the nature of being. Being in its most grounding and foundational sense, as a primary ontological constituent, is unopposed and does not have a contrary, and this the interlocutors have shown by refusing to speak of the contrary of being in keeping with Parmenides. But being, in this grounding and necessary sense, also entails a structure, including the structuring characteristic of nonbeing or otherness. This structure must be composed of kinds that are not identical but do indeed intermix and being and otherness must be among these intermixing kinds. And this analysis of being holds in turn for all other forms, whose co-constitutive natures derive both from within (in a certain sense) and without (in another sense), and whose necessary partaking of one another for instantiation indicates the necessity with which they, taken together, form a web of infinite magnitude of co-constitutive interrelations. Being, in this sense, is one and many.

The Parmenidean notion of being has been salvaged and clarified to show that it does not prohibit the possibility of plurality, but instead explains plurality with reference

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to a grounding unity that demands further complex specificity. But by showing that being is structured, the interlocutors have indicated the need for the measure that constitutes *good* structure. The account of being, therefore, has demanded an account of the good.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION (259E – 268E)

6.1   The structure of speech (259e – 264c)

In this concluding section, I want to trace out two threads that will continue to develop in the final parts of the *Sophist* and the turn taken in the *Statesman*. These are (i) the senses in which the ontological structure at play in the investigation becomes increasingly complex following the notions like forms, being as power, and commingling that have been developed by the interlocutors, and (ii) the sense in which this expanded account of the structure of being continues further to demand a central role for *goodness*. The two are tied together because structure demands goodness as an ordering principle, and this issue becomes increasingly apparent as the conception of structure deepens and the violent commingling that is possible in speech arises and is addressed. And while the consideration of being in terms of its bifurcatory structure proves to be useful in accounting for the sophist, it will be shown to be merely propaedeutic toward deeper conceptions in what is to follow. Hence the conversation in the *Sophist* proves to be intrinsically valuable but not self-sufficient or self-contained; it offers a lesson in Platonic metaphysics and epistemology, but this lesson is not exhaustive of these subjects and instead indicates new methodological and conceptual horizons to explore. In this way,

the dialogue has given us an exercise in learning how to think in a certain way that will be of use as the matter gets increasingly complicated.

We begin with the rich discussion of truth and falsity (259e-264c) that follows the preceding sections in the text and has been the site of much scholarly debate. While there is much to say about this passage, I will here focus on (1) the ways in which structure is analogous across true speech and the communing of forms, and how this allows the interlocutors to develop their understanding of the structure of necessary being and intermixing that has been discussed thus far in the dialogue by considering the sense in which being is a necessary mediating term between the determinate wholes through which structure is actualized; and (2) the senses in which the structuring power of speech does *not* reflect the communing of ontological kinds, but instead represents the possibility of enacting a structure that does violence to the entities thereby structured by blending together entities that do not in fact blend, pointing further to the need for an account of goodness conceived as a primary ontological principle that makes possible a good intermixing.

The Stranger says that speech has arisen in the discussion in the context of the interweaving of the forms (259e6-7). The passage hence offers occasion to consider both interweaving through the notion of speech, and speech through the notion of interweaving. Speech furthermore shows the failure of the late learners' view and salvages the possibility of philosophy as a dialectical investigation into the commingling of beings (260a6-8).[333] The interlocutors continue their discussion by addressing the question of whether nonbeing, which they have determined *is* as constitutive and

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[333] Cf. Moravcsik 1962: 60 and Malcolm 1967: 144-145.

determinate negation, mixes with opinion and speech. To consider this, the Stranger

proposes to treat 'names' (ὀνομάτα) in the same manner as the interlocutors had

previously treated letters, musical notes, and forms, i.e., in such a way as to allow for an

understanding of the nature of their communing (261d1-3). As was the case in

addressing the late learners, the interlocutors hypothesize that some names are amenable

to intermixing while some are not (261d4-7), though this does not work in the purely

analogous way in which Theaetetus initially anticipates.[334] Instead, the Stranger shows

that through speech in the broad sense, words can in principle be assembled in any order,

e.g., (i) 'Theaetetus sits,' (ii) 'Theaetetus flies,'[335] and (iii) 'lion deer horse.'[336] First,

only some combinations of words like (i) and (ii) entail an actual indication of a state of

affairs while others like (iii) draw upon things that *are* but do not 'bring to completion'

through 'weaving together' (cf. 262c6-7), and hence do not indicate anything decisive.[337]

Therefore, although they indicate the potential of a given word to intermix with another

at least in the sense of a vocal act, intermixings of words like (iii) do not constitute

speech in the proper sense (i.e., in the sense of *logos*). This, in the Stranger's words,

suggests 'that words said in a row and indicating something fit together, while those that

signify nothing in their sequence are non-fitting' (261d11-e2). This reflects what the

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[334] Theaetetus initially anticipates that words will only fit together relative to their natures on the model of forms, but the Stranger identifies this misconception at 262b1-3 and works out a more nuanced account. See Crivelli 2012: 223 and Wiitala 2014b: 233-234 for discussions of Theaetetus' confusion regarding this distinction and the Stranger's need to clarify his question.

[335] Although the Stranger first articulates this phrase as 'Theaetetus – the one with whom I am now speaking – flies' at 263a10, he later (at 263c3) refers to this claim as 'among the shortest' in kind, and therefore I use it as an example in its shortened form, i.e., 'Theaetetus sits,' here; cf. Crivelli 2012: 236 fn. 47.

[336] Nothing hinges on this in my argumentation, but it bears noting that here I deviate from Brann et al. in interpreting 'lion deer horse' as intended by the Stranger at 262b10-11 to be a quasi-phrase and not a list of names. Cf. Crivelli 2012: 226.

[337] But note that the Stranger's distinction here does not map on cleanly to that between declarative and non-declarative sentences; cf. Dorter 1994: 163.

Stranger calls a 'dual kind of vocal indication concerned with beinghood' (261e4-6), in that the fitting together of words can indicate things that are as in (i) or things that are not as in (ii), or it can fail to indicate anything as in (iii) and hence not qualify as speech in the proper sense.[338]

Second, there is an important contrast between (i) and (ii). (i) indicates a plausible state of affairs based on the nature of Theaetetus and the nature of (the form) sitting, while (ii) does not, given the natures of Theaetetus and (the form) flying.[339] In other words, (i) is stated in such a way as to capture the natures of the entities that compose the sentence, 'Theaetetus' and the form sitting, whereas (ii) does not, because the form human that is in the essence of Theaetetus does not intermix with flying.

I want to suggest some important takeaways that extend from separate considerations of both (i) and (ii). We begin with (i), that is, that kind of speech that entails attentiveness to the normativity of the natures of the forms at play in a given instance of discourse like 'Theaetetus sits.' Speech is composed, most essentially and basically,[340] of nouns and verbs.[341] Both nouns and verbs are indications of things that

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[338] For discussions of these distinctions, see Sedley 2003: 61 and Crivelli 2012: 227.

[339] For arguments as to why it is best to understand forms (alternatively called 'kinds' or 'types' in this context by some commentators) at play in the notion of words broadly and the 'verb' (ῥῆμα) more narrowly in this passage, see Cornford 1935: 314-315, O'Brien 2005: 139, Thomas 2008: 647, and Crivelli 2012: 224.

[340] Cf. Frede 1992: 413, who discusses the elementary nature of such a two-word sentence construction and its relationship with the examples that the Stranger chooses.

[341] The Stranger first distinguishes between names in the sense of the 'noun' (ὄνομα) and the 'verb' (ῥῆμα) at 262a1. Although the English terms 'noun' and 'verb' do not capture precisely what is at issue in the Stranger's point here, they are favored by the majority of English translators (including Brann et al.) and are sufficient for the point I am making here, so I leave them as they are typically translated. A deeper investigation into these issues would likely require a different rendering of ῥῆμα, perhaps as 'predicative expression' (used by Crivelli 2012 and Wiitala 2014b), though I have not used this rendering here because of the potential confusion that might arise from a reference to the notion of predication. Additionally, this discussion of these constitutive elements in the nature of language echoes several other key passages in neighboring Platonic dialogues, including *Cratylus* 425a-435c and *Theaetetus* 206d. Crivelli 2012: 223-224 offers helpful commentary on the semantic range of these words in Greek broadly, and throughout

are, but the Stranger points out that nouns are required, for without them, there is no speech at all (263c9-10). This is because nouns indicate some noetically stable entity that will be shown insofar as it is moved or affected by another entity, namely the form that the verb indicates as actively moving the noun. In this way the noun will be considered insofar as it has been intermixed with, or moved by, another stable entity through being. 'Theaetetus sits' draws upon at least two entities, Theaetetus and the form sitting, both with their own natures, and indicates that the latter moves or affects the former through the former's participation in it. This furthermore implies that Theaetetus is of a such a nature, e.g. insofar as he participates in the form human, as to partake of the potentiality to sit.

Furthermore, all verbs necessarily draw on being in some sense; in other words, to say that 'Theaetetus sits' necessarily entails that 'Theaetetus is the kind of thing for which sitting is natural,' or, put differently, 'Theaetetus is the kind of thing for which sitting is potential,' as in the standard uses of the simple present in both English and Ancient Greek. As an example of the simple present, 'Theaetetus sits' also might entail suggesting that 'Theaetetus is sitting,' i.e., in space and time in the moment in which I am indicating. This construal is not necessary, however, insofar as the expression in the simple present is coherent merely as an indication of the structure of potentiality that characterizes Theaetetus' nature. Even if it happens to be the case that Theaetetus is sitting in the moment in which 'Theaetetus sits' is said to be the case, that Theaetetus were to be sitting at the moment in which the sentence was stated would necessarily entail that Theaetetus was the kind of thing for which sitting is a potential. States of

Plato's texts and in the *Sophist* specifically. See also Stough 1990: 370 and Brown 2008: 452 for further helpful discussion of these terms in the context of the *Sophist*.

affairs in space and time, that is, are actualizations of potentialities implicit in the natures

of entities, and thus are in some sense posterior to the prior possibilities that led to them

coming about. In this way, the sense in which 'Theaetetus is the kind of thing for which

sitting is potential' is conceptually prior to the sense in which 'Theaetetus is sitting' could

be true of a given instance of an event in space and time. Speech therefore entails

disclosing the structured nature of beings and the ways in which entities commingle.

The Stranger continues by stating that one who speaks in the proper sense

"indicates something about the things that *are* or come to be or have come to be or will

come to be. [The speaker] doesn't merely name but brings something to closure by

weaving together (συμπλέκων) verbs with nouns" (262d2-7).[342] Several important

aspects of the Stranger's point here warrant our attention.[343] The Stranger here

distinguishes between things that *are* (i.e., in the full sense in which forms *are*) from

things that have become and will become. This is important, as it shows that speech

allows us to account for the intermixing of what has or will come to be and perish with

reference to what *is* but did not come to be and will not perish (i.e., the forms). Speech

therefore reflects the ways in which beings intermix with being, in a sense. This was

evident in the case of 'Theaetetus sits,' as it allowed us to see the intermixing of a

timeless form, sitting, with the nature of a being in space and time, Theaetetus. In this

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[342] The Stranger's distinction between the things that *are* and the things that come to be here is significant for several reasons. First, it indicates that he has not blurred this distinction following his discussion with the friends of forms, who grant beinghood only to the things that *are* and not the things that become. Second, it indicates that the notion of form is at play in the Stranger's account of speech and that which is intermixed in speech, given that the Stranger contrasts those things that *are* with those that become.
[343] Regarding other places in which this notion of 'bringing to closure' is at play in Plato's dialogues, see Crivelli 2012: 227 fn. 14.

way, speech indicates the rootedness of the beinghood of contingent beings in necessary beings, i.e., the forms.[344]

The necessary structure that thought and speech reflect offers occasion to return to the account of being in its unified sense and the reasons as to why this account of ultimate ground cannot reduce to naïve monism. In the course of this investigation, we have come across several definitional accounts of being (though again, this does not suggest that the conception of being we have found is disunified or pluralistic.) These accounts include 'being is power,' 'being is the power to affect and be affected,' 'being is participation,' 'being is being given to thought and speech,' and 'being is necessary and unopposed.' In each of these instances, it is necessarily the case that being is structured in some sense, i.e., that to be by nature is to intermix, in this case essentially, with the terms in the predicate position in each sentence.

To illustrate this point, I will use 'being is power' as an example. Like 'Theaetetus sits,' 'being is power' indicates the communion of two terms, 'being' and 'power,' through the 'is.' Merely to say 'being' is to indicate, but to indicate in such a way that does not allow for a 'bringing to closure' through a 'weaving together' (cf. 262d6-7), since the term 'being' has been posited in isolation. In this way, intermixing is required for this speech act's fulfillment. This linguistic point is analogous to the ontology that such a sentence indicates. Being alone is insufficient to be fulfilled 'in isolation,' but instead requires a structure from without for ontological fulfillment. In the case of 'being is power,' this entails constitution from without, i.e., through the causally prior notion of power, which is needed to bring the definitional account of being to its

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[344] For a discussion of the relationship between this passage and the earlier accounts of *logos* in the *Theaetetus*, see Fritz 2016: 79-80.

fulfillment. Therefore, the structure of speech offers a helpful and analogous indication of the concurrently necessary structure of being.

But the disanalogous senses of the intermixing of forms and words in speech is critical and warrants reflecting upon as well. That both (i) 'Theaetetus sits' and (ii) 'Theaetetus flies' can be said through speech in the proper sense suggests that intermixing works differently in speech than in the communion of forms. This is because forms, unlike words, can *only* intermix in ways that their nature allows. For example, the form cat can blend with the forms being, same, grey, and so forth, but it simply cannot blend with the forms dog, corrupt, snow, etc. Forms thus necessitate blending with respect to natures. In this way, all intermixing of forms entail goodness as an ontological constituent, at least to some degree. Speech, conversely, allows for blending in ways that do not entail attentiveness to the normativity derived from a given form. For example, (ii) does not entail attentiveness to the normativity of the form human governing the nature of Theaetetus, while (i) does. Speech therefore allows for 'unnatural' intermixing in a way that the communion of forms does not.[345] In this sense speech entails a kind of intermixing that holds the potential to do violence to its constituent parts. Speech, that is, can be structured with or without the constitution of goodness.

The importance of goodness thus has come to the fore. The interlocutors had set out to answer questions like, what is the nature of the sophist, this peddler of sham

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[345] Cf. Wiitala 2014b: 225-258 for a full discussion of the interpretation for which I am here advocating, including ways in which this interpretation allows best for making sense of grammatical ambiguities at play in this stretch of the *Sophist* (see Keyt 1973 for discussion). The conception of falsity that the Stranger is arguing for here is a hotly debated topic. For a thorough discussion of the four major lines of competing interpretation and some further 'unorthodox' interpretations that have arisen in the literature, see Crivelli 2012: 238-241. Wiitala's interpretation, for which I advocate here, is closest to what Crivelli calls the 'incompatibility interpretation,' a view best articulated (so far as I am aware) in its more orthodox form by Seligman 1974: 110-112 and Dorter 1994: 163.

wisdom more interested in victory than truth whose nature has grown out of the

subjectivist orientation extending from the view that truth is constructed by mortals that

results in treating beings as self-sufficient and hence resources that are on hand for

extraction? A host of preparatory exercises and ontological clarifications were needed to

get to this point, but the interlocutors have ultimately come upon the beginning of an

answer to their question. Forms blend with one another in an important sense, and the

beings in space and time owe their natures to this kind of blending that is necessarily

composed of goodness to some extent. Mortals have epistemological access to forms and

can bring them together in speech; but this is something that can be done either carefully

or violently, i.e., with or without goodness. To understand the sophist, it was necessary

to understand the communing of forms, and the ways in which the communing of words

in speech is analogous to but also fundamentally different from that of the communing of

forms. These conceptions have furthermore shown the mortal, as the possessor of *logos,*

to be the agent that can either safeguard the nature of being, i.e., the structure of forms, or

do violence to it by failing to blend entities together *well* and *truthfully* in speech.

Having come upon this great insight, the need that inaugurated the central digression has

been fulfilled.

6.2   The return to bifurcation (264c – 268e)

        The interlocutors decide that their findings in the discussion of true and false

speech have satisfied the demand to clarify nonbeing. In the process, their conclusions

have also given context to the exercises in bifurcatory division earlier in the dialogue.

The investigations via bifurcatory division entailed tracing the sameness and being

running through various forms and allowing the forms' participation in otherness to guide

cuts in the pursuit of a satisfying account. This process has so far yielded six accounts of the sophist and will soon yield a seventh and final account; the plurality of these demonstrates that these kinds of definitional accounts define but do not exhaust the concept or object being sought. But shortly after the interlocutors decide to recollect their earlier divisions, the ontology of communion is further complicated, and the divisions via bifurcation briefly but tellingly begin to show themselves to be insufficient for the task of accounting for the co-constitutive structure of reality. The interlocutors will find that simple lengthwise cuts do not always allow them to carve up nature at its proper joints, and more complicated cuts will begin to be necessary. This will ultimately force the interlocutors to abandon their process of cutting in half to allow them to understand and account for the more complex co-constitutive nature of being as they continue into the *Statesman* and their objects of investigation become more structurally complex.[346] In other words, the interlocutors will find that interrelations among forms are not *merely* bifurcatory in structure, but instead more complicated, and here their cuts begin to suggest that their method will need to develop in complexity to reflect that.[347]

The interlocutors return to division by answering the question regarding the nature of apparitions that had caused the digression. That is, having satisfied themselves that they understand the 'not-being while being' at play in apparitions (articulated most directly at 236e1-237a1), they are prepared to continue their pursuit of another account of the sophist. But they soon encounter entities that require a different kind of 'lengthwise' cutting. The problem that the interlocutors here face is that 'making' must be cut into

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[346] Cf. Miller 1999 and 2010, Smith 2019.

[347] Hence the Stranger's decree at 287b that he and Socrates the Younger should no longer cut in two, but instead 'carve up' the form 'limb by limb,' 'like a sacrificial animal,' and 'with an eye to the number nearest.'

'divine making' and 'human making' (265b7),[348] but both of these branches requires further symmetrical cuts into 'thing-itself making' and 'image making' (266a8-12).[349] For the first time in the course of the divisions, both the left (here 'divine making') and right (here 'human making') branches require further cuts, and symmetrical ones at that. Therefore, here the interlocutors are left with the web-like symmetrical structure of dual, unfolding natures (as depicted in Appendix 1f), not a simple bifurcatory tableau as had been the case in all previous cuts.[350]

This does not disturb the interlocutors, who continue without much ado in tracing that which follows on the branch along the node of human image-making. But this does nevertheless indicate that bifurcation is beginning to show itself to be inadequate. The ontology of bifurcation has thus far been helpful in illustrating co-constitution, but bifurcation is not robust enough to capture the web of interdependence at a deeper level. The earlier example of the tone continuum is helpful to consider in this context, since the tone continuum is not merely a bifurcated structure but instead exhibits a different kind of one-many structure, insofar as each note derives its identity from its situation from without. In other words, a tone like C# does not partake of its nature simply by separating off from C natural, non-C#, or some other such bifurcatory system. Instead, it reflects a constitutive network of interrelated tones. C# derives its identity both as a part constituting the whole of the tone continuum, and also by its situation among other parts like it in kind, e.g., most immediately C natural and D in a half step on either side, as well

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[348] It bears noting that the division between divine and human recalls the divisions between divine and human madness that motivated the discussion of the method of 'division and collection' in the *Phaedrus*; cf. *Phaedrus* 265c5.
[349] Cf. Cornford 1935: 324 and Crivelli 2012: 27.
[350] For the opposing view that this cut merely exhibits a more complicated bifurcatory structure that nevertheless preserves the spirit of this method in terms of its bifurcation, see Miller 2016: 323 fn. 7.

as B and D# in a full step in either direction, and so forth. And yet, C# has its own

simple and unique identity, as evidenced by its instantiations by instruments and singing

voices. In this way, C# is 'one' among many other 'ones' that are 'held together from

without' by the form 'tone' as the Stranger had identified in his account of dialectical

method (see 253d5-10 and section 5.2.3). This will be the kind of analysis that will be

necessary in accounting for the statesman in non-bifurcatory division beginning at

Stranger 287c.[351]

Therefore, the lesson to be derived from this symmetrical, web-structured cut into

the form making is that the bifurcatory division exercises have been helpful but are most

essentially propaedeutic towards more complex forms of division. In other words, on this

reading the bifurcatory cuts were not mere 'jokes' or the product of a philosophically

immature mind as some commentators have suggested, but they also should not be taken

to be the products of a method of philosophical inquiry that is ultimately suited to yield

'definitive' knowledge in the highest sense. Instead, bifurcatory division should be

understood as a preliminary step in developing our understanding of complex ontology to

guide our thinking toward the notions of co-constitution, and, later, being, difference,

sameness, motion, rest, and so forth. Put simply, bifurcatory division is good practice for

us as we learn to develop our thinking of entities not as purely self-sufficient, but instead

as constituted from without; but because nature does not reduce to bifurcation, the

method of inquiry will not allow us to grasp all forms in their ultimate nature.

After encountering this indication of the insufficiency of bifurcatory accounts, the

interlocutors continue on the path that will lead them to their seventh and final account of

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[351] See section 5.2.3 for discussion of this dialectical exercise.

the sophist. They do so by dividing through imitation as oriented by opinion (not

knowledge) and dissembling in private before coming upon an account of the sophist

with which they are satisfied. With Theaetetus' approval, the Stranger 'ties up'

(συνδήσομεν, 268c5) the account of the sophist by 'weaving together' (συμπλέξαντες,

268c6) the names that have composed it. The account upon which they have arrived is

that of the individual who has a share of (1) expertise in (2) making (not getting or

separating)[352] in (3) the human (not divine) form of (4) image-making (not making things

themselves) of (5) apparitions (not likenesses) through (6) bodily imitation (not

instruments) while (7) ignorant (not informed) through (8) dissemblance (not simplicity)

in (9) public (and not in private, like the demagogue) (264c1-268c4, drawing upon

distinctions from 232a1-236d9 and summarized at 268c9-268d5).[353] With that, the

Stranger concludes by quoting *Iliad* 6 (211 ff.) by referencing the sophist's 'breed and

blood.'[354] This reference is the second of two Homeric references, which serve to frame

the dialogue by appearing in its second and penultimate passages of dialogue.

Having apparently satisfied themselves with their definition of the sophist, the

interlocutors thus conclude their investigation, though they will of course continue

immediately thereafter by turning to the statesman in the second half of the diptych. To

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[352] Ionescu 2013: 50 notes that this entails a challenge to the assumption at play in all earlier definitions
that the sophist is an expert in getting (which she calls 'exchange.') Ionescu further notes that this seems to
indicate that the next step in critiquing the earlier divisions would be to move one step further up the branch
and challenge the notion that the sophist engages in a technē.

[353] See Rosen 1983: 311-314 for commentary on each of these steps. There is much debate as to whether
the interlocutors have successfully divided the sophist from the philosopher with this account. For the view
that they have done so and that the seventh sophist represents the moment of successful definition in the
investigation, see Cornford 1935: 324-331, Notomi 1999: 296-301, and Sayre 2006. Those holding the
view that they have not include Rosen 1983: 309-316, Dorter 1994: 167-173, Brown 2008 160-163, and
Ionescu 2013: 51 fn. 11.

[354] Here Glaucus and Diomedes invoke the relations of *xenoi* and trade armor, though Glaucus does so
against good sense at Zeus' behest, trading gold for bronze, the worth of one hundred oxen for nine.

define the sophist, it was necessary to clarify the meaning of nonbeing, but this clarification required an account that draws upon being in its necessary and unopposed sense, as the most fundamental of ontological principles that is necessarily causally prior to all beings. But this sense of being necessarily entails a composite structure in which the parts of being draw upon one another for their own nature, without reducing merely to the sum of relations between one another.

This account of composite structure and its co-constitution will be addressed in the *Statesman*. Perhaps most remarkably, this will also involve a consideration of the ways in which an understanding of these distinctions, in ever-more complex forms, is relevant not merely to the study of the kind of abstract metaphysics that has been at play in the *Sophist* but also the ways in which we do and should structure our mortal communities with reference to such fine-grained distinctions. Put differently, the interlocutors will begin to consider the socio-political normativity that this ontological account of structure suggests. This turn does not entail simply a change in philosophical orientations, e.g. from theoretical to practical philosophy, but instead is a drawing out of the normativity that has been at play throughout. This leads to a subsequent application and expansion of these notions in the context of accounting for care for the mortal community.

In this way, the *Sophist* has offered us the beginnings of an indication of the ways in which a grasp of the whole, such as the whole of care for the mortal community as in the *Statesman*, entails an understanding of and respect for the nature of each part. Because being is structured through co-constitution, any disruption to the normativity of a part constitutes a disruption to all parts, and hence to the whole. This will become

evident as the interlocutors begin to consider the nature of the mortal community and find it necessary to do so by considering it as a whole with reference to its parts.

That they do so amid the backdrop of Socrates' impending trial and the decline of Athens suggests the great importance of the process. The account of being and structure and the goodness that structure entails occurs in the context of the impending covering over of being represented by the execution of the philosopher by an increasingly disordered *polis*. It falls upon us, Plato's readers, to learn to think being for ourselves, uncover it now in our own time, and safeguard it in our accounts.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX: DIVISIONS

1a. The Angler (218e–221c)

```
1        expertise
        /         \
2 making        getting
              /         \
3     willingness    manipulation
                   /         \
4           hunting        fighting
                         /         \
5                  soulless      ensouled
                               /         \
6                        on land        in water
                                       /         \
7                               via enclosures   by striking
                                                /         \
8                                        by night       by day
                                                       /         \
9                                               from above    from below
                                                              ANGLER
```

1b. The first sophist (221c3–223b6)

```
1        expertise
        /         \
2 making        getting
              /         \
3     non-footed    footed
                  /         \
4           wild prey    tame prey
                       /         \
5                forcible      "credibility-producing"
                                /         \
6                        in public       in private
                                        /              \
7                gift-bearing for 'erotic' pleasure   pay-earning for virtue
                                                       SOPHIST I
```
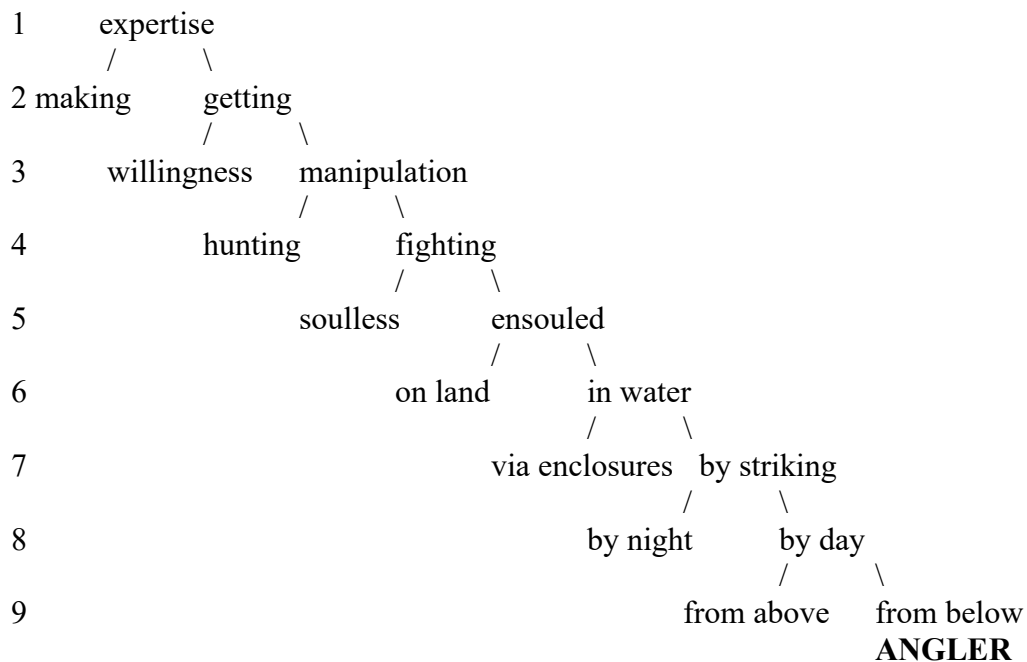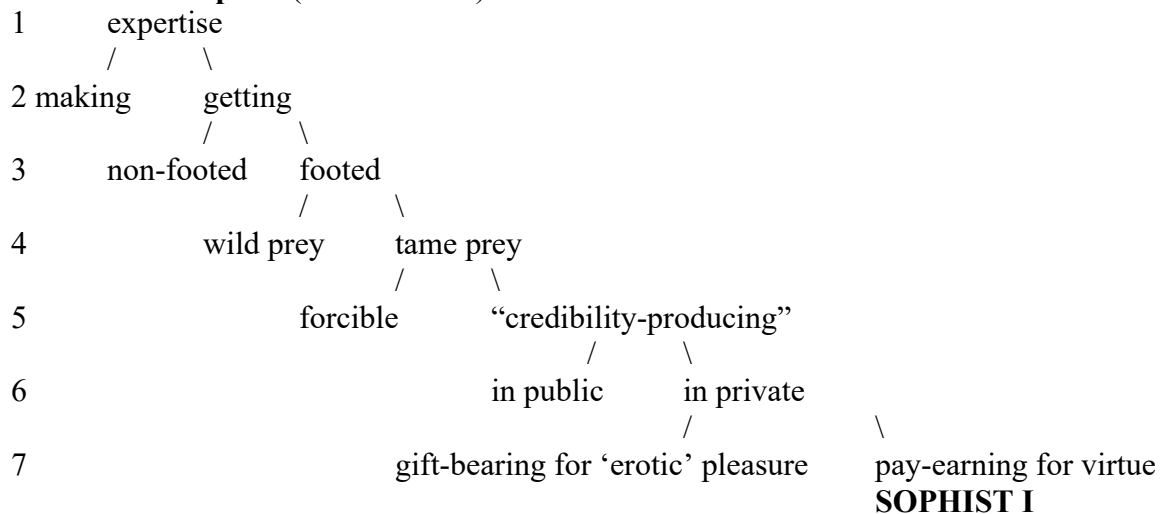
1c. The second, third, and fourth sophists (223b9–224e11)

```
1        expertise
        /         \
2 [making]      getting
              /         \
3     hunting       exchanging
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                         /        \
4               gift-giving    marketing
                           /            \
5                   self-selling          trafficking
                    SOPHIST IV            /            \
6                                   peddling          trading
                                    SOPHIST III       /      \
7                                                  body      soul
                                                   /             \
8                                             displaying    learnable selling
                                                            SOPHIST II
```

1d. The fifth sophist (224e6–226a6)
```
1       expertise
        /        \
2 [making]    getting
              /        \
3           [?]      competing
                     /         \
4              contending    battling
                           /         \
5                  doing violence      disputing
                                    /        \
6                              pleading    debating
                                          /       \
7      (unnamed form regarding contracts, etc.)   eristic
                                                  /       \
8                                            yammering   money-making
                                                         SOPHIST V
```
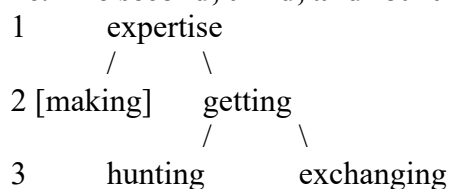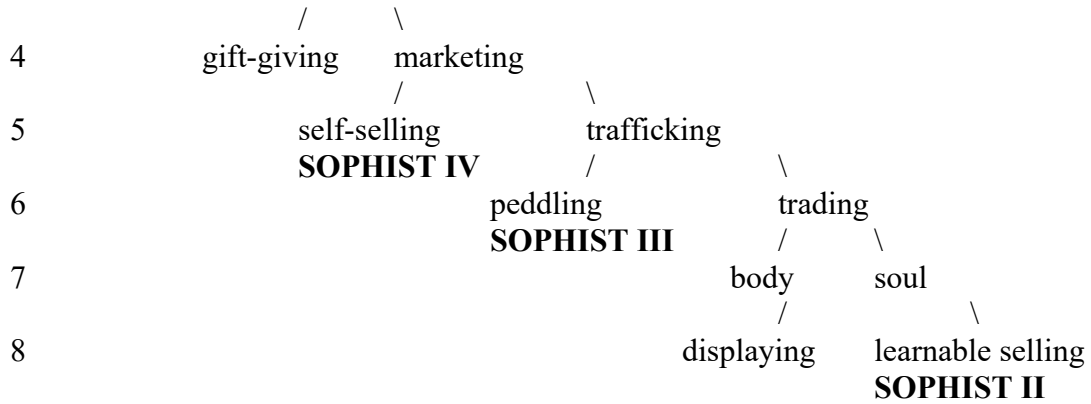
1e. The sixth sophist (231b3-8)
```
1          expertise
         /      |      \
2 [making] [getting]   separating
                       /       \
3              (like from like) cleansing
                          /         \
4                   soul        body
                              /        \
5                       correction    teaching
                                     /        \
6                       vocational training  education
                                            /       \
7                                     scolding    cross-examining
                                                  SOPHIST VI
```
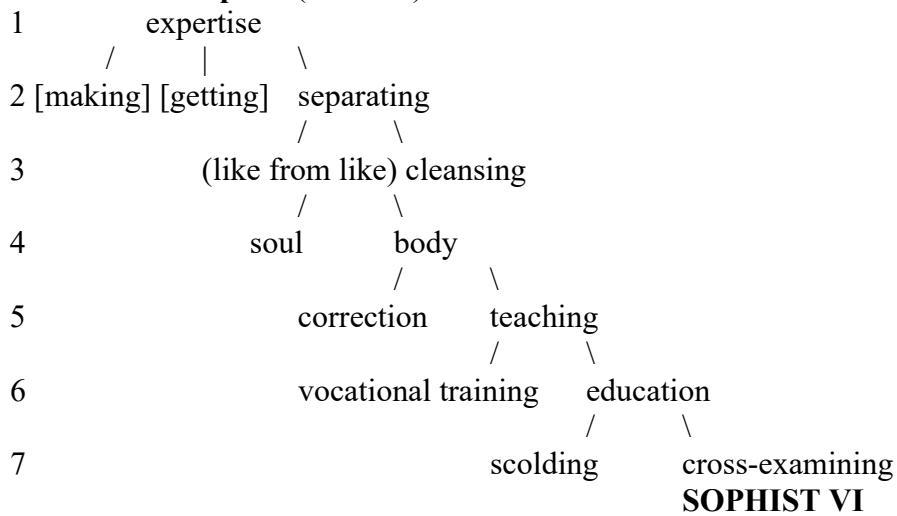
1f. Symmetrical division of making (265b-266b1)

```
1                           making
              /                        \
2        divine making                      human making
       /          \                       /          \
3 thing-itself making  image making    thing-itself making  image making
```
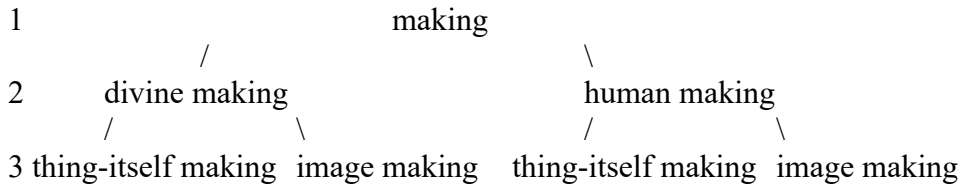
1g. The seventh sophist (264c1-268d5, drawing upon distinctions from 232a1-236d9)

```
1              expertise
        /      |                    \
2 [getting]  [separating]              making
                              /           \
3 (see 1f)                 divine          human
                          /      \        /      \
4 (see 1f)          thing-itself  images  thing-itself  images
                                                    /      \
5                                          likenesses    apparitions
                                                        /      \
6                                  through instruments   bodily imitation
                                                          /      \
7                                            informed       ignorant
                                            /                  \
8                                    simple imitation       dissemblance
                                                            /      \
9                                               private          public
                                            (demagogue)      SOPHIST VII
```
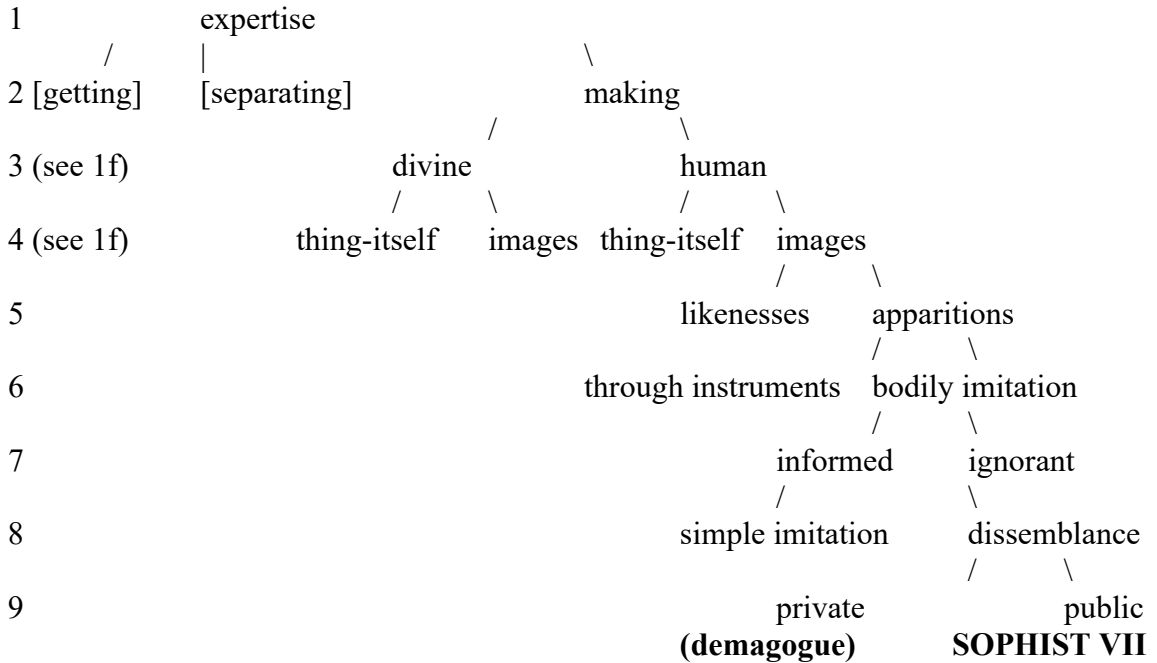
1h. The 'pyramid-like' structure of division according to Stenzel 1964 (1931)

THE ANGLER

9	Hunting from above	-	**Hunting from below**
8	By day	-	**By night**
7	By enclosures	-	**By striking**
6	On land	-	**In water**
5	Soulless animals	-	**Ensouled animals**
4	By hunting	-	**By fighting**
3	By willingness	-	**By manipulation**
2	Making	-	**Getting**
1	[Non-expertise]	-	**Expertise**
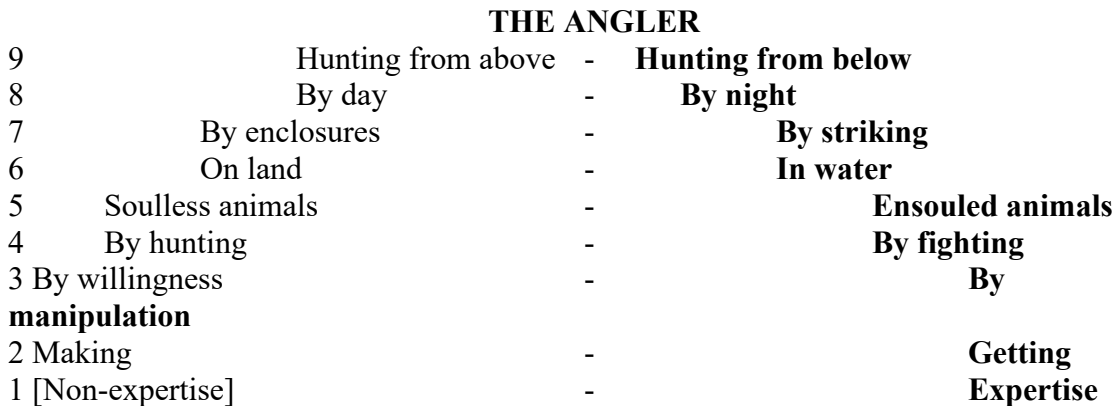
1i. The non-bifurcatory division of care for the human community (*Statesman* 287c-305e), cf. Miller 2016: 342.

Care

```
| Material needs                                                    Spiritual needs |
 /    |    |     |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      \
(1)  (2)  (3)    (4)    (5)    (6)    (7)    (8)    (9)   (10)   (11)   (12)   (13)   (14)   (15)
```

(1) raw materials (288e, 289a)
(2) tools (287d, 289b)
(3) containers (287e, 289b)
(4) bearers (288a, 289b)
(5) defenses (288b, 289b)
(6) playthings (288c, 289b)
(7) nourishments (289a, 289b)
(8) slaves (289d)
(9) traders and merchants (289e-290a)
(10) heralds and clerks (290b)
(11) priests and mantics (290c-e)
(12) orator (304a-d)
(13) general (304a-305a)
(14) judges (304a, 305b-c)
(15) statesman (305e)

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VITA

Colin C. Smith, CV July 2019

EDUCATION

M.A., Boston College, Philosophy (2013)

B.A., Temple University, Philosophy and Classical Civilizations (2011)

ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT

Lecturer, University of Colorado Boulder, Department of Philosophy (2019–present)

Graduate Instructor, University of Kentucky, Department of Philosophy (2014–2019)

PUBLICATIONS

"Dialectical Methods and the *Stoicheia* Paradigm in Plato's Trilogy and *Philebus*," *Plato Journal: Journal of the International Plato Society* 19 (2019): 9-29.

"The Groundwork For Dialectic in *Statesman* 278a-287b," *The International Journal of the Platonic Tradition* 12:2 (2018): 132-150.