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Truth and Falsehood in Plato's *Sophist*

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TRUTH AND FALSEHOOD IN PLATO'S *SOPHIST*

DISSERTATION

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
Michael Oliver Wiitala

Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Dr. Eric Sanday, Associate Professor of Philosophy

Lexington, Kentucky

2014

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

TRUTH AND FALSEHOOD IN PLATO'S *SOPHIST*

This dissertation is a study of the ontological foundations of true and false speech in Plato's *Sophist*. Unlike most contemporary scholarship on the *Sophist*, my dissertation offers a wholistic account of the dialogue, demonstrating that the ontological theory of the "communing" of forms and the theory of true and false speech later in the dialogue entail one another.

As I interpret it, the account of true and false speech in the *Sophist* is primarily concerned with true and false speech about the forms. As Plato sees it, we can only make true statements about spatio-temporal beings if it is possible to make true statements about the forms. Statements about the forms, however, make claims about how forms "commune" with other forms, that is, how forms are intelligibly related to and participate in one another. If forms stand in determinate relations of participation to other forms, however, then forms, as the *relata* of these relations, must compose structured wholes. Yet if they compose structured wholes, there must be a higher order normative principle that explains their structure. This creates a regress problem. In order to ground the structure of spatio-temporal beings, forms must be the highest explanatory principles. The theory of the "communing" of forms, however, makes it seem as if the forms require further explanation.

This dissertation argues (1) that in the *Sophist* Plato solves the regress problem and (2) that, by doing so, he is able to ground true and false speech about the forms. I demonstrate that he solves the regress problem by differentiating a form's nature from a form *qua* countable object. Then I show that this distinction between a form's nature and a form *qua* countable object explains how true and false statements about the forms are possible.

KEYWORDS: Plato, Metaphysics, Theory of Forms, Truth, Falsehood.

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July 30, 2014

TRUTH AND FALSEHOOD IN PLATO'S *SOPHIST*

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εἰ δ' ἄγ' ἐγὼν ἐρέω, κόμισαι δὲ σὺ μῦθον ἀκούσας,
αἶπερ ὁδοὶ μοῦναι διζήσιός εἰσι νοῆσαι ·
ἢ μὲν ὅπως ἔστιν τε καὶ ὥς οὐκ ἔστι μὴ εἶναι,
Πειθοῦς ἔστι κέλευθος (Ἀληθείη γὰρ ὀπηδεῖ),
ἢ δ' ὥς οὐκ ἔστιν τε καὶ ὥς χρεῶν ἔστι μὴ εἶναι,
τὴν δὴ τοι φράζω παναπευθέα ἔμμεν ἀταρπὸν ·
οὔτε γὰρ ἂν γνοίης τό γε μὴ ἐὸν (οὐ γὰρ ἀνυστόν)
οὔτε φράσαις

- Parmenides, Fragment 2

ἀφ' οὗ δὲ ἕκαστον, οὐχ ἕκαστον, ἀλλ' ἕτερον ἀπάντων

- Plotinus, *Ennead* V.3.11

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Complete bibliographical information is provided in the bibliography. The following abbreviations are used in the text and notes:

<i>Apol.</i>	<i>Apology</i>	<i>Parm.</i>	<i>Parmenides</i>
<i>Crat.</i>	<i>Cratylus</i>	<i>Phd.</i>	<i>Phaedo</i>
<i>Cri.</i>	<i>Crito</i>	<i>Phdr.</i>	<i>Phaedrus</i>
<i>Ep.</i>	<i>Epistles</i>	<i>Phil.</i>	<i>Philebus</i>
<i>Euth.</i>	<i>Euthyphro</i>	<i>Plt.</i>	<i>Statesman</i>
<i>Euthyd.</i>	<i>Euthydemus</i>	<i>Prt.</i>	<i>Protagoras</i>
<i>Grg.</i>	<i>Gorgias</i>	<i>Rep.</i>	<i>Republic</i>
<i>Hi.Ma.</i>	<i>Hippias Major</i>	<i>Soph.</i>	<i>Sophist</i>
<i>Lach.</i>	<i>Laches</i>	<i>Symp.</i>	<i>Symposium</i>
<i>Lg.</i>	<i>Laws</i>	<i>Tht.</i>	<i>Theaetetus</i>
<i>Men.</i>	<i>Meno</i>	<i>Tim.</i>	<i>Timaeus</i>

Unless otherwise noted, for the text of the *Euthyphro*, *Apology*, *Crito*, *Phaedo*, *Cratylus*, *Theaetetus*, *Sophist*, and *Statesman*, I use the edition of E. A. Duke, W. F. Hicken, W. S. M. Nicoll, D. B. Robinson, and J. C. D. Strachan, Oxford Classical Text series (Oxford, 1995). For the text of the other works of Plato, I use the editions of J. Burnet, Oxford Classical Text series (Oxford, 1901-1903).

All translations of Plato's works are my own, in consultation with the translations included in John Cooper's, *Plato: Complete Works* (Hackett, 1997). In translating the *Sophist*, I also consulted the translations of Harold N. Fowler (Harvard, 1921), A. E. Taylor (Thomas Nelson, 1961), Seth Benardete (Chicago, 1984), Eva Brann, Peter Kalkavage, and Eric Salem (Focus, 1996), and those found in Francis M. Cornford's *Plato's Theory of Knowledge* (Routledge, 1935), David Ambuel's *Image and Paradigm* (Parmenides, 2007), and Paolo Crivelli's *Plato's Account of Falsehood* (Cambridge, 2012).

For the works of Aristotle, I use the editions of L. Minio-Paluello, W. D. Ross, and W. Jaeger, Oxford Classical Text series (Oxford, 1949-1957).

DK = Diels, Hermann, and Walther Kranz, eds. *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*. 10th ed. Berlin: Weidmann, 1960.

LSJ = Liddell, H. G., and R. Scott. *Greek-English Lexicon*. 9th ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996.

Chapter I: Situating the *Sophist* Account of Being and *Logos*

§1. An Overview of my Argument

The *Sophist* contains the clearest and most explicit discussion of the difference between true and false speech (λόγος) found in Plato's dialogues. That discussion is situated within a digression in which the dialogue's primary interlocutor, an unnamed stranger from Elea, argues for the reality and intelligibility of non-being and false speech. The stranger finds it necessary to enter into this digression because of certain difficulties he encounters in attempting to define sophistry. The stranger wants to argue that the sophist produces falsehoods by saying things that are not. In order to resist being defined in this way, however, the sophist would retort that it is impossible to say things that are not, since there is no such thing as non-being. Hence the stranger undertakes the task of demonstrating that both non-being and falsehood are. Non-being and falsehood, however, turn out only to be intelligible in light of a proper understanding of being. The stranger, therefore, presents and considers a diverse array of ontological theories before he leads his interlocutor, Theaetetus, through a rigorous series of arguments by which he reveals the nature of being and non-being, and then true and false speech.

This dissertation is a study of the ontological foundations of true and false speech in light of the stranger's digression on non-being and falsehood. As I interpret it, the account of true and false speech the *Sophist* offers is primarily concerned with true and false speech about the forms. According to Plato, we can only make true statements about spatio-temporal beings if it is possible to make true statements about the forms.¹ Statements about the forms, however, make claims about how forms "commune" with other forms, that is, how forms are intelligibly related to and participate in one another. To use an example from the *Sophist*, a statement such as "angling is a kind of expertise" is a statement about how the form "angling" participates in the form "expertise." Since forms stand in determinate relations of participation to other forms, forms, as the *relata* of these relations, compose structured wholes. Hence, in the *Sophist*, Plato has the

¹ See for example, Plato, *Parm.*, 128e6-129b1, 134e9-135c2; *Phd.*, 96a5-102a1; *Rep.*, VII.523c11-524c13; *Soph.*, 259e5-6; and cf. Alexander Nehamas, "Self-Predication and Plato's Theory of Forms," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 16, no. 2 (1979): 93-103.

stranger explicitly claim that forms compose structured wholes.² However, Plato also presents arguments throughout the dialogues which indicate that for any structured whole, there must be a higher order normative principle that explains its structure. This is one of the primary reasons for positing the theory of forms in the first place. The forms are higher order normative principles that explain the whole/part structure of spatio-temporal beings.

That forms themselves exhibit whole/part structure in relation to one another, however, creates a regress problem for the theory of forms as that theory is articulated in the middle dialogues.³ In the middle dialogues, Plato has Socrates posit the forms in order to explain the structure of spatio-temporal beings. Yet a form can only do this explanatory work if it does not itself exhibit a structure that requires further explanation. Thus, there is a tension between the stranger's claims in the *Sophist* and those in the middle dialogues that directly impacts the question of the ontological foundations of true and false speech. The theory of the communing of forms, intended to ground true and false speech about the forms, makes it seem as if the forms require further explanation. In order to make the theory of forms viable, Plato needs to offer a solution to the regress

² The stranger's "method of division" presupposes that forms compose wholes of parts. Thus, while practicing the method, the stranger will frequently refer to certain forms or kinds as "wholes" and to those forms or kinds that compose them as "parts." He does this, for example, in his application of the method of division to the form angling (*Soph.*, 219c2, c7, e1, 220a3, b10, c7, 221b3, b6) and in his definition of non-being as part of the form different (*ibid.*, 257d4-258a9). Also note that the forms are characterized as wholes of parts elsewhere in Plato. See for example, Plato, *Euth.*, 12c6-e2; cf. *Lach.*, 190b7-d8; *Phdr.*, 265e1 ff.

³ I am a "unitarian" of sorts with respect to the order of Plato's dialogues (see Michael Wiitala, "The Forms in the *Euthyphro* and *Statesman*: A Case against the Developmental Reading of Plato's Dialogues," *International Philosophical Quarterly*, forthcoming 2014). I simply refer to the "early dialogues," "middle dialogues," and "late dialogues" because those groupings represent a helpful and conventional way of categorizing various dialogues that are similar to one another in how they characterize the forms and in their argumentative and narrative structures. I am a "unitarian" in that I think the dialogues present a "unified philosophical vision" (cf. Charles Kahn, *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue: The Philosophical Use of Literary Form* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996], 385). That vision is expressed in different ways throughout the dialogues due to the different educative goals of various dialogues. For how Plato's educative goals can account for the different ways that Plato presents his unified philosophical vision throughout the dialogues see Mitchell Miller, *The Philosopher in Plato's Statesman* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1980; Las Vegas: Parmenides Publishing, 2004), xxiii-xxxiii (citations refer to the Parmenides Publishing edition); *Plato's Parmenides: The Conversion of Soul* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1986), 3-12; "The *Timaeus* and the 'Longer Way': Godly Method and the Constitution of Elements and Animals," in *Plato's Timaeus as Cultural Icon*, ed. G. Reydarns-Schils (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), esp. 23-25; "Beginning the 'Longer Way,'" in *The Cambridge Companion to Plato's Republic*, ed. G. R. F. Ferrari (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), esp. 339-342.

problem while still saving the theory of communing in a way that can ground true and false speech about the forms.

My dissertation argues (1) that in the *Sophist* Plato offers a solution to the regress problem and (2) that, by doing so, he is able to ground true and false speech about the forms. I demonstrate that he solves the regress problem by differentiating a form's unique nature (φύσις) from a form *qua* countable object. On the one hand, each form is a countable object that exhibits whole/part structure in relation to other forms. On the other hand, each form possesses a unique nature. A form's nature is the normative principle that explains and governs the structured relations exhibited by that form *qua* countable object. This solves the regress problem because the nature of each form is that form's mode of being, rather than a separate entity, different from the forms whose structured relations it explains. In this way, the ontological account in the *Sophist* demonstrates that the forms can do the explanatory work they were initially posited to do. I argue that Plato then uses this ontological account to show how true and false statements about the forms are possible. Statements about a form are always statements about the structured relations which that form exhibits. When statements about a form are governed by the normative principle which explains that form's structured relations, those statements are true. Otherwise, those statements are false.

My argument proceeds as a careful analysis of the text of the stranger's account of being, non-being, truth, and falsehood in *Sophist* 236c9-263d5. Much of the contemporary scholarship attempts to interpret the theory of truth developed in the *Sophist* without reference to the ontology. That approach is problematic. Instead of taking that approach, I offer a wholistic interpretation of the digression on non-being and falsehood. I show that the stranger's account of true and false speech can only be properly understood in terms of his theory of the communing of forms.

§2. *Standards for Interpreting a Platonic Dialogue*

The *Sophist* is a notoriously difficult dialogue. The questions that it raises—"What is being?" "What is non-being?" etc.—are challenging. Moreover, many of the arguments which Plato has the stranger use are brief and elliptical. Like all Platonic dialogues, the *Sophist* demands a critical response from its readers. Plato, it seems, did

not write so as to communicate what he thought, but rather to lead his readers to philosophical insight.⁴ As the discussion of the education of the guardians in *Republic* VII makes clear, the sort of insight with which Plato was concerned can only be achieved through sustained critical engagement in argumentatively rigorous discussions with oneself and others, and in philosophy as a lived practice. Philosophical insight, for Plato, is not merely a matter of being struck by the truth of something. Nor is it an experience in which the answer to a difficult question appears obvious. In fact it is not an experience at all, except incidentally. Rather, as Plato has Socrates describe it in *Republic* VII, philosophical insight only occurs to the extent that one can “survive all refutation (πάντων ἐλέγχων), as if in battle, striving to judge things not in accordance with opinion but in accordance with being, and can come through all this with [one’s] account (τῷ λόγῳ) still intact” (534c1-3). Philosophical insight, therefore, is that which is presupposed by, grounds, and explains a certain kind of ability and activity, and ultimately a certain way of life. Consequently, when studying Plato, one must understand philosophical insight *primarily* in ontological, rather than experiential, terms.⁵ Philosophical insight is what ontologically explains why the philosopher can survive all refutation with his account still intact. The one whose account can survive all refutation has philosophical insight. The one whose account cannot does not. One has philosophical insight to the extent that one’s account can survive all refutation. This is true regardless of whether or not one thinks or feels that one has insight and regardless of how certain one thinks or feels about one’s insight. That one has philosophical insight cannot be conclusively verified experientially. To the extent that it can be verified at all,⁶

⁴ Plato refers to what I am here calling “philosophical insight” in a variety of ways and in a variety of contexts. By “philosophical insight” I mean to designate what Plato has Socrates characterize as “νοῦς” and “νόησις” during the discussion of the Divided Line in *Republic* VI (see esp. 508c1, d6, 511d1, d4, d8). Plato has the Eleatic stranger refer to it with “νοῦς” and “διαισθάνεσθαι” in the *Sophist* (227b1, 253d7). In the *Seventh Letter*, Plato describes what I am calling “philosophical insight” by saying, “This knowledge is not something that can be put into words like other sciences; but after long-continued intercourse between teacher and pupil, in joint pursuit of the subject, suddenly, like a light flashing forth when a new fire is kindled, it is born in the soul and straightway nourishes itself” (*Ep.*, VII, 341c5-d2). Also cf. Mitchell Miller, “Unity and ‘Logos’: A Reading of *Theaetetus* 201c-210a,” *Ancient Philosophy* 12, no. 1 (1992): 108-110.

⁵ Of course I am not claiming that Plato does not thematize the experiential dimension of philosophical insight. He continually does throughout the dialogues. In the *Symposium*, for example, he describes the experience of philosophical insight in terms of the experience of *erōs*.

⁶ That one has philosophical insight can never be verified completely, since in life one will never reach the point where one has survived *all* refutation. Philosophical insight is an ideal which we can only achieve

it can only be verified through the way one lives and through continual engagement with others in philosophical discussion that earnestly seeks the truth. Plato crafted his dialogues, it seems, so as to offer his readers texts which could serve as philosophical discussion partners for their readers.

What are the standards, then, for interpreting the arguments in a Platonic dialogue, in our case the *Sophist*?⁷

The first, as I see it, is accountability to the text. This accountability ought to be understood as analogous to the accountability one would have to a dialogue partner. Everything that the text says ought to be taken seriously and ought to be explained, although not “explained away.” The more an interpretation can explain, the better.

A second standard, connected with the first, is that initially at least, one ought to assume both that what the text is trying to express is true, and that the text expresses what it is trying to express in the best possible way. This is simply what a charitable reading requires. It may of course turn out that after a comprehensive study one is forced to conclude that some of what the text expresses is false, or that the text does not express what it is trying to express in the best way. One would only be in the position to make those sorts of judgments, however, if one were to understand the text on its own terms. And a genuine understanding of a text on its own terms requires that one initially takes what it is attempting to say to be true and aptly expressed.

A third standard for interpreting a Platonic dialogue is to assume, at least initially, both that the dialogue is internally coherent and consistent, and that what it claims is, if properly understood, coherent and consistent with what other Platonic dialogues claim.

imperfectly as human beings. Hence the difference between “human wisdom” and “divine wisdom” that Socrates notes in the *Apology*.

⁷ Note that this question is far more pointed than the question of how to interpret Platonic dialogues. I am only asking about standards for interpreting the arguments in Plato’s dialogues, not about how to interpret the dramatic settings, each dialogue as a whole, etc. The question of how to interpret a Platonic dialogue has been thoroughly discussed in the literature. See for example, Drew A. Hyland, “Why Plato Wrote Dialogues,” *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 1, no. 1 (1968): 38-50; Charles Griswold, “*E Pluribus Unum?* On the Platonic ‘Corpus,’” *Ancient Philosophy* 19, no. 2 (1991): 361-397; Kahn, *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue*; “The Philosophical Importance of the Dialogue Form for Plato,” *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 26, no. 1 (2005): 13-28; John M. Cooper, introduction to *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997), xviii-xxvi; Francisco Gonzalez, *Dialectic and Dialogue: Plato’s Practice of Philosophical Inquiry* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1998); Mitchell Miller, “Platonic Mimesis,” in *Contextualizing Classics: Ideology, Performance, Dialogue*, ed. Thomas Falkner (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1999); Catherine H. Zuckert, *Plato’s Philosophers: The Coherence of the Dialogues* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

Again, I think that this is simply a requirement of a charitable reading: assume that the account an author offers is consistent unless you are forced to conclude otherwise. Some might object that Plato, like the rest of us, was not perfectly consistent in his thinking. The response I would offer to this objection has two parts. First, I am not concerned with “what Plato thought” in the sense of “what was going on in his mind,” but rather with the truth expressed in the text. Second, the assumption that the dialogues are coherent and consistent is an initial assumption, and is intended to enable one to understand the text. If after an exhaustive analysis it turned out that certain claims made by the text or texts in question could only be explained as an inconsistency, then and only then would one be in a position to claim that there was such an inconsistency.

A fourth and final standard is respect for and awareness of the historical context in which the text was written and its literary genre. In our case, the historical context is fourth century B.C. Athens and the literary genre is a modified form of the Socratic dialogue. I say “respect for” the historical context because, again, one ought not to use that context to “explain away” the truth of what is said in the text, but rather to better understand it.

§3. *An Outline of the Background to the Account of the Forms in the Sophist*

In dialogues such as the *Phaedo*, *Republic*, *Symposium*, and *Phaedrus*, Socrates⁸ generally posits the forms in order to explain how spatio-temporal beings can exhibit the different and even incompatible properties which we observe in them. Consider the three fingers example from *Republic* VII. Socrates asks Glaucon to consider three fingers—the middle, the ring, and the pinky (523c5-6). One and the same finger can appear from one perspective large and from another small or from one perspective hard and from another soft (523e3-524a4). Socrates points out that this is puzzling. That one and the same object can have opposite properties renders that object’s intelligibility problematic. One condition of an object’s intelligibility is that that object is not its opposite. For example, if a “large thing” is also a “small thing,” then a “large thing” is also a “not large thing,”

⁸ Whenever I refer to “Socrates,” unless otherwise indicated, I am referring to the character in Plato’s dialogues. Although this character is based on the historical Socrates, we can responsibly make claims about Socrates the character in Plato’s dialogues on the basis of the dialogues, in a way that we cannot responsibly make claims about the historical Socrates.

since small is incompatible with large and so not large. Consequently, if a “large thing” is also a “small thing,” then it is no longer clear how a “large thing” can be understood as a “large thing,” since it is no more a “large thing” than it is a “not large thing.”

Furthermore, that one and the same object can have opposite properties renders true speech about that object problematic. If a “large thing” is also a “small thing” and so a “not large thing,” then it is no more true to say about it “this thing is large” than it is to say “this thing is not large.” One statement is no more true or false than the other is. In this way, true as opposed to false speech about objects exhibiting opposite properties is problematic. Socrates argues in *Republic* VII that considering how one and the same object, such as a finger, has opposite properties can turn the soul toward the forms, the source of truth (see 524b1-c13, 525b1). The soul, by attempting to clarify for itself how one and the same object can have opposite properties, will be prompted to consider what the “properties” themselves are. At first, one might be tempted to think of these “properties” themselves as mere relations. One might be tempted to think that the ring finger is small simply because it is in relation to the larger middle finger and that the ring finger is large simply because it is in relation to the smaller pinky. Although it is descriptively true that a small thing is only small in relation to a large thing and a large thing is only large in relation to a small thing, such a description offers no explanation of why the large thing is large and the small thing is small. Instead, it simply identifies the relationship that large things and small things bear toward one another as a consequence of their having the properties “large” and “small.” In other words, that *A* is larger than *B* because *B* is smaller than *A*, and *B* is smaller than *A* because *A* is larger than *B*, gives us no explanation as to *why* *A* is larger and *B* is smaller. It is merely descriptive and only tells us *that* *A* is larger in relation to *B* and vice versa.⁹ By realizing this, the soul will begin to ask what largeness, smallness, heavy, light, and so on are in themselves. Hence, Socrates argues, the soul will be led to make a distinction between the visible (τὸ ὁρατόν) and the intelligible (τὸ νοητόν) (524b1-c13).

The forms are introduced so as to explain the unity, intelligibility, and truth of spatio-temporal beings. A spatio-temporal being might have opposite properties, but it has those opposite properties with respect to its participation in different forms.

⁹ Cf. Plato, *Phd.*, 100e8-101b2; *Plt.*, 283c11-285c2; Wiitala, “The Forms in the *Euthyphro* and *Statesman*.”

Consequently, the fact that one and the same object, for example, is both a “large thing” and a “small thing” is no longer problematic, because that object is a “large thing” with respect to its participation in largeness and a “small thing” with respect to its participation in smallness. Participation in largeness explains why a large object is large and participation in smallness explains why a small object is small. The forms can do this explanatory work because, unlike spatio-temporal beings, the forms themselves do not admit of opposites. The large itself, for instance, will never be small. Since forms do not admit of opposites, their intelligibility does not need to be explained in the way that the intelligibility of spatio-temporal beings does. Likewise, since the forms do not admit of opposites, they can ground true statements about spatio-temporal beings. I can truly say “my ring finger is large in comparison to my pinky” because it truly is large in relation to my pinky, due to its participation in largeness and my pinky’s participation in smallness. In the same way, it would be false for me to say “my ring finger is small in comparison to my pinky,” because in relation to my pinky my ring finger does not participate in smallness. The forms ground the possibility of true and false speech about spatio-temporal beings such as my ring finger because although those beings exhibit opposite properties, they exhibit those properties due to their participation in different forms. Since the forms themselves do not exhibit opposite properties, they can ground true speech about the spatio-temporal beings that do. It is true that my finger is large and not small with respect to its participation in largeness, because largeness itself is always large and not small, in the sense that it always explains the largeness of its participants and never the smallness.

In the middle dialogues themselves, however, Socrates claims that the accounts of the forms he offers therein are incomplete and imagistic.¹⁰ Plato makes what is incomplete in those accounts explicit in the *Parmenides*. Plato has Parmenides critique certain ways of understanding the theory of forms from the middle dialogues. This critique is not intended to convince the readers of the dialogue to reject the theory of forms, but rather to begin the process of purifying the way they understand that theory of ambiguities that render it problematic.¹¹ At the beginning of the *Parmenides*, we find

¹⁰ See for example, Plato, *Rep.*, VI.503e1-507a7; *Phd.*, 99d4-100b7; *Phdr.*, 265b6-d1.

¹¹ See Plato, *Parm.*, 134e9-135c2; cf. Miller, *Plato’s Parmenides*.

Zeno reading a book he wrote in his youth, the thesis of which is that “things are not many” (127e10; οὐ πολλά ἐστι). Zeno argues that a thing cannot be many, whether the thing in question is an individual entity or the one “all” (πᾶν)—the totality of entities. The core of Zeno’s argument in defense of this thesis is that “if the things that are are many, they must then be both like and unlike, but that is impossible, because unlike things cannot be like things or like things unlike things” (127e1-4; εἰ πολλά ἐστι τὰ ὄντα, ὡς ἄρα δεῖ αὐτὰ ὁμοιά τε εἶναι καὶ ἀνόμοια, τοῦτο δὲ δὴ ἀδύνατον · οὔτε γὰρ τὰ ἀνόμοια ὁμοια οὔτε τὰ ὁμοια ἀνόμοια οἷόν τε εἶναι). The following *reductio* articulates the core of Zeno’s argument:

- (1) Things are many (assumption for *reductio*).
- (2) Things that are many are necessarily both like and unlike in at least the following sense: each of the many is like itself and unlike the others (premise).
- (3) A thing can only be if it is intelligible (premise).
- (4) A thing can only be intelligible if that thing is not its opposite (premise).
- (5) Like and unlike are opposites (premise).
- (6) Thus, “an unlike thing” is not “a like thing” and “a like thing” is not “an unlike thing” (from (3), (4), and (5)).
- (7) Thus, it is impossible for “a like thing” to be “an unlike thing” (from (3), (4), and (6)).
- (8) But, each of the many things must be both like itself and unlike the others, that is, each must be “a like thing” and “an unlike thing” (=2).
- (9) Therefore, the assumption that things are many (=1) is false. Things are not many (from (7) and (8)).

Socrates counters this argument in the *Parmenides* by introducing the forms, which allow him to qualify the premise in (4). While he agrees that a thing can only be intelligible if that thing is not its opposite, he differentiates things that have opposite properties or characters—that participate in opposite forms—from those “properties” or characters¹² themselves—the forms themselves. Socrates is thinking here that the things that have opposite characters are spatio-temporal beings. He argues that while the forms themselves cannot be their own opposites, spatio-temporal beings can have opposite

¹² I put “properties” in quotations because the word itself works against the argument here. “Characters,” although slightly less natural in English, better reflects the point Socrates is making here. The word “properties” suggests that the characters in question inevitably belong to something, whereas Socrates wants to understand the “properties” or characters in question as prior to the things to which they sometimes happen to belong.

characters, so long as they have those opposite characters with respect to their participation in different forms. Socrates' account here attempts to ground the intelligibility of spatio-temporal beings in the intelligibility of the forms, in much the same way as the accounts of the forms in the *Republic* and other middle dialogues do.

The way that Socrates formulates his account of the forms in response to Zeno, however, has a number of weaknesses, as Parmenides will go on to reveal. Socrates begins by asking Zeno:

Don't you acknowledge that there is some form (εἶδος τι) of likeness, itself by itself (αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτό), and some other form, opposite to this, that which is unlike? And don't you and I and the other things we call 'many' (καὶ τὰλλα ἃ δὴ πολλὰ καλοῦμεν) get a share of those two entities (δυσὸν ὄντων)? And don't things that get a share of likeness come to be like in that way and to the extent that they get a share, whereas things that get a share of unlikeness come to be unlike, and things that get a share of both come to be both? . . . If someone showed that the likes themselves come to be unlike or the unlikes like, that, I think, would be a marvel; but if he shows that things that partake of both of these have both characteristics, there seems to me nothing strange about that, Zeno—not even if someone shows that all things are one by partaking of oneness, and that these same things are many by partaking also of multitude (οὐδέ γε εἰ ἐν ἅπαντα ἀποφαίνει τις τῷ μετέχειν τοῦ ἑνὸς καὶ ταῦτα ταῦτα πολλὰ τῷ πλήθους αὖ μετέχειν). But if he should demonstrate that this thing itself, what one is, to be many, or, conversely, the many to be one (ἀλλ' εἰ ὁ ἕστιν ἓν, αὐτὸ τοῦτο πολλὰ ἀποδείξει καὶ αὖ τὰ πολλὰ δὴ ἓν)—at this I'll be astonished. (128e6-129a6, b1-c1)

One glaring problem with Socrates' characterization of the forms here is the way in which he treats their plurality as completely unproblematic. He claims that "you and I and the other things we call 'many'" can get a share of opposite forms. Socrates apparently assumes that "the things we call 'many'" are only spatio-temporal beings.¹³ Yet if there are many different forms, as Socrates' account here requires, then the forms themselves would also be among "the things we call 'many.'" Likewise, the forms would be among the things we call "one," since each is itself one. If the forms are countable

¹³ Of course Zeno's argument, to which Socrates is responding, does not restrict "the things we call 'many'" to spatio-temporal beings or to any other kind of being. For a discussion of Zeno's unrestricted use of "many" in his argument in the *Parmenides* see Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*, trans. Glenn R. Morrow and John M. Dillon (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), II.725; R. E. Allen, "Interpretation of Plato's *Parmenides*: Zeno's Paradox and the Theory of Forms," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 2, no. 2 (1964): 151; Eric Sanday, "Eleatic Metaphysics in Plato's *Parmenides*: Zeno's Puzzle of Plurality," *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 23, no. 3 (2009): 215-220.

ones of many in this way, however, then each form would be like itself and unlike the others.¹⁴ Thus, each form would be like and unlike in the same problematic way that each spatio-temporal being is.¹⁵ Furthermore, the form that Socrates calls “multitude” (129b6; πλήθους) or “many” (129b7; τὰ πολλά) in the above passage, if it is a form as Socrates claims that it is, would have to be one form among the many other forms that there are. Thus, astounding as it may be, the many would be one. Socrates in the above passage, however, clearly does not think that the forms themselves can exhibit opposite characters, since the forms can only ground the intelligibility of their participants because they do not exhibit opposite characters.¹⁶

The *Parmenides* demonstrates that the forms themselves must in some sense possess opposite characters. That, how, and why the forms can possess opposite characters is a theme taken up and addressed in the *Sophist*. The Eleatic stranger, in his attempt to show possibility of falsehood, will find it necessary to critique a certain way of understanding the theory of forms and to argue that the forms must both be at rest and in motion, despite the fact that rest and motion are opposites. In this way, the *Sophist* continues the project inaugurated in the *Parmenides* of clarifying, or offering a more sophisticated account of, the theory of forms presented in the middle dialogues. That the forms exhibit opposite properties threatens their intelligibility. And since the forms were initially posited to explain the intelligibility of spatio-temporal beings, if the intelligibility of the forms is threatened, so is that of spatio-temporal beings, and so is the possibility of true speech. As I will show, the theory of forms in the *Sophist* overcomes these difficulties by offering a more sophisticated account of the forms that differentiates a form *qua* countable object from a form *qua* nature.

¹⁴ Plato has Parmenides demonstrate this in the second hypothesis of the *Parmenides*. See Plato, *Parm.*, 143c1-144a9, 147c1-148d4.

¹⁵ For an analysis of the exchange between Zeno and Socrates in the *Parmenides* that develops this point, see Sanday, “Eleatic Metaphysics in Plato’s *Parmenides*.”

¹⁶ Precisely what Parmenides goes on to show in the dialogue’s hypotheses is that the one itself, at least, does in some sense exhibit opposite characters. The critical reader of the *Parmenides* can arguably even discern a solution to the problem through a study of the hypotheses. See Miller, *Plato’s Parmenides*; Eric Sanday, *A Study of Dialectic in Plato’s Parmenides* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, forthcoming).

§4. *The Dramatic Context and the Character of the Eleatic Stranger*

Any study of the *Sophist* must consider the sort of weight one ought to give to the statements of the Eleatic stranger. This consideration must be made on the basis of the dramatically projected situation in which the discussions in the *Sophist* and in the other Platonic dialogues take place. Socrates is the philosophical protagonist, hero, and main speaker in most of Plato's dialogues. While this does not imply that what Socrates says always represents Plato's own views, it does give Socrates' claims a certain weight. Given the way in which Socrates is presented in the dialogues, his claims and views on things ought to be taken seriously and sympathetically. When someone else replaces Socrates as the main speaker in a dialogue, how seriously and sympathetically we initially ought to approach his or her claims is less clear. Plato, no doubt, employs characters other than Socrates as protagonists in his dialogues partially to remind his readers that they ought to be judging arguments on their own terms, rather than on the basis of the merits of the character presenting those arguments. There is clearly more to it than that, however, since Plato's choice of the dialogue form in the first place indicates that he intends the dramatic content to influence his readers.¹⁷ In order to get a sense of the initial weight we ought to give to the claims of the stranger, it will be helpful to consider briefly the dramatic context in which the stranger appears. Contrary to what is sometimes thought, the dramatic content of the *Sophist* is extremely rich. Due to the limits of my project here, however, I will only be able to briefly touch on the dimensions of that content which are helpful for setting up the sort of interpretation of the *Sophist* digression that I will put forward in this dissertation.

A. The Basic Dramatic Setting of the *Sophist*

The *Sophist* bears a number of salient dramatic connections to other Platonic dialogues. It is the middle dialogue in a trilogy that consists of the *Theaetetus*, *Sophist*, and *Statesman*. Likewise, the discussion recorded in the *Sophist* is the first of a

¹⁷ For various discussions of why Plato employs the Eleatic stranger as the main speaker in the *Sophist* and *Statesman* rather than Socrates, see Julius Stenzel, *Plato's Method of Dialectic*, trans. and ed. D. J. Allen (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940); A. A. Long, "Plato's Apologies and Socrates in the *Theaetetus*," in *Method in Ancient Philosophy*, ed. J. Y. L. Gentzler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Ruby Blondell, *The Play of Character in Plato's Dialogues* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 378-396; David Sedley, *The Midwife of Platonism: Text and Subtext in Plato's Theaetetus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), esp. 180-181.

dramatically projected trilogy of philosophical discussions: one that is to define sophistry, one that is to define statesmanship, and one that is to define philosophy. Furthermore, the *Sophist* is the third dialogue in a tetralogy that includes the *Theaetetus*, *Euthyphro*, *Sophist*, and *Statesman*. Given that the conversation Socrates has in the *Theaetetus* is set on the day that he goes to the King's Porch to meet Meletus' indictment (*Tht.*, 210d2-4), the conversation presented in the *Euthyphro* occurs later on the same day. The discussion that takes place in the *Sophist* and *Statesman* is set on the following day and is thus dramatically dated during the spring of 399 B.C., mere months before Socrates' death.¹⁸ The *Sophist*, therefore, has a close dramatic connection not only to the *Euthyphro*, but also to the *Apology*, *Crito*, and *Phaedo*.¹⁹ And given the characters and philosophical topics discussed in the *Theaetetus*, *Sophist*, *Statesman* trilogy, the *Sophist* is closely linked to the *Republic*, *Phaedrus*, *Cratylus*, *Parmenides*, and *Philebus*.

The *Theaetetus*, *Sophist*, and *Statesman* trilogy is built around the question that Socrates raises near the beginning of the *Theaetetus*: What is knowledge? The *Theaetetus*, with its apparently aporetic conclusion, shows us what knowledge is not. Then the *Sophist* and *Statesman* pick up the question of knowledge again,²⁰ but this time by focusing on the object of knowledge: being in the *Sophist* and the good, in the sense of due measure, in the *Statesman*. The characters who converse in these three dialogues are Socrates, the mathematician and geometer Theodorus, two of Theodorus' students—Theaetetus and another young man also named Socrates—and the unnamed stranger from Elea.²¹ The conversation between the stranger and Theaetetus that begins in the *Sophist* is continued in the *Statesman*. In the *Theaetetus*, Socrates cross-examines Theaetetus concerning the nature of knowledge. Theaetetus is then selected as the stranger's conversation partner in the *Sophist*. In the *Statesman*, the company decides to give Theaetetus a break and have Young Socrates take his place as the stranger's conversation

¹⁸ Debra Nails, *The People of Plato: A Prosopography of Plato and Other Socratics* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2002), 320-323.

¹⁹ For discussions of the significance of Socrates' trial and death for the *Sophist*, see Miller, *The Philosopher in Plato's Statesman*, 1-3; Zuckert, *Plato's Philosophers*, 39-48, 680-735.

²⁰ Cf. Kenneth M. Sayre, *Plato's Late Ontology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), esp. 219; Mary Louise Gill, *Philosophos: Plato's Missing Dialogue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 2.

²¹ For a discussion of the stranger's namelessness see Blondell, *The Play of Character in Plato's Dialogues*, 318-326.

partner. Socrates and Theodorus, although they speak a little at the beginning of both the *Sophist* and *Statesman*, spend the rest of those dialogues listening in the background.²²

B. The Guiding Question of the *Sophist* and *Statesman* and the Identity of the Eleatic Stranger

At the beginning of the *Sophist*, Socrates asks the stranger to address the question that guides the discussion in both the *Sophist* and *Statesman*: How do the people from the stranger's native Elea regard sophists, statesmen, and philosophers (216c2-217a4)? More specifically, Socrates asks whether the people in Elea divide these into three kinds—just as there are three names—or whether they regard them as two kinds or just one kind (217a7-9). Socrates' question arises out of a concern that it is difficult to discern who is truly a philosopher. For “due to the ignorance of others,” Socrates claims, true philosophers “make their appearance in all sorts of ways” (217c4-6). “To some people,” Socrates continues, “they [true philosophers] seem to be in no way honorable and to others in every way worthy, and sometimes they make their appearance as statesmen and sometimes as sophists, and sometimes they give the sense of being in a totally mad condition” (217c7-d2).

The question of the essence of the true philosopher has a direct bearing on the dramatically projected situation in which Socrates asks it. First, Meletus has just publically called Socrates' own identity as a genuine philosopher into question on the previous day.²³ Second, and more important for our purposes, the Eleatic stranger's identity as a genuine philosopher is still in question.²⁴ Socrates has just met the stranger for the first time. Theodorus introduces the stranger as an Eleatic and “an associate of the people around Parmenides and Zeno—a very philosophical man (μάλα δὲ ἄνδρα φιλόσοφον)” (217a2-4). Then immediately after the initial introduction, Socrates and Theodorus have the following exchange:

²² Many editors, however, attribute the last words in the *Statesman* to the older, rather than the younger, Socrates, due to the authoritative character of those words.

²³ Mitchell Miller notes this and discusses its dramatic and philosophical significance in some detail (Miller, *The Philosopher in Plato's Statesman*, 1-15).

²⁴ Cf. Stanley Rosen, *Plato's Sophist: The Drama of Original and Image* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983), 61ff.; Blondell, *The Play of Characters in Plato's Dialogues*, 325.

Socrates: Has it escaped your notice, Theodorus, that—by Homer’s account—you’re bringing not a stranger but some god? Homer says that besides the other gods the god of strangers especially becomes a companion to those men who participate in just reverence, and that he looks down on both hubristic and lawful conduct.²⁵ So perhaps here too some of the higher powers may be accompanying you, to keep an eye on us and to refute us (ἐποψόμενός τε καὶ ἐλέγξων), since we are poor at giving accounts (φάυλους ἡμᾶς ὄντας ἐν τοῖς λόγοις)—some god of refutation (θεὸς ὢν τις ἐλεγκτικός).

Theodorus: That’s not the stranger’s style (τρόπος), Socrates, he’s more measured than those who take eristics seriously (τῶν περὶ τὰς ἔριδας ἐσπουδακόντων). And to me the man seems to be in no way a god, though certainly godlike (θεῖος). For that is what I call all philosophers.

Socrates: Well said, my friend. But I’m afraid that this kind is not much easier to discern (διακρίνειν), I imagine, than that of a god. (217a5-c4)

Theodorus may have brought a philosopher with him. Yet then again, just as in the passage from the *Odyssey* to which Socrates refers—where the stranger is not a god but Odysseus returning home²⁶—the Eleatic stranger may be no god or philosopher at all, but a sophist. In order to begin discerning whether or not the stranger is a true philosopher, Socrates asks him a philosophical question. He asks him whether the sophist, statesman, and philosopher are three different kinds. Socrates wants to see whether the stranger can do what any real philosopher can do: give an account of his life (διδόναι ἔλεγχον τοῦ βίου).²⁷ The stranger is introduced as “a very philosophical man.” Socrates wants to see whether the stranger can give an account of what a philosopher is.

The problem that we readers of the *Sophist* face, however, is that only someone who is a true philosopher could discern with knowledge whether the account that the stranger gives is truly philosophical. For, as Socrates has pointed out, to those who are ignorant—to those who are not themselves philosophers—the philosopher will appear as someone else: a sophist, a statesman, or a madman (217c4-d2).²⁸ Given that we the

²⁵ Homer, *Odyssey*, IX, 269ff.; XVII, 483ff.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, XVII, 483ff.

²⁷ Cf. Plato, *Apol.*, 39c6-8. Socrates tells those who convicted him: “You did this in the belief that you would avoid giving an account of your life (τοῦ δίδοναι ἔλεγχον τοῦ βίου), but I maintain that quite the opposite will happen to you.”

²⁸ This also implies that the stranger’s account of what the philosopher is would only appear to be the account of what the philosopher is to a philosopher. To the non-philosopher an account of what the philosopher is would appear to be an account of the sophist, statesman, or madman. As a result, Mitchell Miller has persuasively argued that Plato never intended to add a fourth dialogue, the “*Philosopher*,” to the *Theaetetus*, *Sophist*, *Statesman* trilogy. Given that Theodorus, *Theaetetus*, and Young Socrates are non-

readers of the Platonic dialogues may not yet be true philosophers, it is not obvious how we can even begin to discern whether or not the stranger is truly “a very philosophical man.”

I contend, however, that the text of the *Sophist* gives us some clues as to how we ought to begin discerning whether the stranger is a philosopher. The Platonic dialogues offer their readers a guiding ideal of the philosopher. That guiding ideal is the character Socrates. Socrates is presented in the dialogues as a philosophical hero and ideal. If anyone, Socrates is a true lover of wisdom, a true philosopher. The activity that Socrates most of all characterizes himself as doing in the *Apology* and *Theaetetus*, and what we witness him doing throughout the dialogues, is practicing *elenchus*, refutation. The stranger characterizes the sort of *elenchus* that we witness Socrates practicing as the art of refutation in *Sophist* 229b1-230e4. If Socrates practices the art of refutation and Socrates is the guiding ideal of a philosopher for the reader of the Platonic dialogues, then the initial question concerning the character of the stranger that we as readers of the *Sophist* ought to ask ourselves is whether or not the stranger practices this art as well. Moreover, Socrates’ first comments about the stranger point us toward asking this question. Socrates asks Theodorus whether the stranger is “some god of refutation” in disguise. With regard to the stranger, I submit, discerning “the divine” and discerning the

philosophers, in the dramatically projected situation a direct search into the nature of the philosopher would be impossible. “If anything,” Miller concludes, “the philosopher must be sought within the searches for the sophist and the statesman, and the . . . task will be to recognize and distinguish him there” (Miller, *The Philosopher in Plato’s Statesman*, 10). For others who, like Miller, argue that Plato did not write the “*Philosopher*” because a direct search into the nature of the philosopher would be impossible, see Martin Heidegger, *Plato’s Sophist*, trans., Andre Schuwer and Richard Rojcewicz (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997), 368; Francis M. Cornford, *Plato’s Theory of Knowledge: The Theaetetus and Sophist* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1935; New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1957), 169; Paul Friedländer, *Plato*, trans. H. Meyerhoff, vol. 3 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 281; Kenneth Dorter, *Form and Good in Plato’s Eleatic Dialogues: The Parmenides, Theaetetus, Sophist, and Statesman* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), 235-236; Noburu Notomi, *The Unity of Plato’s Sophist: Between Sophist and Philosopher* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 238-239. Others argue that Plato could have written the “*Philosopher*,” but instead chose to reveal the nature of the philosopher implicitly in the *Sophist*, *Statesman*, or other related dialogues. See for example, Rosamond K. Sprague, *Plato’s Philosopher King* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1976), 100; Jacob Klein, *Plato’s Trilogy: Theaetetus, the Sophist, and the Statesman* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 177; Michael Frede, “The Literary Form of the *Sophist*,” in *Form and Argument in Late Plato*, ed. C. Gill and M. M. McCabe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 149-151; Blondell, *The Play of Characters in Plato’s Dialogues*, 325n39; Gill, *Philosophos*, esp. 5. Still others argue that Plato could have written the “*Philosopher*” but did not due to circumstantial or personal reasons. See for example, J. B. Skemp, *Plato: The Statesman* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1952; Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 1987), 20-22.

philosopher amount to the same thing: discerning whether or not the stranger practices the art of refutation. If the stranger does in fact practice the art of refutation, we have at least initial evidence that he is “a very philosophical man.”²⁹

In order to answer the question of whether or not the stranger practices the art of refutation, it will be helpful to consider the *Sophist* as a member of the *Theaetetus*, *Euthyphro*, *Sophist*, *Statesman* tetralogy. The conversations in the *Theaetetus* and *Euthyphro* are dramatically set on the same day. The *Sophist* and *Statesman* are set on the following day. On the surface, the conversations that occur in the *Theaetetus* and *Euthyphro* seem similar to one another in their overall structure. Likewise, the conversations that occur in the *Sophist* and *Statesman* seem similar to one another in their overall structure. These two pairs of dialogues, however, seem very different in their overall structure. The conversations in the *Theaetetus* and *Euthyphro* are both led by Socrates and both end in apparent *aporia*. *Theaetetus* fails to adequately define knowledge and *Euthyphro* fails to adequately define piety. In contrast, the conversations in the *Sophist* and *Statesman*, led by the stranger, do not end in *aporia*. While how exactly the stranger’s final accounts of sophistry and statesmanship ought to be understood is somewhat unclear, he does provide a positive account of each that no one refutes. If the stranger practices the art of refutation, how he practices it does not on the surface look anything like how Socrates practices it.

I submit that we do see the stranger practicing the art of refutation in the *Sophist* and *Statesman*, although his refutation is of a slightly different sort than the one Socrates practices.³⁰ I will distinguish, therefore, two different parts of the art of refutation. One part is the kind of refutation typically practiced by Socrates, which I will call “Socratic

²⁹ Some commentators on the *Sophist* have argued that the stranger represents a kind of philosopher different from the kind represented by Socrates. While Socrates’ *elenchus* might be a necessary tool at the beginning of philosophical study, the void left by the beliefs it destroys must be filled by a constructive kind of philosophizing, represented by the stranger (see for example, Stenzel, *Plato’s Method of Dialectic*; Long, “Plato’s Apologies and Socrates in the *Theaetetus*”). This view is problematic because it tends to ignore or downplay the fact that the stranger is first characterized by Socrates as “some god of refutation.” The reading I will offer explains how the stranger, like Socrates, practices the art of refutation. For another way of characterizing the stranger’s philosophical practice as a kind of refutation see Lesley Brown, “Innovation and Continuity: The Battle of the Gods and Giants, *Sophist* 245-249,” in *Method in Ancient Philosophy*, ed. J. Y. L. Gentzler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 182; Cf. Notomi, *The Unity of Plato’s Sophist*, 227.

³⁰ That the Eleatic stranger practices some sort of refutation is certainly not the standard reading. For a representative of the standard reading, see Frede, “The Literary Form of the *Sophist*,” 135-145.

elenchus.” The other part is the kind of refutation we see practiced by the stranger, which I will call “the stranger’s *elenchus*.” I will identify the stranger’s *elenchus* on the basis of the stranger’s approach to philosophy in the *Sophist* and *Statesman*. I will take the sort of refutation we witness in the *Theaetetus* and *Euthyphro* as my exemplar of Socratic *elenchus*. I will proceed by first considering the differences in how Socrates and the stranger approach philosophical discussion. Then I will present the stranger’s account of the art of refutation in the *Sophist* and show how Socrates and the stranger both practice the art of refutation in their own way.

B(i). Differences in How Socrates and the Eleatic Stranger Approach Philosophical Discussion

The first way in which Socrates and the Eleatic stranger differ in their typical approach to philosophical discussion is that the stranger tends to put forward what appear to be his own opinions whereas Socrates generally does not. At the beginning of the *Sophist*, the stranger characterizes the account of the sophist, statesman, and philosopher he is about to give as his own. When Socrates first asks him whether the people in Elea understand the sophist, statesman, and philosopher to be one, two, or three kinds, the stranger responds that “they generally consider them to be three” (217b1-2). “And yet,” the stranger continues, “to mark off clearly what each is one by one is no small or easy task” (217b2-4). Socrates encourages the stranger to undertake this task and asks the stranger whether he would prefer to present the account “in a long speech” by himself or by questioning another (217c1-7). The stranger answers that “if the person to whom the conversation is addressed is compliant and isn’t a trouble-maker . . . the easier way to go through it is with another. Otherwise, it is easier to do it alone” (217d1-3). Socrates offers Theaetetus as a polite conversation partner. Although the stranger agrees to proceed by questioning Theaetetus, he tells Socrates that he is somewhat embarrassed to turn their first meeting into a “spinning out at great length a long account” as if he were “making an oration” (217d8-e2). Thus, a natural reading of the opening of the *Sophist* suggests that the accounts of the sophist and statesman that follow express the stranger’s views. That does not mean that every claim which the stranger makes throughout the *Sophist* and *Statesman* should be given equal weight. The stranger clearly has educative

aims in his discussion with Theaetetus and Young Socrates, and due to those aims he offers a number of problematic and incompatible definitions of sophistry and statesmanship.³¹ Taken as a whole, however, the accounts he offers can safely be said to express his views. In this respect, the stranger's approach is rather dissimilar to that of Socrates' practice of *elenchus*. In the *Theaetetus*, Socrates characterizes himself as a philosophical midwife who is himself "barren of wisdom." Instead of putting forward his own views, he assists others in "giving birth" to their theories by testing those theories in order to determine whether they are true or false (150a4-151d6). We witness this practice in the *Theaetetus*, *Euthyphro*, and many other Socratic dialogues. When performing the *elenchus*, Socrates does not put forward his own views—except perhaps incidentally—but rather elicits the opinions of others and subjects those opinions to scrutiny. Sometimes that scrutiny is welcome—as in the *Theaetetus*—and sometimes unwelcome—as in the *Euthyphro*.

A second way in which the stranger and Socrates differ is that the stranger's approach is much more impersonal than that of Socrates. The stranger's account is impersonal in that it could be addressed to anyone, or at least to any student advanced in mathematical studies and interested in pursuing philosophy. The stranger, unlike Socrates, does not know Theaetetus' family (cf. *Tht.*, 144b8-c8). Nor is the stranger an Athenian. He is not intimately familiar with the customs and laws that have shaped who Theaetetus is. All that the stranger requires for the sort of account he gives in the *Sophist* and *Statesman* is a compliant interlocutor (*Soph.*, 217d1-3). His interlocutor's opinions, customs, and history are for the most part irrelevant to the sort of exposition he has to offer. With Socrates' approach, in contrast, the opposite is true. Socrates always adapts his questions to the particular person he is questioning. He takes that person's history, culture, activities, and customs into account. Thus, it is no surprise that Socrates knows Theaetetus family background better than Theaetetus' own teacher, Theodorus, does (*Tht.*, 144b8-c8). Furthermore, Socrates almost never leaves the confines of Athens' city walls and refuses to flee the city even to save his life.³² He characterizes his god-given

³¹ See Miller, *The Philosopher in Plato's Statesman*. The stranger's educative aims are especially clear in the *Statesman*, and can be seen in the *Sophist* as well (see esp. Plato, *Plt.*, 261e5-263b12, 286d4-287a7; *Soph.*, 234d2-e7, 236d5-7).

³² Plato, *Phdr.*, 230c6-e4; *Cri.*, esp. 52b1-c6.

task in the *Apology* as a service to the people of Athens. For Socrates, the *elenchus* is a practice that is primarily tied to a particular city and carried out in a particular political and cultural context.³³ This is clearly not the case for the stranger, who has traveled far from his native Elea.

B(ii). The Art of Refutation, Socratic *Elenchus*, and the Stranger's *Elenchus*

Despite the difference in approach exhibited by Socrates and the stranger, I think that both are practicing the same art of refutation, although in different ways. In order to see why, it will be helpful to consider more carefully what the art of refutation is. I will use the stranger's account of the art of refutation in *Sophist* 226b1-230e4 as a guide.

The art of refutation (ἔλεγχος), according to the stranger, is a part of the art of teaching (διδασκαλική) and a kind of education (παιδεία) (227d13-229d6). Refutation is one of the arts that address what the stranger characterizes as the greatest kind of ignorance: "Having the opinion that one knows something when one does not really know it" (see 229c1-5; τὸ μὴ κατειδότα τι δοκεῖν εἰδέναι). The goal of refutation is to cleanse one's soul of the opinion that one knows what one does not know. It accomplishes this goal, according to the stranger, by showing to the one upon whom it is practiced that his opinions about the thing he thinks he knows contradict one another (230b4-d4). This contradiction reveals to the one upon whom refutation is practiced that he does not in fact know what he thought he knew.

Socratic *elenchus* generates a contradiction by identifying certain opinions as false on the basis of other opinions that the one questioned holds to be true. In the *Theaetetus*, for example, Socrates shows Theaetetus that knowledge is perception, knowledge is true opinion, and knowledge is true opinion with a *logos* are all false opinions, at least if they are taken in the sense that Theaetetus understands them. Similarly, in the *Euthyphro*, Socrates shows that piety is what the gods love, piety is what all the gods love, and piety is the part of justice concerned with care of the gods are false opinions given other opinions that Euthyphro holds to be true. Socrates shows those upon whom he practices the *elenchus* that they do not know what they think they know,

³³ I say that Socrates' *elenchus* is "primarily" tied to a particular political and cultural context, because at the end of the *Apology* Socrates mentions the possibility of practicing it in Hades (Plato, *Apol.*, 41b5-7), thus suggesting that his practice of *elenchus* could be detached from its service to the Athenians.

by demonstrating that some of their opinions about what they think they know are false. The ignorance that Socratic *elenchus* addresses is one that involves the holding of demonstrably false opinions. And these demonstrably false opinions are generally rooted in *nomoi*—in particular customs, cultures, activities, and practices.

I submit that the stranger, in contrast to Socrates, primarily contends against a slightly different sort of ignorance. Like the ignorance that Socratic *elenchus* addresses, the sort of ignorance the stranger targets consists in thinking that one knows what one does not know. The sort of ignorance that the stranger’s approach addresses, however, is not rooted in *nomos*, but in the very nature of being. As a corollary of this, the sort of refutation the stranger practices is not primarily concerned with targeting demonstrably false opinions. Rather, the stranger’s *elenchus* primarily targets true opinions. Those who hold true opinions are in danger of thinking that they have knowledge of that about which they have true opinions. It is this sort of thinking that one knows what one does not know with which the stranger’s *elenchus* is concerned. As Socrates has already shown in the *Theaetetus*, knowledge is not reducible to true opinion. Hence, even if one’s opinions are true, one is still in danger of thinking that one knows what one does not know. Consider two true opinions that the stranger discusses later in the *Sophist*: “motion is not being” and “motion is being.” Both are true opinions, yet they seem to contradict one another. One does not hold these two opinions with knowledge unless one understands how both opinions do not in fact contradict one another and why both are necessarily true. One can opine that both of these opinions are true without understanding why they are true. In that case, however, one would not hold these opinions with knowledge. Knowledge must include, in addition to true opinion, insight (*voũç*) into that which explains and grounds one’s opinions.³⁴

Those who have achieved some philosophical insight are continually in danger of losing it. Moreover, those same true opinions that resulted from an insight can, when the insight fades, obscure the very insight that produced them, since one can begin to mistake the opinions for the insight itself. As my analysis of the *Sophist* digression on non-being will show, the stranger’s *elenchus* targets the danger of mistakenly thinking that one

³⁴ See §2 above.

knows those things about which one has true opinions.³⁵ If we compare Socratic *elenchus* with that of the stranger, it is clear that the stranger's *elenchus* is more suitable to those making progress in dialectical education as outlined in the *Republic*. Such students, coming to the end of their mathematical studies and having entered into philosophical inquiry proper, will be especially prone to confuse their true opinions with insight, since on the basis of insight, and of some of the true opinions that resulted from insight, they will have already jettisoned many of their false opinions rooted in *nomos*. The danger, which Socrates vividly describes in the *Republic* (VII.537e1-539d1), is that such students, due to the confusion of true opinion with insight, will think that they already securely possess genuine philosophical knowledge when they do not, which could result in their becoming vicious sophists who "like puppies, enjoy dragging and tearing those around them with their arguments" (*Rep.*, VII.539b5-7).

While Socratic *elenchus* strives to turn the soul toward the study of philosophy, the stranger's *elenchus* strives to protect and strengthen the insight of those who have already begun that study. This is precisely what the dramatic structure of the *Theaetetus*, *Euthyphro*, *Sophist*, *Statesman* tetralogy indicates. In the *Euthyphro*, we witness Socrates practicing the *elenchus* on someone who is clearly not philosophical. The hope was that Euthyphro would acknowledge his ignorance concerning the things about which he claimed to be an expert and would thereby recognize his need for philosophy. In the *Theaetetus*, we see a young man, Theaetetus, with a good upbringing and character, very intelligent and well advanced in mathematical studies.³⁶ Socrates practices the *elenchus* on Theaetetus in order to show him that despite his intelligence, he does not even know what knowledge is.³⁷ Again, the hope is that Theaetetus will recognize his need for philosophy, as he in fact does. In the *Sophist*, the stranger introduces Theaetetus to basic dialectical method—the so called method of division—and leads Theaetetus through a

³⁵ Cf. chap. V.1.D, p. 200.

³⁶ In fact, when Theodorus describes Theaetetus, the character traits he names are the same ones that Socrates in the *Republic* ascribes to the rare philosophical nature, which if tested and properly nurtured, would have the capacity to undergo the long process of education that ends in dialectic. See Plato, *Tht.*, 144a1-b6; *Rep.*, VI.503b3-d8.

³⁷ The Socratic *elenchus* purges Theaetetus of a number of culturally rooted false opinions. For instance, the relativism advocated by Protagoras, Theodorus' friend, and the thesis that knowledge is perception (cf. Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth: On Plato's Cave Allegory and Theaetetus*, trans. Ted Sadler [New York: Continuum, 2002], 121: "For the Greeks, nothing is more self-evident than to interpret possession of ἀλήθεια [i.e., knowledge] first of all as αἴσθησις").

properly philosophical investigation concerning the nature of sophistry, being, non-being, truth, and falsehood. By the time of the conversation in the *Sophist*, Theaetetus, in contrast to someone like Euthyphro, has already successfully undergone the Socratic *elenchus* and recognized that he is in need of philosophy. As he begins the practice of dialectic with the stranger, he is not in great danger of thinking that the sort of inquiry through which the stranger is guiding him is unimportant or a waste of time.³⁸ Yet, Theaetetus is in danger of mistaking the various true opinions which he will adopt as the stranger goes through the investigation for the insight that explains their truth. This mistake would entail the further mistake of confusing philosophy with sophistry, since properly understanding sophistry presupposes insight into the nature of philosophy. Moreover, given that Theaetetus is in danger of confusing philosophy and sophistry and given that as a result of the Socratic *elenchus* Theaetetus recognizes that philosophy is something desirable, Theaetetus is in danger of thinking that sophistry is something desirable. It is this danger that the stranger's *elenchus* can remedy and that the Socratic *elenchus* cannot. Thus, Socrates, out of his concern for Theaetetus' soul, allows the stranger to do his work.

C. The Significance of Plato's Use of the Eleatic Stranger

We can now return to the question of what sort of weight one ought to give the stranger's philosophical claims in light of the dramatically projected situation in the *Sophist* and *Statesman*. According to the reading I have been developing, Socrates remains a philosophical protagonist and hero in the *Sophist* and *Statesman*.³⁹ Socrates convinces the stranger to continue the philosophical education of Theaetetus that was initiated the day before. He then stands by and listens, presumably at least in part to ensure that the stranger is leading Theaetetus in the right direction. If the stranger does indeed practice a certain sort of *elenchus*, as my reading of the *Sophist* will confirm, then we have reason to think that the stranger, like Socrates, is a genuine philosopher and not a sophist. Thus, the stranger's claims throughout the *Sophist* and *Statesman* ought to be

³⁸ In the *Statesman*, there is an explicit discussion of whether dialectical inquiry is a waste of time (283b1 ff.). Young Socrates grants that it is not a waste of time, but the stranger thinks that it is necessary to discuss it anyway, in case Young Socrates should be tempted to change his mind in the future.

³⁹ This is a major difference between my reading and that of Julius Stenzel and A. A. Long (Stenzel, *Plato's Method of Dialectic*; Long, "Plato's Apologies and Socrates in the *Theaetetus*").

accorded the weight that one would give to the claims of a genuine philosopher. While, as in the case of Socrates, this does not necessarily mean that one must take everything the stranger says as representative of Plato's own views, it does mean that his claims ought to be taken seriously and sympathetically.

The question remains as to why Plato would employ the stranger as the main speaker in the *Sophist* and *Statesman* rather than Socrates. Three main reasons present themselves in light of our discussion so far. First, the introduction of the stranger as the main speaker in place of Socrates highlights the difference between the two sorts of *elenchus* I have identified: Socratic *elenchus* and the stranger's *elenchus*. Both sorts of *elenchus* are vital to philosophical education and each is suited for a different stage in that education. Had Plato simply employed Socrates to do what the stranger does, the distinction between these two sorts of *elenchus* would not be as salient. Second, the introduction of the stranger in place of Socrates highlights the transcultural character of philosophical inquiry. The philosophical inquiry that Socrates practices in Athens is the same inquiry that they practice in Elea. It is also the same inquiry practiced by those who have gone before, such as Parmenides and Zeno. Finally, the introduction of the stranger in place of Socrates indicates that philosophy transcends any particular teacher or vocation, something important to remember given the imminence of Socrates' imprisonment and death. Socrates, as he tells us in the *Apology*, had a particular mission to the city of Athens. While this vocation was intimately connected to Socrates' pursuit of philosophy, the pursuit of philosophy itself is not limited to this specific vocation.⁴⁰ Moreover, the practice of philosophy requires of its students detachment from any particular teacher.⁴¹ Insofar as one is practicing philosophy, one ought not to think that something is true because Socrates or anyone else says that it is true, but because one understands why it is true.

§5. Important Philosophical Notions from Dramatically Related Dialogues

The theory of forms the *Sophist* offers can only be properly understood on the basis of certain key notions that Plato prompts his readers to develop in dialogues

⁴⁰ Cf. Blondell, *The Play of Characters in Plato's Dialogues*, 318-326, 378ff.

⁴¹ Cf. Plato, *Phd.*, 78a1-9, 91b8-c6; *Symp.*, 201c8-9.

dramatically related to the *Sophist*, such as the *Theaetetus* and *Euthyphro*. My analysis of the *Sophist* will make use of three of these notions.

The first two notions are causal priority and priority in *logos*. I will introduce these two notions through an analysis of the central portion of the *Euthyphro*. After these two senses of priority, I will turn to the discussion of wholes and parts near the end of the *Theaetetus*. I will use that discussion to identify and define the various sorts of wholes of parts to which I will later refer in my analysis of the *Sophist*.

A. Causal Priority: The *Euthyphro*

Near the beginning of the *Euthyphro*, Socrates asks Euthyphro, a self-proclaimed expert in religious matters, to teach him what piety is (5a3-d5). Euthyphro agrees and attempts to define piety for Socrates. After Euthyphro's first definition of piety as "what is dear to the gods" (6e11) fails, he attempts a second. He claims that "the pious (τὸ ὅσιον) is what all the gods love" (9e1-2). Although Socrates might very well agree that all the gods love the pious,⁴² he does not think that Euthyphro's second definition adequately captures what piety is.

In what follows, I will define what I will call "causal priority"—which could alternatively be called "priority in explanation"⁴³—through an analysis of Socrates'

⁴² See Plato, *Rep.*, II.377d4-383c7; *Euth.*, 6a8-10.

⁴³ What I am calling "causal priority" is sometimes called "priority in explanation," "explanatory priority" or "metaphysical ground" (see Matthew Evans, "Lessons from *Euthyphro* 10A-11B," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 42 (2012): 1-38; Wiitala, "The Forms in the *Euthyphro* and *Statesman*"). "Causal priority"—where "cause" translates "αἰτία"—most closely reflects the terminology that Aristotle uses to refer to this sort of priority (see for example, Aristotle, *Categories*, xii.14b9-23) and the way in which Plato has Socrates refer to it in *Phaedo* 96a5-102a1. In contemporary philosophical discussions, however, "causal priority" often means something very different. Sensitivity to contemporary senses of "causal priority" is the reason why scholars like Evans opt to refer to this sort of priority as "metaphysical ground" and why I opted for "explanatory priority" in some of my publications. "Explanatory priority" accurately describes the sort of priority in question, and "explanation" can be an accurate translation of "αἰτία," so long as "explanation" is understood in an objective sense—as in "the heat of the stove explains why the water is boiling." Yet, due to the semantic range of the English "explanation," "explanatory priority" could be misleading in that it might suggest that the priority in question depends on the way in which we human beings explain things. Since I expect the readers of this dissertation to be somewhat familiar with ancient Greek philosophy, throughout this dissertation I will use "causal priority." "Causal priority" most closely reflects the terminology of Plato and Aristotle and emphasizes the ontological nature of this sort of priority. My readers, however, should not confuse the sort of "causal priority" to which I refer with the other senses of "causal priority" in contemporary discourse.

refutation of Euthyphro's second definition of piety.⁴⁴ My argument proceeds in three stages. I begin by presenting the examples that Socrates uses to clarify what he means by "because" in his argument against Euthyphro. Next, I show how these examples identify the relationship of causal priority and I state what I take that relationship to be. Finally, I suggest some ways that causal priority is articulated in various discussions of the forms in the middle dialogues.

Socrates begins his critique of Euthyphro's second definition of piety by asking: "Is the pious loved (φιλεῖται) by the gods because (ὅτι) it is pious, or is it pious because it is loved?" (10a2-3). Euthyphro is unsure of what Socrates means by this question (10a4). So Socrates attempts to clarify. He undertakes this clarification on the basis of two sets of examples. The first set of examples consist of four pairs of objects: a thing carried (φερόμενον) and a thing carrying (φέρον), a thing led (ἀγόμενον) and a thing leading (ἄγων), a thing seen (ὀρώμενον) and a thing seeing (ὀρῶν), and finally a thing loved (φιλούμενον) and a thing loving (φιλοῦν) (10a5-11). Socrates contrasts the members of each pair, pointing out that the thing carried is different from the thing carrying, the thing led different from the thing leading, the thing seen different from the thing seeing, and the thing loved different from the thing loving. In each case there is a relation between two different things, a relation in which one thing affects the other. With this first set of examples, Socrates is differentiating a thing that does an activity, an active thing, from the thing affected by that activity, a passive thing.

While this distinction between an active thing and a passive thing is plain enough, Socrates further develops the relationship that underlies this distinction by means of a second set of examples. He uses this second set of examples to specify more precisely what he means by the word "because" when he asks whether "the pious is being loved by the gods because it is pious." Socrates presents his second set of examples in the following:

⁴⁴ That Socrates' refutation of Euthyphro's second definition of piety identifies causal priority is well documented in secondary literature on the *Euthyphro*. The precise way in which it does is of course a matter of dispute. See S. Marc Cohen, "Socrates on the Definition of Piety: *Euthyphro* 10A-11B," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 9, no. 1 (1971): 1-13; Kahn, *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue*, 174-177; Brendan O'Sullivan, "The *Euthyphro* Argument (9d-11b)," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 44, no. 4 (2006): 662; Lindsay Judson, "Carried Away in the *Euthyphro*," in *Definition in Greek Philosophy*, ed. David Charles (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Evans, "Lessons from *Euthyphro* 10A-11B," 11.

Socrates: Tell me then whether the thing carried (τὸ φερόμενον) is a carried thing because it is being carried (φέρεται), or for some other reason?

Euthyphro: No, that is the reason.

Socrates: And the thing led (τὸ ἀγόμενον) is so because it is being led (ἄγεται), and the thing seen (τὸ ὁρώμενον) because it is being seen (ὁρᾶται)?

Euthyphro: Certainly.

Socrates: It is not being seen because it is a thing seen but on the contrary it is a thing seen because it is being seen; nor is it because it is a thing led that it is being led but because it is being led that it is a thing led. . . . Nor is it being affected (πάσχον) because it is a thing affected (πάσχει), but it is a thing affected because it is being affected. (10b1-c4)

The examples in this second set differ from those of the first set in that they highlight a relation between a thing and its mode or way of being, instead of a relation between two different things.⁴⁵ Rather than referring to a relation between active and passive things—such as the thing leading and the thing led or the thing seeing and the thing seen—Socrates here focuses on the relation between passive things and their modes of being. In his first set of examples, Socrates uses an active participle to designate the active thing and a passive participle to designate the passive thing. In his second set of examples, by contrast, he employs a passive finite verb to designate the thing's being affected—its mode of being—and a passive participle to designate the thing so affected. Socrates uses his second set of examples to differentiate a thing led, a thing seen, and generally a thing affected, from its being led, being seen, and generally its being affected. The being affected of a passive thing is one of its modes or ways of being. Socrates differentiates the mode of being from the thing characterized by it.

By means of his second set of examples, Socrates identifies the “because” in his question as the “because” of causal priority. The second set of examples highlights the following three characteristics of causal priority.

First, the relationship of causal priority is not essentially a relationship between different entities. In the second set of examples, the “because” does not designate a

⁴⁵ For a concise discussion of the relation between a thing and its mode of being in the context of understanding the priority of form and *ousia* in Aristotle see Michail Peramatzis, *Priority in Aristotle's Metaphysics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 3-6. I think that much of what Peramatzis says there would apply to the priority of form in Plato as well.

relationship between two different entities, but rather a relationship between an entity and its mode of being. To be sure, this “because” could relate two different entities, since presumably piety and the gods who love it are two different entities. Yet what this “because” of causal priority designates is not essentially a relation between different entities. Relations in which one *relatum* explains another are not restricted to relations between entities.

Second, causal priority is not temporal priority. Temporal priority is the priority of things which occur earlier in time to things which occur later in time. *A* is temporally prior to *B* iff *A* occurs at a time before *B* occurs. While one thing that is temporally prior to another thing could also be causally prior to that thing, it need not be. In Socrates’ examples, in fact, the *relata*—a thing and its being affected—“occur” simultaneously. Or rather they do not “occur” at all, since neither a thing nor its modes of being are events.⁴⁶ Thus, the relationship of explanatory priority is not temporal priority.

Third, the relationship of causal priority is asymmetrical. Something is *B* because of *A*, but not vice versa. Something is not being affected because it is a thing affected, but rather something is a thing affected because it is being affected. For example, my reflection in a mirror looks the way that it does because I look the way that I do. The reverse, however, is not the case. I am causally prior to my reflection in a mirror insofar as the way that I look explains the way that my reflection looks. Likewise, the movement of a painter’s hand is causally prior to the movement of the paintbrush the painter is holding insofar as the movement of the painter’s hand explains the movement of the paintbrush. The paintbrush is moving because the painter’s hand is moving. The reverse, however, is not the case. Due to its asymmetry, I characterize the relationship of causal priority as a relationship of priority and posteriority.

With this initial negative characterization of causal priority in place, we are now in the position to move to a positive account. I will identify and define explanatory priority by closely considering the relationship between the *relata* in Socrates’ second set

⁴⁶ Asking about whether the gods love the pious because it is pious or whether the pious is pious because the gods love it could, perhaps, be construed as involving the question of whether or not piety existed before the gods did, especially if one thinks that the gods came into being at some point in time, as certain things which Euthyphro says suggest (see 5e2-6c7). Socrates’ claims about the relationship between a thing and its being affected, however, illustrate that temporal priority is not the sort of priority which he means to designate by the word “because.”

of examples. A thing's being carried is part of the explanation of why the thing carried is a carried thing. A thing's being carried is prior to its being a carried thing in the order of explanation. The fact that a carried thing is a carried thing, however, does not explain why the thing is being carried. As I said above, the relation of causal priority between the thing carried and its being carried is asymmetrical. The being carried of the thing explains why the thing carried is a thing carried, but the reverse is not true. Yet someone might object to the asymmetry here by pointing out that the following biconditional is true: if a thing is a carried thing, then it is necessarily being carried; and if a thing is being carried, then it is necessarily a carried thing. This objection fails, however, because it confuses the relationship of causal priority with a relation of entailment. Although the fact that a carried thing is a carried thing necessarily *entails* that the thing is being carried, the fact that a carried thing is a carried thing does not explain *why* the thing is being carried. That which is causally prior explains why that which is causally posterior has the character that it does and is the sort of being that it is. The being carried of a thing, for instance, explains why that thing is the sort of thing it is insofar as it is a carried thing. The relationship of causal priority, therefore, can be stated in the following way:

(CP) *A* is causally prior to *B* iff *A* explains why *B* is the sort of thing *B* is, but *B* does not explain why *A* is the sort of thing *A* is.

Causal priority is a structure on which we continually rely in the way we understand things. We rely on it whenever we think about why something is the sort of thing it is or has the sort of character it does. Moreover, the meaning of "because" in Socrates' refutation should now be clear. The "because" is a "because" of causal priority: a "because" which indicates that the *relatum* named after the "because" is causally prior to the *relatum* named before the "because."

After Socrates clarifies what he means by "because," he gets Euthyphro to concede that the pious is loved by the gods because it is pious (10d6-8). With this concession, Socrates has all he needs to show that Euthyphro's definition of piety as "what all the gods love" fails to capture what piety is, even if it is true that piety is loved by all the gods.⁴⁷ "What all the gods love" fails to capture what piety is because what

⁴⁷ For a clear and convincing discussion of how and why Socrates' argument against Euthyphro's second definition of piety accomplishes what it claims to accomplish, see Evans, "Lessons from *Euthyphro* 10A-11B."

piety is must explain why pious things are pious. Socrates wants to learn “that form itself,” as he says, “by which all pious things are pious” (6d10-11; ἐκεῖνο αὐτὸ τὸ εἶδος ᾧ πάντα τὰ ὅσια ὅσιά ἐστιν).⁴⁸ He is not searching for some fact—such as the gods’ love—that the form of piety would explain.⁴⁹

Having established what causal priority is, let me briefly suggest some ways in which it is articulated through the theory of forms generally. The middle dialogues in particular describe the forms in such a way as to highlight causal priority. Take for example Socrates’ discussion of his “second sailing” in *Phaedo* 96a-102a. Socrates tells how as a young man he was interested in “the causes (αἰτίας) of each thing” (96a8). He then goes on to describe how his investigations led him to posit the forms as the genuine causes for why the things that come to be and cease to be are the way that they are (98b7-100e3). Likewise, the metaphysical hierarchies expressed by the Divided Line and Allegory of the Cave in the *Republic* and by the Ladder of Love in the *Symposium* articulate various dimensions of reality, as Plato sees it, in terms of their causal priority and posteriority to one another.⁵⁰ In the Allegory of the Cave, for example, the things outside the cave, which represent the forms, are causally prior to the puppets inside the cave, and hence to the shadows on the wall. The look of things outside of the cave

⁴⁸ Whether or not Socrates uses “form” (εἶδος) here in the sense that it is used in other dialogues which seem to present a more developed theory of forms is irrelevant to my argument, although I think that he does. My argument here simply seeks to establish that the thing Socrates is calling a form in the *Euthyphro* is causally prior to the objects which have that form’s character. There is general consensus among scholars that the notion of form (εἶδος) which Socrates employs in the *Euthyphro* is then developed by Plato into the theory of forms presented in dialogues such as the *Phaedo* and *Republic*. How exactly that development ought to be understood and whether or not the notion of form in the *Euthyphro* is compatible with the theory of forms in other dialogues, however, is controversial. For a “unitarian” account see Charles Kahn, “Did Plato Write Socratic Dialogues?” *Classical Quarterly* 31, no. 2 (1981): 305-320; *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue*; Miller, *The Philosopher in Plato’s Statesman*, xxiii-xxxiii. For a “developmental” account that focuses especially on the *Euthyphro* see R. E. Allen, *Plato’s ‘Euthyphro’ and the Earlier Theory of Forms* (New York: Humanities Press, 1970). For other “developmental” accounts see Henry Teloh, *The Development of Plato’s Metaphysics* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1981) and Russell M. Dancy, *Plato’s Introduction of the Forms* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). For other approaches see Cooper, introduction to *Plato: Complete Works*; Zuckert, *Plato’s Philosophers*. For a survey of the various approaches to understanding how the dialogues are related to one another see Charles Griswold, “*E Pluribus Unum?* On the Platonic ‘Corpus.’”

⁴⁹ See Plato, *Euth.*, 11a6-b1: “I’m afraid, Euthyphro, that when you were asked what piety is, you did not wish to make its essence clear to me, but you told me an affect of it, that the pious has the affect of being loved by all the gods.” καὶ κινδυνεύεις, ὦ Εὐθύφρων, ἐρωτώμενος τὸ ὅσιον ὅτι ποτ’ ἐστιν, τὴν μὲν οὐσίαν μοι αὐτοῦ οὐ βούλεσθαι δηλῶσαι, πάθος δέ τι περὶ αὐτοῦ λέγειν, ὅτι πέπονθε τοῦτο τὸ ὅσιον, φιλεῖσθαι ὑπὸ πάντων θεῶν. For further discussion of this passage and 6d10-e7 see Richard Sharvey, “*Euthyphro* 9d-11b: Analysis and Definition in Plato and Others,” *Noûs* 6, no. 2 (1972): 119-137, esp. 128ff.; Judson, “Carried Away in the *Euthyphro*,” 31-33.

⁵⁰ See Plato, *Rep.*, VI.507b2-VII.521c8; *Symp.*, 209e5-212a7.

explains the look of the puppets, which in turn explains the look of the shadows. Similarly, the upper rungs on the Ladder of Love follow an order of causal priority. Beauty itself explains the beauty of all the things on the Ladder. Furthermore, the beauty of knowledge explains the beauty of customs and actions, while the beauty of customs and actions in turn explains the beauty of a soul.⁵¹ Given that the forms are causally prior to the objects of sense perception, it is not surprising that in the *Phaedo* and other middle dialogues, Plato has Socrates characterize the forms as unchanging realities that must be grasped through intellect rather than sense perception. As we will see, causal priority has an equally important role to play in the notion of form developed in the *Sophist*.

B. Priority in *Logos*: The *Euthyphro* and the Structure of Definition throughout the Dialogues

After Socrates has shown Euthyphro that the definition of piety as “what all the gods love” does not articulate what piety is, Euthyphro is ready to give up trying to teach Socrates (11b6-d2). Hence Socrates, eager to continue the search, suggests that the idea of piety might be part of the larger idea of justice.⁵² Euthyphro finds this reasonable. Thus Socrates asks Euthyphro simply to tell him what part of justice piety is (12e1-2). Euthyphro offers that piety is the part of justice that “is concerned with the care (θεραπείαν) of the gods” (12e6-9). He is unable, however, to clarify sufficiently for Socrates what he means by “care” in this context, and so this definition of piety fails as well (see 14a11-c6). Yet their discussion of how one idea, such as piety, can be part of a different idea, such as justice, reveals another sense of priority, “priority in *logos*.”⁵³ Priority in *logos*, I will argue, is a specific kind of causal priority. It is the kind of causal

⁵¹ There is a similar hierarchy articulated in terms of explanatory priority in the argument against the materialists in the *Sophist*, which moves from body, to soul, to virtues themselves. See Plato, *Soph.*, 246e5-247b4.

⁵² I will be using the word “idea” in this section in a general and non-technical sense. Plato would characterize most of the “ideas” I will be considering as forms (εἰδή), but no commitment to his theory of forms is necessary for my argument in this section.

⁵³ I borrow the terminology of “priority in *logos*” (προτέρος τῷ λόγῳ) from Aristotle (see Aristotle, *Physics*, V.227a19-20, VIII.265a 22-23; *Metaphysics*, XIII.1077b2-4). “Προτέρος τῷ λόγῳ” is sometimes translated as “priority in definition” or “logical priority.” The precise status of priority in *logos* in Aristotle is not always clear. And I am not here concerned to align myself with a certain interpretation of Aristotle’s notion of priority in *logos*. For a discussion of priority in *logos* in Aristotle see Michael T. Ferejohn, “Aristotle on Necessary Truth and Logical Priority,” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 18, no. 4 (1981): 285-293; Peramatzis, *Priority in Aristotle’s Metaphysics*.

priority that characterizes the structure of definition: an idea can be correctly defined in terms of ideas prior to it in *logos*. I begin by articulating what priority in *logos* is, and then show that priority in *logos* underlies the structure of definition as Plato presents it throughout the dialogues.

Socrates introduces priority in *logos* in the *Euthyphro* by asking Euthyphro: “See whether you think that all that is pious is of necessity just. . . . And is then all that is just pious? Or is all that is pious just, but not all that is just pious, but some of it is and some is not?” (11e4-12a2). When Euthyphro has trouble understanding what Socrates is asking with these questions, Socrates turns from the relationship between justice and piety to the relationship between fear (δέος) and shame (αἰδώς)—two ideas that together exhibit priority in *logos*. Socrates describes this sort of priority as follows:

Socrates: I do not think that “where there is fear there is also shame,” for I think that many people who fear disease and poverty and many other such things feel fear, but are not ashamed of the things they fear. . . . But where there is shame there is also fear. For is there anyone who, in feeling shame and embarrassment at anything, does not also at the same time fear and dread a reputation for wickedness?

Euthyphro: He is certainly afraid.

Socrates: It is then not right to say “where there is fear there is also shame,” but that where there is shame there is also fear, for fear covers a larger area than shame (ἐπὶ πλεόν γὰρ οἶμαι δέος αἰδοῦς). Shame is a part (μόριον) of fear just as odd is a part of number, with the result that it is not true that where there is number there is also oddness, but that where there is oddness there is also number. (12b4-d10)

The relationship of priority in *logos* articulated here is asymmetrical in two ways. First, it is a relationship in which the extension of one idea completely encompasses that of another, but not vice versa. Second, as I will show below, the relationship between ideas here is a kind of causal priority—one idea explains the other, but not vice versa. Priority in *logos* is the priority of one idea over another in both of these senses. The relationship between genus and species in Aristotle, for example, would be an instance of this kind of priority.⁵⁴

The first sort of asymmetry that the relationship of priority in *logos* exhibits has to do with the extensions of ideas. When two ideas are related in terms of priority in *logos*,

⁵⁴ Cf. Ferejohn, “Aristotle on Necessary Truth”; Kahn, *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue*, 173.

the extension of the idea that is “prior” is both larger than and completely encompasses the extension of the idea that is “posterior.” The extension of the idea “animal,” for example, is larger than and includes the extension of the idea “human being.” The reverse, however, is not the case, since there are non-human animals. The same holds for the relationship between the idea of oddness and the idea of number. The idea “number” includes the extension of the idea “odd” (in the relevant sense), but not vice versa, since some numbers are even.⁵⁵

Priority in *logos*, however, involves more than a relation between the extensions of ideas. Priority in *logos* articulates a relation between ideas in which the prior idea is causally prior to the posterior idea. Priority in *logos* characterizes the structure of definition, and definitions ought to be explanatory according to Plato. There are cases, however, where the extension of one idea is both larger than and includes the extension of another idea, but where the larger idea is not causally prior to, and therefore does not explain, the idea included within its extension. In these cases, the latter idea cannot be defined in terms of the former. Consider, for example, the relationship between the idea “what all the gods love” and the idea “piety.” For the sake of argument, say that all the gods loved not only piety but justice as well. As a result, the extension of the idea “things loved by the gods” would be both larger than and include the extension of the idea “piety.” The relationship between the idea “things loved by the gods” and the idea “piety,” however, is not a relationship of priority in *logos*, because the idea “things loved by the gods” is not causally prior to the idea “piety.” One could give a complete account of what piety is without reference to whether all the gods happen to love it, since whether all the gods love piety is, as we have already seen, causally posterior to what piety is. This is the reason why Socrates rejects “things loved by the gods” as a correct definition of piety. What piety is must explain why pious things are pious, and the sort of definition of piety which Socrates is seeking must capture that explanatory power. An idea is only prior in *logos* to another idea if it is causally prior to that other idea. Consider again the

⁵⁵ This is true for the understanding of “number,” “odd,” and “even” both in ancient Greek and in modern mathematics, despite the fact that ancient Greek and modern mathematics define these three notions differently. In ancient Greek mathematics, only whole integers are considered “numbers.” What we consider fractions are understood as ratios rather than numbers. Greek mathematics defines an even number as any number that can be halved; and an odd number as any number that cannot. For more on odd and even in Greek mathematics see Árpád Szabó, *The Beginnings of Greek Mathematics*, trans. A. M. Ungar (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1978), 267.

relationship between the ideas “animal” and “human being.” Not only is the extension of the idea “animal” larger than and inclusive of extension of the idea “human being,” it is also causally prior to “human being.” “Animal,” in part,⁵⁶ explains “human being.” What it means to be a human being is in part explained by what it means to be an animal. What it means to be an animal, however, is not explained by what it means to be a human being. After all, there are many non-human animals. The same applies to the relationship between the idea “number” and the idea “odd” (in the relevant sense). Not only is the extension of “number” larger than and inclusive of the extension of “odd,” but what it means to be odd is in part explained by what it means to be a number.⁵⁷ What it means to be a number, however, is not explained by what it means to be odd. Although the fact that the extension of idea *A* is both larger than and includes the extension of idea *B* is a necessary condition for *A*’s being prior in *logos* to *B*, it is not a sufficient condition, since the idea which is prior in *logos* is causally prior to the idea which is posterior in *logos*.

Thus, priority in *logos* is a special case of causal priority. Priority in *logos* is the relation of causal priority when that relation is a relation between ideas, and when the following conditions obtain: (1) the extension of one idea is larger than and includes the extension of the other idea, and (2) the former idea is causally prior to the latter idea.

Hence the relationship of priority in *logos* can be formulated as follows:

- (PL) Idea *A* is prior in *logos* to idea *B* iff the extension of idea *A* is both larger than and includes the extension of idea *B*, and idea *A* is causally prior to idea *B*.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ An idea prior in *logos* explains the character of a posterior idea only in part, because other things in addition to the idea prior in *logos* also explain the character of the posterior idea. For example, the character of the idea “human being” is not only explained by “animal” but also by “rational.” What it means to be human is explained by what it means to be animal, but what it means to be human is also explained by what it means to be rational. Thus, the idea “animal” only in part explains the idea “human being.”

⁵⁷ See note 55 above; cf. Plato, *Plt.*, 262d6-e5.

⁵⁸ In Aristotle scholarship, the definition of priority in *logos* is usually formulated somewhat differently. Michael Ferejohn, for instance, formulates priority in *logos* (which he calls “logical priority”) in this way: “*x* is logically prior to *y* iff the name (or *logos*) of *x* is in the *logos* of *y*, but not vice-versa” (Ferejohn, “Aristotle on Necessary Truth,” 293). Michail Peramatzis, to give another example, formulates priority in *logos* (which he calls “priority in definition”) in this way: “*A* is prior in definition to *B* just in case *A* is (correctly) defined without mentioning *B*, but *B* is not (correctly) defined without mentioning *A*” (Peramatzis, *Priority in Aristotle’s Metaphysics*, 6). I think that both these formulations, although somewhat different from my own, are nevertheless compatible with it. Say that idea *A* is prior in *logos* to idea *B* on the basis of my formulation (PL). Then the name (*logos*) of *A* is in the complete account (*logos*)

A brief consideration of how Plato characterizes definition in the early dialogues and in late dialogues such as the *Sophist* and *Statesman* will be sufficient to show that priority in *logos* underlies the structure of definition as Plato understands it. These dialogues are the dialogues in which Plato offers rigorous accounts of the structure of definition, something not found in the middle dialogues. I first consider how priority in *logos* underlies the definitions that Socrates puts forward in the early dialogues, and then turn to how it underlies the sorts of definitions the Eleatic stranger attempts through the so called method of division in the *Sophist* and *Statesman*.

In the early dialogues, Socrates offers a total of seven definitions. He presents these definitions either as examples for his interlocutors to imitate or as correct definitions, which he then uses as premises in his arguments. Gerasimos Santas provides the following list:⁵⁹

- (1) “What I call swiftness is the power of accomplishing a great deal in a short time, whether in speech or in running or in all other cases” (*Lach.*, 192a10-b3).
- (2) “Fear is the expectation of a future evil” (*ibid.*, 198b8-9, *Prt.*, 358d6-7).
- (3) “Shape is that which alone of existing things always follows color” (*Men.*, 75b9-11).
- (4) “Shape is that which limits a solid; in a word, shape is the limit of a solid” (*ibid.*, 76a5-7).
- (5) “Color is an effluvium from shapes which fits the sight and is perceived” (*ibid.*, 76d4-5).
- (6) “Cowardice is ignorance of what is and is not to be feared” (*Prt.*, 360c6-7).
- (7) “Courage is wisdom about what is and is not to be feared” (*ibid.*, 360d4-5).

of *B*, because *A* is causally prior to *B*. And since *A* is causally prior to *B*, *B* is not named in the complete account of *A*. Likewise, *A* is correctly defined without mentioning *B*, because *A* is causally prior to *B*. And for the same reason, *B* is not correctly defined without mentioning *A*.

⁵⁹ Gerasimos Santas, *Socrates: Philosophy in Plato's Early Dialogues* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), 100. In addition to the seven definitions above, Santas also includes two definitions drawn from *Gorgias* 474d3-475a5 and one from *Republic* I.352e2-3. Santas infers the definitions “The fair is the pleasant or the good or both” and “The foul is the painful or the evil or both” from the *Gorgias* passage and “The function of a horse or anything else is that which one can do only with it or best with it” from the *Republic* passage. I have not included those definitions because Socrates does not explicitly state them in the standard way—using a form of the verb “εἶναι” (to be)—as he does in the seven definitions that I have listed, with the partial exception of (1) and (2). As to (1), although Socrates does not use a form of “εἶναι” in his definition of swiftness at *Laches* 192a10-b3, he does use it in the “τί ἐστὶ” question he poses to himself immediately prior to stating the definition: “Socrates, what do you say it is which you call swiftness in all these cases?” (Plato, *Lach.*, 192a9-10; ὦ Σώκρατες, τί λέγεις τοῦτο ὃ ἐν πᾶσιν ὀνομάζεις ταχυτήτα εἶναι.). As to (2), the definition as stated in the *Laches* does employ a form of “εἶναι,” whereas the definition as stated in the *Protagoras* does not, although in the *Protagoras* it is stated in such a way as to include an implicit “εἶναι.”

Priority in *logos* plays an important role in these definitions. With the exception of (3), in each of the seven definitions the *definiendum* is defined in terms of an idea prior to it in *logos*. For instance, shape in (4) is defined as a kind of limit. The idea “limit” is prior in *logos* to the idea “shape,” because “limit” is both larger than and includes “shape,” and “limit” is causally prior to “shape.” In the same way, swiftness is defined as a kind of power for accomplishing things; fear as a kind of expectation; color as a kind of effluvium; cowardice as a kind of ignorance; and courage as a kind of wisdom.

As to definition (3), given its content and given the context in the *Meno* where Socrates states it, its status as a good definition is questionable.⁶⁰ The *definiens* in definition (3) is defective in light of Socrates’ criticism of Euthyphro’s definition of piety as “what all the gods love,” because it does not explain what shape is, but only identifies a necessary affect (πάθος) of shape.⁶¹ Moreover, Socrates quickly follows the definition of shape in terms of color (=3) with the one in terms of limit (=4). And even Meno finds the one in terms of limit more satisfying. Definition (3)—the only definition in the list that does not exhibit a structure articulated in terms of priority in *logos*—does not exemplify the structure of definition as Plato presents it in the early dialogues.

What about the structure of definition in the late dialogues? In the *Sophist* and *Statesman*, the Eleatic stranger replaces Socrates as the primary interlocutor and his approach to definition is somewhat different from that of Socrates.⁶² The stranger undertakes the task of defining various forms or kinds by means of the method of division. The method of division is a philosophical mode of investigation that attempts to define a certain form—for example, angling, weaving, sophistry, statesmanship—by laying out in order the other forms of which the form to be defined is a part. In the *Sophist*, for instance, angling is defined as a certain part of expertise, and of various

⁶⁰ Charles Kahn argues that of the three definitions Socrates offers in *Meno* 75b-76d, Socrates prefers the second, which defines shape as the limit of a solid. Kahn rejects (3) because it is not explanatory and is suspicious of (5) because it is only explanatory “if one accepts a particular mechanistic theory of vision.” See Kahn, *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue*, 177.

⁶¹ See Plato, *Euth.*, 11a6-b1 and note 49 above; cf. Kahn, *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue*, 177.

⁶² Although the stranger’s approach is somewhat different from that of Socrates, Socrates appears to endorse it. He shows respect and admiration for the stranger throughout both the *Sophist* and *Statesman*. Furthermore, in the *Phaedrus*, Socrates himself describes a method of division similar to that of the stranger and claims that he is “a lover of these divisions and collections” (266b3-4). Likewise, Socrates’ account of dialectic in *Republic* VI-VII seems to describe certain aspects of the method of division practiced by the stranger. For more on this see Lesley Brown, “Definition and Division in Plato’s *Sophist*,” in *Definition in Greek Philosophy*, ed. David Charles (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 151-157.

subcategories within expertise. The stranger summarizes the definition of angling in this way:

Within expertise as a whole one half was the acquisitive; half of the acquisitive was taking possession; half of possession-taking was hunting; half of hunting was animal-hunting; half of animal-hunting was aquatic hunting; all of the lower portion of aquatic hunting was fishing; half of fishing was hunting by strike; and half of striking was hooking. And the part of hooking that involves a blow drawing a thing upward from underneath is called . . . angling. (221b2-c2)

The method of division begins by identifying a target form—such as angling—and a general class to which that form belongs—such as expertise. It then proceeds to divide the general class in two, and after identifying the half in which the target form belongs, divides that half in two. It proceeds in this way until it arrives at the target form. The method of division, therefore, attempts to define a form by articulating it as a particular part of an ordered set of other forms. In other words, the method of division attempts to define a form by articulating its relation to the forms prior to it in *logos*. Priority in *logos*, therefore, underlies the structure of definition as Plato presents it in the late as well as in the early dialogues. This sort of priority will be essential to my analysis of the *Sophist*.

C. Wholes and Parts: The *Theaetetus* and *Sophist*

The notions of whole and part are central to the ontology of the *Sophist*. In the *Sophist*, the forms are characterized as parts in some cases and wholes in others. In other dialogues, however, the forms are often presented as simple unities that do not admit of opposites (cf. *Parm.*, 128e5-130a2). Due to their simplicity, they can explain the complex structure of spatio-temporal beings. The tension between the notion of form as partless and the notion of form as whole or part is brought to the fore but left unresolved in the *Parmenides*.⁶³ Plato was himself aware of this tension. Thus, he provides his critical readers with the tools for thinking through various notions of whole/part composition. One passage in which he does this is *Theaetetus* 202d10-205e7. In what follows, I will consider whole/part composition through an analysis of *Theaetetus* 202d10-205e7. As prompted by the text, I will differentiate a “whole” (ὅλον) from a “totality” (πᾶν). Then, turning to the *Sophist*, I will identify an “eidetic whole”—that is,

⁶³ See esp. Plato, *Parm.*, 130e3-131e7; cf. *Phil.*, 14e5-15c3.

a form insofar as it is a whole composed of other forms—as a specific kind of whole/part compound. The distinction I will make between a whole and a totality follows that of Aristotle in *Metaphysics* Δ.26. I will define a totality as a unity consisting of a plurality of objects, in which the objects that compose it need not occupy specific positions in relation to one another. I will define a whole as a plurality in which some or all of the objects that compose it must occupy specific positions. I will define an eidetic whole as a whole composed of forms insofar as those forms are determinately intelligible countable objects.

Before turning to *Theaetetus* 202d10-205e7, a brief consideration of how Aristotle differentiates a whole from a totality in *Metaphysics* Δ.26 will be helpful. Aristotle explains that a totality (πᾶν), just as a whole, is composed of a plurality of objects, a plurality that is structured in some way. Wholes and totalities differ, however, in that while the members of a whole occupy specific positions in their relations to one another, the members of a totality do not.⁶⁴ Numbers and aggregates are examples of totalities according to Aristotle. Take the totality that is the number six. It is composed of six units, say *u*, *v*, *w*, *x*, *y*, and *z*. Whether unit *x* is counted before or after unit *y* makes no difference as far as the totality, six units, is concerned. No matter how one arranges the six units—for instance, *w*, *x*, *u*, *y*, *z*, and *v*, or *v*, *u*, *z*, *x*, *w*, and *y*—they comprise the totality six. In a whole, by contrast, the members must occupy specific positions. In the whole that is the human body, for instance, the arm cannot take the place of the head, nor the foot of the ear, and so on. Similarly, in the case of the whole that is a circle, the circumference cannot occupy the position of the center, and vice versa. With this distinction in mind, let us turn to *Theaetetus* 202d10-205e7.

The conversation narrated in the *Theaetetus* is dramatically set a day before the conversation presented in the *Sophist*. In the *Theaetetus*, Socrates and Theaetetus attempt to answer the question “What is knowledge (ἐπιστήμη)?” After finding a number of definitions Theaetetus offers unsatisfactory, Socrates presents a theory that characterizes reality as consisting of compounds composed of elements. The theory claims that the

⁶⁴ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, V.26.1024a1-10. “Again, of a quantity (ποσοῦ) having a beginning, middle, and end, one in which position does not make a difference is called a ‘totality’ (πᾶν), but one in which it does make a difference is called a ‘whole’ (ὅλον). . . . Water and all liquids and number are called totalities, but ‘whole number’ and ‘whole water’ is not said, except in an extended sense. . . .”

compounds are knowable while the elements are perceivable but not knowable (201d8-202c6). He then examines the theory by asking whether it is possible that the elements of a knowable compound could themselves be unknowable. Socrates concludes, primarily *via a reductio*, that it is impossible for a knowable compound to be composed of unknowable elements. Socrates' consideration of various ways of understanding a compound of elements in this *reductio* is designed to provoke the critical reader to consider the nature of whole/part composition.⁶⁵

Socrates proposes that he and Theaetetus examine the claim that there are knowable compounds composed of unknowable elements by considering “the original models (τὰ παραδείγματα)” in terms of which that claim is stated (202e3-4). The original models, Socrates goes on to explain, were the basic “constituents of written language—letters and syllables” (202e6-8; τὰ τῶν γραμμάτων στοιχεῖα τε καὶ συλλαβάς). Socrates plays here on a double meaning of the Greek words “στοιχεῖον” and “συλλαβή.” The word “στοιχεῖον” means “element,” and from there comes to refer to an element of speech, that is, “a letter.”⁶⁶ “Συλλαβή” means “that which is held together,” a compound, and from there comes to refer to “several letters taken together to form one sound,” a syllable.⁶⁷ The original models for “compounds” and “elements” to which Socrates refers here are syllables and letters respectively.

Socrates examines the claim that compounds are knowable and their elements unknowable by taking syllables and letters as paradigm cases of compounds and elements. His examination takes the form of a two horned dilemma. In the first horn of the dilemma, Theaetetus assumes that the compound simply is all its elements—the syllable simply is all the letters:

Socrates: Look here, what do we mean by “the syllable”? The two letters, or if there are more, all the letters (τὰ ἀμφοτέρα στοιχεῖα, καὶ ἐὰν πλείω ἢ ἢ δύο, τὰ πάντα)? Or do we mean some one character (μίαν τινὰ ἰδέαν) produced by their combination?

Theaetetus: I think we mean all the letters.

⁶⁵ It is generally recognized that the arguments in *Theaetetus* 202d10-205e7 are designed to provoke some kind of response from the critical reader of the dialogue. See Myles Burnyeat, *The Theaetetus of Plato* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1990), 129, 192; Miller, “Unity and ‘Logos,’” 87-111; Verity Harte, *Plato on Parts and Wholes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 34.

⁶⁶ LSJ, s.v. “στοιχεῖον.”

⁶⁷ LSJ, s.v. “συλλαβή.”

Socrates: Then take the case of the two letters, “S” and “O;”⁶⁸ these two are the first syllable of my name. If a man knows the syllable, he must know both the letters?

Theaetetus: Of course.

Socrates: So he knows “S” and “O.”

Theaetetus: Yes.

Socrates: But can it be that he is ignorant of each one, and knows two of them without knowing either?

Theaetetus: That would be a strange and unaccountable thing, Socrates.

Socrates: And yet, supposing it is necessary to know each in order to know both, then it is absolutely necessary that anyone who is ever to know a syllable must first get to know the letters. And in admitting this, we shall find that our beautiful theory has taken to its heels and got clean away. (203c4-d10)

The first horn of the dilemma operates under the assumption that a compound (a syllable) is identical to all its elements (all the letters). Socrates argues here that if a compound (a syllable) were identical to all its elements (all the letters), then if knowability were a property of the one, it would also be a property of the other. As the second horn of the dilemma will reveal, whether or not a compound and all its elements can have different properties is the key here. The theory in question attempts to attribute different, and in fact contrary, properties to a compound and all its elements: knowability to the compound and unknowability to all the elements. If a compound were identical to all its elements, however, it could not have properties that differed from those of all of its elements.⁶⁹

In the second horn of the dilemma, Theaetetus assumes at Socrates’ suggestion that a compound and all its elements are different from one another, rather than identical.

The first section of the second horn reads as follows:

Socrates: . . . Perhaps we ought not to have supposed the syllable (τὴν συλλαβὴν) to be the letters (τὰ στοιχεῖα); perhaps we ought to have made it some one form produced out of them (ἐξ ἐκείνων ἓν τι γεγονός εἶδος), having its own single character (ιδεάν μίαν αὐτὸ αὐτοῦ ἔχον)—something different from the letters.

Theaetetus: Yes, certainly; that might be more like it. . . .

⁶⁸ “S” and “O” here translate “Σ” and “Ω.”

⁶⁹ Someone might object that Socrates’ argument in 203c4-d10 commits a fallacy of division since it requires the inference that “S” is knowable and “O” is knowable from the fact that “S” and “O” are jointly knowable. Harte persuasively argues that given the example here, the argument does not commit a fallacy of division (Harte, *Plato on Parts and Wholes*, 36).

[204a]

Socrates: Then let it be as we are now suggesting. Let the compound be a single form resulting from the combination of the several elements when they fit together (μία ἰδέα ἐξ ἐκάστων τῶν συναρμοσπόντων στοιχείων γιγνομένη ἢ συλλαβή); and let this hold both of language and of things in general.

Theaetetus: Yes, certainly.

Socrates: Then it must have no parts (οὐκοῦν μέρη αὐτῆς οὐ δεῖ εἶναι).

Theaetetus: Why is that?

Socrates: Because when a thing has parts, the whole (τὸ ὅλον) is necessarily all the parts (τὰ πάντα μέρη). Or do you mean by “the whole” also a single form arising out of the parts, yet different from all the parts.

Theaetetus: I do.

Socrates: Now do you call “the totality” (τὸ πᾶν)⁷⁰ and “the whole” (τὸ ὅλον) the same thing or [204b] different things?

Theaetetus: I don’t feel at all certain; but as you keep telling me to answer up with a good will, I will take a risk and say they are different.

Socrates: Your good will, Theaetetus, is all that it should be. Now we must see if your answer is also. . . . As the argument stands at present, the whole will be different from the totality?

Theaetetus: Yes.

Socrates: Well now, is there any difference between all the things (τὰ πάντα) and the totality (τὸ πᾶν)? For instance, when we say “one, two, three, four, five, six”; or [204c] “twice three,” “three times two,” “four and two,” “three and two and one”; are we speaking of the same thing in all these cases or different things?

Theaetetus: The same thing.

Socrates: [Is that thing] anything other than six (ἄρ’ ἄλλο τι ἢ ἕξ)?

Theaetetus: Nothing other (οὐδέν).

Socrates: Then with each expression have we not spoken of all six things (πάντα ἕξ)?

Theaetetus: Yes.

Socrates: And when we speak of them all, aren’t we speaking of a totality (τὸ πᾶν)?

Theaetetus: We must be.

Socrates: [Is that thing] anything other than six things (ἢ ἄλλο τι ἢ τὰ ἕξ)?

⁷⁰ See p. 42 below for a discussion of why I have translated “τὸ πᾶν” as “the totality” as opposed to “the sum,” which is also a possibility given the mathematical examples that Socrates uses in this passage.

Theaetetus: Nothing other (οὐδέν).

[204d]

Socrates: Then with as many things as are made up of number, at any rate, by “the totality” (τὸ πᾶν) and “all of them” (τὰ ἅπαντα) we mean the same thing?

Theaetetus: So it seems. (203e2-7, 204a1-d3)

In this second horn of the dilemma, Socrates and Theaetetus assume that the compound is a single form or character,⁷¹ some distinct thing from the elements that compose it. The nature of composition is what is at stake here. Socrates begins with compound and elements and then suggests some various ways in which they could be characterized. He begins by asking Theaetetus about which of the two would be properly characterized as a whole of parts, a compound or all of its elements. Theaetetus opts for the former and identifies the notion of compound with the notion of whole. He claims that just as a compound is some one form different from all its elements, so a whole is some one form, different from all its parts. Then Socrates introduces a fifth term with which to analyze the compound/element and whole/part relation: “τὸ πᾶν”—the “totality” or “sum.”

“Τὸ πᾶν” is the neuter singular of the Greek word meaning “all.” “Τὰ πάντα” is the neuter plural of the same word. “Τὸ πᾶν,” then, could be translated as “all of it”—where the “it” is something composite—while “τὰ πάντα” could be translated as “all of them.”⁷² Furthermore, “τὸ πᾶν” in mathematical contexts means “the sum,”⁷³ as in “the sum of three and three is six.” For the sake of terminological consistency, I translate “τὸ πᾶν” as “totality” and “τὰ πάντα” as “all the things.”

Throughout the second horn, Socrates attempts to get Theaetetus to identify the notion of totality with either the notion of whole or with the notion of all the parts. When initially asked whether or not a totality is identical to a whole, Theaetetus, with some hesitation, claims that they are not identical—a whole is one thing, while a totality is something else. Through the remainder of the second horn, Socrates leads Theaetetus to conclude that a totality (τὸ πᾶν) is both identical to all the things (τὰ πάντα) that compose it, and identical to a whole (τὸ ὅλον).

⁷¹ “Form” or “character” (ἰδέα) is not being used in an especially technical sense here.

⁷² Cf. Harte, *Plato on Parts and Wholes*, 40ff.

⁷³ LSJ, s.v. “πᾶς” B.II.

I contend that the first part of the second horn ought to prompt its critical reader to resist the conclusion that a totality is identical to all the things that compose it. The conclusion is problematic, because a totality is one thing, designated by singular words, whereas all the things that compose it are many things, designated by plural words.⁷⁴ In short, a totality is one, whereas all the things that compose it are many. The wording of Socrates' questions highlights the problem with claiming that a totality and all the things that compose it are identical. Socrates asks whether there is "any difference between all the things (τὰ πάντα) and the totality (τὸ πᾶν)?" (204b10). He then turns to the number six as an example and asks whether "'one, two, three, four, five, six'; or 'twice three,' 'three times two,' 'four and two,' 'three and two and one'" all refer to the same thing (204b11-c2). Theaetetus answers that they do. Theaetetus' quick affirmative answer is already problematic given the way in which number (ἀριθμός) is conceived in Greek mathematics.⁷⁵ Euclid defines number as "a multitude composed of units."⁷⁶ A number, for the Greeks, is a compound of enumerable units.⁷⁷ Socrates' descriptions of the number six highlight the fact that a collection of six things—the number six—can be structured in various ways: a collection of six ones, two threes, three twos, a four and a two, etc.⁷⁸ Theaetetus, however, does not recognize the relevance of these various structures to the question of whether "'one, two, three, four, five, six'; or 'twice three,' 'three times two,' 'four and two,' 'three and two and one'" all refer to the same thing. Thus, Socrates words his follow-up questions so as to indicate the most salient difference between six and the units that compose it: namely that the number six is one thing, whereas the units that compose it are many.⁷⁹ Socrates asks whether that thing is "anything other than *six* (ἄλλο τι ἢ ἕξ)" (204c4). Theaetetus answers "nothing other

⁷⁴ Harte offers an excellent analysis of *Theaetetus* 202d10-205e7 in light of the contemporary mereological theories of David Lewis and Donald Baxter. She focuses in particular on how the identification of one thing with many things is the underlying problem revealed by Socrates' argument in 203e2-205a10. See Harte, *Plato on Parts and Wholes*, chap. 1, esp. 9-47.

⁷⁵ See Burnyeat, *The Theaetetus of Plato*, 205-209; cf. Harte, *Plato on Parts and Wholes*, 44ff. Burnyeat points out that Aristotle's account of number implies that the units which compose a number should only be considered its matter (Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, VII.13.1039a11-14, VIII.3.1044a3-5, 6.1045a7-12, XIII.8.1084b5 ff.; cf. *Categories*, 6.4b20-5a37; *Physics*, IV.14.224a2-15).

⁷⁶ Euclid, *Elements*, VII, Def. 2: ἀριθμὸς δὲ τὸ ἐκ μονάδων συγκείμενον πλῆθος.

⁷⁷ Harte, *Plato on Parts and Wholes*, 27-28.

⁷⁸ Cf. Miller, "Unity and 'Logos,'" 94.

⁷⁹ Euclid defines a unit as "that by virtue of which each of the things that are is called one" (Euclid, *Elements*, VII, Def. 1: μονάς ἐστίν, καθ' ἣν ἕκαστον τῶν ὄντων ἐν λέγεται).

(οὐδέν)” (204c5). After a little discussion, Socrates repeats the question, with the addition of one word: “τά.” Socrates asks whether the number six is “anything other than *six things* (ἄλλο τι ἢ τὰ ἕξ)” (204c10). Theaetetus again answers, “nothing other (οὐδέν)” (204c11). Socrates’ use of the plural definite article, “τά,” in 204c10 highlights the problem. All the things are in fact not identical to the collection—to the sum or totality—of all the things. Or to put it differently, all of them are not identical to all of it. What is true of all the things is not in every case what is true of the totality. A totality is one, while all the things are many. Contrary to Theaetetus’ conclusion, a totality (τὸ πᾶν) is not identical to all the things (τὰ πάντα) that compose it.

In the second part of the second horn of the dilemma, Socrates leads Theaetetus to conclude that the notion of totality, already identified with the notion of all the things that compose it, is identical to the notion of whole. I will argue that the text prompts its critical reader to reject the identification of totality and whole. Theaetetus concludes that the three notions “whole,” “totality,” and “all the things” are identical. I submit that these three are not identical. The text reads as follows:

Socrates: Now let us talk about them [all the things made up of number] in this way. The number of an acre (πλέθρου) is the same thing as an acre, isn’t it?

Theaetetus: Yes.

Socrates: Similarly with a mile (σταδίου).

Theaetetus: Yes.

Socrates: And the number of an army is the same as the army? And similarly with all things of this sort; their total number is the totality that each of them is (ὁ γὰρ ἀριθμὸς πᾶς τὸ ὄν πᾶν ἕκαστον αὐτῶν ἐστίν).

Theaetetus: Yes.

[204e]

Socrates: But is the number of each anything other than its parts?

Theaetetus: No.

Socrates: Now things which have parts consist of parts (ὅσα ἄρα ἔχει μέρη, ἐκ μερῶν ἂν εἴη)?

Theaetetus: That seems true.

Socrates: And it is agreed that all the parts (πάντα μέρη) are the totality (τὸ πᾶν), seeing that the total number (ὁ πᾶς ἀριθμὸς) is to be the totality (τὸ πᾶν).

Theaetetus: That is so.

Socrates: Then the whole does not consist of parts (τὸ ὅλον ἄρ' οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ μερῶν). For if it did, it would be all the parts and so would be a totality.

Theaetetus: It looks as if it doesn't.

Socrates: But can a part, as such, be a part of anything but a whole?

Theaetetus: Yes; of a totality.

[205a]

Socrates: You are putting up a good fight anyway, Theaetetus. But this totality now—isn't it just when there is nothing lacking (ὅταν μηδὲν ἀπῆ) that it is a totality?

Theaetetus: Yes, necessarily.

Socrates: And won't this very same thing—that from which nothing anywhere is lacking—be a whole? While a thing from which something is absent is neither a whole nor a totality—the same consequence having followed from the same condition in both cases at once?

Theaetetus: Well, it doesn't seem to me now that there can be any difference between a whole and a totality.

Socrates: Very well. Now were we not saying that in the case of a thing that has parts, both the whole and the totality will be all the parts?

Theaetetus: Yes, certainly. (204d4-205a10)

As he begins to lead Theaetetus to the conclusion that the notion of totality and the notion of whole are identical, Socrates offers three examples, the last of which strongly suggests that the notion of totality and of whole are not identical. Socrates' first example is an acre. He identifies the totality—acre—with the number of smaller units that compose it. His second example is a mile. Again, he gets Theaetetus to agree that a mile is identical to the number of smaller units that compose it. Socrates next introduces an army as an example. He gets Theaetetus to conclude that the army is identical to the number of soldiers that compose it. All three of these conclusions are problematic, the third most of all. According to what I have argued concerning the non-identity of a totality and all the things that compose it, even the conclusions about the acre and mile are false. The conclusion about the army, however, is so clearly false that it is somewhat surprising that Theaetetus affirms it. An army is not just any old collection of people, or even any old collection of soldiers. Rather an army is a specially ordered collection of soldiers, wherein each soldier occupies a certain position in relation to the others,

fulfilling a specific role, so that the army can function as a single unit and achieve things that an individual soldier, or even a large number of individual soldiers, never could.⁸⁰ An army, in other words, is a structured collection of soldiers, and not just any structured collection of soldiers, but a collection structured such that the positions of its members are not interchangeable with one another, and structured for the purpose of achieving a certain goal. While the positions of its members are not interchangeable, however, different individuals can occupy those positions at different times. Thus, if one soldier dies, another one can take his place. If an army were identical to the number of soldiers that composed it, however, it would become a different army every time one of the soldiers died.⁸¹

Hence, there is a clear difference between the army and the mile or acre. All three are structured pluralities, but the structure of the army is different in kind from that of the other two. An army is a structure in which at least some of the members—general and hoplite, for example—must occupy specific positions or play specific roles in relation to other members. Following Aristotle in *Metaphysics* Δ.26, I will refer to this sort of structure as a whole (ὅλον). In an acre or mile, by contrast, the units that compose it do not occupy specific positions in relation to one another. A mile is 5280 feet. If one represents each of those feet with its own variable, the foot represented by the variable x_{26} , for example, does not need to occupy any particular position in relation to the foot represented by y_{32} . Whether x_{26} comes before or after y_{32} and the number of feet between them does not alter the structure of the mile. Following Aristotle in *Metaphysics* Δ.26, I will refer to the sort of structure exemplified by a mile, an acre, or a number—a structure in which its members need not occupy specific positions in relation to one another—a totality (πᾶν).

Since a whole and a totality are two different sorts of structured pluralities, both must be differentiated from all the things (πάντα) that compose them. All the things are simply many things, each of which has its own properties, and so on. As such, all the things are not structured in relation to one another, except insofar as each is a one of all of these many things. Insofar as these things are structured in relation to one another

⁸⁰ Miller, “Unity and ‘Logos.’” 94-95.

⁸¹ Burnyeat, *The Theaetetus of Plato*, 205.

such that they can jointly be treated as one thing, they compose a structured plurality. If all the things are structured such that at least some of them must occupy specific positions in relation to one another, they compose a whole; otherwise they compose a totality. An entity that is a whole can of course also be considered insofar as it is a totality or insofar as it is all the things that compose it. Reflect on the army again. It is a whole of parts. Yet considered only insofar as it is a certain number of people, it is a totality. Likewise, all the people who compose it, simply considered in themselves, are the army considered insofar as it is all the things (πάντα) that compose it.

Yet what about the structure itself considered apart from any structured plurality that exemplifies it? We can consider the structure of an army without considering any particular army that is structured in terms of that structure. Any particular army is always a structured whole. A structured whole, however, can be differentiated from the structure in terms of which it is structured. In Plato, the structure in terms of which or in reference to which some particular structured plurality is structured is generally called a form (εἶδος). Hence, the structure in terms of which armies are structured—the structure in reference to which we call each token army an army—can be called the form army. Similarly, the structure in terms of which any instance of the activity of angling is structured—the activity that particular token anglers perform when they are angling—can be called the form angling.⁸²

This brings us to the final sort of compound I will identify in this section: eidetic wholes. I have already referred to the Eleatic stranger’s definition of angling as kind of expertise at *Sophist* 221b2-c2.⁸³ This definition articulates angling as occupying a

⁸² Some might object to my suggestion that Plato would apply the term “form” to any structure in terms of which particular token entities are structured, whether those entities are natural entities (such as trees or horses), artifacts, or aggregates. After all, Aristotle testifies in *Metaphysics* Λ.3 that Plato “said that there are as many forms as there are [kinds of] natural entities” (Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, XII.3.1070a18-19; Πλάτων ἔφη ὅτι εἶδη ἔστιν ὅποσα φύσει). Plato, however, has his characters use the term “form” with reference to things other than natural entities in the dialogues. In the *Sophist* and *Statesman*, for example, Plato has the Eleatic stranger characterize various sorts of expertise as “forms” (εἶδη). Likewise, in the *Parmenides*, Plato has Parmenides criticize Socrates for not wanting to grant that there are forms of things like “hair, mud, and filth” (Plato, *Parm.*, 130c5-e4; cf. *Soph.*, 227a7-b6; Miller, *Plato’s Parmenides*, 44-47). Thus, given Aristotle’s tendency to misrepresent Plato, and given that in the *Sophist* Plato has the stranger note that there are various senses of “form” (*Soph.*, 253d5-e2), I think we can safely conclude that although Plato may have said “there are as many forms as there are [kinds of] natural entities,” when he said it he would have been using “form” in only one of the many technical ways that it is used throughout the dialogues.

⁸³ See §5.B., p. 37 above.

specific position in an ordered compound of other kinds of expertise. The method of division that the stranger uses to arrive at his definition of angling brings the specific position of angling to light. Angling is not just any kind of expertise. It does not occupy just any position among the different forms that compose expertise. The stranger divides expertise into two major kinds, production and acquisition. Production is a kind of expertise, but according to the stranger, angling is not a kind of production (219a8-d4). Or to put it differently, using the whole/part language that the stranger himself employs,⁸⁴ the form angling is not part of the form production. Rather, angling is part of acquisition (219a8-d4). The stranger then goes on to identify two kinds of acquisition: exchange and possession-taking. Angling is not a part of exchange, but is a part of possession-taking. Then the stranger divides possession-taking in two and the process continues until he is unable to make further divisions and so can identify angling as “the part of hook-hunting that involves a blow drawing a thing upward from underneath” (221b7-c3). Expertise is a compound of forms. Angling and the other kinds of expertise occupy specific positions within that compound. These positions are not interchangeable. Expertise, then, can be considered as a whole of parts. The different kinds of expertise are its parts. The same applies to many of the various kinds of expertise: for instance, acquisition is a whole and has parts, exchange is a whole and has parts, and so on. Angling itself does not appear to be a whole, since it cannot be further divided; yet it is a part of several wholes, such as expertise and acquisition. These sorts of wholes and the parts that compose them are forms or kinds.⁸⁵ Hence I will refer to these wholes as “eidetic wholes” and their parts as “eidetic parts.”

§6. *Syntax, Semantics, and Translation of the Verb “Einai” (“To Be”)*

Before beginning our analysis of the *Sophist*, some brief comments on the syntax, semantics, and translation of the verb “εἶναι” (“to be”) are in order. The stranger’s digression on non-being and falsehood in the *Sophist* is in large part an inquiry into the nature of being. In addition to the typical philosophical difficulties that accompany such an inquiry, how to understand the stranger’s account of being is made even more

⁸⁴ See for example, Plato, *Soph.*, 219c2, c7, e1, 220a3, b10, c7, 221b3, b6.

⁸⁵ I will use the terms “form” and “kind” interchangeably for now, as Plato does throughout much of the *Sophist*. I will begin to differentiate what is meant by each in Chapter IV.

challenging, at least for those of us who are not native speakers of ancient Greek, due to some syntactic and semantic peculiarities of the verb “εἶναι” (“to be”). Thus, I will briefly discuss the syntax and semantics of “εἶναι” and explain how I will translate “εἶναι” throughout this dissertation.

During the 19th and much of the 20th century, scholarship on the *Sophist* assumed that there was a sharp distinction between an “is” (“ἔστι”) of predication (including identity) and an “is” of existence. English speaking philosophers working outside of ancient Greek philosophy, such as John Stuart Mill, argued that there are these two different meanings of “is” in English (and in other modern European languages).⁸⁶ And many scholars of ancient philosophy adopted this way of understanding the verb “to be” and brought it to bear on ancient Greek philosophy. Many argued that Plato differentiated these two senses of “is” in the *Sophist*.⁸⁷ The syntax and semantics of “εἶναι,” however, were often misunderstood and confused in these discussions, and this confusion led to a misunderstanding of the philosophical views expressed in the writings of Plato and other ancient Greek philosophers. This has in large part changed in recent years thanks to the work of Charles Kahn and Lesley Brown.⁸⁸ They argue that the

⁸⁶ See especially John Stuart Mill, *A System of Logic, Ratiocinative and Inductive: Being a Connected View of the Principles of Evidence and the Methods of Scientific Investigation* (London: Longmans, 1843), I.iv.1. “Many volumes might be filled with the frivolous speculations concerning the nature of Being, (τὸ ὄν, οὐσία, *Ens, Entitas, Essentia*, and the like) which have arisen from overlooking this double meaning of the word *to be*; from supposing that when it signifies *to exist*, and when it signifies *to be* some specified thing, as *to be* a man, *to be* Socrates, *to be* seen or spoken of, *to be* a phantom, even *to be* a nonentity, it must still, at bottom, answer to the same idea. . . . The fog which rose from this narrow spot diffused itself at an early period over the whole surface of metaphysics. Yet it becomes us not to triumph over the great intellects of Plato and Aristotle because we are now able to preserve ourselves from many errors into which they, perhaps inevitably, fell.”

⁸⁷ See for example, Paul Shorey, *What Plato Said* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1933), 298; Cornford, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge*, 296; J. L. Ackrill, “Plato and the Copula: *Sophist* 251-59,” *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 77, no. 1 (1957): 1-6; A. E. Taylor, trans. and comm., *Plato: The Sophist and the Statesman* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd., 1961), 81-82; Ian M. Crombie, *An Examination of Plato's Doctrines* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), 2:499; J. M. E. Moravcsik, “Being and Meaning in the *Sophist*,” *Acta Philosophica Fennica* 14 (1962): 23-56; R. E. Heinaman, “Being in the *Sophist*,” *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 65, no. 1 (1983): 1-17. For more recent support of this way of understanding “to be” in ancient Greek philosophy see John Malcolm, “Some Cautionary Remarks on the ‘Is’/‘Teaches’ Analogy,” in *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 31 (2006): 281-296.

⁸⁸ See Charles Kahn, “The Greek Verb ‘To Be’ and the Concept of Being,” *Foundations of Language* 2 (1966): 245-265; “On the Terminology for *Copula* and *Existence*,” in *Islamic Philosophy and the Classical Tradition: Essays presented by his friends and pupils to Richard Walzer on His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. S. M. Stern, A. Houvani, and V. Brown (Oxford: Cassirer, 1972); “Why Existence Does Not Emerge as a Distinct Concept in Greek Philosophy,” *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 58, no. 4 (1976): 323-334; “Some Philosophical Uses of ‘To Be’ in Plato,” *Phronesis* 26, no. 2 (1981): 105-134; *The Verb “Be” in Ancient Greek* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2003); *Essays on Being* (Oxford: Oxford

distinctions we contemporary English speakers make between various senses of “is”—particularly the way we differentiate an “is” that signifies the copula from an “is” that means “exists”—do not clearly apply to the ancient Greek “ἐστί.” This new understanding of the syntax and semantics of “εἶναι” that Kahn, Brown, and others have offered has transformed recent scholarship on the *Sophist* and on Platonic metaphysics and ancient Greek philosophy generally.

There are two syntactically distinct uses of “εἶναι.” I follow Brown in referring to these as the complete and the incomplete use.⁸⁹ The use of “εἶναι” with an explicit or elided complement is the syntactically incomplete use. Examples of the incomplete use are “Motion is different from the same” (ἡ κίνησις ἕτερον ταυτοῦ ἐστί), “Justice is good” (ἀγαθή ἐστί ἡ δικαιοσύνη), “Simmias is short” (σμικρὸς ἐστί ὁ Σιμμίας), and “Centaur is large” (μεγάλοι εἰσὶν οἱ κενταύροι). The use of “εἶναι” without an explicit or elided complement is the syntactically complete use. Examples of the complete use are “Motion is” (“ἡ κίνησις ἐστί”), “Justice is” (ἡ δικαιοσύνη ἐστί), “Simmias is” (ὁ Σιμμίας ἐστί), and “Centaur is” (οἱ κενταύροι εἰσὶν).

Prior to the work of Kahn and Brown, these two syntactic uses were often associated with the semantic distinction between an “is” of the copula and an “is” of existence. The syntactically complete use was typically taken to signify “exists”; while the incomplete use was taken to play the role of the copula, signifying identity, attribution, class inclusion, etc. Thus, statements such as “Justice is” (ἡ δικαιοσύνη ἐστί) were taken simply to mean “Justice exists.” In contrast, in statements such as “Justice is a virtue” (ἀρετή ἐστί ἡ δικαιοσύνη) the “is” was simply understood as a copula connecting the subject and predicate or as a copula indicating identity, with no implication of an attribution of existence. When functioning as a copula, it was thought, the “is” does not imply an attribution of existence, because statements such as “Centaur is nonexistent” are perfectly intelligible and do not imply a contradiction. Since there

University Press, 2009); Lesley Brown, “Being in the *Sophist*: A Syntactical Enquiry,” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 4 (1986): 49-70; repr., in *Plato 1: Metaphysics and Epistemology*, ed. Gail Fine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); “The Verb ‘to be’ in Greek Philosophy,” in *Language (Companions to Ancient Thought 3)*, ed. Stephen Everson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); cf. G. E. L. Owen, “Plato on Not-Being,” in *Plato: A Collection of Essays, I: Metaphysics and Epistemology*, ed. Gregory Vlastos (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1971); repr., in *Plato 1: Metaphysics and Epistemology*, ed. Gail Fine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

⁸⁹ Brown, “Being in the *Sophist*,” esp. 461-464. Citations refer to the reprint edition.

was no word in the Greek of Plato's time and earlier that simply meant "to exist," it seemed natural to assume that the complete use of "εἶναι" meant "to exist" and the incomplete use simply functioned as a copula.⁹⁰

Brown in particular, however, has shown that the correspondence between the syntactic complete/incomplete distinction and the semantic existence/copula distinction simply does not hold for "εἶναι." Brown argues instead that the syntax and semantics of "εἶναι" are analogous to words in English such as "to teach" or "to eat."⁹¹ In order to clarify, I will, following Brown, compare the syntax and semantics of the "to teach" and "to eat" with "to grow." Consider these three pairs of statements:

(1a) Jane teaches French.

(1b) Jane teaches.

(2a) John ate grapes.

(2b) John ate.

(3a) Joan grew tomatoes.

(3b) Joan grew.

Syntactically, "Jane teaches French," "John ate grapes," and "Joan grew tomatoes" are incomplete or two-place uses of "teaches," "ate," and "grew" respectively; while "Jane teaches," "John ate" and "Joan grew" are complete or one-place uses. Semantically, however, the third pair of statements differs from the first and second. "Grew" is transitive in "Joan grew tomatoes"; while in "Joan grew" it is intransitive. In contrast, "teaches" and "ate" are transitive in "Jane teaches" and "John ate" as well as in "Jane teaches French" and "John ate grapes." To ask "grew what?" in response to "Joan grew" would suggest a misunderstanding, whereas "teaches what?" is a proper follow up to "Jane teaches," as is "ate what?" to "John ate." Moreover, the following inferences can be made in the case of the first and second pair that cannot be made in the case of the third. First, "Jane teaches French" entails "Jane teaches," and the same holds for "John ate grapes" and "John ate." That "Joan grew tomatoes," however, does not entail "Joan grew." Second, while "Jane teaches" does not entail "Jane teaches French," "Jane

⁹⁰ In addition to seeming natural, some thought that such a correlation between the syntactic distinction between the complete and incomplete use and the semantic distinction between the "is" of the copula and the "is" of existence could solve a whole host of traditional difficulties in philosophy. Cf. note 86 above.

⁹¹ Brown, "Being in the *Sophist*," 461ff.; "The Verb 'to be' in Greek Philosophy," 224ff.

teaches” does entail “Jane teaches something.” Likewise, “John ate” entails “John ate something.” “Joan grew,” however, in no way entails “Joan grew something.” Finally, although “Jane teaches” entails “Jane teaches something,” “Jane teaches” is not elliptical.⁹² Rather, statements like “Jane teaches” and “John ate” allow for a predicate and imply “Joan teaches something” and “John ate something” respectively. The syntax and semantics of “ἐστί,” Brown argues, is similar to the syntax and semantics of “teaches” and “ate.” “Justice is good” (ἀγαθή ἐστὶν ἡ δικαιοσύνη), for instance, entails “Justice is” (ἡ δικαιοσύνη ἐστίν). The latter, in turn, entails “Justice is something” (ἡ δικαιοσύνη ἐστίν τι). Similarly, “Centaur is large half-human and half-horse poetic fiction” entails “Centaur is.” “Centaur is,” however, does not mean that they exist in the so called “real world,” but that they are something determinate. Since they are determinate, they do exist in some weak sense—they exist as a certain sort of creature in fictional narratives—but it would generally be better to translate “οἱ κενταύροι εἰσὶν” as “Centaur is” rather than as “Centaur exist.”⁹³ Although “εἶναι” has a weak existential

⁹² Brown, “Being in the *Sophist*,” 462.

⁹³ For criticisms of Brown’s account of the syntax and semantics of “εἶναι,” see Malcolm, “The ‘Is’/‘Teaches’ Analogy”; Fiona Leigh, “The Copula and Semantic Continuity in Plato’s *Sophist*,” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 34 (2008): 105-121. Malcolm criticizes Brown’s account primarily with respect to her claim that “εἶναι,” whether its use is complete or incomplete, has at least a “weakly existential” force. Malcolm calls for a return to the traditional complete/incomplete distinction, where the incomplete “εἶναι” signifies the copula and the complete “εἶναι” signifies existence. He does so on the basis of “the conviction that there is a fundamental difference between positing the existence or non-existence of something and ascribing or denying properties” (Malcolm, “The ‘Is’/‘Teaches’ Analogy,” 283). He thinks that denying this fundamental distinction between positing the existence or non-existence of something and ascribing properties entails denying that it is possible to ascribe properties to things that do not exist, such as centaurs. He glosses this distinction as our ability to differentiate “what it is” and “that it is,” and claims that this ability “is integral to rationality as such, and, in all likelihood, was implicit in the thought-processes of the Cro-Magnon” (ibid.). The problem with Malcolm’s critique of Brown, as I see it, is that how “what it is” and “that it is” ought to be understood is precisely what is at stake. Brown does not deny that we can make a distinction between “what it is” and “that it is.” What she denies is that “that it is” can be reduced to “that it exists.” I think that Malcolm has a point inasmuch as he wants to account for how we can ascribe properties to non-existent things, such as centaurs. It seems to me, however, that he should have spent more time clarifying what exactly he thinks “to exist” means. Brown’s account entails that when we say “Centaur is non-existent,” the “are” carries with it a “weakly existential” force (see Brown, “Being in the *Sophist*,” 458). Malcolm finds this problematic, because the statement “Centaur is non-existent” is not self-contradictory. Yet I would argue that the issue here is what is meant by “non-existent” or “to exist,” and not what is meant by “are.” If we can attribute anything to centaurs, then they must “exist” in some weak sense, as Brown’s understanding of “εἶναι” entails. They must exist as “objects of thought,” “fictions,” or some such thing. Yet this does not make the statement “Centaur is non-existent” self-contradictory. When we claim that something is “non-existent,” we clearly use “to exist” in a more restricted sense (for instance, “to exist” means “to be in space and time” or “to be in the empirical world”) than we do when we say that something “exists” as “an object of thought,” or “a fiction,” etc. If Malcolm or others would like to restrict the meaning of the word “to exist” such that

force, its primary semantic value is its implication of determinacy. That something is implies that it is something determinate. In other words, that something is implies that it is the sort of thing about which one can make true statements.

Given the above syntax and semantics of “εἶναι,” I will translate the complete use of “εἶναι” as “is” in the singular and “are” in the plural. While this will sometimes lead to somewhat awkward sounding phrases in English, the alternative—to translate the complete use as “exists” or “exist”—would fail to convey the meaning of the Greek, particularly in a dialogue like the *Sophist*.

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there can “be” (in Brown’s sense of “εἶναι”) things that do not “exist,” I have no problem with that. In fact, I think that such restrictions might be helpful. One must simply be clear about what such restrictions are. And Malcolm is not clear about that.

Chapter II: Difficulties with Being and Non-Being (236c9-245e8)

During their seventh attempt to define the sophist as a maker of deceptive appearances, the stranger and Theaetetus find it necessary to digress into an inquiry concerning the nature of non-being and falsehood. They find this necessary because the sophist, in order to avoid being defined as a deceiver, will deny that there is such a thing as speaking falsely—that is, saying what is not—on the grounds that there is no such thing as non-being. I will discuss the problem of non-being and falsehood in more detail below, but first some remarks on my approach to interpreting the digression will be helpful. As I noted in Chapter I.4.B., the way the stranger proceeds as he gives his account of the sophist and statesman is influenced by his educative aims for Theaetetus and Young Socrates. Moreover, by using different characters in the dialogues, Plato is able to indicate to his readers the perspective from which what he has those characters say ought to be understood. Thus, in order to properly follow the points that the stranger makes in, and that Plato wants to communicate through, the often odd and at times elliptical discussions that compose the digression on non-being and falsehood, we ought to take note of Theaetetus' basic ontological outlook. In other words, we should be aware of and keep track of Theaetetus' implicit assumptions about the nature of being. Plato gives us the tools to do this in the *Theaetetus* and in the discussion in the *Sophist* leading up to the digression.

We see in the *Theaetetus* that Theaetetus' basic ontological outlook is a typical one. At the beginning of his discussion with Socrates, Theaetetus takes the things that he perceives around him to be the fundamental components of reality. Individual spatio-temporal beings are what is most of all. Hence, Theaetetus first defines knowledge as perception (αἴσθησις) (151e2-3). As Socrates begins to ask him what he means, however, Theaetetus shows himself willing to grant that the fundamental beings which compose reality need not be spatio-temporal beings, such as chairs, trees, dogs, and so on. Even before the definition of knowledge as perception is refuted, Theaetetus gladly goes along with Socrates in characterizing “those people who think that there is nothing other than what they can grasp with both hands (οἳ ἂν δύνωνται ἀπρὶς τοῖν χεροῖν λαβέσθαι); people who refuse to admit that . . . anything invisible (πᾶν τὸ ἀόρατον) has a

place in being (ὡς ἐν οὐσίας μέρει)” as crude (ἄμουσοι), stubborn (σκληροί), and obstinate (ἀντίτυποι) (155e4-156a2).

Nevertheless, the assumption that “to be”¹ is simply to be an individual thing continues to have a hold on Theaetetus throughout the dialogue.² While an individual thing, just insofar as it is an individual thing, does not bear spatio-temporal determinations—that is, is not structured in terms of space and time—it does bear some determinations. An individual is structured such that it is a countable unit, a one of many, both numerically self-identical and numerically different from other individuals. To assume that “to be” is simply to be an individual thing, then, is to assume that reality at its most fundamental level consists of individual things—things that, regardless of whatever else they happen to be, are at least countable objects. I say that the assumption that “to be” is simply to be an individual thing “has a hold on Theaetetus” because Theaetetus does not even recognize this assumption as an assumption. He is unaware that in his thinking he implicitly assumes that “to be” simply means to be an individual thing. It is this assumption, for instance, that forces Theaetetus, despite his best efforts (see *Tht.*, 204a11-b5, 204e11-205a1), to reduce wholes and totalities to all the things that compose them³ in *Theaetetus* 202d10-205e7. I discussed *Theaetetus* 202d10-205e7 at some length in Chapter I.5.C, so I will not recount the details of that passage here. I do want to note, however, that it is Theaetetus’ implicit assumption that “to be” is to be an individual that underlies the two-horned dilemma in which Socrates ensnares him. Socrates asks Theaetetus whether by a “compound” (συνλλαβή) we mean all the elements (στοιχεῖα) that compose it, or some one character (μίαν τινὰ ἰδέαν) produced by the combination of the elements, yet different from them (203c4-6, e2-5). Theaetetus begins by choosing the first option: the compound is identical to all its elements (203c7). After that choice proves problematic, Theaetetus, at Socrates suggestion, opts for the second: the compound is some one character, a thing numerically distinct from the elements whose combination produces it (203e2-204a4). This second option turns out to be untenable. The problem is that compounds, whether wholes or totalities, cannot be

¹ The “to be” in scare quotes indicates “what it is to be” or “what being is.”

² Cf. Cornford, *Plato’s Theory of Knowledge*, 151.

³ “Whole” translates “ὅλον,” “totality” translates “πᾶν,” and “all the things” translates “πάντα.” See my discussion of these three terms in chap. I.5.C.

understood simply in terms of the numerically distinct elements that compose them. A compound cannot be numerically identical to the elements that compose it. Yet neither can it be numerically distinct from the elements that compose it.⁴ Each compound is numerically self-identical, distinct from every other compound. Nevertheless, each compound is not numerically distinct—some different thing—from all the elements that compose it. Since Theaetetus implicitly assumes that “to be” is to be an individual, he lacks the resources to overcome the compound/elements dilemma in 202d10-205e7.

This assumption continues to have a hold on Theaetetus throughout much of the *Sophist*. As the stranger leads Theaetetus through the definition of angling and the first six definitions of sophistry, Theaetetus treats the forms or kinds that the stranger is dividing and defining as individual things, as countable objects. And he is not wrong in doing so, for both the stranger’s “method of division” and, as we will later see,⁵ discourse (λόγος) itself presuppose that forms or kinds are countable objects. Yet the forms and kinds are not only, or even primarily, countable objects, but countable objects that are embedded within eidetic structures. Since forms or kinds are embedded within eidetic whole/part compounds, forms or kinds cannot be understood simply as numerically distinct entities. Thus, in order to understand forms or kinds as embedded within eidetic whole/part compounds, which is precisely what Theaetetus must do in order to understand the stranger’s definitions of sophistry, and later statesmanship, he must come to recognize that “to be” is not reducible to being an individual entity. Or to put it differently, Theaetetus must come to recognize that the fact that there are individual beings presupposes what it is to be, and that what it is to be cannot simply be an individual being, since it is presupposed by individual beings. Or to put it most concisely, Theaetetus must come to recognize that being itself is not an individual being. I think that bringing Theaetetus to this recognition is one of the stranger’s primary aims in the digression, and that bringing us the readers of the *Sophist* to this recognition is one

⁴ Cf. Plato, *Parm.*, 146b2-5. “Πάν που πρὸς ἅπαν ὧδε ἔχει, ἢ ταὐτόν ἐστιν ἢ ἕτερον · ἢ ἐὰν μὴ ταὐτόν ἢ μὴδ’ ἕτερον, μέρος ἂν εἴη τούτου πρὸς ὃ οὕτως ἔχει, ἢ ὡς πρὸς μέρος ὅλον ἂν εἴη.” “Everything is related to everything in this way: either it is identical or different; or if it is neither identical nor different, it would be related as part to whole or as whole to part.”

⁵ See esp. chap. VI.2.B.

of Plato's aims.⁶ Such a recognition is certainly necessary if we are to understand the account of truth and falsehood that the *Sophist* offers.

On my reading, the first portion of the digression (236c9-245e8), which I will examine in this Chapter, offers a series of aporetic arguments that problematize the assumption that "to be" is reducible to being an individual thing. This first portion of the digression can be divided into five sections. In the first section (236c9-237b6), the stranger briefly introduces the problem of non-being and falsehood. In the second (237b7-241c6), he presents a four stage *reductio*-like argument, which provides an agenda for how to approach the problem of non-being. This argument shows that in order to affirm that non-being is, the stranger and Theaetetus will have to deny the assumption that "to be" is simply to be an individual thing. In the third section (241c4-243c9), the stranger leads Theaetetus through a brief digression on method and they conclude that they must inquire into the nature of being. In the fourth section (243c10-245e8), the stranger critiques the ontological theories of the dualists and monists. Those critiques demonstrate that being in the most fundamental sense can be neither one nor a number of individual things, and suggest that in order to understand what being is, one must turn one's attention away from the question of how many individual beings there are, and instead inquire into what sort of thing being is, that is, into the normative structure in terms of which individual beings are structured.

§1. Introduction to the Problem of Non-Being and Falsehood (236c9-237b6)

During the first half of the *Sophist*, the stranger offers six different definitions of the sophist. Each of the six identifies sophistry as a different kind of expertise. After the sixth definition, Theaetetus expresses some vexation at the fact that the sophist has appeared in so many guises. Since the sophist has appeared to be the practitioner of so

⁶ I am not alone in thinking that Plato is concerned with showing that "to be" is not reducible to being an individual entity. A number of contemporary interpreters of Plato would agree with me on this. See for example, John Sallis, *Being and Logos: Reading the Platonic Dialogues* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1975; Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1996), 494ff.; Miller, "Beginning the 'Longer Way,'" 318-323; Sanday, "Eleatic Metaphysics in Plato's *Parmenides*"; *A Study of Dialectic*. Likewise, all the major figures of the Neo-Platonic tradition, from Plotinus to al Kindi, argue that individual beings presuppose the uncountable One itself, which, although it is not a being, can, according to Pseudo-Dionysius at least, nevertheless be named "being," since it is the cause of being (see esp. Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Divine Names*, I.7, V.1-2, 4-8).

many different professions, Theaetetus finds himself more unsure than ever about what sophistry really is (231b9-c2). The stranger encourages Theaetetus to continue to follow him in defining the sophist, and so they begin again. And the stranger is optimistic that this seventh attempt to define the sophist will be successful (231c3-7, 232a1-b6, 234e5-235a4).

After some discussion (232b6-235b4), the stranger begins the seventh search for the sophist in earnest by identifying sophism as a kind of image-making (235b5-9; εἰδωλοποιική). He then divides image-making into two kinds: likeness-making (εἰκαστική) and appearance-making (φανταστική) (235d6-236c7). Likeness-making produces its images according to true proportions (235e7; ἀληθινὴν συμμετρίαν), while appearance-making does not. For example, the stranger claims, if a likeness-maker were to sculpt something, he would do so “according to the proportions of his model in length, breadth, and depth, and in addition to this, give it colors that suit each of its parts” (235d6-e2). An appearance-maker, however, “bidding farewell to the truth,” would produce his sculpture or image not according to “the real proportions, but rather [according to] those that merely seem beautiful (οὐ τὰς οὐσας συμμετρίας ἀλλὰ τὰς δοξούσας εἶναι καλάς)” (236a4-6). The distinction, then, is that a “likeness” is a true image, whereas an “appearance” is a false one. When it comes to sculpting or painting, one might have some sense of what “true image” and “false image” are supposed to mean. The images with which the stranger and Theaetetus are ultimately concerned, however, are not sculptures or paintings, but rather images in speech (λόγος). As the stranger will point out, what true and false images are when it comes to speech is difficult to discern.⁷

Having divided image-making into likeness-making and appearance-making, the stranger tells Theaetetus that he is unsure in which kind to place the sophist.

Stranger: I'm still unable to see clearly the things which I was of two minds about then, namely, in which of the two the sophist must be put.

⁷ The problem is that both appearances and likenesses are images, and all images are both like their originals in some respects and unlike them in others. In the case of speaking, proportionality is not an easily identifiable respect in which one could compare likeness and unlikeness. Hence, any image in speech could count as an appearance insofar as it is unlike its original, and again as a likeness insofar as it is like its original. The stranger and Theaetetus do not have a clear enough account of image-making with respect to speaking. So when they divide it into likeness- and appearance-making, they are unable to keep those two categories clearly separated.

But, the man is really wondrous and utterly difficult to make out, since even now he's fled, in very good and clever fashion, down into a form that offers no passage for our tracking. (236c9-d3)

Theaetetus responds by saying “so it seems” (236d4; ἔοικεν), which prompts the stranger to ask him whether he really sees the reason why it is difficult to place the sophist in one of those two kinds or whether he has simply been swept along by the argument and is assenting out of habit (236d5-7). As the ensuing discussion reveals, Theaetetus has in fact assented without truly understanding the problem. And it will take a little work in order to get him to understand it.

If the stranger and Theaetetus are ever to define the sophist as some kind of image-maker, Theaetetus must be brought to recognize the perplexity entailed by notions such as “likeness” and “appearance.” The stranger claims:

This appearing and seeming, but not being, and saying things, but not true ones—all these things are always full of perplexity (μεστὰ ἀπορίας), now as in time past. For it is extremely difficult, Theaetetus, to see how, in speaking, one is to say (λέγειν) or to opine (δοξάζειν) that falsehoods really are (ὄντως εἶναι), and not be hemmed in by contradiction in uttering this. (236e1-237a1)⁸

Since false statements in some sense say what is not, the assertion that falsehoods really are entails that what is not⁹ is (237a3-4). Understanding what it means to say that what is not is, however, is difficult for a number of reasons. The stranger begins to reveal the difficulty by pointing out that to say that what is not is seems to contradict the words of Parmenides:¹⁰

This, he says, should never prevail: that things which are not are; but you, while searching, keep your thought shut off from this path.

⁸ There is some controversy on how to translate and philosophically interpret this passage. For a discussion of the debate see Paolo Crivelli, *Plato's Account of Falsehood: A Study of the Sophist* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 28-32.

⁹ Throughout this Chapter, I will generally translate “τὸ μὴ ὄν” and similar phrases as “what is not,” and “τὸ ὄν” and similar phrases as “what is.” These two phrases could of course also be translated as “non-being” and “being” respectively, and I will translate them in that way at times. I have chosen the more indefinite “what is”/“what is not” as my standard translations in this Chapter, however, so as to emphasize the presumptive character of Theaetetus' assumption that “to be” is simply to be an individual. Theaetetus, I claim, assumes that what is (ὄν) is always *a* being (ὄν τι). Given that “being” can be a noun in English, whereas the Ancient Greek “ὄν” is a participle, “being” lends itself to Theaetetus' mistaken assumption more than “ὄν” does.

¹⁰ It should be noted that in the extant fragments of Parmenides' poem, he is not the one who admonishes his followers to keep their minds “well shut off from just this way of searching.” Rather it is the goddess. The stranger, however, portrays these as Parmenides' words. For the purposes of this discussion, I will follow the stranger and speak as if Parmenides said the things that the stranger attributes to him.

Οὐ γὰρ μή ποτε τοῦτο δαμῆ, φησίν, εἶναι μὴ ἔόντα · ἀλλὰ σὺ τῆσδ' ἀφ' ὁδοῦ διζήμενος εἶργε νόημα. (237a8-9)¹¹

The stranger suggests that they look into what Parmenides means by this. At this point Theaetetus still does not see the difficulty clearly, but he agrees to follow the stranger in whatever way the stranger thinks “the argument is best pursued” (237b4-6).

§2. *Orienting the Inquiry into the Problem of Non-Being (237b7-241c6)*

The stranger sets up the way in which they will pursue the problem of non-being by means of a rather complex four-part argument (237b7-241c6), which I will call the “Orienting Argument.”¹² The first part of the Orienting Argument (237b7-e7) contends that the term “what is not” does not have a referent, and so cannot be meaningfully said. The second (238a1-238c12) and third (238d1-239a12) parts compose a two-part *reductio*, which I will call the “*Reductio*.” The fourth part of the Orienting Argument (239b1-241c6) contends, in opposition to the first, that the term “what is not” does have a referent, and so can be meaningfully said. I will refer to the four parts of the Orienting Argument as A1, A2, A3, and A4, respectively.

I will show that the *Reductio* derives a number of performative contradictions on the basis of two assumptions. The first assumption, (A), is an assumption that “to be” is simply to be an individual thing. In other words, assumption (A) identifies what is with being an individual. The second assumption, (B), is that the term “what is not” has a referent, and therefore is a name and can be meaningfully said. The stranger puts forward this second assumption at 237c2, where he characterizes “what is not” as a “name” (237c2; ποῖ χρῆ τούνομ' ἐπιφέρειν τοῦτο, τὸ μὴ ὄν). After stating this assumption but before he begins the *Reductio*, the stranger presents the argument A1, the conclusion of which denies (B) and is derived on the basis of (A). The *Reductio*, however, derives its performative contradictions on the basis of both (A) and (B). Thus,

¹¹ DK 28 B7.1-2; cf. Plato, *Soph.*, 258d2-3.

¹² The way in which I am interpreting 237b7-241c6 as presenting a four-part argument is unusual. To my knowledge, all commentators on the *Sophist* divide 237b7-241c6 into at least two sections. Commentators take the first part to span roughly 237b7-239a12. Then they take the second part to span roughly 239b1-241c6. I agree with commentators that 237b7-239a12 consists of three interrelated arguments, what I will refer to as A1, A2, and A3. I differ from commentators in that I take 239b1-241c6 to be an integral part of the same overall argument, without which the arguments 237b7-239a12 cannot be properly understood. For my complete formulation of the Orienting Argument, see §2.D, pp. 82-84 below.

taken together, A1 and the *Reductio* leave open the question of whether both assumptions (A) and (B) are responsible for the contradictions or whether only one is, and if only one, which one. As I have already suggested, the stranger ultimately wants to show that (A) is false. Likewise, the stranger ultimately wants to show that (B) is true: “what is not” does have a referent, the form non-being (258b9-c5, d6-7). I will show that the stranger, therefore, crafts the Orienting Argument to point the subsequent inquiry into non-being in just this direction. First, he constructs the first three parts of the Orienting Argument, A1 and the two-part *Reductio*, to show that if (B) is true, (A) is false; and if (A) is true, (B) is false. Second, in A4 he offers an argument in support of the truth of (B). Although A4’s affirmation of (B) is only provisional, it, together with A1 and the *Reductio*, serves to orient the subsequent inquiry into non-being by proposing that (A) is false while (B) is true.

A. A1—“What is not” cannot be Meaningfully Said (237b7-e7)

The stranger begins A1 by asking Theaetetus whether they should dare to disobey Parmenides and to utter (φθέγγεσθαι)¹³ the term “what in no way is” (τὸ μηδαμῶς ὄν) (237b7-c4). After Theaetetus agrees, the stranger asks him, “Where must this name, ‘what is not,’ be applied?” (237c2; ποῖ χρῆ τούνομα ἐπιφέρειν τοῦτο, τὸ μὴ ὄν. . . ;). He asks Theaetetus to consider “in reference to what and what sort of thing” (εἰς τί καὶ ἐπὶ ποῖον) the name “what is not” should be applied (237c3). I will argue that A1 attempts to address the question “to what?” the name “what is not” can be applied; while A2 attempts

¹³ There are differing opinions on how to best translate “φθέγγεσθαι” in the context of the A1-3, in which the word appears four times: 237b8, 237e6, 238b6, 238c8. For a discussion of the various ways to translate “φθέγγεσθαι” in these passages, see Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 34-36. Two of the various senses of “φθέγγεσθαι” seem possible in A1-3: (1) “φθέγγεσθαι” could take as its object an accusative noun-phrase that stands for a linguistic expression. In this case “φθέγγεσθαι” could be translated as “to utter,” as in “. . . to utter ‘what is not’”; (2) “φθέγγεσθαι” could take as its object propositional content, introduced by a declarative sentence, a pronoun or noun-phrase, or some other device (see *ibid.*). I opt for (1), given how I think the argument works. Most translators also opt for (1). See for example, Harold N. Fowler, trans., *Plato VII: Theaetetus, Sophist*, Loeb Classical Library 123 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1921), 339; Cornford, *Plato’s Theory of Knowledge*, 203; Seth Benardete, trans. and comm., *Plato’s Sophist* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 28; Eva Brann, Peter Kalkavage, and Eric Salem, trans., *Plato: Sophist or The Professor of Wisdom* (Newburyport, MA: Focus Publishing, 1996), 41; Nicholas P. White, trans., *Sophist*, in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997), 257; David Ambuel, *Image and Paradigm in Plato’s Sophist* (Las Vegas: Parmenides Publishing, 2007), 205. Some, however, opt for (2). See for example, Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 34-36.

to address “to what sort?” it can be applied.¹⁴ A1 and A2 ultimately fail to address those two questions, but their failure is informative, in that it reveals that Theaetetus’ assumption that “to be” is simply to be an individual is problematic.

The stranger will conclude A1 by claiming that to meaningfully utter the name “what is not” is impossible. A1’s answer to the question of to what “what is not” can be applied is that it cannot be applied to anything at all. A1 is concerned with the referent of “what is not.”¹⁵ Due to his assumption that “to be” is simply to be an individual, Theaetetus cannot identify a possible referent for “what is not.” Thus, he is forced to concede that the name has no referent.¹⁶ A name without a referent, however, is not a name at all. Nor is it even meaningful speech. All speech must be about something, as Theaetetus and the stranger will affirm explicitly toward the end of the digression (262e6-8). According to A1, the utterance “what is not” fails to be about something and so fails to be meaningful speech.

The text of A1 reads as follows:

Stranger: But this at least is clear, that “what is not” must not be applied among what are.

Theaetetus: How could it be?

Stranger: Therefore, if in fact it cannot be applied to what is, someone who applies it to something would again not apply it correctly.

Theaetetus: How so?

[237d]

Stranger: At least this also is clear to us, that we always say this expression, “something,” in reference to what is. For to say it alone, as if naked and isolated from all beings, is impossible. Isn’t that so?

Theaetetus: Yes, it’s impossible.

Stranger: Are you agreeing because you view the matter in this way,¹⁷ that it is necessary for whoever says “something” to refer to at least some one thing?

¹⁴ Cf. Mary M. McCabe, *Plato’s Individuals* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 198-199.

¹⁵ In this I agree with McCabe (*ibid.*, 197).

¹⁶ Cf. Rosen, *Plato’s Sophist*, 181-182.

¹⁷ Crivelli points out that there are two possible ways to construe this clause and discusses both alternatives (Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 36). The first takes the “σύμφορος” to govern the declarative sentence introduced by “ὅς.” The second takes the “τῆδε” to govern the declarative sentence introduced by “ὅς.” I follow Crivelli in adopting the second construal, both for the textual reasons he offers and because

Theaetetus: Just so.

Stranger: For you will say that the singular “something” is a sign of one, the dual “some” a sign of two, and the plural “some” a sign of many.

Theaetetus: Of course.

[237e]

Stranger: But then it is most necessary, it seems, that someone who says “not something”¹⁸ refers to nothing at all.

Theaetetus: Utterly necessary.

Stranger: Then one mustn’t grant even this much: that such a person speaks, but refers to nothing. But instead mustn’t one claim that whoever tries to utter “what is not” does not even speak?

Theaetetus: The account would reach complete perplexity at least.

ΞΕ. Ἀλλ’ οὖν τοῦτό γε δῆλον, ὅτι τῶν ὄντων ἐπι¹⁹ τὸ μὴ ὄν οὐκ οἰστέον.

ΘΕΑΙ. Πῶς γὰρ ἄν;

ΞΕ. Οὐκοῦν ἐπεὶ οὐκ ἐπὶ τὸ ὄν, οὐδ’ ἐπὶ τὸ τι φέρων ὀρθῶς ἄν τις φέροι.

ΘΕΑΙ. Πῶς δὴ;

[237d]

ΞΕ. Καὶ τοῦτο ἡμῖν που φανερόν, ὡς καὶ τὸ τι τοῦτο ῥῆμα ἐπ’ ὄντι λέγομεν ἐκάστοτε · μόνον γὰρ αὐτὸ λέγειν, ὥσπερ γυμνὸν καὶ ἀπρηρημωμένον ἀπὸ τῶν ὄντων ἀπάντων, ἀδύνατον · ἢ γάρ;

I think that it makes better sense of the argument. On the first construal, the clause would be translated as something like “Viewing the matter in this way, do you agree that . . . ?” (see *ibid.*).

¹⁸ In translating “τὸν . . . μὴ τι λέγοντα” as “someone who says ‘not something,’” I follow Fowler, Cornford, Brann et al., and Ambuel and take the “μὴ” with the “τι” rather than with the “λέγοντα” (Fowler, *Plato VII*, 241; Cornford, *Plato’s Theory of Knowledge*, 204; Brann et al., *Plato: Sophist*, 42; Ambuel, *Image and Paradigm*, 206). In this I differ from Taylor, Benardete, White, and Crivelli, who take the “μὴ” with the “λέγοντα”: “. . . someone who does not say something” (Taylor, *The Sophist and the Statesman*, 126; Benardete, *Plato’s Sophist*, 29; White, *Sophist*, 258; Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 34)

¹⁹ A “τι” does not appear after the “ἐπι” in the main manuscripts, but it does appear in *Parisinus graecus* 1808. It is nevertheless generally accepted as an emendation (see for example, Lewis Campbell, *The Sophistes and Politicus of Plato* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1867), 84; John Burnet, ed., *Platonis Opera*, vol. 1, *Euthyphro, Apologia Socratis, Crito, Phaedo, Cratylus, Theaetetus, Sophista, Politicus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1900); Fowler, *Plato VII*, 338; Auguste Diès, ed. and trans., *Platon: Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 8.3, *Sophiste*, 3rd ed. (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1955); E. A. Duke et al., eds., *Platonis Opera*, vol. 1, *Euthyphro, Apologia Socratis, Crito, Phaedo, Cratylus, Theaetetus, Sophista, Politicus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 418; Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 32n19). For reasons I explain below (pp. 64-65), I adopt the minority view, reject the addition of “τι,” and read “τῶν ὄντων ἐπι” with the anastrophe of “ἐπι” (see Nestor-Luis Cordero, “Le non-être absolu dans le *Sophiste* de Platon,” *Annuaire de l’École Pratique des Hautes Études, V^e Section* 95 [1986-1987]: 283; trans., *Platon: Le Sophiste* [Paris: G-F Flammarion, 1993], 233n136; Pierre Aubenque, “Une occasion manquée: la genèse avortée de la distinction entre l’‘étant’ et le ‘quelque chose,’” in *Études sur le Sophiste de Platon*, ed. Pierre Aubenque and Michel Narcy [Rome: Bibliopolis, 1991], 372; Francesco Fronterotta, trans., *Platone: Sofista* [Milan: Rizzoli, 2007], 311).

ΘΕΑΙ. Ἀδύνατον.

ΞΕ. Ἄρα τῆδε σκοπῶν σύμφης, ὡς ἀνάγκη τόν τι λέγοντα ἔν γε τι λέγειν;

ΘΕΑΙ. Οὕτως.

ΞΕ. Ἐνὸς γὰρ δὴ τό γε τι φήσεις σημεῖον εἶναι, τὸ δὲ τινὲ δυοῖν, τὸ δὲ τινὲς πολλῶν.

ΘΕΑΙ. Πῶς γὰρ οὐ;

[237e]

ΞΕ. Τὸν δὲ δὴ μὴ τι λέγοντα ἀναγκαιότατον, ὡς ἔοικε, παντάπασι μηδὲν λέγειν.

ΘΕΑΙ. Ἀναγκαιότατον μὲν οὖν.

ΞΕ. Ἄρ' οὖν οὐδὲ τοῦτο συγχωρητέον, τὸ τὸν τοιοῦτον λέγειν μὲν, λέγειν μέντοι μηδὲν, ἀλλ' οὐδὲ λέγειν φατέον, ὅς γ' ἂν ἐπιχειρῆ μὴ ὄν φθέγγεσθαι;

ΘΕΑΙ. Τέλος γοῦν ἂν ἀπορίας ὁ λόγος ἔχοι. (237c7-e7)

The Greek of the stranger's first remarks is difficult. Unlike other interpreters who would like to emend the text or gloss over the linguistic difficulties, I think that the difficulties are deliberate and important for the argument. The stranger's first move in A1 is to claim that the term "what is not" must not be applied among what are" (237c7-8; τῶν ὄντων ἔπι τὸ μὴ ὄν οὐκ οἰστέον). The "τῶν ὄντων ἔπι" is strange, since in the immediate context "ἐπί" is being used with the accusative rather than the genitive (237c3, c10).²⁰ Hence the vast majority of editors emend the text by adding "τι" after "ἐπί."²¹ I think that Plato has had the stranger omit the "τι" deliberately, however. The stranger, as I read the text, is attempting to bring Theaetetus to recognize the implicit assumption that "to be" is simply to be an individual, just as Plato is attempting to get the critical readers of the dialogue to recognize this assumption. A1's perplexing conclusion depends on this assumption. Since the stranger does not himself endorse this assumption, he does not himself supply the assumption in A1, but rather permits Theaetetus to supply it. In other words, the stranger omits the "τι" in 237c7 so as to allow Theaetetus to supply the assumption that "to be" is to be a something. Thus, although the "ἐπί" grammatically goes with "τῶν ὄντων," as the argument continues we see that Theaetetus clearly understands "τῶν ὄντων ἔπι" ("[applied] among what are") as "ἐπί τι τῶν ὄντων"

²⁰ Cf. Crivelli, *Plato's Account of Falsehood*, 33n19.

²¹ See note 19 above.

(“[applied] to something among the things that are”), and it is this latter understanding which leads to the argument’s conclusion. Unless “to be” is simply to be a something—to be an individual—it is not clear why “what is not” could not be applied to “what is.” After all, something that is not *x*, for example, can nevertheless be *y* and *z*, and in that sense we frequently apply “what is not” to what is. Theaetetus here, however, is not thinking of what is as what is *y* and *z*, but rather as an individual being. Likewise, he is not thinking of what is not as what is not *x*, but rather as what is not an individual being.

Given the assumption that “to be” is simply to be an individual, however, the referent of the term “what is not” could not be anything that is.²² For, inasmuch as any individual thing is, it simply does not make sense to call it “what is not.” One might object to this and claim that something might “be” in one respect and “not be” in another. If this objection is to be successful, however, the assumption that “to be” is simply to be an individual must be false.²³ The objection presupposes that respects are.²⁴ Yet if the assumption that “to be” is simply to be an individual holds, and if respects are, then respects are simply individual things. I will refer to these individuals as “respect-things.” If respects are “respect-things,” however, then in order to think and speak coherently about an object that is in some respects and not in others, we must think and speak about it as the respect-things that compose it. After all, that object will be nothing more than all of the respect-things that compose it, since the assumption that “to be” is simply to be an individual precludes any non-reductive account of whole/part composition, as the *aporiai* concerning whole/part composition at the end of the *Theaetetus* demonstrate.²⁵ If the object that has different respects is simply the respect-things that compose it, and if, as

²² Recall that “is” in the sense of “εἶναι” does not necessarily mean “to exist,” except in a weak sense such that everything exists (chap. I.6). Despite what some commentators suggest (see for example, Cornford, *Plato’s Theory of Knowledge*, 203-209; Moravcsik, “Being and Meaning in the *Sophist*,” 26ff.; Richard S. Bluck, *Plato’s Sophist*, ed. Gordon C. Neal [Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1975], 61-63; George Rudebusch, “*Sophist* 237-239,” *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 29, no. 4 (1991): 522-523; Christine J. Thomas, “Speaking of Something: Plato’s *Sophist* and Plato’s Beard,” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 38, no. 4 [2008]: 631-668; Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 46-48), the existence or non-existence of things is not at issue, or is so only incidentally, in the Orienting Argument. What is at issue is “what sort” being and non-being must be, given that one can make true statements about them (cf. Owen, “Plato on Not-Being”).

²³ Cf. Benardete, *Plato’s Sophist*, 113.

²⁴ Again, whether or not respects “exist” or how they “exist” is irrelevant here (see note 22 above). The objection presupposes that respects “are” in the sense that they are such that one can make true statements about them.

²⁵ See chap. I.5.C.

the objection presupposes, those respect-things are, then it does not make sense to refer to those respect-things as “what are not.” Hence the objection does not hold. Given the assumption that “to be” is simply to be an individual, Theaetetus is correct to affirm that the term “what is not” does not refer to anything that is.

After Theaetetus agrees that the referent of the term “what is not” is not among what are, the stranger infers that “if in fact it cannot be applied to what is, someone who applies it to something would again not apply it correctly” (237c10-11; οὐκοῦν ἐπέπειρ οὐκ ἐπὶ τὸ ὄν, οὐδ’ ἐπὶ τὸ τι φέρων ὀρθῶς ἄν τις φέροι).²⁶ Theaetetus asks, “How so?” (237c12; πῶς δῆ;) and the stranger responds by making some comments about the referent of the term “something.” “At least this also is clear to us,” says the stranger, “that we always say this expression, ‘something,’ in reference to what is. For to say it alone, as if naked and isolated from all beings, is impossible” (237d1-4; καὶ τοῦτο ἡμῖν που φανερόν, ὡς καὶ τὸ τι τοῦτο ῥῆμα ἐπ’ ὄντι λέγομεν ἐκάστοτε · μόνον γὰρ αὐτὸ λέγειν, ὥσπερ γυμνὸν καὶ ἀπηρημωμένον ἀπὸ τῶν ὄντων ἀπάντων, ἀδύνατον). These claims lend support for the assertion in 237c10-11 that “what is not” cannot be applied anything that is a something. For it is at least clear that the term “something” always refers to what is. After all, it is impossible to use “something” in a statement without employing the notion of “is” that is implicit in any statement.²⁷ Anything to which the term “something” can refer is. In other words, anything to which the term “something” can refer is such that one can make true predications about it. If “something is *x*,” then “something is.”²⁸ Furthermore, anything of which I can predicate “something” is. If “*x* is something” then “*x* is.”²⁹ Thus, “something” always refers to what is. With this and his first claim—that “‘what is not’ must not be applied among what are” (237c7-8)—the

²⁶ I do not take the “τό” in “τὸ τι” to be a quotation device, as some commentators do (see for example, Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 37). Rather, I take the “τό” to indicate that the adjective and/or adverb “τι” is being used substantively. Cf. Herbert W. Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, rev. G. M. Messing (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956), 1153a, e.

²⁷ The verb “to be” is at least implicit in any statement. See Aristotle, *De Interpretatione*, 21b9; *Metaphysics*, V.7.1017a 27-30; cf. Kahn, “On Terminology for *Copula* and *Existence*,” 143-144. As Aristotle suggests, a statement governed by a finite verb other than the verb “to be” can be converted into an equivalent statement with the verb “to be” by replacing the finite verb with a copula and participle combination: “Theaetetus flies” is in principle equivalent to “Theaetetus is flying.”

²⁸ Cf. chap. I.6.

²⁹ Ibid.

stranger has all he needs to get the consequent of the conditional in 237c10-11: that the term “what is not” cannot refer to something.

Yet, in case someone were to harbor any doubt concerning the claim that something always refers to what is, the stranger further explains why that claim is necessarily true. He asks Theaetetus, “Are you agreeing because you view the matter in this way, that it is necessary for whoever says ‘something’ to refer to at least some one thing?” (237d6-7; ἄρα τῆδε σκοποῶν σύμφης, ὡς ἀνάγκη τόν τι λέγοντα ἔν γέ τι λέγειν;). That “λέγειν” here should be taken in the sense of “to speak of” or “to refer,” whereas “τόν τι λέγοντα” should be taken in the sense of “he who says the term ‘something,’” is clear from what immediately follows. The stranger supports 237d6-7 by claiming that “the singular ‘something’ (τὸ τι) is a sign of one, dual ‘some’ (τὸ τινέ) a sign of two, and plural ‘some’ (τὸ τινές) a sign of many” (237d9-10). Anything named by the word “something” can take at least one predicate: “one.” Whatever else it may or may not be, the referent of the term “something” (τι) is always one. Likewise, whatever else the referent of “τινέ” may or may not be, it is always two. In the same way, the referent of “τινές” is always many. Thus, the referents of “τι,” “τινέ,” and “τινές” always are, at least with respect to their number. Therefore, “τι,” “τινέ,” and “τινές” always refer to what is.³⁰

The stranger’s argument in A1 thus far, then, can be formulated in this way:

(A) Assume that “to be” is simply to be an individual thing, that is, identify what is with an individual thing or with some number of individual things.

(1) Given (A), the term “what is not” cannot refer to something that is (237c7-9), just as the term “apple” cannot refer to an orange, and so on.³¹

³⁰ For other passages in Plato that affirm that something is necessarily both something that is and some one, see Plato, *Thet.*, 188e8-189a9; *Rep.*, V.478b5-478c2; *Parm.*, 132b8-132c2. Also cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, IV.1003b27-27: “‘One man’ (εἷς ἄνθρωπος) and ‘man who is’ (ὄν ἄνθρωπος) and ‘man’ (ἄνθρωπος) are the same.”

³¹ By construing this first claim in A1 as dependent upon assumption (A), my reading differs from the dominant interpretation of A1. According to the dominant interpretation, Plato presents A1 (and A2 and A3) as serious arguments, not sophisms, for the conclusion that the term “what is not,” in the sense of “what is utterly nothing” or “what in no sense exists,” cannot be meaningfully used; although the term can of course be meaningfully mentioned and not used, as it is in A1 (for commentators that subscribe to variations of this view see Cornford, *Plato’s Theory of Knowledge*, 203-209; Owen, “Plato on Not-Being,” 426-427, 431-434; L. M. de Rijk, *Plato’s Sophist: A Philosophical Commentary* (Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Co., 1986), 84-90; Rudebusch, “*Sophist* 237-239”; Thomas, “Speaking of Something,” 637-642, 657; Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 32; for discussion of the use/mention distinction and “what is not” in A1, see Rudebusch, “*Sophist* 237-239,” 523-524). My reading of A1 is in many ways

- (2) The term “something” always refers to what is (237d1-4).
- (3) Someone who says “something” necessarily refers to some one thing (237d6-7), since the singular “something” (τὸ τι) is a sign of one, dual “some” (τὸ τινέ) a sign of two, and plural “some” (τὸ τινές) a sign of many (237d9-10).
- (4) Given (1)-(3), “what is not” cannot refer to something (237c10-11).

The way in which the stranger concludes A1, as we will see momentarily, presupposes one other inference based on (1)-(4):

- (5) Given (1)-(4), “what is not,” “not something,” and “nothing” (μηδέν: literally “not-even-one”) have the same extension.

The stranger offers two formulations of the conclusion of A1, the second of which is a more precise and accurate way of stating the first. His first formulation of the conclusion is “it is most necessary . . . that he who says ‘not something’ refers to nothing at all” (237e1-2; τὸν δὲ δὴ μὴ τι λέγοντα ἀναγκαιότατον, ὡς ἔοικε, παντάπασι μηδὲν λέγειν).³² The conclusion is that there is no referent of “not something.” In other words, there is no individual to which “not something” could correctly refer. Although this conclusion naturally follows from the premises, the stranger’s wording of it in 237e1-2 is problematic in that it uses, rather than mentions,³³ the term “nothing” (“μηδέν”). Whether the terms “nothing,” “not something,” and “what is not” can be meaningfully used, however, is precisely what is at issue in A1.³⁴ So, the stranger rewords his conclusion in a way that does not use “nothing”: “Then one mustn’t grant even this much: that such a person speaks, but refers to nothing. But instead mustn’t one claim that whoever tries to utter ‘what is not’ does not even speak?” (237e4-6; ἄρ’ οὐκ οὐδὲ τοῦτο

compatible and in general agreement with the dominant interpretation. On my reading, however, the primary focus is not on “what is not” in the sense of “what in no way exists,” but rather on “what is not” in the sense of “what is not *F*, for any value of *F*”; the latter of course entails the former (see Kahn, “Some Philosophical Uses of ‘To Be’ in Plato,” 113n18; “Parmenides and Plato Once More,” in *Presocratic Philosophy: Essays in Honour of Alexander Mourelatos*, edited by Victor Caston and Daniel W. Graham [Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002], 89). My reading of A1 differs from the dominant view in that I think that although Plato would agree that the term “what is not” in the sense of “what is not *F*, for any value of *F*” has no referent and cannot be meaningfully used, Plato would affirm (and in fact does have the stranger affirm at 258b9-c5, d6), that “what is not” can be used of the form non-being, and so does have a referent, if properly understood. On my reading, however, this proper understanding can only be gained by rejecting assumption (A). Thus, the rejection of (A) is the primary purpose of the Orienting Argument on my reading.

³² I translate “τὸν . . . λέγοντα” as “he who says . . .” and “λέγειν” as “refers” for the same reason that I did in the parallel construction at 237d6-7. See note 18 above.

³³ See note 31 above.

³⁴ Rudebusch, “*Sophist* 237-239,” 523-524.

συγχωρητέον, τὸ τὸν τοιοῦτον λέγειν μὲν, λέγειν μέντοι μηδέν, ἀλλ’ οὐδὲ λέγειν φατέον, ὅς γ’ ἂν ἐπιχειρῆ μὴ ὄν φθέγγεσθαι;) All meaningful speech must be about something. It must have a referent or referents. The terms “what is not,” “not something,” and “nothing,” however, do not have referents according to A1. Whoever attempts to utter (φθέγγεσθαι) those terms, therefore, does not refer and so does not even meaningfully speak (οὐδὲ λέγειν).³⁵ The two formulations of the conclusion of A1, then, can be expressed as follows:

- (6) Given (1)-(5), whoever says “not something” refers to absolutely nothing (237e1-2).
- (7) But, since to what “nothing” refers is precisely what is at stake in this argument, we must restate (6) without using “nothing”: whoever says “what is not,” “not something,” or “nothing” does not even refer, and so does not meaningfully speak (237e4-6).³⁶

Theaetetus reacts to the stranger’s conclusion by saying that if what the stranger says is true, “the account would reach complete perplexity at least” (237e7). Yet the stranger tells him not to “start talking big yet” (238a1). “For,” the stranger continues, “there is more to come, and it is the greatest and first of the perplexities. For it happens to be about the very principle of the matter (περὶ γὰρ αὐτὴν αὐτοῦ τὴν ἀρχὴν οὔσα τυγχάνει)” (238a1-3). That whoever tries to utter “what is not” does not meaningfully speak is certainly a troubling and perplexing conclusion. The stranger and Theaetetus, however, have not yet come to the heart of the matter.

B. A2—What is Not is Unthinkable, Inexpressible, Unutterable, and Unsayable (238a1-238c12)

³⁵ Commentators on the *Sophist* understand the sense of “οὐδὲ λέγειν” at 237e5 in various ways. For a discussion of the two main possibilities see Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 40-42. For commentators who agree with the reading of “οὐδὲ λέγειν” I offer here, where “οὐδὲ λέγειν” means “does not even meaningfully speak” because that which is said—“what is not”—does not have a referent, see Cornford, *Plato’s Theory of Knowledge*, 205; Taylor, *The Sophist and the Statesman*, 35-36; Owen, “Plato on Not-Being,” 419, 431-432; Paul Seligman, *Being and Not-Being: An Introduction to Plato’s Sophist* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), 15; Rosen, *Plato’s Sophist*, 181-182; de Rijk, *Plato’s Sophist*, 84-87; McCabe, *Plato’s Individuals*, 197; Thomas, “Speaking of Something,” 639-640. For alternative views see David Wiggins, “Sentence Meaning, Negation, and Plato’s Problem of Non-Being,” in *Plato: A Collection of Critical Essays I: Metaphysics and Epistemology*, ed. Gregory Vlastos (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1971), 271, 279-280; William Bondeson, “Plato’s *Sophist*: Falsehoods and Images,” *Apeiron* 6, no. 2 (1972): 3-4; Ambuel, *Image and Paradigm*, 83.

³⁶ There is an argument somewhat similar to A1 in *Tht.*, 188e4-189a13, which concerns opining what is not, instead of saying what is not. Also cf. Plato, *Euthy.*, 284b1-284c6.

The stranger claims that A2 will get to “the very principle” of the perplexity concerning non-being. The relationship between A2 and A1 is complex. Both rely on assumption (A): that “to be” is to be an individual thing. A2 will make this assumption even more explicit. A2 also assumes the truth of assumption (B)—that the term “what is not” can be meaningfully used. The conclusion of A1, in contrast, denies that (B) is true. A2 must assume (B) because A2 attempts to answer the question of “to what sort?” the term “what is not” can be applied. Recall that the stranger began the Orienting Argument by asking Theaetetus “to what?” and “to what sort?” the name “what is not” can be applied (237c3; εἰς τί καὶ ἐπὶ ποῖον). A1 addressed the “to what?” question, by attempting to identify an object to which “what is not” could refer. The conclusion of A1 was that there is no object to which “what is not” can refer. A2’s attempt to address the “to what sort?” question, in contrast, must presuppose that “what is not” has a referent. In fact, A1 itself already presupposed an answer to the “to what sort?” question. A1 failed to find a referent for “what is not” because A1 assumed that non-being is a certain sort of thing, namely, an individual thing.

A2 reads as follows:

Stranger: Something else among the things that are, I suppose, could come to be attached to what is.

Theaetetus: How could it not?

Stranger: But will we say that something among the things that are could ever come to be attached to what is not?

Theaetetus: How could we?

Stranger: We put the totality of number among the things that are.

[238b]

Theaetetus: If in fact anything else is to be posited as being.

Stranger: Then let us in no way attempt to attribute either plurality or unity of number to what is not.

Theaetetus: The account asserts, it seems, that it would not be correct for us to attempt this.

Stranger: Then without number how could one utter with one’s mouth or even grasp in thought what are not or what is not?

Theaetetus: Will you say how?

Stranger: Whenever we say “what are not,” are we not attempting to attribute plurality of number?

Theaetetus: Certainly.

Stranger: And whenever we say “what is not” [238c], are we not attempting to attribute unity of number, in turn?

Theaetetus: Most clearly.

Stranger: And we claim that it is neither right nor correct to attempt to attribute what is to what is not.

Theaetetus: What you say is most true.

Stranger: So you understand that it is possible neither correctly to utter nor to speak nor to think what is not, it by itself; but it is unthinkable, inexpressible, unutterable, and unsayable.

Theaetetus: That’s altogether so.

ΞΕ. Τῷ μὲν ὄντι που προσγένοιτ’ ἂν τι τῶν ὄντων ἕτερον.

ΘΕΑΙ. Πῶς γὰρ οὔ;

ΞΕ. Μὴ ὄντι δέ τι τῶν ὄντων ἄρα ποτε προσγίγνεσθαι φήσομεν δυνατόν εἶναι;

ΘΕΑΙ. Καὶ πῶς;

ΞΕ. Ἀριθμὸν δὴ τὸν σύμπαντα τῶν ὄντων τίθεμεν.

[238b]

ΘΕΑΙ. εἴπερ γε καὶ ἄλλο τι θετέον ὡς ὄν.

ΞΕ. Μὴ τοίνυν μηδ’ ἐπιχειρῶμεν ἀριθμοῦ μήτε πλήθος μήτε ἐν πρὸς τὸ μὴ ὄν προσφέρειν.

ΘΕΑΙ. Οὐκ οὖν ἂν ὀρθῶς γε, ὡς ἔοικεν, ἐπιχειροῖμεν, ὡς φησιν ὁ λόγος.

ΞΕ. Πῶς οὖν ἂν ἢ διὰ τοῦ στόματος φθέγγεται ἂν τις ἢ καὶ τῆς διανοίας τὸ παράπαν λάβοι τὰ μὴ ὄντα ἢ τὸ μὴ ὄν χωρὶς ἀριθμοῦ;

ΘΕΑΙ. Λέγε πῆ;

ΞΕ. Μὴ ὄντα μὲν ἐπειδὴν λέγωμεν, ἄρα οὐ πλήθος [238c] ἐπιχειροῦμεν ἀριθμοῦ προστιθέναι;

ΘΕΑΙ. Τί μὴν;

ΞΕ. Μὴ ὄν δέ, ἄρα οὐ τὸ ἐν αὐτῷ;

ΘΕΑΙ. Σαφέστατά γε.

ΞΕ. Καὶ μὴν οὔτε δίκαιόν γε οὔτε ὀρθόν φαμεν ὄν ἐπιχειρεῖν μὴ ὄντι προσαρμόττειν.

ΘΕΑΙ. Λέγεις ἀληθέστατα.

ΞΕ. Συννοεῖς οὖν ὡς οὔτε φθέγγασθαι δυνατόν ὀρθῶς οὔτ’ εἰπεῖν οὔτε διανοηθῆναι τὸ μὴ ὄν αὐτὸ καθ’ αὐτό, ἀλλ’ ἔστιν ἀδιανόητόν τε καὶ ἄρρητον καὶ ἀφθεγκτόν τε καὶ ἄλογον;

ΘΕΑΙ. Παντάπασι μὲν οὖν. (238a5-238c12)

The stranger's first claim concerns what sort of thing what is is. "Something else among the things that are," says the stranger "could come to be attached (προσγένοιτ' ἄν) to what is" (238a5-6). Two things about this claim should be noted from the outset. First, "προσγίγνεσθαι," the word that I am translating as "come to be attached" in 238a5 and a8, generally means "to be added, accrue."³⁷ Given where the stranger takes the argument, what he primarily seems to mean in 238a5-6 is that things that are can be predicated of something that is. Yet he frames this predication in terms of addition. He does so, I submit, in order to mark as operative Theaetetus' assumption that "to be" is simply to be an individual. If one identifies what is with an individual thing or things, then attributes or properties, since they are, must somehow themselves be individuals. Second, the stranger's claim in 238a5-6 indicates that something that is always is within the context of other things that are. Things that are are related to one another. Anything that is is such that other things that are can be attached to it. The stranger has begun to make claims about "what sort" being is.

The stranger's second question in A2 is, "Will we say that something among the things that are could ever come to be attached (προσγίγνεσθαι) to what is not?" (238a8-9). This question uses, rather than mentions, the term "what is not." Thus, this question ignores the conclusion of A1 and affirms assumption (B). Theaetetus agrees that something among the things that are could never come to be attached to what is not because he thinks of what is and what is not as individual things. Individual things are countable; they can be added to one another. They cannot, however, be added to a non-one, non-something, or non-being. Something cannot be added to nothing. Just as, for example, I cannot add five marbles to no marbles, so I cannot add any number of somethings to no somethings. Likewise, just as I cannot attribute various colors, shapes, sizes, and numbers to no marbles, so I cannot attribute anything that is to what is not.³⁸ Attributes presuppose a subject that is—which is to say, attributes presuppose a subject that is such that one can make true affirmative statements about it. Already one can

³⁷ LSJ, s.v. "προσγίγνεσθαι."

³⁸ Although I think that Theaetetus' assumption that "to be" is simply to be an individual entails that attributes must be individuals, I agree with McCabe that the argument of A2 as stated leaves the question of whether attributes are individuals open (McCabe, *Plato's Individuals*, 197n15).

begin to see A2 committing a performative contradiction by attempting to make true predications of what is not.

Next, the stranger claims that “we put the totality of number (ἀριθμὸν . . . τὸν σύμπαντα) among the things that are” (238a11). Theaetetus responds with a strong affirmation, claiming that we must put the totality of number among the things that are “if in fact anything else is to be posited as being” (238b1; εἴπερ γε καὶ ἄλλο τι θετέον ὡς ὄν). With this claim, A2 begins to touch on “the very principle of the matter,” as the stranger promised in 238a1-3.³⁹ Theaetetus’ response makes the assumption that to be is to be an individual explicit. Number must be if anything else is to be posited as being, because what is, Theaetetus assumes, are individual things. Individual things, moreover, are here characterized as countable objects. Whatever other characteristics individual things happen to have, they are at the very least countable. Individuals may be spatio-temporal beings, attributes, relations, perceptions, thoughts, opinions, kinds, forms, and so on; because despite any radical differences between these different sorts of things, they all are countable objects (cf. *Tht.*, 198c1-5). “To be,” according to Theaetetus’ assumption, is simply to be one of these countable objects. Hence, if anything else is, number must be.⁴⁰

With Theaetetus’ assumption that “to be” is simply to be an individual now virtually explicit, the rest of A2 follows naturally. Theaetetus has, perhaps without even recognizing it, answered the question of to what sort he thinks the term “what is not” can be applied. He has identified the sort to which “what is” can be applied as the sort “countable objects.” Since an object of any sort is a countable object, the term “what is

³⁹ Cf. Thomas, “Speaking of Something,” 641. Although there are some differences in how Thomas and I read the *Reductio*, she rightly points out that the stranger identifies “‘the true source’ (τὴν ἀρχήν, 238a1-3) of the difficulties of speaking about what is not with the fact that we cannot speak or think apart from number. . . .”

⁴⁰ Cf. Jacob Klein, *Greek Mathematical Thought and the Origin of Algebra*, trans. Eva Brann (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1968), 46. “The fundamental phenomenon which we should never lose sight of in determining the meaning of *arithmos* (ἀριθμός) is counting, or more exactly, the *counting-off*, of some number of things. These things, however different they may be, are taken as uniform when counted; they are, for example, either *apples*, or apples and pears which are counted as *fruit*, or apples, pears, and plates which are counted as “*objects*.” *Insofar* as these things underlie the counting process they are understood as *of the same kind*. That word which is pronounced last in counting off or numbering, gives the “*counting-number*,” the *arithmos* of the things involved. . . . Thus the *arithmos* indicates in each case *a definite number of definite things*.”

not” apparently cannot be applied to any sort of object.⁴¹ Furthermore, since any attribute that is cannot be correctly attributed to what is not, number cannot be correctly attributed to what is not. Thus, the stranger says, “let us in no way attempt to attribute either plurality or unity of number to what is not” (238b2-3). Yet, if we cannot correctly attribute number to what is not, then we can neither refer to it in language nor grasp it in thought,⁴² since whenever we say “what is not” or “what are not” we try to attribute unity or plurality of number to their supposed referent(s) (238b6-c4). Thus, concludes the stranger, “it is possible neither correctly to utter nor to speak nor to think what is not, it by itself;⁴³ but it is unthinkable, inexpressible, unutterable, and unsayable” (238c8-11). As the stranger will point out in A3, this conclusion enacts a performative contradiction.

C. A3—How A2 Performatively Contradicts Itself (238d1-239a12)

Immediately after getting Theaetetus’ agreement that what is not “is unthinkable, inexpressible, unutterable, and unsayable,” the stranger begins to point out that A2 enacts a number of performative contradictions. The stranger shows that the very formulation of the argument of A2 is self-refuting, since in order to assert a number of A2’s claims, including its conclusion, one must do that which A2 maintains is impossible: meaningfully say that what is not is and attribute number to it.⁴⁴ First, the stranger makes the general point that A2, by “positing that what is not could participate in neither unity nor plurality,” spoke of what is not as a one (238d10-e3). A2 spoke of what is not as one

⁴¹ The question which neither Theaetetus nor the stranger raise at this juncture is whether “what is not” could be applied to a “sort” or “kind” itself, rather than to an object of a certain sort or kind. Although I think that the stranger’s final solution to the problem of non-being will in a way affirm that “what is not” applies to a sort or kind itself, at this point it is not clear how such an affirmation would solve the problem, since we must refer to sorts or kinds themselves as countable objects.

⁴² Cf. Bluck, *Plato’s Sophist*, 63. “‘What is not’ is not even a thing, and therefore is quite inconceivable.”

⁴³ There is some dispute about what “what is not, it by itself” (τὸ μὴ ὄν αὐτὸ καθ’ αὐτό) means here. Does it mean the form non-being, the concept of non-being (Moravcsik, “Being and Meaning in the *Sophist*,” 26), what is not considered without any properties added (Bluck, *Plato’s Sophist*, 63), or what is not considered only in terms of itself and not in terms of relations that it may bear toward others? I prefer the latter two options. I think that the first option is implausible since “Platonic forms” are not introduced until the discussion of the friends of the forms (248a4-251a4). Likewise, the second option is unlikely because the distinction between concept and referent that Moravcsik relies on is never thematized in the *Sophist*.

⁴⁴ Cf. Notomi, *The Unity of Plato’s Sophist*, 175-176. Notomi identifies two kinds of contradiction involved in the performative contradiction here. He writes, “When I *said* in the conclusion of the second stage [the conclusion of A2] that what is not *is* unutterable, unspeakable, and unthinkable, I have attached ‘is’ to the subject ‘what is not’ and treated it as one thing; contradicting myself because I earlier said that we should not attach ‘what is’ to ‘what is not.’ Moreover, in the same conclusion I have already *spoken* of what is not, and therefore, that conclusion itself is pragmatically self-contradicting.”

by referring to what is not with the singular “what is not,” as opposed to the plural “what are not.” Second, the stranger explains how the conclusion of A2 in 238c8-11—that what is not “is unthinkable, inexpressible, unutterable, and unsayable”—enacted a number of performative contradictions. First, by using the word “is,”⁴⁵ the conclusion of A2 contradicts its premise—stated at 238a8-10 and then again at c5-6—that being cannot be attributed to what is not (238e8-239a1). Second, by using the singular “is” (ἐστίν) instead of the plural “are” (εἰσίν), the conclusion of A2 addressed what is not “as a one (ὡς ἐνί),” and thereby attributed unity to it (239a3).⁴⁶ Third, by using the singular adjectives⁴⁷ “unthinkable” (ἀδιανόητόν), “inexpressible” (ἄρητον), “unutterable” (ἄφθεγκτον), and “unsayable” (ἄλογον), the conclusion of A2 was made “as if in reference to a one (ὡς γε πρὸς ἓν)” (239a5-6). Finally, the conclusion of A2 referred to what is not with the word “it” (αὐτό) at 238c9.⁴⁸ Yet, if it is incorrect to attribute one or many to what is not, then what is not should not even be called “‘it’ at all (τὸ παράπαν αὐτό),” since whoever calls what is not “it,” addresses what is not “by means of the form of one (ἐνὸς γὰρ εἶδει καὶ κατὰ ταύτην ἂν τὴν πρόσρησιν προσαγορεύοιτο)” (239a8-11).

The *Reductio* as a whole, then, can be formulated as follows:

- (A) Assume that “to be” is simply to be an individual thing. That is, identify what is with an individual thing or with some number of individual things.
- (B) Assume that “what is not” has a referent.

A2:

- (1) Some other thing that is can be attributed to what is (238a5-6).

⁴⁵ The stranger uses the third-person singular “ἐστίν” at 238c10 and then uses the infinitive “εἶναι” in indirect discourse at 238e6, referring to his claim at 238c10-11.

⁴⁶ There is some controversy about the Greek of 239a3, concerning whether to emend the “τοῦτο” found in the manuscripts to “τὸ τό.” The emendation was suggested by Cornford (and others have followed him) on the grounds that “τοῦτο” must refer to the “εἶναι” at 238e6, and “εἶναι” does not imply the attribution of “one” (Cornford, *Plato’s Theory of Knowledge*, 207; Duke et al., *Platonis Opera*, 421; White, *Sophist*, 259). I reject the emendation and retain the “τοῦτο,” taking it to allude, via the “εἶναι” in indirect discourse at 238e6, back to the singular “ἐστίν” at 238c10 (Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 45; cf. Campbell, *Sophistes and Politicus*, 89; Burnet, *Platonis Opera*; Fowler, *Plato VII*, 344; Diès, *Platon: Oeuvres complètes*). Frede suggests that the “τοῦτο” should be emended to “τὸ αὐτό” (Michael Frede, “Bemerkungen zum Text der Aporienpassage in Platons *Sophistes*,” *Phronesis* 7, no. 2 [1962]: 132-133). But at 239a9-10 the stranger addresses the use of “αὐτό” in 238c9 and 238e6, and there is no need for him to address it twice.

⁴⁷ In Greek, unlike English, adjectives are singular, dual, or plural.

⁴⁸ The stranger also uses “αὐτό” to refer to what is not at 238d2, d6, e2, e6, and 239a9.

- (2) Given (A), something that is cannot be attributed to what is not (238a8-9, c5-6).⁴⁹
- (3) Number is among the things that are (238a11).
- (4) Thus we cannot attribute unity or plurality of number to what is not (238b2-3).
- (5) Yet when we say “what is not” or “what are not” we are attempting to attribute unity or plurality of number to what is/are not (238b10-c3).
- (6) Therefore, it is not possible correctly to utter “what is not,” nor to speak nor to think about what is not, it by itself; but what is not is unthinkable, inexpressible, unutterable, and unsayable (238c8-11).

A3:

(C) But A2 enacts a performative contradiction by:

- (a) Using the singular “what is not,” instead of the plural “what are not,” to refer to what is not, thereby attributing unity to what is not, even though such attribution is prohibited by (4) (238d10-e3).
- (b) Using the word “is” of what is not in (6) (“what is not *is* unthinkable . . .”), thereby attributing being to what is not, even though such attribution is prohibited by (2) (238e8-239a1).
- (c) Using the singular “is” of what is not in (6) instead of the plural “are,” thereby attributing unity to what is not, even though such attribution is prohibited by (4) (239a3).
- (d) Using the singular adjectives “unthinkable” (ἀδιανόητόν), “inexpressible” (ἄρρητον), “unutterable” (ἄφθεγκτον), and “unsayable” (ἄλογον), thereby attributing unity to what is not, even though such attribution is prohibited by (4) (239a5-6).
- (e) Using the word “it” (αὐτό) to refer to what is not, thereby attributing unity to what is not, even though such attribution is prohibited by (4) (239a8-11).

(D) Therefore, one or both of assumptions (A) and (B) must be false.

The conclusion of the *Reductio*, therefore, leaves the critical reader with the unanswered question of whether (A) or (B), or both (A) and (B), are false. I will argue that the stranger addresses this question in 239b1-241c6, the fourth and final portion of the Orienting Argument.

⁴⁹ A2 presupposes assumption (B) whenever it uses the expression “what is not.” Hence, lines (2), (4), (5), and (6) presuppose (B). A3 also presupposes (B) for the same reason.

D. A4—"What is not" can be Meaningfully Said (239b1-241c6)

The problematic conclusions of A1, A2, and A3 were generated by Theaetetus' assumption (A) that "to be" is simply to be an individual thing. Theaetetus, however, still seems unaware that this assumption is operative in his thought. The stranger, therefore, withdraws as the leader of the inquiry for a moment and asks Theaetetus to attempt to say something true about what is not (239b3-10). By shifting the attention to Theaetetus' own views about being and non-being, the stranger allows Theaetetus to directly engage the assumptions that guide his own thinking, apart from the stranger's suggestions. Theaetetus initially does not want to offer his own solution. The stranger, however, convinces him to make the attempt, lest the definition of the sophist escape them (239b7-c7).

A4 consists of a two-part argument. In each part, the stranger begins by recalling the definition of the sophist as an appearance-maker, a maker of deceptive images. He then presents Theaetetus with arguments that the sophist would make in order to avoid being defined in this way. Each of the two parts ends with Theaetetus forced to concede that what is not is in some way (240c6, 241b1-2). In the first part of A4 (239c9-240c7), the stranger begins with their definition of the sophist as an appearance- and image-maker. He asks Theaetetus to define what an image is. Theaetetus attempts two definitions. The first is unsuccessful and the second can only succeed by attributing being to what is not. In the second part of A4 (240c8-241b3), the stranger takes the lead in the argument again. He begins with their definition of the sophist as an appearance-maker and expert in deception and then offers a definition of both false opinion and false statements. Both definitions attribute being to what is not. The stranger then shows how the sophist will reject these definitions on the basis of A1. Hence, A4 strongly suggests that in order to defeat and successfully define the sophist, the conclusion of A1—that assumption (B) is false—will have to be rejected. Since the stranger and Theaetetus are attempting to define the sophist, they will have to proceed as if assumption (B) were true. Yet given that the *Reductio* shows that one or both of assumptions (A) and (B) must be false, by implication they will also have to proceed as if (A) is false.

The first part of A4 begins with the stranger telling Theaetetus that if they want to call the sophist an “image-maker” (ειδωλοποιόν), the sophist will ask them what they mean by the term “image” (εἶδωλον) (239c9-d6). Theaetetus attempts to answer this question by saying:

It is clear that we will say “the images in water and in mirrors, and still more, painted ones, sculpted ones, and all the others, as many different ones of these, I suppose, that there are.”

δῆλον ὅτι φήσομεν τά τε ἐν τοῖς ὕδασι καὶ κατόπτροις εἶδωλα, ἔτι καὶ τὰ γεγραμμένα καὶ τὰ τετυπωμένα καὶ τᾶλλα ὅσα που τοιαῦτ' ἔσθ' ἕτερα.
(239d7-9)

The stranger claims, however, that the sophist will not accept this sort of answer. “He’ll seem to you to have his eyes shut,” says the stranger, “or not to have any [eyes] at all . . . but he’ll ask you only about what comes from your words (ἐκ τῶν λόγων)” (239e3, 240a2). Not only will the sophist stubbornly refuse to accept such imagistic explanations of what an image is, but such explanations are philosophically unsatisfying. When describing the Divided Line in *Republic* VI, Socrates claims that dialectic, once having reached “the unhypothetical first principle (ἀρχήν) of everything . . . , reverses itself and . . . comes down to a conclusion without making use of anything visible whatsoever (αἰσθητῶ μαντάπασιν οὐδενὶ προσχρώμενος), but of forms themselves, moving through forms, into forms, and ending in forms” (511b3-c2). Thus, Theaetetus’ attempt to define an image in terms of visible examples, such as images in water or paintings, is inadequate according to the ideal of the philosophy outlined in the *Republic*. Moreover, it is inadequate within the context of the *Sophist*, not only because the sophist would not accept such an answer, but because images are precisely the things for which Theaetetus is being asked to give an account. To define what an image is by simply pointing to other things that one thinks are images is to give no definition at all. Instead of saying what an image is, Theaetetus has given many instances of an image, just as he had given many instances of knowledge in his first attempt to define it in the *Theaetetus* (146c7-d3).⁵⁰

Hence, the sophist can legitimately challenge Theaetetus’ account of an image, by asking, as the stranger says, “What runs through all of these [images] which you call

⁵⁰ Cf. W. G. Runciman, *Plato’s Later Epistemology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), 67; A. Chadwick Ray, *For Images: An Interpretation of Plato’s Sophist* (Lanham, MD: University of America Press, 1984), 17-18; Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 48.

many, but which you thought worthy to address by one name, uttering ‘image’ for them all as if they were one thing” (240a4-6). Images in mirrors, water, paintings, and so on are each different things, as Theaetetus in fact indicated in his attempted definition (239d9; καὶ τὰλλα ὅσα που τοιαῦτ’ ἔσθ’ ἕτερα). Not only are there different sorts of images, but each individual image is numerically distinct from all others. What justifies someone in classifying these many numerically distinct and sortally different individual things as images? It seems that in order to attribute one property, such as being an image, to many individual things, there must be some one individual character running through all those many things which would justify the attribution. That one individual character or common property running through all the many things, however, cannot itself be an individual in the same sense that the individual things that bear it are individuals. The individuals characterized as images are, at least in principle, whereas the character “image” is even in principle only one. Theaetetus’ assumption that “to be” is simply to be an individual is getting in the way here.

In his second attempt to define an image, Theaetetus defines it as “another thing of the same sort made similar to the true one” (240a8; τὸ πρὸς τἀληθινὸν ἀφωμοιωμένον ἕτερον τοιοῦτον).⁵¹ The stranger asks him to clarify the “sort.” An image, after all, exhibits a number of sortal qualities. Consider an example that Socrates uses in *Republic* X, a painting of a bed (595c7-598c5). The painting is of the sort “spatio-temporal object” and “countable object;”⁵² then in a different way of the sort “painting” and “image.” A painting of a bed, however, is not a sort of bed, for the same reason that an image of Cratylus is not another Cratylus (*Crat.*, 432b4-c5). Although there are a number of relevant sortal qualities in play, the stranger focuses on the quality truth. He asks Theaetetus, “By ‘another thing of the same sort’ do you mean ‘of the sort true’? Or what do you mean by ‘sort’?” (240a9-b1; ἕτερον δὲ λέγεις τοιοῦτον ἀληθινόν, ἢ ἐπὶ τίνι τό τοιοῦτον εἶπες;). Theaetetus answers the stranger’s question concerning what “sort” he has in mind by claiming that an image is not of the sort “true,” but rather of the sort “like” (ἐοικός) (240b2). The problem is that an image is of the sort “true” in a number of

⁵¹ Cf. Plato, *Rep.*, X.597a4-5.

⁵² By “spatio-temporal object” I mean an object subject to the conditions of space and time, that is, distended through space and time. By “countable object,” in contrast, I mean an object that is numerically self-identical and numerically different from other countable objects.

ways. For instance, it is truly a countable object, truly an image, and so on. Yet an image is “not-true” in other senses. For example, it is not truly a bed, since it is not a sort of bed.

The stranger’s next move is the fatal one. He asks Theaetetus whether by “true” he means “what really is” (240b3; τὸ ἀληθινὸν ὄντως ὃν λέγων;). Theaetetus answers affirmatively. Hence, Theaetetus’ assertion that an image is a likeness and is not of the sort “true” amounts to the assertion that an image or likeness is not of the sort “what really is.” Thus the stranger concludes, “You therefore say that what is like really is not, if in fact you call it ‘not true’” (240b7-8; οὐκ ὄντως ὃν ἄρα λέγεις τὸ εἰκός, εἴπερ αὐτὸ γε μὴ ἀληθινὸν ἐρεῖς). Theaetetus responds by insisting that a likeness nevertheless “is in some way” (240b9; ἀλλ’ ἔστι γε μὴν πως), even if “not truly” (240b10; οὐκ οὖν ἀληθῶς). He asserts that a likeness is “really a likeness” (240b11; εἰκὼν ὄντως). The stranger points out, however, that if everything they have just been affirming is true, then “what we call a likeness, while not really being, really is” (240b12-c1; οὐκ ὃν ἄρα ὄντως, ἔστιν ὄντως ἢν λέγομεν εἰκόνα). Theaetetus thus concludes that “what is not risks being entwined in some such interweaving with what is, and a very strange (μάλα ἄτοπον) one too” (240c2-3).

While he is far from having a clear understanding of what non-being is, Theaetetus makes a significant step forward in this passage by acknowledging that what is not intertwines in some way with what is. He is starting to understand that “to be” cannot simply mean to be an individual. If “to be” simply meant to be an individual thing, then, as A1 and A2 demonstrate, what is could never intertwine with what is not, since what is not would be unsayable and unintelligible. In A1, the stranger introduced the supposition that “what is not” could not refer to what is (237c7-8). At that point, Theaetetus readily accepted this supposition, asking “how could it?” (237c9; πῶς γὰρ ἔν;). Similarly, in A2, the stranger supposed that anything that is could not be attributed to what is not (238a5-6, c5-6). Again, Theaetetus readily accepted the supposition. If what is and what is not intertwine in some way, however, then one or both of those suppositions must be false, just as the notion of being that underlies them must be false. By admitting that being and non-being intertwine, Theaetetus has begun to call

assumption (A)—the assumption that “to be” is simply to be an individual—into question.

Although Theaetetus has made some progress, he does not yet have an understanding of the nature of being sufficient to define the sophist. Thus, the stranger quickly points out that the sophist will not agree that what is not is in some way. On that basis, the sophist will resist their attempt to define him as an image-maker. In the second part of A4, therefore, the stranger takes the lead again and shifts Theaetetus’ focus to the deceptive character of the images that the sophist creates in *logos*. If the sophist deceives by means of the appearances (φάντασμα) which he creates, asks the stranger, then does not his art induce the soul to opine false things (240d1-4)? Theaetetus says that it must. The stranger then asks a number of questions about false opinion (ψεθδῆς δόξα), which result again in Theaetetus being forced to concede that what is not is in some way. False opinion, Theaetetus agrees, opines the opposite of the things that are (τάναντία τοῖς οὐσι) (240d6-8). Thus, “false opinion opines things that are not” (240d9-10). “Does it opine that the things that are not, are not,” asks the stranger, “or that things that in no way are, somehow are?” (240e1-2; πότερον μὴ εἶναι τὰ μὴ ὄντα δοξάζοθσαν, ἢ πως εἶναι τὰ μηδαμῶς ὄντα;). Since the former alternative describes true opinion, Theaetetus chooses the latter, although he rewords it, saying “it’s necessary at least that the things that are not somehow are” (240e3; εἶναι πως τὰ μὴ ὄντα δεῖ γε), so as to soften the contradiction between “μηδαμῶς” (in no way) and “πως” (in some way) in the stranger’s formulation. The stranger then proposes the other way in which someone can opine falsely. One can opine falsely not only by opining that things which in no way are somehow are, but also by opining “that things that in every way are, in no way are” (240e5; μηδαμῶς εἶναι τὰ πάντως ὄντα). Again, the stranger uses “μηδαμῶς” and “πάντως” so as to characterize being and non-being as opposites, as Theaetetus had agreed at 240d8. In doing this, the stranger is testing Theaetetus so as to see whether Theaetetus is still thinking of being in terms of individuals, since such thinking is what would lead one to suppose that being and non-being are opposites. While Theaetetus gestures toward the non-opposition being and non-being with his attempt at 240e3 to soften the stranger’s strong contrast between the two, he does not recognize it explicitly, and so after the stranger asks whether false opinion “also opines that things that in every way are, in no way are” (240e5-6),

Theaetetus simply answers “yes” (240e7). The stranger then moves from false opinion to false statement (λόγος). “I suppose a statement,” he says, “will be considered false in the same way: when it says things that are, are not, and that things that are not, are” (240e10-241a1; καὶ λόγος οἶμαι ψευδῆς οὕτω κατὰ ταῦτα νομισθήσεται τὰ τε ὄντα λέγων μὴ εἶναι καὶ τὰ μὴ ὄντα εἶναι). Thus the second part of A4, like the first, concludes that being and non-being intertwine in some way. For if the stranger has characterized false opinions and beliefs correctly, “is” can be truly said of what is not and “is not” can be truly said of what is.⁵³

The stranger, however, points out that the sophist will not grant that in some way non-being is or that in some way being is not. And he asks how “any reasonable man” would grant it, given the conclusions of their earlier discussion, especially the conclusion of A1—that the term “what is not” has no referent (241a3-6).⁵⁴ With this the stranger prompts Theaetetus to identify the false assumption that guided their earlier discussions. Furthermore, Plato prompts his critical readers to recognize what their guiding expectations about non-being ought to be as the inquiry moves forward. These expectations become clear if one considers the Orienting Argument (237b7-241c6) as a whole, which we are now in the position to do:

(A) Assume that “to be” is simply to be an individual thing. That is, identify what is with an individual thing or with some number of individual things.

(B) Assume that “what is not” has a referent.

⁵³ Some commentators want to interpret the two arguments in A4 in such a way that what is at issue is whether or not images or falsehoods “really exist” (see for example, Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 50-51, 64-70). By doing so, however, they cannot account for the way that A4 fits into the wider argument of 237b7-241c6. As I interpret A4, it indicates which of the two assumptions upon which A2 and A3 are based is false. A4 would be unable to do this if the sense of “εἶναι” in the argument were simply “to exist.” My understanding of “εἶναι” in this passage agrees with that of Malcolm and Brown (see John Malcolm, “Plato’s Analysis of τὸ ὄν and τὸ μὴ ὄν in the *Sophist*,” *Phronesis* 12, no. 2 (1967): 137; Brown, “Being in the *Sophist*,” 468).

⁵⁴ The text of 241a3-6 in the main manuscripts is problematic, with the result that modern editors emend it in various ways. Given that my reading of 237b7-241c6 (the Orienting Argument) makes the primary target of the arguments in A4 the conclusion of A1, I prefer, with Madvig, Schanz, Apelt, Burnet, and Robinson, to delete “ἄφθεγκτα καὶ ἄρρητα καὶ ἄλογα καὶ ἀδιανόητα” (see Johan Nicolai Madvig, *Adversaria critica ad scriptores graecos et latinos*, vol. 1 [Copenhagen: Sumptibus librariae Gyldendalanae, 1871], 381-382; Martin Schanz, ed., *Platonis Sophista* [Leipzig: Tauchnitz, 1887]; Otto Apelt, ed., *Platonis Sophista* [Leipzig: B.G. Teubneri, 1897], 126-127; Burnet, *Platonis Opera*; Duke et al., *Platonis Opera*, 424). For a discussion of the various emendations that have been suggested, see Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 52-59.

A1:

- (1) Given (A), the term “what is not” cannot refer to something that is (237c7-9), just as the term “apple” cannot refer to an orange.
- (2) The term “something” always refers to what is (237d1-4).
- (3) Someone who says “something” necessarily refers to some one thing (237d6-7), since the singular “something” signifies one, the dual “some” signifies two, and the plural “some” signifies many (237d9-10).
- (4) Given (1)-(3), “what is not” cannot refer to something (237c10-11).
- (5) Given (1)-(4), “what is not,” “not something,” and “nothing” (literally “not-one-thing”) have the same extension.
- (6) Given (1)-(5), whoever says “not something” refers to absolutely nothing (237e1-2).
- (7) But, since to what “nothing” refers is precisely what is at stake in this argument, we must restate (6) without using “nothing”: whoever says “not something,” “what is not,” or “nothing” does not even refer, and so does not meaningfully speak (237e4-6).
- (8) Therefore, (B) is false.

A2:

- (1) Some other thing that is can be attributed to what is (238a5-6).
- (2) Given (A), something that is cannot be attributed to what is not (238a8-9, c5-6).
- (3) Number is among the things that are (238a11).
- (4) Thus we cannot attribute unity or plurality of number to what is not (238b2-3).
- (5) Yet when we say “what is not” or “what are not” we are attempting to attribute unity or plurality of number to what is/are not (238b10-c3).
- (6) Therefore, it is not possible correctly to utter “what is not,” nor to speak nor to think about what is not, it by itself; but what is not is unthinkable, inexpressible, unutterable, and unsayable (238c8-11).

A3:

- (C) But A2 enacts a performative contradiction by:
- (a) Using the singular “what is not,” instead of the plural “what are not,” to refer to what is not, thereby attributing unity to what is not, even though such attribution is prohibited by (4) (238d10-e3).

- (b) Using the word “is” of what is not in (6) (“what is not *is* unthinkable . . .”), thereby attributing what is to what is not, even though such attribution is prohibited by (2) (238e8-239a1).
 - (c) Using the singular “is” of what is not in (6) instead of the plural “are,” thereby attributing unity to what is not, even though such attribution is prohibited by (4) (239a3).
 - (d) Using the singular adjectives⁵⁵ “unthinkable” (ἀδιανόητόν), “inexpressible” (ἄρρητον), “unutterable” (ἄφθεγκτον), and “unsayable” (ἄλογον), thereby attributing unity to what is not, even though such attribution is prohibited by (4) (239a5-6).
 - (e) Using the word “it” (αὐτό) to refer to what is not, thereby attributing unity to what is not, even though such attribution is prohibited by (4) (239a8-11).
- (D) Therefore, one or both of assumptions (A) and (B) must be false.
- (E) But we want to say against the sophist that images really are not their originals, and are in that sense among the things which are not (240b9-12).
- (F) Furthermore, we want to say against the sophist that false belief believes that things which are not are or things which are are not (240e1-9).
- (G) Likewise, we want to say against the sophist that false statements say that things which are not are or things which are are not (240e10-241a2).
- (H) Therefore, if at all possible, we should attempt to show that (B) is true and (A) is false.

With this argument, the stranger indicates to Theaetetus and to those listening what the guiding assumptions of the ensuing inquiry into the nature of non-being will be. As the inquiry moves forward, Theaetetus must assume that (A) is false and (B) is true; and the stranger must demonstrate that (A) is false and (B) is true. Furthermore, Plato indicates what his critical readers can expect to see in the *Sophist* account of non-being.⁵⁶ They can expect an account that shows that (A) is false and (B) is true.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ In Greek, unlike English, adjectives are singular, dual, or plural.

⁵⁶ Cf. Bluck, *Plato's Sophist*, 67; Rosen, *Plato's Sophist*, 202.

⁵⁷ Cf. Notomi, *The Unity of Plato's Sophist*, 183. Although Notomi does not always understand the arguments in 237b7-241c6 in the way that I do, he does recognize that one of the problematic assumptions underlying those arguments is an assumption that equates “‘what is’ with ‘thing’ (*ti*) and ‘what is not’ with ‘nothing’ (*ouden*).”

§4. A Digression on Method (241c7-243c9)

After concluding the Orienting Argument, the stranger undertakes a brief digression on methodology, centering on the notions of agreement and refutation. The stranger claims that as long as he and Theaetetus do not agree with or refute the various opinions and hypotheses which they have been considering about being and non-being, they will be unable to avoid self-contradiction in talking about falsehood, likenesses, images, and appearances (241e1-6).

Given that at the end of A4 the sophist seems to have escaped the attempts of the stranger and Theaetetus to define him yet again, with A4 concluded, the stranger claims that “the hour has come . . . to take counsel on what must be done about the sophist” (241b4-5). According to the stranger, he and Theaetetus have only considered a small number of the objections the sophist could raise against them, since those objections “are, so to speak, unlimited” (241b10-c1; μικρὸν μέρος τοίνυν αὐτῶν διεληλύθαμεν, οὐσῶν ὡς ἔπος εἰπεῖν ἀπεράντων). Theaetetus points out that if the number of objections were truly unlimited, it would be impossible to catch the sophist (241c2-3). The stranger, however, says that they should not be so soft as to give up now (241c4). He then proposes a way forward.

First, the way forward will also involve a change in tactic. The objections that the sophist can bring against Theaetetus will be unlimited so long as Theaetetus attempts to ward them off with mere hypotheses, rather than on the basis of genuine insight (cf. 243a7-b7). Theaetetus has shown himself open to the hypothesis that being and non-being may somehow intertwine, and hence he is open to a sense of “to be” that is not reducible to being an individual thing. Yet he lacks a genuine insight into what that sense of being is. If Theaetetus is ever to convict the sophist, however, he will have to do more than simply hypothesize that in some way what is not is and what is is not. He must move beyond simply believing things because they seem obvious to him. Instead, he must test what is obvious—his apparent insights—in *logos*.⁵⁸ Theaetetus must learn to articulate a *logos* which reveals that his apparent insights are consistent and do not contradict themselves.

⁵⁸ Cf. Plato, *Tht.*, 206d1-4; Miller, “Unity and ‘Logos,’” 96.

Second, the stranger claims that the way forward will involve subjecting the dictum of Parmenides⁵⁹ to further scrutiny in an attempt to demonstrate that in some way what is not is and what is is not (241d5-7). Earlier, in A1 and A2, the stranger and Theaetetus had taken Parmenides' statement that one should never let the thought prevail "that things which are not are" to mean that one should not say various things about non-being or hold certain opinions about non-being. In A1, for instance, the stranger posed the issue in terms of whether or not they should say that the term "what is not" has a referent. A1 purportedly showed that in fact "what is not" does not have a referent, and hence cannot be used in meaningful discourse. This conclusion, however, aside from being problematic, is actually at odds with Parmenides' injunction. If one could not even meaningfully say "what is not," Parmenides would not have needed to admonish his followers to keep their "thought shut off from this path" (237a9). The conclusion of A3, on the other hand—that using the term "what is not" entails a performative contradiction—seems more compatible with Parmenides' injunction. Yet Parmenides' injunction actually says nothing about using the term "what is not," but rather concerns thinking about what is not in a certain way. Consequently, neither A1 nor A2-3 actually dealt with Parmenides' paternal *logos*, much less put it to the test. The stranger, therefore, is in no way being redundant when in 241d5-7 he suggests that they take up the argument of Parmenides again so as to put it to the test.

The stranger specifies the form this test will take. Rather than simply accepting that what Parmenides said is true, they will call it into question and attempt to refute (*ἐλέγχειν*) it (242a7-b5). Although the stranger is not confident that they will be able to refute it (242b2), he does seem confident that as a result of the attempt, they will no longer simply accept Parmenides' statements as mere hypotheses or opinions. Rather, Parmenides' dictum will be either agreed to or refuted (cf. 241e1-6). The stranger then begins to specify the kind of agreement to which he thinks they must come. The stranger claims that he and Theaetetus must "examine what now seems evident (*τὰ δοκοῦντα νῦν ἐναργῶς ἔχειν ἐπισκέψασθαι*), lest we should be in confusion (*μὴ πη τεταραγμένοι μὲν ὄμεν*) about these things and so easily agree with one another as if our judgment were good (*ὡς εὐκρινῶς ἔχοντες*)" (242b10-c2). The easy agreement due to confusion is the

⁵⁹ See notes 10 and 11 above.

kind of agreement upon which the conclusions of A1, A2, and A3 were based. The assumption that “to be” is simply to be an individual seemed evident to Theaetetus during A1 and A2, but A4 showed that we should consider it to be false. The assumption resulted in a confusion on Theaetetus’ part as to how to understand basic notions such as “something,” “counting,” “attribution,” “what is,” and “what is not.” The stranger, therefore, proposes to inquire into the nature of being, starting with a consideration of how various thinkers have defined it. So far Theaetetus and the stranger have merely been considering common sense opinions and assumptions about being and non-being so as to see what follows from them. Now, however, the stranger suggests that they “pull back a bit from the mighty argument” (241c8-9) and again attempt to critically examine the accounts of Parmenides and of others who have made claims about “how many” (πόσα) and “what sort” (ποῖα) of beings there are (242b10-c6).

Putting the doctrines of these thinkers to the test will first and foremost involve making sure that one understands and is able to follow the claims they make about being. After introducing the various ontological theories of previous philosophers in 242c8-243a5, the stranger offers the following criticism. He complains that “they overlooked and paid too little attention to us ordinary people” (243a7-8). “For,” the stranger continues, “without caring whether we follow them or are left behind when they speak, each of them goes on to reach his own conclusion” (243a8-b1). The result is that we “ordinary people” fail to understand what they mean and fail to achieve the insight that they wish to communicate (243b3-10). As the digression continues, it becomes clear that understanding the claims of these past philosophers does not necessarily involve offering the most charitable interpretation of their claims. Rather, it consists in following every step of their arguments, and subjecting the words they say to critical scrutiny, examining those thinkers “as if they were here present” (243d7-8; οἷον αὐτῶν παρόντων ἀναπυθνομένων ὧδε). The stranger’s hope is that by means of this method Theaetetus will come to a genuine understanding of the stories (μῦθοι) (242c8-d3) and hypotheses (243b3-7) of these “famous and ancient men” (243a3-4) concerning being.

§5. *The Dualists and Monists (243c10-245e8)*

The stranger has suggested that they examine the doctrines of those who have made claims about “how many” (πόσα) and “what sort” (ποιῶ) of beings there are (242c4-6).⁶⁰ He begins with those who were especially concerned with the question of “how many”: the dualists and the monists. The stranger’s arguments against the dualists and monists will further critique the assumption that “to be” is simply to be an individual thing.⁶¹ If “to be” is simply to be an individual thing, then what is must be either one thing or a definite number of things, since individuals are countable. The argument against the dualists, however, will show that given the assumption that “to be” is simply to be an individual, what is cannot be a definite number of things greater than one. The argument against the monists, in turn, will show that given the assumption that “to be” is simply to be an individual, what is cannot be one thing. Consequently, both together demonstrate that the assumption that “to be” is simply to be an individual thing is false.

A. The Argument Against the Dualists (243d8-244b5)

The stranger examines the position of the dualists:

Stranger: . . . Come then, all of you who say that all things are hot and cold or some such two—what are you uttering that applies to both, when you say both and each are?⁶² How are we to take this “to be” of yours? Is it a third besides those two, and should we posit that, according to you, the totality is three and no longer two? For surely when you call the one or the other of the pair being, you’re not saying that both are in the same way. For in both ways, there would surely be one, but there would not be two.⁶³

⁶⁰ The stranger proceeds by cross-questioning the proponents of the various ontological theories he considers. This use of the method of cross-questioning suggests that the stranger wants to accomplish more in his analysis of each school of thought than a simple refutation. Throughout his discussion of these various schools of thought, the stranger’s primary goal is to lead Theaetetus toward insight into the nature of being. He does this by, as Lesley Brown puts it, “probing the rationale which each party has for its exclusive ontology” (Brown, “Innovation and Continuity,” 205). This will be important to keep in mind as we consider and interpret the often elliptical arguments that the stranger presents in what follows.

⁶¹ Cf. Dana Miller, “Fast and Loose about Being: Criticism of Competing Ontologies in Plato’s *Sophist*,” *Ancient Philosophy* 24, no. 2 (2004): 341, 344, 361.

⁶² For a discussion of why the stranger says “both and each” here see Sallis, *Being and Logos*, 490; cf. Plato, *Hi.Ma.*, 300a1-302b3; Klein, *Greek Mathematical Thought*, 79ff.

⁶³ Unlike Fowler, Benardete, White, Brann et al., and Crivelli, I do not take the dual “εἶτην” to be predicative with “τὸ δύο” from the previous sentence as the supplied subject (Fowler, *Plato VII*, 363; Benardete, *Plato’s Sophist*, 36; White, *Sophist*, 265; Brann et al., *Plato: Sophist*, 49; Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 73). Rather, I follow Cornford and Taylor in translating “εἶτην” as “there would . . . be” (Cornford, *Plato’s Theory of Knowledge*, 219; Taylor, *The Sophist and the Statesman*, 138). Crivelli

Theaetetus: True.

Stranger: Do you then want to call both being?

Theaetetus: Perhaps.

Stranger: But, we will say, if you did that, friends, you would also very clearly say that the two things are one.

Theaetetus: Most correct.

ΞΕ. . . . Φέρε, ὅποσοι θερμὸν καὶ ψυχρὸν ἢ τινε δύο τοιούτω τὰ πάντ' εἶναι φατε, τί ποτε ἄρα τοῦτ' ἐπ' ἀμφοῖν φθέγγεσθε, λέγοντες ἄμφω καὶ ἐκάτερον εἶναι; τί τὸ 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 ὄν ἀμφοτέρα ὁμοίως εἶναι λέγετε · σχεδὸν γὰρ ἂν ἀμφοτέρως ἓν, ἀλλ' οὐ δύο εἶτην.

ΘΕΑΙ. Ἀληθῆ λέγεις.

ΞΕ. Ἄλλ', ὧ φίλοι, φήσομεν, κἂν οὕτω τὰ δύο λέγοιτ' ἂν σαφέστατα ἓν.

ΘΕΑΙ. Ὅρθότατα εἶρηκας. (243d8-244a3)

The dualists hold that the totality of what is consists of two entities—“hot and cold or some such two.” What is, according to the dualists, can ultimately be reduced to these two individual things.⁶⁴ The dualists apparently share Theaetetus’ implicit assumption that “to be” is simply to be an individual or a set of individuals.⁶⁵ The stranger, however, sets up a three-horn dilemma for the dualists. In saying that the two principles are, the dualists must mean that:

(1) Being is a third thing in addition to the two.

OR

(2) Being is one of the pair: being is the hot or being is the cold.

OR

(3) Being is both the hot and the cold together.

prefers the predicative interpretation because it matches the stranger’s statement at 244a1-2 (“if you did that, friends, you would also very clearly say that the two things are one”) by explaining the “also” from “κἂν” and having “τὰ δύο” as the subject. I prefer Cornford and Taylor’s interpretation because of the way that I think the stranger’s argument against the dualists ought to be understood. I take the “also” in 244a1 to indicate that, just as in 239e4-6, what is would turn out to be one, instead of the two that the dualist originally posited.

⁶⁴ Cf. Miller, “Fast and Loose about Being,” 341.

⁶⁵ Cf. Seligman, *Being and Not-Being*, 23-24; Miller, “Fast and Loose about Being,” 342. Seligman describes this assumption of the dualists as “the naturalistic assumption that being must be a specific thing, i.e., either h or c or (h + c) or another thing coordinate with h and c.”

All three alternatives imply that what is does not consist of two entities. Option (1) results in three entities and options (2) and (3) in one entity. These three alternatives are exhaustive if “to be” is reducible to being an individual. The dualists hold that there are ultimately only two individuals: hot and cold. To what, then, do the dualists apply the term “being”? They cannot apply it to a third individual (=1), different from hot and cold, or else the totality of what is could not consist of only two individuals, hot and cold. Likewise, the dualists cannot apply the term “being” to one of the pair and not the other (=2). “For,” explains the stranger, “when you call the one or the other of the pair being, you’re not saying that both are in the same way.” The basic thesis of the dualists is that the totality of being consists of the hot and the cold. When they claim that being consists of both the hot and the cold, they employ a univocal notion of “being.” If, however, they were to claim that being is the hot rather than the cold, or if alternately they were to claim that being is the cold rather than the hot, they would either be contradicting their basic thesis or would be using the term “being” in a different way than they used it in their basic thesis. They would be contradicting their basic thesis because they would be claiming that being is the hot and is not the cold, or alternately that being is the cold and is not the hot. Or they would be using the term “being” in a different way because “being” would refer to only the hot or only the cold, whereas in the basic thesis “being” referred to both the hot and the cold. This later possibility is problematic for the dualists in that it fails to address what the stranger is asking them to clarify, that is, to what the term “being” in their basic thesis referred.⁶⁶ Yet neither can they say that being is both the hot and the cold together (=3). For then the totality of what is would be one individual—being—since the two would compose one thing. In other words, if being were both the hot and the cold together, then there would be no more reason to claim that it is two than to claim that it is one, and so dualism would be false. Given the assumption that “to be” is simply to be an individual thing, dualism is incoherent.

⁶⁶ How to understand the reason why the stranger rejects alternative (2) of the dilemma is controversial. The reading I have offered here is in agreement with that of Taylor, Seligman, Sallis, and Notomi, and is for the most part compatible with those of Cornford, Bluck, and Miller (Cornford, *Plato’s Theory of Knowledge*, 220; Taylor, *The Sophist and the Statesman*, 38-39, 138; Bluck, *Plato’s Sophist*, 70-71; Seligman, *Being and Not-Being*, 23-24; Sallis, *Being and Logos*, 490; Notomi, *The Unity of Plato’s Sophist*, 215; Miller, “Fast and Loose about Being,” 341-342). For other readings see Moravcsik, “Being and Meaning in the *Sophist*,” 29; Malcolm, “Plato’s Analysis,” 132; Ray, *For Images*, 20-21; de Rijk, *Plato’s Sophist*, 94-95; Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 73-75.

It should be noted that, given the assumption that “to be” is simply to be an individual thing, the same consequence would follow for any pluralism that posited a definite number of entities. Say that the totality of being consists of 10,000 things. To what does the term “being” refer? It cannot refer to some other thing in addition to the 10,000, because then the totality of being would consist of 10,001 instead of 10,000. Nor can “being” refer to only one (or some other number less than 10,000) of the 10,000, since the totality of being would be less than 10,000. Nor can “being” refer to all the 10,000 taken together, because all 10,000 taken together would be one individual—being—since the 10,000 would compose one thing.

B. The Argument Against the Monists (244b6-245e8)

The stranger further develops his critique of the assumption that “to be” is simply to be an individual with his critique of the monists. The critique consists in a two-part *reductio*. The first part (244b6-d13) contends that if monism is true and the One is not a whole, then using the names “one” and “being” is impossible. I will call this the “semantic argument.” The second part (244d14-245e8) contends that if monism is true and “to be” is simply to be an individual, then the One is not a Whole. I will call this second part the “whole/part argument.”

B(i). The Semantic Argument (244b6-d13)

The stranger begins his discussion with the monists by having them suppose that one alone is (244b9-10; ἓν . . . μόνον εἶναι). He then asks them whether they call something “being” (244b12; ὄν καλεῖτέ τι;). Theaetetus answers that they do. “Is it the very thing you call ‘one,’” asks the stranger, “using two names for the same thing, or what?” (244c1-2; πότερον ὅπερ ἓν, ἐπὶ τῷ αὐτῷ προσχρώμενοι δυοῖν ὀνόμασιν, ἢ πῶς;). Theaetetus asks what the monists will respond to this question, and the stranger points out that it will be difficult for them to come up with a response, since “to agree that there are two names after positing that there is nothing but one is most ridiculous” (244c8-9; τό τε δύο ὀνόματα ὁμολογεῖν εἶναι μηδὲν θέμενον πλὴν ἓν καταγέλαστόν που). In fact, the stranger notes, it would not even be reasonable for the monists to assert that one name is, for that would be positing the name as other than the One, and so there would be two

things that are instead of just one (244c11-d4). By positing that there is a name of the One, the monist would become a dualist.

The stranger points out that if the monist “posits the name as the same as the thing, either he’ll be compelled to say that it is the name of nothing; or if he claims that it is the name of something, it will follow that the name is only the name of a name and of nothing else” (244d6-9; καὶ μὴν ἂν ταῦτόν γε αὐτῷ τιθῆ τοῦνομα, ἢ μηδενὸς ὄνομα ἀναγκασθήσεται λέγειν, εἰ δέ τινος αὐτὸ φήσῃ, συμβήσεται τὸ ὄνομα ὀνόματος ὄνομα μόνον, ἄλλου δὲ οὐδενὸς ὄν). If the monists do not want to claim that a name is different from the One, they will be forced to concede either that it is a name of nothing or that it is a name of itself. The former is absurd because a name of nothing—a name which does not refer—is not a name. The stranger explains that the latter is absurd because the result would be that “the one, which is the one of the one only, is also in turn the one of the name” (244d11-2; καὶ τὸ ἓν γε ἐνὸς ἓν ὄν μόνον καὶ τοῦ ὀνόματος αὖ τὸ ἓν ὄν).⁶⁷ If the One and the name which referred to the One were identical, then not only would the name signify itself, but we could substitute “one” for “name” with no change in sense,⁶⁸ just as we can substitute “bachelor” for “unmarried man.” Hence, it would make just as much sense to say “the one of the name” or “the one of the one” as it would to say “the name of the one.” But this is in fact not the case. “The name of the one” makes sense; while “the one of the name” and “the one of the one” are nonsensical expressions. The monists, therefore, are reduced by the dilemma either to the claim that the name is a name of nothing, and so the name is not a name; or to the claim that “the name of the one” in no way differs in sense from “the one of the name” or “the one of the one.” Both claims are unintelligible.⁶⁹

The monists could respond, however, by claiming that this is a false dichotomy. Perhaps the name is other than the One in the way a part is other than a whole. If the One were a whole and the names which designate it were parts of it, then the names would not be other countable objects in addition to the One, yet neither would they be identical to

⁶⁷ The text of 244d11-12 is difficult and the main manuscripts are inconsistent. Various emendations have been suggested. I follow the version printed by Robinson (Duke et al., *Platonis Opera*, 431).

⁶⁸ Cf. Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 79.

⁶⁹ Cf. Sallis, *Being and Logos*, 491.

it.⁷⁰ As a part of the One, the name could signify the One without being separate from the One.⁷¹ Theaetetus fails to note this means of escape for the monists. The stranger, however, does not let it pass. Although he does not explicitly point out that the monists could escape the dilemma by claiming that the One is a whole, he responds to Theaetetus' claim that the monists will necessarily (244d13; ἀνάγκη) be trapped in the dilemma by asking, “What then? Will they claim that the whole is different from the one being or identical to it?” (244d14-15; τί δέ; τὸ ὅλον ἕτερον τοῦ ὄντος ἐνὸς ἢ ταῦτὸν φήσουσι τοῦτ’;).⁷² Theaetetus answers that they will say it is identical (244e1).

B(ii). The Whole/Part Argument (244d14-245e8)

With the whole/part argument, the stranger finally gets to the heart of his critique of the dualists and monists. The dualists and monists as the stranger presents them both assume that “to be” is simply to be an individual thing or things. The dualists claim that what is consists of two things, while the monists claim that what is consists of one thing. Neither, however, can explain whole/part composition. The dualists' position ultimately failed because they could not say why the combination of the hot and the cold was two things rather than one thing. The monists will fail because they will be unable to explain how a whole can be without there also being a higher order principle to unify it. The whole/part argument will show why the assumption that “to be” is reducible to being an individual thing or things makes whole/part composition unintelligible.

The stranger begins the whole/part argument by establishing that the one being which is a whole has parts:⁷³

If then, it [the One] is a whole—as even Parmenides 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 . . .”

⁷⁰ Cf. Plato, *Parm.*, 146b2-5; and note 4 above.

⁷¹ Cf. Harte, *Plato on Parts and Wholes*, 106.

⁷² I differ from Bluck and de Rijk (Bluck, *Plato's Sophist*, 72-83; de Rijk, *Plato's Sophist*, 97-100), who hold that the whole/part argument is concerned with the names “being,” “one,” and “whole.” Instead, I agree with most commentators that the whole/part argument is concerned with the monist One—the one whole being—to which those names refer.

⁷³ The way I use the term “whole” and “part” in this section follows my discussion of those terms in Chapter I.5.C unless otherwise indicated.

—being, since it is of this sort, has a middle and extremities, and by having these it is most necessary that it have parts, must it not?

Εἰ τοίνυν ὅλον ἐστίν, ὥσπερ καὶ Παρμενίδης λέγει,

πάντοθεν εὐκύκλου σφαίρης ἐναλίγκιον ὄγκῳ,
μεσσόθεν ἰσοπαλὲς πάντῃ · τὸ γὰρ οὔτε τι μειζόν
οὔτε τι βαιότερον πελέναι χρεόν ἐστι τῆ ἢ τῆ,⁷⁴

τοιοῦτόν γε ὄν τὸ ὄν μέσον τε καὶ ἔσχατα ἔχει, ταῦτα δὲ ἔχον πᾶσα
ἀνάγκη μέρη ἔχειν · ἢ πῶς; (244e2-7)

Theaetetus answers affirmatively. Although one could attempt to deny that a whole has parts, as Theaetetus had done the day before (*Tht.*, 204a7-10), Parmenides, and presumably his monist followers, would not deny this.⁷⁵ The monists grant that the one being is a whole with at the very least a center and extremes as its parts.

The parts of a whole must occupy specific positions in relation to one another. In other words, the parts of a whole are defined in terms of a role or function they play in reference to the other parts of that whole. Consider a sphere spinning on its axis. We can, following the stranger, analyze the sphere in terms of two basic parts: center and extremes. In order for the sphere to spin on its axis, those two parts must play different roles in reference to one another and to the whole sphere. The center must remain at rest in relation to the extremes; while the extremes must continually move in a regular and orderly fashion around the center—those parts nearer the center moving faster than those nearer the extremes (cf. *Lg.*, X.893c4-d5). To put it differently, the parts of the sphere function according to certain norms. Without this normatively governed distribution of roles for the various parts, the sphere not only would be incapable of spinning, it would no longer be a sphere. To put it generally, a whole is always a normatively structured compound of various parts. This holds of a totality as well, however. A totality is always a normatively structured compound: at the very least there is a norm that dictates the number or quantity of that of which it is composed. As his critique of the monists continues, the stranger will use the term “whole” in a wider sense than I defined it in Chapter I. He will use “whole” to designate what I in Chapter I called a “structured plurality,” which, depending on the sort of structure it exhibits, could be either a whole or

⁷⁴ DK 28 B8.43-45.

⁷⁵ I am not here concerned with the historical Parmenides or monists, or with how fairly the stranger represents their views.

a totality. The stranger notes that he is concerned with both the notion of whole and of totality in 245a3. Then he confirms it again in 245d8-10, where he claims that any plurality (ποσόν) is a whole. In the remainder of my analysis of the argument against the monists, I will use “whole” in the way that the stranger does in this context: to designate any structured plurality.

Due to this normativity, a whole is one, although composed of many parts. Thus, the text continues:

Stranger: But nothing prevents what is divided into parts from having been affected by the one over all its parts, and from being one in this way, since by this it is both a totality and one whole.

Theaetetus: Certainly.

Stranger: But isn't it impossible for what has been affected by these things itself to be the one itself?

Theaetetus: How so?

Stranger: What is truly one, according to the correct definition,⁷⁶ must be completely partless.

Theaetetus: It surely must.

Stranger: But that other sort of one, since it consists of many parts, will not fit this definition.

Theaetetus: I understand.

ΞΕ. Ἀλλὰ μὴν τό γε μεμερισμένον πάθος μὲν τοῦ ἑνὸς ἔχειν ἐπὶ τοῖς μέρεσι πᾶσιν οὐδὲν ἀποκωλύει, καὶ ταύτη δὴ πᾶν τε ὄν καὶ ὅλον ἓν εἶναι.

ΘΕΑΙ. Τί δ' οὐ;

ΞΕ. Τὸ δὲ πεπονθὸς ταῦτα ἄρ' οὐκ ἀδύνατον αὐτό γε τὸ ἓν αὐτὸ εἶναι;

ΘΕΑΙ. Πῶς;

ΞΕ. Ἀμερὲς δῆπου δεῖ παντελῶς τό γε ἀληθῶς ἓν κατὰ τὸν ὀρθὸν λόγον εἰρησθαι.

ΘΕΑΙ. Δεῖ γὰρ οὐν.

ΞΕ. Τὸ δέ γε τοιοῦτον ἐκ πολλῶν μερῶν ὄν οὐ συμφωνήσει τῷ λόγῳ.

ΘΕΑΙ. Μανθάνω. (245a1-b3)

If the One is a whole, it could still have many parts, because these parts would compose one whole, with the result that what is would still ultimately be one by being whole. A

⁷⁶ I translate “λόγος” as “definition” here. Cf. Plato, *Lg.*, X.895d1-896a5; *Ep.*, VII.342b6-c1; Crivelli, *Plato's Account of Falsehood*, 81.

whole, however, is a structured unity, and so presupposes that by which it is structured. At the very least, that by which it is structured must include what the stranger refers to here as the one itself. A whole is one in that it has been affected—that is, structured—by the one itself. The stranger claims that the one by which the one whole being is structured must itself be partless. Presumably this is because the one itself is causally prior to the unity of the whole. The unity of a whole requires an explanation. And, if it is to explain, the unity of that which explains the unity of something cannot itself require further explanation. The one itself is that which explains the unity of whatever is unified and consequently the unity of wholes.⁷⁷ In this way, the stranger has introduced two sorts of one: (1) a structured being/whole and (2) the structure in terms of which that structured being/whole is structured, that is, the one itself. This distinction between a structured object and the normative principle in terms of which it is structured is not only the distinction by which the stranger will reduce the monists to absurdity, but is vital to the remainder of the digression.

With the distinction between the one itself and the structured one whole being, we are now in the position to turn to the final dilemmas by which the stranger completes his *reductio* against the monists. The overarching dilemma is the following. The monists must assert that either:

(a) Being is one and whole by being affected by the one (245b4-5; πάθος ἔχον τὸ ὄν τοῦ ἐνὸς οὕτως ἔν τε ἔσται καὶ ὅλον).

OR

(b) Being is in no way whole (245b5; παντάπασιν μὴ . . . ὅλον εἶναι τὸ ὄν).

The monists have granted that being, the one being, is a structured whole (244d14-e1). Yet if being is in some way one because it is being affected by the one itself (=a), then being is not identical with the one itself (245b7-8; πεπονθέναι τε γὰρ τὸ ὄν ἐν εἶναί πως οὐ ταὐτὸν ὄν τῷ ἐνὶ φανεῖται). Therefore, all things will be more than one (245b8-9)—that is, being will consist of both the one whole being and of the one itself. If “to be” is simply to be an individual thing, then if the one itself is—and it must be if the one whole being is, since it explains the unity of the one whole being—it must be an individual, countable alongside the one whole being.

⁷⁷ Cf. Harte, *Plato on Parts and Wholes*, 109-111.

If the monists choose (b) rather than (a), the stranger claims that they will land in another dilemma. In the first horn of this sub-dilemma, being is not the whole (=b), but the whole is. In the second horn, being is not the whole (=b), and the whole is not.

If being is not the whole (=b), but the whole itself is, then being lacks itself (245c1-3; καὶ μὴν ἐάν γε τὸ ὄν ἢ μὴ ὅλον διὰ τὸ πεπονθέναι τὸ ὑπ' ἐκείνου πάθος, ἢ δὲ αὐτὸ τὸ ὅλον, ἐνδεὲς τὸ ὄν ἑαυτοῦ συμβαίνει). Thus, being will be not-being (245c6; οὐκ ὄν ἔσται τὸ ὄν). If being is not coextensive with the whole, but the whole is (being), then being is not coextensive with itself. In other words, if the monists claim that being is not the whole and that the whole is, then the being that is not the whole lacks the being that is the whole and vice versa. Since the assumption is that “to be” is simply to be an individual thing, this first horn of the sub-dilemma posits that there are two individual beings, but must deny being to one of them. It posits the individual called “being” that is not the whole and the individual called “the whole” that is being. As a result, either the whole that is being is not-being, since the individual called “being” is not the individual called “the whole”; or the being that is not the whole is not-being, since the individual called “the whole” is the individual called “being.” Either case involves a contradiction.⁷⁸

This sub-dilemma not only offers a critique of the assumption that “to be” is simply to be an individual, but reveals something about individuals, namely, that individuals necessarily have a definitive nature. These two individuals, the one called

⁷⁸ Commentators differ on how to explain why the hypothesis that being is not a whole but the whole is entails that being lacks itself and thus is not-being. Some conjecture that Plato has the stranger infer that being would lack itself because it would lack the property of wholeness, and the property of wholeness is a being (see for example, Campbell, *Sophistes and Politicus*, 114; Cornford, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge*, 225). Others propose that being would lack itself because it would not be whole, and if something is not whole it is not complete (Harte, *Plato on Parts and Wholes*, 103n91, 113). Crivelli rightly finds these explanations unsatisfactory “because they saddle Plato with a poor argument in that they treat the claim that being is not a whole as a claim that being does not instantiate wholeness, on a par with the claim that this pudding is not a whole because a slice of it has been eaten” (Crivelli, *Plato's Account of Falsehood*, 84). Crivelli takes the claim that being is not a whole to amount “to the claim that it is not the case that to be is to be a whole.” Thus, given that the argument is “still governed by the Parmenidean view that to be is to be a whole . . . to assume that it is not the case that to be is to be a whole is tantamount to depriving being of its own nature, and therefore makes it into a not-being. . .” (ibid., 84). Although Crivelli's explanation of the stranger's inference is more plausible than most others, it is also unsatisfactory, because it must introduce the notion of a nature into the argument prior to the stranger's own introduction of that notion at 245c8-9. My reading is based on the assumption that “to be” is simply to be an individual thing. That assumption, as we have seen, is an assumption that has been in play throughout the digression thus far. My reading is close to that of Bluck (see Bluck, *Plato's Sophist*, 85-96).

“being” that is not the whole and the one called “the whole” that is, can be counted as two because each is characterized by a different nature.⁷⁹ The one called “being” is characterized by the nature of being and the one called “the whole” is characterized by the nature of whole. The stranger does not let this insight pass. Hence, after getting Theaetetus to agree that if (b) and the whole is then being would be not-being, he continues, “And again, all things become more than one because being and the whole each possess their peculiar nature separately” (245c8-9; τοῦ τε ὄντος καὶ τοῦ ὅλου χωρὶς ἰδίαν ἑκατέρου φύσιν εἰληφότος). Since the individual called “being” and the individual called “the whole” are not defined by the same nature, they are two individuals and all things are more than one, with the result that monism is false.

The stranger next considers the second horn of the sub-dilemma. What if being is not the whole (=b), and the whole is not in any way? The stranger claims that “if the whole is not in any way, these same things result for being (μὴ ὄντος δέ γε τὸ παράπαν τοῦ ὅλου, ταῦτά τε ταῦτα ὑπάρχει τῷ ὄντι)” (245c11-d1). The antecedent of the “these same things” (ταῦτα ταῦτα) is not immediately obvious. The results of this *reductio* so far are that being lacks itself and so is non-being; and that all things are more than one. Yet it is not the case that all things would be more than one if the whole was not at all.⁸⁰ Nor is it the case that being would lack itself if the whole was not at all.⁸¹ I follow David Ambuel, therefore, in thinking that the antecedent of the “these same things” is the dilemma of the “semantic argument.”⁸² Claiming that the whole is not at all would return the monists to the dilemma of the “semantic argument.” The monists only escaped the dilemma of the “semantic argument” by maintaining that the one being is a whole of parts (244d14-e1). Hence, if they deny that the whole is at all, they will be thrown back into the dilemma which concludes the semantic argument: Either the name “one” is other

⁷⁹ Cf. Crivelli, *Plato's Account of Falsehood*, 84.

⁸⁰ Crivelli and I agree on this (ibid., 85). Others do not (see for example, Cornford, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge*, 226; Sallis, *Being and Logos*, 492-493).

⁸¹ Some commentators claim that if the whole is not, being would lack itself, since by not being whole, it would be incomplete (Harte, *Plato on Parts and Wholes*, 103n91; 113). This would only be the case on the assumption that only wholes are complete, an assumption that has not been stated and that seems dubious, since it does not seem reasonable to say that partless objects are incomplete. For other views that differ from mine, see Cornford, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge*, 226; Bluck, *Plato's Sophist*, 86-88; Sallis, *Being and Logos*, 492; de Rijk, *Plato's Sophist*, 98n8; Harte, *Plato on Parts and Wholes*, 113; Crivelli, *Plato's Account of Falsehood*, 85.

⁸² Ambuel, *Image and Paradigm*, 103-104.

than the One, and all things are more than one; or the name is not a name, and the position of the monists is unintelligible.

Yet the stranger does not simply leave the monists there, but adds a further *aporia* that results if being is not whole and the whole is not:

Stranger: . . . And in addition to not being, it could not even have ever come to be.

Theaetetus: Why is that?

Stranger: What comes to be has always come to be a whole. So that if someone doesn't posit the whole among the things that are, he must address neither being nor becoming as being.

Theaetetus: By all means, this is how things are.

Stranger: And what is not a whole must not even be of some quantity: for by being of some quantity, however much it is, it is necessary for it to be so much as a whole.

ΞΕ. . . . καὶ πρὸς τῷ μὴ εἶναι μὴδ' ἄν γενέσθαι ποτὲ ὄν.

ΘΕΑΙ. Τί δή;

ΞΕ. Τὸ γενόμενον ἀεὶ γέγονεν ὅλον · ὥστε οὔτε οὐσίαν οὔτε γένεσιν ὡς οὔσαν δεῖ προσαγορεύειν τὸ ὅλον ἐν τοῖς οὔσι μὴ τιθέντα.

ΘΕΑΙ. Παντάπασιν ἔοικε ταῦθ' οὕτως ἔχειν.

ΞΕ. Καὶ μὴν οὐδ' ὅποσονοῦν τι δεῖ τὸ μὴ ὅλον εἶναι · ποσόν τι γὰρ ὄν, ὅποσον ἄν ἦ, τοσοῦτον ὅλον ἀναγκαῖον αὐτὸ εἶναι. (245d1-10)

At the very least, anything that comes to be has temporally distinct parts, and so is necessarily a whole. Furthermore, as the stranger points out, anything that can be characterized as “so much” (ποσόν)—as being for so much time, in so much space, having so many members, etc.—must be a whole. He here uses the term “whole” in a wider sense than I defined it in Chapter I. He uses “whole” to designate what I in Chapter I called a “structured plurality,” which, depending on the sort of the structure it exhibits, could be either a whole or a totality. The point is clear, however, what is and what comes to be are unintelligible apart from structure. In fact, we cannot assess “how many” (πόσα) beings there are (243b10-c6)—the very thing the dualists and monists claim to do—apart from structure, since “some quantity” (ποσόν τι) is unintelligible apart from structure. What is and what comes to be are in some sense structured pluralities, but what is structured presupposes the causally prior normative principle in terms of which it is structured.

Moreover, this causally prior normative principle cannot be counted along with the being or beings structured by it. The stranger's arguments against the dualists and monists demonstrate that given the assumption that "to be" is simply to be an individual thing, what is cannot be reduced either to one or to many countable objects (cf. 245d12-e5). The argument against the dualists demonstrates that what is cannot be reduced to a definite number of individuals greater than one; while the argument against the monists demonstrates that what is cannot be reduced to one individual. This, in turn, entails that the assumption that "to be" is simply to be an individual thing or things is false.

§6. Conclusion: "To Be" Is Not Simply To Be An Individual Thing

As I have shown, the major arguments in the opening portion of the digression critique the assumption that "to be" is simply to be an individual thing. The Orienting Argument demonstrates that if "to be" meant simply to be an individual thing, non-being, images, and falsehood would be unintelligible. The arguments against the dualists and monists, in turn, demonstrate that what is cannot be reduced to one individual thing or to many individual things, and thus that the assumption that "to be" is simply to be an individual thing or things must be false.

The Orienting Argument reveals that the stranger and Theaetetus should as a practical matter proceed in their investigation with the expectation that the assumption that "to be" is simply to be an individual thing is false. Let us review the argument. In A1, the stranger shows that given the assumption that "to be" is simply to be an individual thing, terms such as "what is not" and "nothing" do not have a referent and so cannot be meaningfully used. In A2, the stranger uses the term "what is not" anyway, but since the argument of A2 continues to assume that "to be" is simply to be an individual thing, it enacts a performative contradiction, as the stranger shows in A3. Hence, the arguments of A1-3 leave the stranger and Theaetetus with a choice, although Theaetetus does not fully recognize this choice. If they wish to remain consistent with themselves, either they must no longer use terms such as "what is not," or they must reject the assumption that "to be" is simply to be an individual thing. In A4, the stranger argues that they should attempt to do the latter, since otherwise they will be unable to make sense of images and falsehood and so unable to define sophism.

In the arguments against the dualists and monists, the stranger shows that the assumption that “to be” is simply to be an individual thing or things is in fact false. If “to be” were simply to be an individual thing or things, then the totality of what is would either (A) be one thing or (B) a determinate number of many things.

The stranger’s argument against the latter alternative (B) can be summarized as follows. If the totality of what is were a definite number of two or more things, and if “to be” is simply to be an individual thing or things, then the individual designated by “to be” would have to be (1_B) one of the many things or (2_B) all of the many things taken together. If (1_B), then either (a) the “to be” would be another individual thing in addition to the determinate number of individual things that are or (b) the “to be” would be one of the determinate number of individual things that are. If (a), then the totality of what is would always have to consist of one more individual than the determinate number of individuals of which it in fact consists. Say the totality of what is consists of two individuals. If (a), then “to be” would be a third individual and so the totality of what is would not consist of two individuals. The same would also follow if the totality of what is consisted of any number of individuals greater than two. On the other hand, if “to be” were one of the determinate number of individual things that are (=b), then the rest of those individuals that are would not be, which is a contradiction. Now consider option (2_B). If “to be” designates all of the many individual things that are, taken together (=2_B), then what is is ultimately one individual thing.

The arguments against the monists, however, demonstrate that given the assumption that “to be” is simply to be an individual thing, what is cannot be one individual thing. If what is is one individual (=A), and (1_A) that individual is not a whole of parts, then there could be no name for that one individual, since a name must be something distinct from that to which it refers. Thus, claiming that what is is one individual would enact a performative contradiction. If what is is one individual (=A), and (2_A) that individual is a whole of parts, then the unity of that whole of parts must be explained. There must be an answer to the question of why these individual things compose this whole. That which explains the unity of the whole, however, cannot be part of the whole. Nor can that which explains unity possess unity as a property (πάθος) at all, since it must be causally prior to that property. Since wholes necessarily possess the

property of unity, that which explains the property of unity cannot be a whole and thus cannot have parts. Hence, if (A) and (2_A), then the individual that is a whole cannot be identical to that which explains its unity. Yet, given that “to be” is simply to be an individual thing, that which explains the unity of the whole, since it is, must be an individual. Therefore, if (A) and (2_A), then what is consists of more than one individual thing, and we are thrown back to the problems that resulted from (B).⁸³ Given the assumption that “to be” is simply to be an individual thing or things, either (A) must be true or (B) must be true: “to be” must itself be nothing but one individual or many individuals. The arguments against the dualists and monists, however, demonstrate that given the assumption that “to be” is simply to be an individual thing or things, both (A) and (B) are absurd.

The assumption that “to be” is simply to be an individual thing or things, however, seems like a very plausible assumption. At the very least, it would be difficult to formulate an alternative. The assumption simply states that whatever is is an individual: it is one, countable, the same as itself, and different from other individuals. What is there that does not fit this description? And given that our words are singular or plural (or dual if we were speaking Ancient Greek), how could they refer to what does not fit this description? These are the questions which the stranger must answer as the digression continues.

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⁸³ As we saw (chap. II.5.B(ii)), the stranger presents another argument against the monists as well. He argues against the view that being is not a whole but the whole nevertheless is. Due to the difficulty of that argument, and due to the fact that I think its main purpose is to introduce the notion of “nature” (φύσις)—a notion that will become important later in the digression—I will refrain from rehearsing that argument again.

Chapter III: What Sort Being Is (245e8-254b7)

In Chapter II, we saw how the stranger attacked the assumption that “to be” is simply to be an individual thing or things. His arguments against the dualists and monists showed conclusively that this assumption must be false. The stranger must now begin to address the question with which I concluded Chapter II. Given that “to be” is not simply to be an individual thing or things, what is the alternative? What could there be that is not an individual thing or individual things? Those who asked “how many” (πόσα) beings there are—the dualists and monists—assumed that the sort of thing being is an individual or many individuals. The stranger will now turn to ontologies that do not take that assumption as a given. He will examine first the materialists and then the friends of the forms, both of which ask a question more fundamental than the question of “how many” beings there are, the question of “what sort” (ποῖα) of beings there are (242b10-c6).

Through his critique of the materialists and the friends of the forms, the stranger will reveal sorts of being that are not reducible to being an individual thing or things. In his critique of the materialists, the stranger will identify being as the power (δύναμις) to affect and/or be affected. Individual things are beings, he will argue, because they possess that power. That power itself, however, the very being of beings, so to speak, is not an individual, but a power that individuals possess and by which they are. He will then turn to the friends of the forms and suggest that their theory, if it is to remain consistent, should in some way accommodate this notion of being as the power to affect and/or be affected. I will argue that he wants the friends of the forms to accommodate the notion of being as power by allowing the forms to undergo motion. I will show that this motion that the forms must undergo is the motion of being affected. Although the friends of the forms speak about the forms as individuals, the stranger will show that it is precisely in this respect that their theory must be modified. He will argue that if the theory of forms is to be maintained, the forms must be understood in terms of their ordered relations toward one another, relations that are not themselves individual forms, or individual beings at all, but rather the affecting and being affected by which the forms are what they are. What could there be that is not an individual thing or individual

things? As I will demonstrate, the stranger's critique of the materialists and the friends of the forms will offer us at least the following: power, affecting, being affected, and the motion and rest which belong to the forms. After introducing these sorts of "to be" that are not reducible to being an individual thing or things, the stranger will continue to develop them through a critique of one last a rather odd ontology held by certain people that the stranger characterizes as "late learners" (251b6-7) and then through a discussion of the art of dialectic. Throughout, the stranger will continue to develop the notion of being as the power to affect and/or be affected, a "to be" that is not an individual thing or things, but rather that by which individuals are beings.

I will divide the portion of the digression under discussion in this Chapter (245e8-254b7) into four parts: the argument against the materialists (245e8-248a3), the argument against the friends of the forms (248a4-251a4), the argument against the late learners (251a5-252e8), and the discussion of dialectic (252e9-254b7).

§1. *The Materialists (245e8-248a3)*

The way the stranger introduces the materialists indicates that the materialism under discussion here does not appear to be the materialism of a worked out philosophical theory.¹ Instead, it seems to be a common sense or pre-theoretical materialism.² The materialists under discussion here "literally (ἀτεχνῶς) grab rocks and trees with their hands" (246a8-10). "They grab all such things and maintain strenuously that that alone is which allows for some touching or embracing" (246a8-b1). Even to speak with them one must make them "better in speech" (246d4-5) since they are unwilling to engage in serious dialogue. The stranger's goal here, therefore, is not to

¹ The materialists in the *Sophist* do not seem to represent any school of thought prior to or contemporary with Plato of which we are aware, although some commentators consider the possibility that they might represent Empedocles, Heraclitus, or the atomists (see for example, Cornford, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge*, 231-232; Taylor, *The Sophist and the Statesman*, 43; Seligman, *Being and Not-Being*, 31; Bluck, *Plato's Sophist*, 89-91; Brown, "Innovation and Continuity," 188).

² See A. E. Taylor, *Plato: The Man and His Work* (London: Methuen & Co., 1926), 384. Taylor apparently changes his view by the time of *The Sophists and the Statesman*, wherein he claims that the materialists of the *Sophist* represent not only common sense materialism, but the materialism of "Heraclitus, Empedocles, and the other unnamed cosmologists of 242c-e" (Taylor, *The Sophist and the Statesman*, 43).

refute a philosophical position, but rather, as we will see, to bring out something true which common sense materialism reveals.³

The stranger's argument against the materialists can be summarized as follows:

- (1) Bodies are tangible and/or visible.
- (2) Living bodies (moral animals) are (246e5).
- (3) Therefore, ensouled bodies are (246e7).
- (4) Therefore, souls are (at least as invisible corporeal bodies) (246e9, 247b8-9).
- (5) Souls can possess virtues and vices (247a2-7).
- (6) Therefore, virtues and vices are (247a9-10).
- (7) But virtues and vices are in no way touchable or visible and are not bodies in any sense (247b1-c2).⁴
- (8) Therefore, for something to be, it need not be a body.

The arguments against the dualists and monists demonstrated that the assumption that “to be” is simply to be an individual thing or individual things is false. With the argument against the materialists, we begin to see the dimension of “to be” which that assumption leaves out. Individual things—in this case living bodies—have a structure and are meaningfully related to one another in terms of that structure and in terms of the principles that explain that structure. The argument against the materialists works by identifying relations of causal priority and posteriority between various sorts of things that are. Steps (2) to (6) articulate relationships of causal priority similar to those that Diotima's Ladder of Love catalogues in *Symposium* 210a4-212a7. When describing the Ladder of Love, Diotima points out that beauty in body presupposes the soul, since a soul

³ Cf. Plato, *Soph.*, 246d8-9. Speaking about the materialists, the stranger says to Theaetetus that “we are not concerned about these people, rather we seek the truth.”

⁴ If the materialists are willing to maintain that souls are “some sort of body” (247b8-9), why are they unwilling to maintain that virtues and vices are bodies? Bradley Jay Strawser offers a compelling answer to this question. His answer hinges on the spatiality of bodies. One body cannot be in multiple places at the same time. Given this constraint, it could seem plausible to say that a soul is a sort of body. After all, each soul is presumably only in one place at a time: my soul is in my body, your soul is in yours, my parakeet's soul is in his body, etc. Strawser points out that virtues and vices, unlike individual souls on this materialist understanding, can be possessed by multiple souls at the same time. Thus justice, for example, can be in multiple souls, and so in multiple places, at the same time. A body, however, cannot plausibly be said to be in multiple places at the same time. Therefore, justice, like any other virtue or vice, cannot plausibly be considered a body. Hence, Strawser concludes, “the manner in which the characters [the stranger and Theaetetus] make the materialists ‘better’ is by having them affirm the existence of universals (Justice, etc.) which they are forced to do out of their affirmation of the existence of the soul and its ability to take on (‘possess’) these universals” (Bradley Jay Strawser, “Those Frightening Men: A New Interpretation of Plato's Battle of Gods and Giants,” *Epoché: A Journal for the History of Philosophy* 16, no. 2 [2012]: 224).

is that which organizes a body. Beauty in soul, in turn, presupposes the norms of customs, activities, and laws, since customs, activities, and laws organize and regulate the soul, enabling it to function properly as a whole. The beauty of customs, activities, and laws, in turn, presupposes the explanatory power of knowledge and the sciences (ἐπιστήμαι), in which those customs, activities, and laws are rooted. The beauty of knowledge and sciences, in turn, presupposes the form of beauty itself, which is expressed in, organizes, and unifies knowledge, as well as the whole order of beautiful things. The stranger’s argument here in the *Sophist* is similar except that it does not differentiate between customs and sciences—but rather groups both together as “virtues present in the soul”—and does not identify one form which governs these relations of priority and posteriority, but rather a plurality of forms—namely, the virtues themselves.⁵

Let us consider the text of the argument more carefully.

Stranger: Let them say whether they claim that anything is a mortal animal.

Theaetetus: Of course they do.

Stranger: And don’t they agree that this is an ensouled body?

Theaetetus: Entirely so.

Stranger: Positing soul as something among the things that are?

Theaetetus: Yes.

ΞΕ. Λεγόντων δὴ θνητὸν ζῷον εἶ φασιν εἶναι τι.

ΘΕΑΙ. Πῶς δ’ οὐ;

ΞΕ. Τοῦτο δὲ οὐ σῶμα ἔμψυχον ὁμολογοῦσιν;

ΘΕΑΙ. Πάνυ γε.

ΞΕ. Τιθέντες τι τῶν ὄντων ψυχὴν;

ΘΕΑΙ. Ναί. (246e5-247a1)

A mortal animal is a living body—a dynamically ordered, self-moving whole of parts. Yet as a dynamically ordered whole of parts, it necessarily presupposes a soul—that which orders the parts of the body and spontaneously moves them both in relation to one another and as a whole in relation to the environment in which the body is situated. To put it another way, the tangible and visible parts of the body presuppose a soul, since they

⁵ The sense in which the “one form” is one, however, is one of the problems that will be examined in the digression.

are parts *of a body*, parts of a self-moving, structured whole. “Soul” names the organizing principle of the body—that which constitutes the body’s parts as parts *of a whole*. Thus, insofar as living bodies are, the souls which those bodies necessarily include and presuppose are.

The stranger continues:

Stranger: What about this: Don’t they claim that one soul is just and another unjust, and that one is intelligent and another unintelligent?

Theaetetus: Certainly.

Stranger: But don’t they claim that each soul becomes just by the possession and presence of justice, and becomes the contrary by the possession and presence of their contraries?

Theaetetus: Yes, they also affirm these things.

Stranger: Yet surely they will claim that the power to become present or absent is certainly something.

Theaetetus: They certainly do affirm this.

ΞΕ. Τί δέ; ψυχὴν οὐ τὴν μὲν δίκαιαν, τὴν δὲ ἄδικόν φασι εἶναι, καὶ τὴν μὲν φρόνιμον, τὴν δὲ ἄφρονα;

ΘΕΑΙ. Τί μὴν;

ΞΕ. Ἄλλ’ οὐ δικαιοσύνης ἔξει καὶ παρουσίᾳ τοιαύτην αὐτῶν ἐκάστην γίγνεσθαι, καὶ τῶν ἐναντίων τὴν ἐναντίαν;

ΘΕΑΙ. Ναί, καὶ ταῦτα σύμφασιν.

ΞΕ. Ἄλλὰ μὴν τό γε δυνατόν τῳ παραγίγνεσθαι καὶ ἀπογίγνεσθαι πάντως εἶναί τι φήσουσιν.

ΘΕΑΙ. Φασὶ μὲν οὖν. (247a2-11)

Bodies move and behave in different ways due to how their souls move them. Souls themselves, however, are wholes of parts.⁶ Souls do and experience things at different levels and in different ways. They experience things through different senses, have and act on different desires, and so on. Furthermore, souls can experience and do things in one way at one time and in another way at another time.⁷ A soul can be just at one time,

⁶ For an excellent discussion of the structure of the embodied soul in the *Republic* and the *Philebus*, see Mitchel Miller, “A More ‘Exact Grasp’ of the Soul? Tripartition in *Republic* IV and Dialectic in the *Philebus*,” in *Truth: Studies of a Robust Presence*, ed. Kurt Pritzl (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 40-101.

⁷ Cf. Plato, *Symp.*, 207e1-208b7. “And it’s not just his body, but in his soul, too, for none of his manners, customs, opinions, desires, pleasures, pains, or fears ever remain the same, but some are coming to be in him while others are passing away. And what is still far stranger than that is that not only does one branch of knowledge come to be in us while another passes away and that we are never the same even in respect of

for instance, and unjust at another. Souls can become just or unjust, and this becoming is itself an ordered process.⁸ The whole/part structure of the soul is articulated in terms of its customs and activities. Customs and activities, in other words, articulate and order a soul in relation to itself. They relate a soul's parts to one another and to the soul as a whole. These customs and activities themselves, however, presuppose a standard of excellence or virtue. Customs and activities enable a soul to function as a coherent whole to varying degrees, which is to say that they enable a soul to be more or less virtuous. Hence, given that souls are necessarily articulated by customs and activities—"one soul is just and another unjust . . . one is intelligent and another unintelligent"—they necessarily presuppose the virtues in terms of which those customs and activities are structured. Virtue is the power (247a9) in terms of which the soul's customs and activities are structured. Insofar as a soul's customs and activities are regulated by virtue, we say that that virtue is present within it, and that its customs and activities are virtuous. Insofar as a soul's activity is not regulated by a virtue, we say that that virtue is not present within it, and that its customs and activities are not virtuous. In either case, however, the soul necessarily presupposes virtue, because vice itself always presupposes and is parasitic on virtue. Even the members of a band of thieves, as Socrates points out in the *Republic*, must exercise some degree of justice in relation to one another. Otherwise they would be unable to function as a whole at all.⁹ The virtues themselves, therefore, are causally prior to souls.¹⁰ And since souls are causally prior to bodies, the virtues themselves are also causally prior to bodies. Consequently, if bodies are, the virtues—the powers that structure bodies—must be. Given that the virtues are neither tangible nor visible, some things that are are not bodies. The causally prior structuring power in terms of which bodies are structured is not itself a body, but must nevertheless be if bodies are.¹¹

our knowledge, but that each single piece of knowledge has the same fate. For what we call studying exists because knowledge is leaving us, because forgetting is the departure of knowledge, while studying puts back a fresh memory in place of what went away. . . ."

⁸ *Republic* VIII, for instance, is a description of the ordered process by which the city and the soul become unjust.

⁹ Plato, *Rep.*, I.351c7-352d4.

¹⁰ For what I mean by "causal priority," see chap. I.5.A, esp. 29.

¹¹ This claim is stronger than that of Taylor, who summarizes the force of the argument against the materialists by saying, "even the corporealist himself needs at least two terms in which to express himself; he needs to recognize not only bodies, but also forces of some kind which act upon them, and this, of itself,

So what do the materialists really mean when they say that something is? What is it about what is that makes bodies appear as the most manifest and the only examples of it? The stranger begins to address these questions at 247c9ff. He claims that the materialists “must tell us what is the innate nature common to both these things [the virtues] and those that have body, that is, what they have in view when they assert that both are” (247d2-4). Since, the stranger says, the materialists might be perplexed by this question, he suggests the following account of being for them:

I say, then, that that which possesses any sort of power—either by nature to affect anything else whatsoever or to be affected even in the least by the most trivial thing, even if only once—I say that all this really is. For I set down as a limit by which to delimit the things that are,¹² that they are nothing other than power.

Λέγω δὴ τὸ καὶ ὅποιανούν τινα κεκτημένον δύναμιν εἴτ' εἰς τὸ ποιεῖν ἕτερον ὀτιούν πεφυκὸς εἴτ' εἰς τὸ παθεῖν καὶ σμικρότατον ὑπὸ τοῦ φαυλοτάτου, κἂν εἰ μόνον εἰς ἅπαξ, πᾶν τοῦτο ὄντως εἶναι · τίθεμαι γάρ ὄρον ὀρίζειν¹³ τὰ ὄντα ὡς ἔστιν οὐκ ἄλλο τι πλὴν δύναμις. (247d8-e4)

The stranger offers two closely related definitions of being here.¹⁴ The first is that that which possesses any sort of power either to affect (ποιεῖν)¹⁵ or to be affected (παθεῖν) really is. The second is that the things that are are nothing other than power. The first defines something that is. Something that is is something that possesses the power to affect and/or be affected. The second delimits the things that are by identifying that in virtue of which they are: the power to affect and/or be affected. By defining being in both of these ways, the stranger allows for a distinction between that which structures and that which is structured. The monists had trouble because they were unable to account

makes thorough-going corporealism impossible” (Taylor, *The Sophist and the Statesman*, 49). While I agree with Taylor that the stranger’s argument reveals this problem with thorough-going materialism, it also does more by advancing the way in which being is understood in terms of the power (δύναμις) of normative structure.

¹² Commentators have debated whether the “ὄρον” in this passage should be understood as indicating a definition of being in the strict sense, or instead as simply a mark or criterion for being. For a proponent of the former, see Owen, “Plato on Not-Being,” 421n13. For the latter, see Cornford, *Plato’s Theory of Knowledge*, 238-239; Brown, “Innovation and Continuity,” 192-193. My own view agrees with that of Dana Miller, who argues that the term “ὄρον” ought to be understood literally: “The [stranger’s] ὄρος establishes the scope or boundary of ‘what is.’ ὄρος indicates whatever achieves this” (Miller, “Fast and Loose with Being,” 350n10). I will, however, use the word “definition” to refer to the stranger’s statements about being here. In doing so, I mean “definition” in a loose sense.

¹³ I do not follow Robinson in adding “[δεῖν]” after “ὀρίζειν” (Duke et al., *Platonis Opera*, 436).

¹⁴ Cf. Brown, “Innovation and Continuity,” 190. For my use to the term “definition” here, see note 12 above.

¹⁵ Cf. Campbell, *The Sophistes and Politicus*, 124.

for the distinction between a structured one—a whole—and that which structures it—the one itself. The stranger here allows for such a distinction. An individual thing has the property of being—is structured as a being—insofar as it possesses the power to affect and/or be affected. Being itself, however, is that power itself. Being itself is that which structures beings insofar as they are beings. The stranger will further develop this definition of being through his discussion of the friends of the forms and the late learners, and in his account of the communion of forms.¹⁶

§2. *The Friends of the Forms (248a4-249d5)*

Having examined the materialists, the stranger next turns to the friends of the forms. The stranger sets up the friends of the forms in opposition to the materialists. While the materialists wanted “to drag everything down to earth out of heaven and the invisible” (246a8-9), the friends of the forms force “true being (ἀληθινὴν οὐσίαν) to be certain objects of thought and disembodied forms (νοητὰ ἅπτα καὶ ἀσώματα εἶδη)” (246b7-8). Furthermore, they break up the bodies that the materialists call being “into small pieces in their arguments, and call it, instead of being, some borne about becoming (γένεσιν ἀντ’ οὐσίας φερομένην τινὰ προσαγορεύουσιν)” (246b9-c2). The friends of the forms, in other words, hold to a theory which is in its broad outline similar in certain respects to that advocated in dialogues such as the *Republic*, *Timaeus*, and *Phaedo*.¹⁷ The stranger will demonstrate, however, that the theory of the friends of the forms lacks sufficient nuance in its explanation of knowledge and being. The stranger’s argument against the friends of the forms will (1) further develop the notion of being as power by examining how that notion could apply to the theory of forms; and in doing so, will (2) introduce motion and rest and begin to clarify how they apply to the forms.

A. Whether the Forms Possess the Power to Affect and/or be Affected (248a4-e6)

¹⁶ Unlike some commentators (Campbell, *The Sophistes and Politicus*, 124; Cornford, *Plato’s Theory of Knowledge*, 239; Taylor, *The Sophist and the Statesman*, 48-49; Notomi, *The Unity of Plato’s Sophist*, 218), I think that the stranger and Plato put forward this two-fold definition of being as a correct definition (cf. Ray, *For Images*, 28; Sallis, *Being and Logos*, 495ff.; William Lentz, “The Problem of Motion in the *Sophist*,” *Apeiron* 30, no. 2 [1997]: 90ff.; Brown, “Innovation and Continuity,” 189ff.). The definition, however, must be further developed and clarified, as it will be later in the digression.

¹⁷ For a discussion of who the friends of the forms represent see Cornford, *Plato’s Theory of Knowledge*, 242-243; Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 86.

The first part of the argument against the friends of the forms, 248a4-e6, is an attempt to specify affecting and being affected with respect to the forms.¹⁸ The friends of the forms make a distinction between being (οὐσία) and becoming (γένεσις). They claim that “with the body, through perception, we commune with becoming; while with the soul, through reasoning, we commune with real being, which always persists in just the same condition, while becoming is in a different condition at different times” (248a10-13; καὶ σώματι μὲν ἡμᾶς γενέσει δι’ αἰσθήσεως κοινωνεῖν, διὰ λογισμοῦ δὲ ψυχῇ πρὸς τὴν ὄντως οὐσίαν, ἣν ἀεὶ κατὰ ταῦτ’ ὡσαύτως ἔχειν φατέ, γένεσιν δὲ ἄλλοτε ἄλλως). The stranger asks Theaetetus what the friends of the forms mean by this “communing” (κοινωνεῖν) in the two cases (248b2-4). He asks whether it is an affecting and being affected (248b5-6). Theaetetus is unsure and asks the stranger to tell him what account the friends of the forms would give concerning this (248b6-9). The stranger says that while they would admit that the communing between the body and becoming is an affecting and being affected, they would not grant that being has the power to affect or to be affected (248c1-9). “And isn’t there something in what they say?” asks Theaetetus (248c10). The stranger grants that there is,¹⁹ but says that “we still need to learn from them more clearly whether they agree that the soul comes to know (γιγνώσκειν) and being comes to be known (οὐσίαν γινώσκεισθαι)” (248c11-d2).²⁰ This turn to the relationship between knowledge and being is crucial to the remainder of the stranger’s critique of the friends of the forms. The stranger’s critique, I contend, will attempt to articulate what must be the case given that knowledge is possible. That knowledge is possible can be taken as a given, since, as the stranger points out, we presuppose that it is possible whenever “we make strong assertions about anything in any way” (249c6-8).

The stranger proceeds by asking Theaetetus to answer for the friends of the forms. The initial questions he poses have to do with whether coming to know (γιγνώσκειν) and

¹⁸ Unlike some commentators (for example, Klein, *Plato’s Trilogy*, 47; Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 89-90), I think that the friends of the forms are forced to accept that being is the power to affect and/or be affected, and that the characterization of being as power remains in play throughout the rest of the dialogue (cf. Kenneth M. Sayre, *Plato’s Analytical Method* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969], 168; Lentz, “The Problem of Motion,” 90ff.; Brown, “Innovation and Continuity”).

¹⁹ I take it that the friends of the forms are correct in that they deny change in quality, time, and place to the forms.

²⁰ “Γινώσκειν,” unlike many uses of “to know,” generally indicates an occurrence—such as learning, distinguishing, forming a judgment (LSJ, s.v. “γινώσκω”). Hence, I render it as “to come to know” (cf. Brown, “Innovation and Continuity,” 196).

coming to be known (γινώσκεσθαι) are a sort of affecting and being affected. He asks: “Do you claim that coming to know or coming to be known is an affecting, or a being affected, or both? Or that one is a being affected and the other an affecting? Or that neither has a share in either of these in anyway whatsoever?” (248d4-7; τὸ γινώσκειν ἢ τὸ γινώσκεσθαι φατε ποίημα ἢ πάθος ἢ ἀμφοτέρων; ἢ τὸ μὲν πάθημα, τὸ δὲ θάτερον; ἢ παντάπασιν οὐδέτερον οὐδετέρου τούτων μεταλαμβάνειν;). This set of questions articulates six different possibilities for the way in which coming to know and coming to be known could be construed as affecting and being affected:

- (1) Both coming to know and coming to be known are an affecting.
- (2) Both coming to know and coming to be known are a being affected.
- (3) Both coming to know and coming to be known are each an affecting and a being affected.
- (4) One is an affecting, the other a being affected.
 - (4a) Coming to know is an affecting, coming to be known a being affected.
 - (4b) Coming to be known is an affecting, coming to know a being affected.
- (5) Neither is in any way an affecting nor a being affected.²¹

The stranger asks which of these ways of construing how coming to know and coming to be known are an affecting and being affected the friends of the forms would accept.

Theaetetus says that they will choose (5) (248d8; δῆλον ὡς οὐδέτερον οὐδετέρου).

The stranger then puts forward the following as the reasoning behind their choice:

Stranger: I understand. You mean that if to come to know is to do something, then it follows in turn that the thing which comes to be known necessarily is affected. Now being, according to this account, comes to be known by an act of knowing; and inasmuch as it comes to be known, to that extent it is being moved on account of being affected, which, we claim, would not happen to what is resting.

ΞΕ. Μανθάνω · τὸ δέ γε, ὡς τὸ γινώσκειν εἴπερ ἔσται ποιεῖν τι, τὸ γινωσκόμενον ἀναγκαῖον αὐτὸ συμβαίνει πάσχειν. τὴν οὐσίαν δὲ κατὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦτον γινωσκομένην ὑπὸ τῆς γνώσεως, καθ’ ὅσον γινώσκεται, κατὰ τοσοῦτον κινεῖσθαι διὰ τὸ πάσχειν, ὃ δὴ φάμεν οὐκ ἂν γενέσθαι περὶ τὸ ἠρεμοῦν. (248d10-e5)

²¹ Cf. Brown, “Innovation and Continuity,” 196.

This passage is both difficult and important. Note that I translated “ποιεῖν” at 248e1 as “to do” instead of “to affect.” Given that the definition of being as power correlates “ποιεῖν” with “παθεῖν,” I generally translate “ποιεῖν” as “to affect” so as to better express the contrast with “παθεῖν,” “to be affected.”²² In order to communicate the force of the stranger’s comments here in 248d10-e5, however, it is important to hear the “to do” in “ποιεῖν,” while at the same time not losing sight of the sense in which “ποιεῖν” means “to affect.” The stranger here characterizes coming to know (γινώσκειν) as a “ποιεῖν.” To come to know is to do something. Yet since a doing is an affecting, and since that coming to know is a doing, coming to know something is an instance of affecting something. Thus, that which is coming to be known is being affected. The stranger, therefore, is contrasting the friends of the forms’ claim that neither coming to know nor coming to be known is an affecting or being affected (=5) with the claim that coming to know is an affecting and coming to be known a being affected (=4a).

With this contrast, the stranger brings to light precisely why the friends of the forms would want to resist characterizing coming to know or coming to be known as an affecting or being affected. To be affected is to be moved. The friends of the forms, however, claim that the objects of knowledge—the forms—are at rest. This is presumably because the forms must be the unchanging and stable principles that allow for the change that characterizes becoming. Consider an example. Presumably the friends of the forms would characterize the body of some horse as an instance of becoming. The body of this horse is constantly changing, yet this body remains the body of a horse throughout the change. This is possible, according to the friends of the forms presumably, because the body of this horse continues to exemplify or participate in the unchanging form of horseness even as it changes. Since the form does not change, the body can remain the same body throughout the changes that it undergoes. The form is the stability that makes change possible. Given this way of understanding the forms, it is clear why the friends of the forms would want to maintain that the forms are at rest. In order better to understand why they would, as a result, want to deny that the forms can be moved and affected, we must examine the sense of motion (κίνησις).

²² See Campbell, *The Sophistes and Politicus*, 124.

A(i). The Notion of *Kineisthai*

“Κίνησις” and the related verb “κινεῖσθαι” are difficult to translate. I translate “κίνησις” as “motion” and “κινεῖσθαι” as “to be moved.”²³ Some scholars and translators of the *Sophist* will render “κίνησις” as “change” and “κινεῖσθαι” as “to change.”²⁴ “Κινεῖσθαι” is the middle-passive of “κινέω.” Unlike the English “to move,” “κινέω” is always transitive.²⁵ Hence, Aristotle’s claim that “everything moved must be moved by something”²⁶ is perfectly natural. Motion or change in an intransitive sense would be expressed by “μεταβάλλω.”²⁷ The most basic meaning of “κινέω” is “to set in motion,” from which it comes to mean “to change, innovate,” “to disturb, arouse,” and “to set going, cause.”²⁸ In the passive, it means “to be put in motion, to be moved.”²⁹

What does “κινεῖσθαι” mean in the context of the digression? I propose that “κινεῖσθαι” in the digression has the sense of “to be caused,” that is, “to be causally posterior to something.”³⁰ Consider the sense that “κινεῖσθαι” must have given the

²³ Cf. Fowler, *Plato VII*; Taylor, *The Sophist and the Statesman*; Benardete, *Plato’s Sophist*; Brann et al., *Plato: Sophist*; Ambuel, *Image and Paradigm*.

²⁴ See for example, Cornford, *Plato’s Theory of Knowledge*; White, *Sophist*; Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*.

²⁵ I would like to thank Helen Lang for pointing this out to me.

²⁶ Aristotle, *Physics*, VII.1.241b34 ff. (ἄπαν τὸ κινούμενον ὑπὸ τινος ἀνάγκη κινεῖσθαι.)

²⁷ Cf. LSJ, s.v. “μεταβάλλω.” That “μεταβάλλω” can be used intransitively explains why, in *Parmenides* 162b9-c6, Parmenides must begin with the claim that the one that is not is “changing” (μεταβάλλον) in order to establish that the one that is not is “being moved” (κινούμενον).

²⁸ LSJ, s.v. “κινέω.”

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ The account of the motion of the forms that I advocate does not find much support in the secondary literature. Sallis, McCabe, Lentz, and Sanday come closest, although in different ways. According to Sallis, “the movement which the stranger introduces into the *eide* . . . is precisely the *movement of self-showing*, the movement in which an *eidos* comes forth into manifestness, the movement in which an *eidos* shows itself. . . . The movement introduced by the Stranger . . . is a movement which is integral to being itself. It is not a movement of *a being* (in the sense of a movement in which something which already is would subsequently engage) but rather the *movement of being itself*” (Sallis, *Being and Logos*, 501). While Sallis and I differ about what precisely this “self-showing” involves, and while I think that his approach is too phenomenological, and so misses key insights, I agree with him that the motion of the forms is a motion of self-showing (which is necessarily a motion of what is causally prior toward what is causally posterior), whereby the forms constitute themselves as eidetic wholes. These eidetic wholes display the causally prior inner nature of the forms that constitute them, as I will argue in Chapter V.1. According to McCabe, “motion is a catchall for the affections of things. The affections of things, and their properties, are determined . . . by their relations with other things. On such an account, ‘motion’ identifies objects in a context of other objects; motion is *difference and relative identification*. . . . Rest, on the other hand, identifies objects in themselves. . . . So rest is *sameness and absolute identification*” (McCabe, *Plato’s Individuals*, 205). Although I think that McCabe is basically right here, her account fails to appreciate that rest and motion in the *Sophist* are intended to account for the causal priority and posteriority involved in the communion of forms. On my reading, rest is what allows for the non-difference between that which is causally prior and that which is causally posterior, while motion is what renders that which is causally

stranger's claims in 248d10-e5.³¹ The stranger supposes that coming to know and coming to be known are an affecting and a being affected. That which comes to be known is affected, insofar as it comes to be known. And insofar as it is affected, it is being moved. The relationship of affecting and being affected here is one of explanation. The act of coming to know explains why the object that comes to be known comes to be known. In other words, the relationship between coming to know and coming to be known here is a relationship of causal priority. To affect something, in this instance, is to be causally prior to something, and to be affected is to be causally posterior.³² The act of knowing explains why the object known comes to be qualified as being known. The stranger claims that "inasmuch as [something] comes to be known, to that extent it is being moved by being affected" (248e3-4; καθ' ὅσον γιγνώσκεται, κατὰ τοσοῦτον κινεῖσθαι διὰ τὸ πάσχειν). What is the relationship between "being moved" and "being affected" here? I submit that the two states are related such that anything being moved is also being affected and anything being affected is also being moved.³³ Both "to be

posterior non-identical to that which is causally prior (see chap. V.1.D). According to Lentz, "Κίνησις or change in being refers to multiple relationships between forms; relationships that are not temporally conceived but pertain to the meanings of the forms related or compared. This idea of κίνησις fills out what it means to define being as power: it is a non-temporal affection and limitation of the meaning of one form created by its connection with other distinct forms" (Lentz, "The Problem of Motion," 101). While my account of eidetic motion is in agreement with Lentz's in many ways—especially in the way that he characterizes it as non-temporal and as a further development of the notion of being as power—I think that, like McCabe, he fails to appreciate that rest and motion in the *Sophist* are intended to account for the causal priority and posteriority involved in the communion of forms. The sense of eidetic motion that Sanday identifies in his commentary on the *Parmenides* is compatible with my own, although stated somewhat differently: "As we go from end to end of the ideas that belong to the one definitionally, i.e. are said of it veridically, the one is in one sense in 'motion' insofar as its attributes are individually articulated into an ordered relationship of 'is' and 'is not'" (Sanday, *A Study of Dialectic*, chap. 5.3c).

³¹ On my reading, the stranger's claims in 248d10-e5 are intended to indicate the sense of "motion" that he wants to put into play, and are not intended to establish (4a): that coming to know is an affecting and coming to be known a being affected. The point is not to establish how exactly coming to know and coming to be known map onto affecting and being affected, but rather to focus the discussion on being as known, and to show that "to be moved" means "to be causally posterior." Hence, Brown may be correct that it is "far more plausible to think of coming to know something as being affected by it, rather than as affecting it" (Brown, "Innovation and Continuity," 199), but I do not think that the text here is intended to decide that issue.

³² The stranger has just employed this sense of "being affected" in his critique of the monists. The One, if it is a whole, could only be unified (a one) by having been affected by the one itself. The unity of the whole, in other words, is causally posterior to and so necessarily presupposes the one itself. See Plato, *Soph.*, 245a1-b3; chap. II. 5.B(ii).

³³ Cf. Plato, *Lg.*, X.894c4-7: "Then there's the motion which moves both itself and another, and which is harmoniously adapted to all affecting and all being affected, and is called the real change and motion of all that really is (τὴν τε αὐτὴν κινουῦσαν καὶ ἕτερον, ἐναρμόττουσαν πᾶσιν μὲν ποιήμασι, πᾶσιν δὲ παθήμασι, καλουμένην δὲ ὄντως τῶν ὄντων πάντων μεταβολὴν καὶ κίνησιν)."

moved” and “to be affected” signify an object’s status as causally posterior. The two states differ, however, in that while being affected is relative to affecting, being moved is relative both to moving (understood transitively) and to resting. “Being moved” is the middle term between the stranger’s claim that if something is being affected by coming to be known, it cannot be at rest. Thus, the argument of 248d10-e5 can be summarized:

- (a) Assume that coming to know is an affecting and coming to be known is a being affected.³⁴
- (b) Inasmuch as something is coming to be known, to that extent it is being affected.
- (c) Inasmuch as something is being affected, to that extent it is being moved.
- (d) Inasmuch as something is being moved, to that extent it cannot be resting (since motion and rest are contraries).
- (e) Therefore, in as much as something is coming to be known, to that extent it cannot be resting.

Some commentators suggest that “κινεῖσθαι” in the argument of 248d10-e5 describes “Cambridge change.”³⁵ In other words, “κινεῖσθαι” describes the way in which an object is changed from having the property of not being known by x , to having the property of being known by x . Say that at time t_1 , person x is ignorant of object y . Then at time t_2 , x comes to know y . When x comes to know y , y is changed from having the property of not being known by x , to having the property of being known by x . Although it may very well be the case that the forms undergo “Cambridge change,” I think claiming that the stranger is arguing for that here over-interprets 248d10-e5, especially since the stranger makes no explicit reference to time in that passage. Rather, the stranger is attempting to establish something much simpler—namely that “to be moved” means “to be posterior in explanation.” This is the most general sense of “to be moved.” This sense is in play in any sort of being moved, whether something is being moved

³⁴ I take this to be an assumption that the stranger does not necessarily himself endorse. See note 31 above.

³⁵ Moravcsik, “Being and Meaning in the *Sophist*,” 39-40; Runciman, *Plato’s Later Epistemology*, 81; G. E. L. Owen, “Plato and Parmenides on the Timeless Present,” *The Monist* 50, no. 3 (1966): 338-339; Bluck, *Plato’s Sophist*, 97-99; C. D. C. Reeve, “Motion, Rest, and Dialectic in the *Sophist*,” *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 67, no. 1 (1985): 61; Mark McPherran, “Plato’s Reply to the ‘Worst Difficulty’ Argument of the *Parmenides*: *Sophist* 248a-249d,” *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 68, no. 3 (1986): 244-250; Thomas “Speaking of Something,” 644. For various alternative views, which nevertheless also differ significantly from my own, see David Keyt, “Plato’s Paradox that the Immutable is Unknowable,” *Philosophical Quarterly* 19, no. 74 (1969), 1-14; Teloh, *The Development of Plato’s Metaphysics*, 194-195; John Malcolm, “Does Plato Revise his Ontology in *Sophist* 246c-249d?” *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 65, no. 2 (1983): 115-127; Brown, “Innovation and Continuity,” 199-203.

eidetically, qualitatively, spatially, temporally, and so on. “Cambridge change” is too determinate and implies motion in time. Being posterior in explanation, in contrast, identifies the necessary and sufficient condition for any sort of motion, including those that are atemporal. Since in the *Timaeus*, Plato has Timaeus describe a motion and life prior to the construction of time (*Tim.*, 37c6-d7), and since in the *Laws*, motion is attributed to the atemporal divine *nous* (mind, intellect, intelligence) (*Lg.*, X.897c4-898b3), it seems that Plato was perfectly happy with atemporal motion. Moreover, since Plato does not have the stranger mention time during his discussion of the motion of the forms in the *Sophist*, and since to the contrary, the stranger argues that the forms are being moved in reference to what seems to be divine *nous*, the text suggests a more general and atemporal sense of motion, rather than the more determinate sort of temporal motion presupposed by Cambridge change.³⁶ As we will continue to see, motion in the sense of “being causally posterior” makes sense of the stranger’s discussion of the motion of the forms in a way that alternative senses of motion do not.

B. The *Nous*, Life, Soul, and Motion of What Perfectly Is (248e7-249b4)

Having indicated the sense of motion in which he is interested, and having focused the inquiry on whether or not the theory of the friends of the forms can account for knowledge, the stranger starts to articulate the sort of motion and rest that would apply to the forms. He begins by establishing that the forms must be moved. He leads off with some pointed rhetorical questions:

What, by Zeus! Shall we be so easily persuaded that motion, life, soul, and intelligence are truly not present in what perfectly is? That it neither lives nor understands; but solemn and holy, not possessed of intellect, it stands unmoved?

—Τί δὲ πρὸς Διός; ὡς ἀληθῶς κίνησιν καὶ ζωὴν καὶ ψυχὴν καὶ φρόνησιν ἢ ῥαδίως πεισθησόμεθα τῷ παντελῶς ὄντι μὴ παρεῖναι, μηδὲ ζῆν αὐτο μηδὲ φρονεῖν, ἀλλὰ σεμνὸν καὶ ἅγιον, νοῦν οὐκ ἔχον, ἀκίνητον ἐστὸς εἶναι;
(248e7-249a2)

Theaetetus responds that this “would be a terrible account to grant” (249a3). We learn later in the *Sophist* (265c1-e3) that the stranger understands Theaetetus to have a predilection for thinking that nature is guided by divine reason and knowledge. The

³⁶ Cf. Lentz, “The Problem of Motion.”

stranger plays on that predilection here so as to bring Theaetetus to recognize how the theory of the friends of the forms must be modified.

The problem with the theory of the friends of the forms is that it does not grant that the forms can be moved and so is unable to account for knowledge. Given that “to be moved” means to be causally posterior to something, the problem is that the friends of the forms, by denying motion to the forms, deny that forms can be causally posterior to other forms, which in turn entails, among other things,³⁷ that forms cannot be posterior in *logos* to other forms. Yet if some forms were not posterior in *logos* to other forms, then discursive knowledge³⁸ and true speech about the forms would be impossible. The object of discursive knowledge must be embedded within eidetic whole/part structures, if it is to be expressed in true speech (λέγειν). For example, if I can discursively know and say truly that piety is just, then piety must be part of the form justice (cf. *Euth.*, 11e4 ff.).³⁹ The form justice, then, must be a whole of parts. Since knowledge entails the ability to give a true *logos*,⁴⁰ its object must be embedded in an eidetic whole. Yet given that the object of discursive knowledge is embedded within an eidetic whole, it must be structured. Since it is structured, it must be causally posterior to that which structures it. And to say that it is causally posterior is to say that it is being affected and being moved.⁴¹ If the friends of the forms deny that the forms have the power to be affected

³⁷ Participatory relations among forms other than those involved in priority and posteriority in *logos* would also be excluded.

³⁸ “Discursive knowledge” is an accurate translation of “λογισμός” at 248a11, where the friends of the forms claim that we know real being through “λογισμοῦ” (248a11; διὰ λογισμοῦ δὲ ψυχῆ πρὸς τὴν ὄντως οὐσίαν).

³⁹ See chap. I.5.B.

⁴⁰ Cf. Plato, *Rep.*, VII.534c1-3; *Tht.*, 201c7 ff.; Miller, “Unity and ‘Logos’”; chap. I.2.

⁴¹ That eidetic wholes are being moved does not imply that they change in quality, time, or place (cf. Robert Bolton, “Plato on Being and Becoming,” *The Review of Metaphysics* 29, no.1 [1975]: 93). These relations are atemporal and always the same. In this way, the account of the motion of the forms I offer here is in agreement with the way that the Athenian describes the motion of *nous* in *Laws* X, 897d3-898b9. He describes the motion of *nous* as analogous to rotational motion, that is, the motion of a sphere turning around its axis. “If we described both *nous* and the motion that spins in one place—resembling a sphere being turned on a lathe—as moving according to one plan and system (a) in the same respect, (b) in the same way, (c) in the same position, (d) about the same objects, and (e) in relation to the same objects, then no one could ever show us up for incompetent makers of verbal images” (Plato, *Lg.*, X.898a8-b3; τὸ κατὰ ταῦτα δῆπου καὶ ὁσαύτως καὶ ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ καὶ περὶ τὰ αὐτὰ καὶ πρὸς τὰ αὐτὰ καὶ ἓνα λόγον καὶ τάξιν μίαν ἄμφω κινεῖσθαι λέγοντες, νοῦν τὴν τε ἐν ἐνὶ φερομένην κίνησιν, σφαίρας ἐντόρνου ἀπεικασμένα φοραῖς, οὐκ ἄν ποτε φανεῖμεν φαῦλοι δημιουργοὶ λόγῳ καλῶν εἰκόνων). The forms are being moved, according to the account I am developing here, according to one plan and order (λόγον καὶ τάξιν), that plan and order being the normative principles in terms of which the forms are structured in relation to one another. The forms are structured such that they vary neither in respect nor in manner ((a) and (b)). Likewise, the forms

and to be moved, they will find themselves unable to explain how forms can compose eidetic wholes, and consequently, how forms are knowable.

The stranger's argument for why "what perfectly is"⁴² must include *nous*, life, soul, and motion, which begins at 249a4, represents the idea of eidetic motion for Theaetetus and further articulates it for the critical reader. The stranger's account here remains brief and elliptical. The account is worth thinking through, however, since it establishes the basis for how the stranger will continue to develop the notion of form as the digression continues. My analysis here will be somewhat provisional.

The stranger's initial claim is that what perfectly is has *nous*. The critical reader can articulate two things about how the forms are moved and commune with one another in light of this claim. First, relationships between the forms are intelligible relations. These intelligible relations include relations of priority and posteriorly in *logos*, since *nous* necessarily comprehends such relations. Second, and as a result, these intelligible relations are intelligible in light of the causally prior normative principles that govern them. The divine *nous* that the stranger invokes in this passage simply is these intelligible relations informed by the normative principles that govern them.⁴³

The stranger asks, "But are we to say that it [what perfectly is] has *nous* and not life?" (249a4; ἀλλὰ νοῦν μὲν ἔχειν, ζῶην δὲ μὴ φῶμεν;).⁴⁴ Theaetetus answer negatively.

are structured such that their positions within the eidetic wholes they compose do not change ((c), (d), and (e)).

⁴² I take "what perfectly is" (248e8-249a1; τῷ παντελῶς ὄντι) here to refer to the forms (cf. Plato, *Tim.* 31b; Plotinus, *Enneads*, VI.7[38].12.1-4; Cornelia J. de Vogel, *Philosophia I: Studies in Greek Philosophy* [Assen, The Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1970], 176-182, 194-198; Eric Perl, "The Demiurge and the Forms: A Return to the Ancient Interpretation of Plato's *Timaeus*," *Ancient Philosophy* 18, no.1 [1998]: 87; Lloyd Gerson, "The 'Holy Solemnity' of Forms and the Platonic Interpretation of *Sophist*," *Ancient Philosophy* 26, no. 2 [2006]: esp. 292n3). Although this is the standard Neo-Platonic reading, many modern commentators reject it (for example, A. E. Taylor, *A Commentary on Plato's Timaeus* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928], 81; Cornford, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge*, 245; Miller, "Fast and Loose about Being," 357n26).

⁴³ Cf. Perl, "The Demiurge and the Forms," 81-92; Gerson, "The 'Holy Solemnity' of Forms," 298. Gerson argues that "the forms and intellect [νοῦς] are inseparable" since the activity of the forms "is just the activity of intellect." In this I agree with him, and I am in general agreement with the Neo-Platonic reading he offers of this passage of the *Sophist*. I differ from him in that my understanding of the motion of the forms is more determinate than the one he presents. I understand "to be moved" as "to be causally posterior," whereas Gerson understands the motion of the forms—*nous*—simply as "perfected activity" in the sense of Aristotle's *energeia*.

⁴⁴ Cf. Plato, *Tim.*, 30c4-8, 31b1; Rosen, *Plato's Sophist*, 224n6. *Timaeus* characterizes the forms on which the cosmos is modeled as "the perfectly living thing (παντελεῖ ζῶν)," which "comprehends within itself all intelligible living things, just as our cosmos is made up of us and all the other visible creatures (τὰ γὰρ δὴ

In the *Laws*, the Athenian defines life as that which moves itself (X.895a6-10), and we find a similar characterization in the *Phaedrus* (245c5-246a2). Hence, it is reasonable to infer that life in this portion of the *Sophist* is in its most basic sense self-motion. The relations among the forms are intelligible relations of participation between forms, including relations of priority and posteriority in *logos*. The forms are not externally related to one another, like billiard balls, but already by their unique natures imply one another and their intelligibly ordered relations with one another. To put it differently, the normative principles that structure the intelligibly ordered communion of forms are not external to the forms, but are those forms themselves, *qua* normative principles or natures. The very meaning or nature of one form implies the nature of the others and the eidetic wholes by which those natures are articulated and expressed. In this way, the communion of forms is not moved by something else, but is self-moving. Given that to be self-moving is to be living (*Lg.*, X.895a6-10), the communion of forms is living.

After hearing Theaetetus' agreement, the stranger continues: "But are we saying that both of these [*nous* and life] are in it [what perfectly is], while we go on to deny that it has them in a soul?" (249a6-7; ἀλλὰ ταῦτα μὲν ἀμφοτέρω ἐνόντ' αὐτῷ λέγομεν, οὐ μὴν ἐν ψυχῇ γε φήσομεν αὐτὸ ἔχειν αὐτά;).⁴⁵ Soul in its most basic sense, as we see it defined in the *Laws* and described throughout the dialogues, is a self-moving principle which imparts motion to what is moved (*Lg.*, X.895e10-896a5).⁴⁶ In most contexts, that which is moved is the body or bodies. Here, however, the stranger is considering soul with respect to what perfectly is, with respect to the forms. Forms have a static intelligible content and structure that can be abstracted from some of the normative principles which govern them, as happens in the mathematical thinking described in the *Republic*. Mathematical thinking considers the forms as hypotheses and does not attempt to give an account of the causally prior normative principles which ground these hypotheses.⁴⁷ That is, mathematical thinking considers the forms insofar as they are

νοητὰ ζῶα πάντα ἐκεῖνο ἐν ἑαυτῷ περιλαβὼν ἔχει, καθάπερ ὁδε ὁ κόσμος ἡμᾶς ὅσα τε ἄλλα θρέμματα συνέστηκεν ὀρατά)."

⁴⁵ Cf. Plato, *Tim.*, 30b3.

⁴⁶ Cf. Plato, *Phrd.*, 245c5-246a2; *Tim.*, 37b5.

⁴⁷ Plato, *Rep.*, VI.510b2-511d5; cf. Miller, "Beginning the 'Longer Way,'" 318-327.

individual intelligible objects—ideal particulars⁴⁸—and does not fully comprehend the unique nature of each form that is causally prior to each form *qua* eidetic individual and each form *qua* eidetic whole or part. The forms, insofar as they are countable individuals and eidetically structured are being moved. Yet, insofar as they are moved, they presuppose a principle which is the source of that motion, a principle which contains and communicates the *nous* and life of the communion of forms. Since this principle is self-moving and imparts motion to that which is moved, it can be described as soul.⁴⁹

The stranger continues:

Stranger: Then will we really say that it has *nous*, life, and soul, and yet, although ensouled, stands entirely immovable?

Theaetetus: To me that appears entirely irrational.

Stranger: So we must admit that which is moved and motion as beings.

ΞΕ. Ἀλλὰ δῆτα νοῦν μὲν καὶ ζωὴν καὶ ψυχὴν ἔχειν, ἀκίνητον μέντοι τὸ παράπαν ἔμψυχον ὄν ἐστάναι;

ΘΕΑΙ. πάντα ἔμοιγε ἄλογα ταῦτ' εἶναι φαίνεται.

ΞΕ. Καὶ τὸ κινούμενον δὴ καὶ κίνησιν συγχωρητέον ὡς ὄντα. (249a9-b3)

A form is something moved insofar as it is structured as an eidetic individual, eidetic whole, or eidetic part. Forms must be structured if they are to be objects of discursive knowledge that can be expressed in true speech. Therefore, given that the forms are objects of discursive knowledge and ground true speech, the forms must be subject to

⁴⁸ Cf. Miller, “Beginning the ‘Longer Way,’” 323-327; Lee Franklin, “Inventing Intermediates: Mathematical Discourse and Its Objects in *Republic VII*,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 50, no. 4 (2012): 485-497; Plato, *Rep.*, VII.532c1–2. Miller concisely identifies what I mean by an ideal particular in the following passage describing mathematical thinking: “Consider: The geometer begins with (1) this sensible ∇ that he draws. But even as he considers it, he turns away from it, looking to (2) the perfection that it lacks; and in the context of pure intelligibility that the consideration of perfection opens up, he ‘sees,’ that is, conceives, (3) the perfectly triangular triangle that this ∇ only approaches or, as Socrates says, ‘falls short of.’ Nor is this all: even as the perfectly triangular triangle presents itself in thought, he knows of it that it is—and that the visible ∇ is not—a perfect triangle; hence there is also in play, though not as an object but as the tacit standard by reference to which he identifies and assesses the two triangles that *are* objects, (4) the Form that these instantiate, triangularity as such” (Miller, “Beginning the ‘Longer Way,’” 324). Term (3), “the perfectly triangular triangle,” is an ideal particular. Although perfect, it is an individual, a one of many, structured according and causally posterior to higher order normative principles, such as perfection itself (=2) and triangularity or the nature of a triangle (=4). Mathematical thinking considers the forms—such as triangularity, being, same, and different—as ideal particulars.

⁴⁹ Cf. Sallis, *Being and Logos*, 498. “What happens in the soul is not something distinct over against the event of self-showing in which things can show themselves; on the contrary, the soul is invocative, and what happens ‘in’ the soul belongs to the totality of the self-showing.”

being moved. Hence, that which is moved and motion are. As the stranger immediately goes on to indicate, however, this eidetic motion presupposes eidetic rest.

C. The Forms both in Motion and at Rest (249b5-d5)

With Theaetetus' agreement that the moved and motion are, the stranger next points out that the forms must both be moved and rest if they are to be intelligible and objects of discursive knowledge. "Thus it turns out, Theaetetus," says the stranger, "that if the things that are are immovable, there is no *nous* in anything about anything anywhere (νοῦν μηδενὶ περὶ μηδενὸς εἶναι μηδαμοῦ)" (249b5-6). The objects of discursive knowledge, and so *nous*, must include eidetic wholes and parts. Wholes and parts, however, are necessarily being moved, since they are structured. "And yet," notes the stranger, "if we grant that all things are borne about and being moved (φερόμενα καὶ κινούμενα), we shall exclude, by that very account, this same *nous* from the things that are" (249b8-10). Theaetetus asks how. The stranger responds: "Do you think that in the same respect and in the same way and about the same thing would ever come to be apart from rest?" (249b12-c1; τὸ κατὰ ταῦτὰ καὶ ὡσαύτως καὶ περὶ τὸ αὐτὸ δοκεῖ σοι χωρὶς στάσεως γενέσθαι ποτ' ἄν;).⁵⁰ Discursive knowledge can be expressed in true speech. One can only speak truly, however, if one can make various claims about the same thing (περὶ τὸ αὐτό) in the same respect (τὸ κατὰ ταῦτά) and in the same way (καὶ ὡσαύτως).⁵¹ Hence, true speech and discursive knowledge about the forms is only possible if the unique nature of each form remains unchanged even as it participates in other forms, and thereby undergoes relations of causal priority and/or priority in *logos*. To put it another way, that which is causally posterior—and therefore moved—necessarily presupposes the power of that which is causally prior to set it in motion.⁵² The power of that which is causally prior, in turn, if it is to explain that which is posterior while itself not requiring

⁵⁰ Cf. Plato, *Lg.*, X.898a8-b3; *Tim.*, 40a8-b1; *Plt.*, 269d5-6; *Phd.*, 78d1-3; *Phil.*, 58a2-3, 59a11-b6, 59c2-6; *Rep.*, V.479a1-3, 479e7-8, VI.484b3-5.

⁵¹ Cf. Crivelli, *Plato's Account of Falsehood*, 94. "According to Plato it is impossible to understand what it is to be (a) ϕ unless being (a) ϕ amounts to the same at all times and in all circumstances and contexts. . . . The requirement that something satisfy the condition of 'being the same in manner and in the same way and about the same thing' is simply the requirement that the attribute of being (a) ϕ have a nature that is invariant with respect to times, circumstances, and contexts. . . ."

⁵² I say the "power" of that which is causally prior, because that which is causally prior simply considered insofar as it is causally prior is already in relation to that which is causally posterior, that is, A is prior to B if and only if B is posterior to A.

further explanation, must be at rest; for it cannot be posterior in any sense and must remain unchanging throughout the various entities that it structures.

The forms must both be in motion and at rest if the discursivity which knowledge entails is possible. Without motion and rest, asks the stranger, “do you see how *nous* could be or come to be (ὄντα ἢ γινόμενον) anywhere?” (249c3-4). Theaetetus correctly answers that it could not. *Nous* and knowledge presuppose that their object—what perfectly is, the forms—is both in motion and at rest. And, the stranger notes, we presuppose that knowledge is possible whenever we make “strong assertions about anything in any way” (249c6-8).⁵³ He concludes, therefore, that we must not listen to those who say that the all is at rest or that the all is in motion, but must rather assert, “as in the children’s prayer, ‘as many as are unmoved and moved,’⁵⁴ that what is and the totality are both together (249c10-d4; ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὴν τῶν παίδων εὐχὴν, ὅσα ἀκίνητα καὶ κεινημένα, τὸ ὄν τε καὶ τὸ πᾶν συναμφοτέρα λέγειν).⁵⁵

§3. *An Argument to Reveal the Perplexity of Inquiry concerning Being (249d6-251a4)*

So far in the digression, two major conceptions of what is have emerged. The first conceived of what is as an individual thing or things. This conception was thoroughly criticized by the stranger, as we saw in Chapter II. The second conception

⁵³ “ΞΕ. Καὶ μὴν πρὸς γε τοῦτον παντὶ λόγῳ μαχετέον, ὃς ἂν ἐπιστήμην ἢ φρόνησιν ἢ νοῦν ἀφανίζων ἰσχυρίζεται περὶ τινος ὀπιοῦν.” “Stranger: So we must surely fight, using every argument, against him who first destroys knowledge, intelligence, or *nous* and then makes strong assertions about anything in anyway.”

⁵⁴ There are two main theories about which words are from the children’s prayer. According to one, “ὅσα ἀκίνητα καὶ κεινημένα” are from the prayer. According to the other, the word “συναμφοτέρα” is from the prayer. See Campbell, *The Sophistes and Politicus*, 131-132.

⁵⁵ Contrary to some commentators (for example, Seligman, *Being and Not-Being*, 37; Richard J. Ketchum, “Participation and Predication in the *Sophist* 251-260,” *Phronesis* 23, no. 1 (1978): 43; Ray, *For Images*, 31-34; Brown, “Innovation and Continuity,” 201-203; Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 92n66, 95), I do not think that the conclusion of the argument against the friends of the forms is that “reality is all that is unmoved and moved”—as if the friends of the forms were forced to concede that reality (being) includes what they call “becoming.” I do not think that the distinction between being and becoming is rejected, since the stranger employs it later in the digression (see for example, 261d2-3). Rather, on my view, the friends of the forms are forced to concede that the totality of what they call “being”—the forms—is both unmoved and moved. As I will demonstrate in Chapter V.1.D, each form *qua* nature, *qua* the power that can structure, is unmoved, while each form *qua* kind, *qua* structured, is moved. Those who want to argue that the stranger is trying to establish that being includes becoming have difficulty accounting for how the stranger concludes that reality (being) includes all moved things from the fact that it includes some moved things, that is, *nous* and soul (cf., Owen, “Plato and Parmenides on the Timeless Present, 339n16; Bluck, *Plato’s Sophist*, 100-101; Ray, *For Images*, 31-34; Brown, “Innovation and Continuity,” 201-204; Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 94-95).

began to emerge during the critique of the monists and has been further developed through the critique of the materialists and friends of the forms. According to the second conception, what is is a structured plurality and a whole of parts. We witnessed the stranger developing this notion especially during his critique of the friends of the forms. As we saw, discursive knowledge and true *logos* presuppose that the forms compose eidetic wholes. Eidetic wholes, in turn, must be moved insofar as they are structured and must be at rest insofar they manifest an unchanging structure in terms of which they are structured. After completing his critique of the friends of the forms and concluding that being is both resting and moved, in 249d6-251a4 the stranger presents an argument against the thesis that being is both resting and moved. This argument and the critique of the late learners that follows it bring together the two major conceptions of what is that have emerged during the digression, so as to prompt the critical readers of the dialogue to recognize what the conception of being in terms of wholeness necessarily entails.

Although Socrates and perhaps some of the others listening to the conversation between the stranger and Theaetetus could presumably follow the stranger's discussion of the *nous*, life, and soul of what perfectly is, Theaetetus himself was unable to follow adequately, as the following remarks make clear:

Stranger: Well then, don't we appear at this point to have suitably encompassed what is in an account (περιειληφέναι τῷ λόγῳ τὸ ὄν)?

Theaetetus: By all means.

Stranger: Hold on, Theaetetus! Because it seems to me that we are only now about to recognize the perplexity of the inquiry concerning what is.

Theaetetus: How so? What do you mean?

Stranger: Don't you notice, my young friend, that we are now in the greatest ignorance about it, and we appear to ourselves to be saying something?

Theaetetus: I think so, at least. But I don't understand at all how we slipped into that condition.

Stranger: Then look more closely whether by now agreeing to these things [namely, that what is and the totality is both unmoved and moved] we might not justly be asked the very things which we ourselves earlier asked those who claim that the totality (τὸ πᾶν) is hot and cold. (249d6-250a2)

The stranger claims that they are only now about to recognize the perplexity that belongs to the inquiry concerning what is. He will reveal this perplexity by bringing the

conception of being as an individual thing or things into tension with the conception of being as a whole of parts. In bringing these two conceptions of being together, the stranger will begin to highlight what is distinctive about each of the two definitions of being as power. Recall that according to the first, that which possesses any sort of power (δύναμις) either to affect (ποιεῖν) or to be affected (παθεῖν) really is (247d8-e3); while according to the second, “the things that are are nothing other than power” (247d4; τὰ ὄντα ὡς ἔστιν οὐκ ἄλλο τι πλὴν δύναμις). The discussion of being during the critique of the friends of the forms primarily focused on being in light of the first definition.

According to the stranger’s modified version of the theory of the friends of the forms, the forms are what really are and possess the power to affect and/or be affected. The forms, in other words, are considered as individuals, although individuals that can compose and/or be wholes. Piety, for example, is an individual countable form, which, along with others, composes the form justice. Justice, in turn, can also be considered as an individual. Although the stranger suggested that the friends of the forms modify their theory such that forms like piety and justice would possess the power to affect and/or be affected, he did not criticize them, at least explicitly, for speaking of the forms as individuals. The perplexity in the stranger’s argument in 250a8-d4, I will argue, should prompt the critical reader to notice the sense in which the forms must be understood in terms of the second definition of being as power. In order properly to understand the forms as individuals, one must first understand what the stranger means when he claims that “the things that are are nothing other than power” (247d4).

In order to reveal the perplexity of the inquiry concerning being, the stranger attacks the thesis that being is both resting and moved by means of an argument in many ways similar to the one with which he attacked the dualists. The text of the argument reads as follows:

Stranger: Well then, wouldn’t you say that motion and rest are most contrary to one another?

Theaetetus: Certainly.

Stranger: And do you claim that both of them and each are in the same way?

[250b]

Theaetetus: I do.

Stranger: Then do you mean that both and each are moved, when you grant that they are?

Theaetetus: In no way.

Stranger: Do you mean that they rest, when you say that both of them are?

Theaetetus: How could I?

Stranger: So do you posit what is as some third thing in the soul in addition to these, as if rest and motion were encompassed by it? And is it by taking them together and focusing on the community of their being that you in this way address them both as things that are?

[250c]

Theaetetus: We truly do seem to divine that what is is some third thing, whenever we say rest and motion are.

Stranger: Then what is is not both motion and rest together, but surely something different from these.

Theaetetus: So it seems.

Stranger: Therefore, according to its own nature, what is neither rests nor is moved.

Theaetetus: Probably.

Stranger: Then to where can he who wants to establish for himself something clear about it still turn his thought?

Theaetetus: Yes, where?

Stranger: I suppose that there is nowhere he can still turn easily. For if something [250d] is not being moved, how is it not resting? Or how is what in no way rests, again not being moved? But what is has now appeared to us outside of both of these. Is this possible?

Theaetetus: It is the greatest of impossibilities.

ΞΕ. Εἶεν δὴ, κίνησιν καὶ στάσιν ἄρ' οὐκ ἐναντιώτατα λέγεις ἀλλήλοις;

ΘΕΑΙ. Πῶς γὰρ οὔ;

ΞΕ. Καὶ μὴν εἶναί γε ὁμοίως φῆς ἀμφοτέρα αὐτὰ καὶ ἐκάτερον;

[250b]

ΘΕΑΙ. Φημί γὰρ οὖν.

ΞΕ. Ἄρα κινεῖσθαι λέγων ἀμφοτέρα καὶ ἐκάτερον, ὅταν εἶναι συγχωρῆς;

ΘΕΑΙ. Οὐδαμῶς.

ΞΕ. Ἄλλ' ἐστάναι σημαίνεις λέγων αὐτὰ ἀμφοτέρα εἶναι;

ΘΕΑΙ. Καὶ πῶς;

ΞΕ. Τρίτον ἄρα τι παρὰ ταῦτα τὸ ὄν ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ τιθείς, ὡς ὑπ' ἐκείνου τὴν τε στάσιν καὶ τὴν κίνησιν περιεχομένην, συλλαβὸν καὶ ἀπιδὼν αὐτῶν πρὸς τὴν τῆς οὐσίας κοινωνίαν, οὕτως εἶναι προσεῖπας ἀμφοτέρω;

[250c]

ΘΕΑΙ. Κινδυνεύομεν ὡς ἀληθῶς τρίτον ἀπομαντεύεσθαι τι τὸ ὄν, ὅταν κίνησιν καὶ στάσιν εἶναι λέγωμεν.

ΞΕ. Οὐκ ἄρα κίνησις καὶ στάσις ἐστὶ συναμφοτέρων τὸ ὄν ἀλλ' ἕτερον δὴ τι τούτων.

ΘΕΑΙ. Ἔοικεν.

ΞΕ. Κατὰ τὴν αὐτοῦ φύσιν ἄρα τὸ ὄν οὔτε ἔστηκεν οὔτε κινεῖται.

ΘΕΑΙ. Σχεδόν.

ΞΕ. Ποῖ δὴ χρὴ τὴν διάνοιαν ἔτι τρέπειν τὸν βουλόμενον ἐναργῆς τι περὶ αὐτοῦ παρ' ἑαυτῷ βεβαιώσασθαι;

ΘΕΑΙ. Ποῖ γάρ;

ΞΕ. Οἶμαι μὲν οὐδαμῶς ἔτι ῥάδιον. εἰ γάρ τι μὴ [250d] κινεῖται, πῶς οὐκ ἔστηκεν; ἢ τὸ μηδαμῶς ἐστὸς πῶς οὐκ αὖ κινεῖται; τὸ δὲ ὄν ἡμῖν νῦν ἐκτὸς τούτων ἀμφοτέρων ἀναπέφανται. ἢ δυνατόν οὖν τοῦτο;

ΘΕΑΙ. Πάντων μὲν οὖν ἀδυνατώτατον. (250a8-d4)

The main difference between this argument and the one against the dualists is that the two basic individuals here are the forms rest (στάσις) and motion (κίνησις) rather than the material principles hot and cold. That rest and motion are forms is important. It explains otherwise problematic inferences that are at play in the argument, such as “motion is being moved” and “motion is not resting,” and “rest rests” and “rest is not being moved.”⁵⁶ These sorts of inferences only work if “motion,” for instance, designates the form motion, where the form is understood as “what is being moved.”

This way of understanding the forms is the one Socrates presents at the end of *Republic* V. Since according to the *Republic* V account, what is not can be neither known nor opined (*Rep.*, V.477a1-b1, 478b6-c7), it is unsurprising that the notion of form developed in that account should come under scrutiny here in the *Sophist*.⁵⁷ The *Republic* V account characterizes the objects of knowledge, the forms, as “what is” (τὸ ὄν).⁵⁸ The forms are defined in contrast to the non-object of ignorance, what is not, and

⁵⁶ For a discussion of the difficulties with these inferences see Crivelli, *Plato's Account of Falsehood*, 119-128.

⁵⁷ Cf. Nehamas, “Self-Predication and Plato's Theory of Forms,” 98ff.

⁵⁸ Cf. “ὄ ἐστιν” at *Rep.*, VI.490b3, 507b7, VII.532a7, b1, 533b2, X.597a2, a4, c3, c9.

the objects of opinion, intermediates between what is and what is not. A form is what is.⁵⁹ In other words, a form is only and always its one character.⁶⁰ The form beauty, for example, is beautiful and is never anything other than beautiful, since the form beauty simply is what is beautiful. According to the *Republic V* account, form *F* is what is in the sense that it is what is *F* and is never what is not *F*. The objects of opinion, on the other hand, which here are primarily spatio-temporal beings, both are and are not. An object of opinion is intermediate between what is and what is not in that at the same time it is and is not (478d5-6). Some particular painting, for example, is beautiful in certain respects and not beautiful in others. An object of opinion is and is not, because it is what is *F* in some respects, but also what is not *F* in others. Form *F*, in contrast, simply is what is *F*.

Given the *Republic V* notion of form, the structure of the stranger's argument in 250a8-d4 can be formulated as follows. I take "what is" (ὄν) to refer to the form being, "motion" (κίνησις) to refer to the form motion—what is being moved—and "rest" (στάσις) to refer to the form rest—what rests:

- (1) What is being moved and what rests are contraries (Premise).
 - (1)a. It is not the case that what rests is being moved (from (1)).
 - (1)b. It is not the case that what is being moved is resting (from (1)).
- (2) What is being moved and what rests both and each are (Premise, from the argument against the friends of the forms).
- (3) It is not the case that what is being moved and what rests are both being moved (from (1)a).
- (4) It is not the case that what is being moved and what rests both rest (from (1)b).
- (5) Therefore, it is not the case that what is is identical to what is being moved or to what rests (from (2), (3), and (4)).
- (6) Therefore, what is is different from what is being moved and from what rests (from (5)).
- (7) Therefore, what is is outside of what is being moved and what rests (from (6)).
- (8) Therefore, what is is not being moved and is not resting (from (6) or (7)).

⁵⁹ Cf. Kahn, "Some Philosophical Uses of 'To Be' in Plato," 112-114; "Being in Parmenides and Plato," *La Parole del Passato* 43 (1988): 255-258.

⁶⁰ Cf. Nehamas, "Self-Predication and Plato's Theory of Forms," 93-103, esp. 95-98.

- (9) But the object of discursive knowledge must both be moved and rest (Premise, from the argument against the friends of the forms).
- (10) Therefore, what is cannot be discursively known. That is, there is nowhere to which “he who wants to establish for himself something clear about it [can] still turn his thought” (from (8) and (9)).

The argument derives a performative contradiction, in that it concludes that what is cannot be discursively known, and yet makes knowledge claims about what is.⁶¹ It makes those claims directly in (5)-(8) and (10), which have what is as their subject. Furthermore, the argument indirectly makes knowledge claims about what is anytime the verb “to be” is used in any of its various forms. I propose that the way in which this performative contradiction is derived brings to light “the perplexity of the inquiry concerning what is” (249d10-11).⁶²

The perplexity, I will argue, is that being can be defined according to both of the two definitions of being as power. In other words, being can be defined both as something that has the power to affect and/or be affected, and also as the power to affect and/or be affected—both an individual characterized as a being and as that character itself.⁶³ Consider how the stranger develops this perplexity. The stranger argues that being is “some third thing in the soul” in addition to motion and rest, “as if rest and motion were encompassed by it” (250b8-9). Both are encompassed by being inasmuch as they are such that we can take them together and focus on “the community of their being (τῆς οὐσίας)” (250b10-11). The word “community” (κοινωνία) here refers to the way in which they affect and are affected by one another. Both motion and rest are in the sense that they share in the same community of *ousia*, the same whole of parts. Insofar as they are both members of the community of forms, their definitive characters (οὐσίαι) are intrinsically related to one another. The definitive character of one is unintelligible apart

⁶¹ Commentators have made various suggestions as to where the fallacy occurs in the argument (see Cornford, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge*, 250; Taylor, *The Sophist and the Statesman*, 54; Moravcsik, “Being and Meaning in the *Sophist*,” 27n1; Runciman, *Plato's Later Epistemology*, 81; Owen, “Plato on Not-Being,” 449; Seligman, *Being and Not-Being*, 41-42; Bluck, *Plato's Sophist*, 104-105; de Rijk, *Plato's Sophist*, 111-112; Ambuel, *Image and Paradigm*, 124; Crivelli, *Plato's Account of Falsehood*, 98-101). As I read it, the fallacy occurs in lines (6)-(8), namely in the inference from not identical to different in (6), the inference from different to “outside of” in (7), and the inference from (6) or (7) to (8). These fallacious moves result because key terms, such as “what is,” “not identical,” “difference,” and “outside of” are left ambiguous.

⁶² Cf. Moravcsik, “Being and Meaning in the *Sophist*,” 27n1.

⁶³ Ambuel, *Image and Paradigm*, 124.

from the definitive character of the other. Motion is the contrary of rest and rest is the contrary of motion. Both are in that they affect and are affected by one another, that is, they stand in intelligible relations to one another.

If this is the community of being, then is being the power to affect and/or be affected, or is being a thing that has this power? During the argument against the dualists, the stranger and Theaetetus forced the dualists to claim either that being is more than two or that being is one. The stranger was able to force the dualists into this conclusion because the dualists were presented as assuming that what is is simply a determinate number of individual things. What is either had to be a third individual in addition to the other two, or it had to be the one and only individual, an aggregate of the other two. If the former, it would be false to say that the two are. If the latter, the totality of what is could be counted as one instead of two. The argument of 250a8-d4 is also concerned with counting, but in a different way. The difference is due to the introduction of whole/part composition into the digression, and to the rejection of the assumption that “to be” is simply to be an individual thing or things. The problem articulated by the argument of 250a8-d4 is more subtle than the argument against the dualists. Insofar as motion and rest are discrete forms and so parts of the communion of forms, they can be counted as such. They are parts of what is. Motion is what is: it is what is being moved. Rest is what is: it is what is resting. Rest and motion can be counted as two individuals that have the character of what is—that possess the power to affect and/or be affected. Therefore, both motion and rest are beings according to the first definition of being as power. Being, however, inasmuch as it simply is the power in terms of which the whole that is the communion of forms is structured, cannot be counted as one of the parts. Yet, as Theaetetus recognizes, “we truly do seem to divine that being is some third thing, whenever we say rest and motion are” (250c1-2). Thus, it appears that being is countable.

The perplexity lies in the way that being is countable.⁶⁴ In one sense, we can count being by counting the forms—motion and rest are two, justice is a third, and so on. On the one hand, counting the forms amounts to counting the parts of being. On this count being is not one of the parts, but the whole, and can be counted as one whole. On

⁶⁴ Cf. Sallis, *Being and Logos*, 504.

the other hand, counting the forms amounts to counting beings, in which case being is not one individual at all. Rather, being is the many things that are—the many forms. Yet, “the things that are,” insofar as they are beings, “are nothing other than power” (247d4; τὰ ὄντα ὡς ἔστιν οὐκ ἄλλο τι πλὴν δύναμις). According to this second definition of being as power, being can be counted as one, but a one that is neither a whole nor simply many. The power whereby the things that are are is one power. And due to this power, the things that are compose one whole—the communion of forms—of which they are parts. The forms compose a whole because inasmuch as they are, they simply are the one power to affect and/or be affected. In this way, being in the sense of the power to affect and/or be affected is causally prior to being in the sense of the whole that is the communion of forms and causally prior to the beings—the forms—that compose it. As a result, being in the sense of the power to affect and/or be affected—what it is to be—is not identical to what it is to rest, nor to what it is to be moved, nor to both together, nor to the totality of forms.⁶⁵ Rather this power is what it is to be and that by which the totality of forms are. “Therefore,” the stranger can infer, “according to its own nature, being neither rests nor is moved” (250c6-7). According to its own nature, being is simply the power to affect and/or be affected. This power, however, is not an individual.⁶⁶ It is neither one of, nor many of, nor the totality of the individual beings that possess it. Instead it is that by virtue of which individual beings are beings and are individuals. Yet if being is not an individual, then it cannot be a numerically distinct and different from the others. The result of this analysis is that being in the sense of the power to affect and/or be affected is neither a numerically distinct individual, different from the things that are, nor an individual that is numerically identical to the things that are. Thus, it seems that we ought not to count it as a third, numerically distinct individual, in addition to motion and

⁶⁵ Cf. Cornford, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge*, 250; Seligman, *Being and Not-Being*, 41-42; Bluck, *Plato's Sophist*, 105.

⁶⁶ Cf. Michael Frede, “Die Frage nach dem Seienden: Sophistes,” in *Platon, Seine Dialoge in der Sicht neuer Forschung*, ed. T. Kobusch and B. Mojsisch (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1996), 193; Miller, “Fast and Loose about Being,” 361-362. That being in the sense of power is not an individual is what generates the perplexity concerning being here. It is also precisely why “what is and what is not have both had an equal share in perplexity,” and precisely why “there is now hope that in whatever way one of them comes to light more dimly or more clearly, so the other will come to light as well” (*Soph.*, 250e6-251e1). As we saw in Chapter II, the perplexities concerning non-being were generated because it does not seem that “non-being” could name an individual. It has now come to light that “being” does not seem to name an individual, at least if the second definition of being as power is correct.

rest, nor as one self-identical individual, a whole composed of motion and rest. The power to affect and/or be affected is not an individual at all.

The following is the heart of the perplexity of the inquiry into being. Being, although presumably one, can seemingly be counted four times. (1) It can be counted as any individual that possesses the power to affect and/or be affected—for example, to count motion and rest is to count two beings. (2) It can be counted as the totality of individuals that have the power to affect and/or be affected—what is, the communion of forms, can be counted as one whole. (3) It can be counted as an individual form, being—what it is to be is one form, different from others, such as what it is to rest and what it is to be moved. (4) It can be counted as the power to affect and/or be affected—the power to affect and/or be affected is one power. Hence the stranger concludes from the argument of 250a8-d4 that just as before they had been hemmed in by perplexity concerning what is not, now they are hemmed in by perplexity concerning what is. Both being and non-being have an equal share in the perplexity (250d5-251a4).

The difference between (3) and (4) is especially perplexing, since what it is to be simply is the power to affect and/or be affected, and yet, as the stranger will insist later on (254d4-12), what it is to be can be counted as one form among others, which like the others presumably possesses the power to affect and/or be affected. The stranger will focus on the relationship between (3) and (4) during his discussion of the five greatest kinds. Before that, however, he will briefly consider the relationship between (1) and (2), by considering “in what way on each occasion we address the same thing by many names” (251a5-6).

§4. The Late Learners (251d5-252e8)

The stranger moves from the perplexity concerning being, rest, and motion to a critique of one final ontological theory, that of those whom he not so flatteringly calls “late learners” (ὄψιμαθεῖς) (251b6-7). The stranger’s critique of the late learners has three main objectives, as I read it. First, it clarifies the relationship between (1) and (2) above in a way that sets the stranger up to clarify the relationship between (1), (2), (3), and (4) later on. Second, it introduces the notion of the communion of forms or kinds. Third, it specifies the sense in which being as the power to affect and/or be affected

applies to the forms: the power to affect and/or be affected is the power to commune in determinate ways with other forms.

The stranger asks how it is that they can call the same thing by many names and then, at Theaetetus' request, he offers an example of what he means:

We speak of man, I suppose, by naming him many things, attributing colors, shapes, sizes, vices, and virtues to him. In all these cases, and thousands of others, we say not only that he is man, but also good and indefinitely many other things. And the same account holds for other things as well: having assumed that each thing is one, we again, by using many names, also call it many.

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 εἶναι φαμεν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀγαθὸν καὶ ἕτερα ἄπειρα, καὶ τᾶλλα δὴ κατὰ τὸν αὐτὸν λόγον οὕτως ἐν ἕκαστον ὑποθέμενοι πάλιν αὐτὸ πολλὰ καὶ πολλοῖς ὀνόμασι λέγομεν. (251a8-b4)

Does “ἄνθρωπον” in this passage refer to a particular man or to the kind man?⁶⁷ The sort of attributions mentioned here—colors, shapes, sizes, and so on—are attributions that could be made of either a particular or a kind.⁶⁸ The passage suggests that both readings are possible, depending on the level at which one considers the stranger's discussion of the late learners. On one level, we can consider what the late learners themselves, whoever they may be,⁶⁹ are thinking about. This is of course a matter of speculation, but given the way in which Protarchus and Socrates describe the proponents of similar views

⁶⁷ Commentators and translators usually take “ἄνθρωπον” in this passage to refer to a particular. See for example, Cornford, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge*, 253-255; Taylor, *The Sophist and the Statesman*, 152; Moravcsik, “Being and Meaning in the *Sophist*,” 57-59; Seligman, *Being and Not-Being*, 44; Benardete, *Plato's Sophist*, 45; de Rijk, *Plato's Sophist*, 113; White, *Sophist*, 173; Lesley Brown, “The *Sophist* on Statements, Predication, and Falsehood,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Plato*, ed. Gail Fine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 441; Crivelli, *Plato's Account of Falsehood*, 104-105. Crivelli recognizes that “ἄνθρωπον” could plausibly refer to either a particular or a kind, but opts for the former due to Protarchus' characterization of a view similar to that of the late learners in *Philebus* 14c11-d3, and due to the fact that he reads the “τοῦτο” and “ἐκάστοτε” at 251a6 as suggestive of “ordinary speech acts” (Crivelli, *Plato's Account of Falsehood*, 105). Crivelli does think, however, that “ἄνθρωπον” and “ἀγαθόν” at 251c1-2 probably refer to the kinds man and good (ibid., 108).

⁶⁸ Moravcsik argues that “by ‘man,’ Plato cannot mean the Form, for among the things said to apply are color, shape, and size” (Moravcsik, “Being and Meaning in the *Sophist*,” 57). In reference to “form” at certain levels of description this is certainly true, but clearly such attributions can be made of the kind man at the relevant level of description—virtuous man and vicious man are different kinds of man, different subclasses into which the kind man can be divided.

⁶⁹ See Campbell, *The Sophistes and Politicus*, 137-138; Cornford, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge*, 254; Taylor, *The Sophist and the Statesman*, 54; de Rijk, *Plato's Sophist*, 115-117; Crivelli, *Plato's Account of Falsehood*, 104.

in the *Philebus*, at least some of the late learners would probably consider the referent of “ἄνθρωπον” to be a particular (*Phil.*, 14c7-e4).⁷⁰ On another level, however, we can consider the theory of the late learners insofar as it is relevant to the account that Plato is having the stranger develop in the digression. Given that the way in which kinds can have attributes is a central concern in the digression, and given that the stranger’s criticism of the late learners turns into a discussion of how kinds can commune with one another, the stranger is no doubt prompting his listeners, and Plato his critical readers, to consider “ἄνθρωπον” insofar as it refers to the kind (cf. *ibid.*, 14e5-15c3). Since I am concerned with the argument of the digression as a whole, I will focus primarily on what the stranger’s discussion of the late learners reveals about kinds.⁷¹

The paradoxes about the one and many that concern the late learners are those that arise within the context of whole/part composition (cf. *ibid.*, 14c11-e4). Consider a particular man. He is one individual and one whole, yet we can attribute many things to him—virtues, vices, sizes, and so on. These attributes are not parts of the particular man like his arms and his legs are (*ibid.*). Yet the way in which these attributes manifest themselves in a particular man is structured such that the attributes are not interchangeable with one another. The man cannot be tall and short or virtuous and vicious at the same time, in the same respect, and in relation to the same thing. This indicates whole/part structure, but the relevant whole is not the particular man, but the kind man. The kind man has virtuous and vicious, tall and short, pudgy and lean, and so on as its eidetic parts. We could imagine someone using the method of division in order to separate these parts. A discussion of how exactly these sorts of eidetic whole/part structures are best characterized is beyond the scope of our current investigation, and would involve an analysis of dialogues such as the *Statesman* and *Philebus*, which thematize these sorts of eidetic structure.⁷² Without a complete analysis of these structures, however, we can note that eidetic structures like that of the kind man are what explain why a particular man, for example, cannot manifest certain attributes—for

⁷⁰ Cf. Wolfgang-Rainer Mann, *The Discovery of Things: Aristotle’s Categories and their Context* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 173; Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 105.

⁷¹ Cf. Cornford, *Plato’s Theory of Knowledge*, 255; de Rijk, *Plato’s Sophist*, 114.

⁷² For such an analysis see Miller, *The Philosopher in Plato’s Statesman*, chap. 4; “The God-Given Way,” *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* 6 (1990): 323-359; “Dialectical Education and Unwritten Teachings in Plato’s *Statesman*,” in *The Philosopher in Plato’s Statesman* (Las Vegas: Parmenides Publishing, 2004); “A More ‘Exact Grasp’ of the Soul?” 56-78.

instance, contraries such as tall and short, virtuous and vicious—at the same time, in the same respect, and in relation to the same thing. The kind man is an eidetic whole whose parts—the various sub-kinds into which it can be divided—occupy specific positions within its structure and are not interchangeable with one another.

When we speak of whole/part compounds, we assume that each is one and address each as one. Yet we also address each as many insofar as we acknowledge that each has many parts. The result is that we call one and the same thing by many names. The fact that we speak this way, says the stranger, has “furnished a feast for the young and the old who are late in learning. For it is easy for anyone immediately to retort that it is impossible for the many to be one and for the one to be many” (251b6-9). Hence these youths and late learners “delight in not letting anyone to call man good but only the good good and the man man” (251b9-c2; χαίρουσιν οὐκ ἐῶντες ἀγαθὸν λέγειν ἄνθρωπον, ἀλλὰ τὸ μὲν ἀγαθὸν ἀγαθόν, τὸν δὲ ἄνθρωπον ἄνθρωπον). The stranger says that in order for him and Theaetetus to direct their account “toward all who have ever discoursed in any way about being (οὐσίας),” they must interrogate the late learners in connection with the other ontologies already discussed (251c8-d3). The principle which the late learners latch onto is simple: it is impossible for one to be many and many one.⁷³ Any whole of parts, of course, will do as a counter example to at least one way of understanding this principle. A whole of parts is by definition both one and many: one whole with many parts. The stranger will begin his analysis of eidetic structure at this basic level. Instead of attempting to delve right into the perplexities about form and eidetic structure that Socrates mentions in *Philebus* 14e5-15c3, the stranger will begin his analysis by attempting simply to answer the question that the late learners would pose to the notion of form that he began to develop during his critique of the friends of the forms: How can we attribute many things, such as resting and being moved, to one form or kind? This question is especially pertinent because on the one hand, a form, like the one itself from the critique of the monists, must in some sense be partless, since it must explain the unity

⁷³ Cf. Mann, *The Discovery of Things*, 174. Mann speculates that the underlying concern here is that “it does not make sense to say of something that it is something that it is not.” “But what (a) human being is,” Mann continues, “is (a) human being, and not, for example, (a) good.”

of that which it structures; but on the other hand, a form must have parts, since discursive knowledge and true speech about the forms is possible.⁷⁴

A. The Argument against the Late Learners—Whether Forms have the Power to Commune with One Another (251d5-252e8)

As a result of their critique of the theory of the friends of the forms, the stranger and Theaetetus affirmed that forms or kinds have the power to affect and/or be affected by one another. With the argument against the late learners the stranger will clarify further how exactly this power that belongs to kinds ought to be understood. The stranger proposes that they consider the following questions:

Are we to attach neither being to motion and rest nor anything at all to anything else whatsoever, but in our accounts posit them as being unblended and unable to have a share in each other? Or are we to bring them all together into the same thing, as if they were all capable of communing with each other? Or some, but others not? Of these alternatives, which shall we say that they choose?

Πότερον μήτε τὴν οὐσίαν κινήσει καὶ στάσει προσάπτωμεν μήτε ἄλλο ἄλλω μηδὲν μηδενί, ἀλλ' ὡς ἄμεικτα ὄντα καὶ ἀδύνατον μεταλαμβάνειν

⁷⁴ My reading of the late learner's problem is non-standard. First, *contra* Ackrill and Owen (Ackrill, "Plato and the Copula," 2; Owen, "Plato on Not-Being," 440; cf. Gregory Vlastos, "An Ambiguity in the *Sophist*," in *Platonic Studies* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981], 288n44), I do not think that the late learner's problem is rooted in a failure to distinguish the "is" of identity from the "is" of predication. It seems that the late learners would not even be comfortable with saying "is" of things other than being (cf. Plato, *Soph.*, 251b9-c2 [χαίρουσιν οὐκ ἔωντες ἀγαθὸν λέγειν ἄνθρωπον, ἀλλὰ τὸ μὲν ἀγαθὸν ἀγαθόν, τὸν δὲ ἄνθρωπον ἄνθρωπον]; Aristotle, *Physics*, I.2.185b27; Malcolm, "A Way Back for *Sophist* 255c12-13," *Ancient Philosophy* 26, no. 2 (2006): 281; Brown, "The *Sophist* on Statements," 442-443). Second, although my account is in many ways compatible with Brown's (Brown, "The *Sophist* on Statements," 440-443; cf. Michael Frede, "Plato's *Sophist* on False Statements," in *The Cambridge Companion to Plato*, ed. Richard Kraut [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992], 400), I think that she fails to take note of the metaphysical significance of the late learners' problem. I find the same fault with commentators who endorse what Crivelli calls "the speech act of naming" reading (see for example, Moravcsik, "Being and Meaning in the *Sophist*," 57-59; David Bostock, "Plato on 'Is-Not' (*Sophist* 254-9)," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 2 [1984]: 99-100; John Malcolm, "A Way Back for *Sophist* 255c12-13," 278; Ambuel, *Image and Paradigm*, 129; cf. Crivelli, *Plato's Account of Falsehood*, 106-107). Third, although my account is in many ways compatible with what Crivelli dubs "the essentialist predication" reading, advocated by commentators such as Frede, Ray, and Crivelli himself (Michael Frede, *Prädikation und Existenzaussage: Platons Gebrauch von '... ist...' und '... ist nicht...'* im *Sophistes* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1967], 61-67; "Plato's *Sophist* on False Statements," 400; Ray, *For Images*, 43-44; Mann, *The Discovery of Things*, 172-180; Crivelli, *Plato's Account of Falsehood*, 107-109), I think that such readings miscarry in that they tend to over-determine the position of the late learners and to miss the way in which the stranger is continuing to expound the notion of eidetic whole/part composition that he began to develop during his discussions of the one itself in his critique of the monists, continued to develop during his critique of the friends of the forms, and will continue to develop through his account of the parts of different.

ἀλλήλων οὕτως αὐτὰ ἐν τοῖς παρ' ἡμῖν λόγοις τιθῶμεν; ἢ πάντα εἰς ταῦτόν
συναγάγωμεν ὡς δυνατὰ ἐπικοινωνεῖν ἀλλήλοις; ἢ τὰ μὲν, τὰ δὲ μή;
τούτων, ὦ Θεαίτητε, τί ποτ' ἂν αὐτοὺς προαιεῖσθαι φήσομεν; (251d5-e2)

There are only three possible answers to the question of whether kinds have the power to commune with one another. (1) No kind has the power to commune with any other. This is the position championed by the late learners. If it were true, then we should not, for example, attach being to motion or rest in our accounts, as we do when we say “motion is” or “rest is.” If motion and rest do not commune or blend with being, then we are not justified in speaking about them as if they did. (2) All kinds have the power to commune with all others. If this were true, then all the kinds could simultaneously commune in the same thing (251d8-9; εἰς ταῦτόν). Consequently, we could truly say not only things like “motion is” or “a cow is a four-footed animal,” but also things like “motion is rest” or “a cow is a four-footed animal and a housefly.” Any character could be present in anything, regardless of the other characters present. (3) Some kinds are willing to commune in the same thing but others are unwilling to commune in that thing.⁷⁵ Say that the thing is

⁷⁵ The majority of commentators and translators systematically misinterpret “ἢ τὰ μὲν, τὰ δὲ μή” in 251d9-e1 and so misunderstand the third alternative to some extent. I translate 251d8-e1 as “Or are we to bring them all together into the same thing, as if they were all capable of communing with each other? Or some, but others not?” (ἢ πάντα εἰς ταῦτόν συναγάγωμεν ὡς δυνατὰ ἐπικοινωνεῖν ἀλλήλοις; ἢ τὰ μὲν, τὰ δὲ μή;). I take it that “Or some, but others not?” (ἢ τὰ μὲν, τὰ δὲ μή;) ought to be understood as “Or are we to bring some together into the same thing, and others not?” (ἢ τὰ μὲν εἰς ταῦτόν συναγάγωμεν, τὰ δὲ μή;). This interpretation is natural since “πάντα εἰς ταῦτόν συναγάγωμεν” is the main clause of the question prior to “ἢ τὰ μὲν, τὰ δὲ μή;” Most translators and commentators, however, choose to read the “ὡς” clause into “ἢ τὰ μὲν, τὰ δὲ μή;” For example, consider the following translations: “Or shall we bring all into communion indiscriminately? Or, thirdly, shall we say that some have, and others have not, communion?” (Campbell, *The Sophistes and Politicus*, 139); “Or shall we gather all things together, believing that they are capable of combining with one another? Or are some capable of it and others not?” (Fowler, *Plato VII*, 393); “Or are we to bring them all together into the same on the grounds that they’re capable of sharing in one another? Or some do and some don’t?” (Benardete, *Plato’s Sophist*, 47); “Or are we to bring them all together into the same place, treating them as though they were capable of communing with each other? Or are some capable and others not?” (Brann et al., *Plato: Sophist*, 60); “Or shall we pull them all together and treat them all as capable of associating with each other? Or shall we say that some can associate and some can’t?” (White, *Sophist*, 273); “. . . or shall we draw all things together in one and the same as able to commune with one another, or are some able to commune and others not?” (Ambuel, *Image and Paradigm*, 225). For a sample of commentators who understand “ἢ τὰ μὲν, τὰ δὲ μή;” in 251d9-e1 in this way see Seligman, *Being and Not-Being*, 47; Ray, *For Images*, 46; de Rijk, *Plato’s Sophist*, 123; Notomi, *The Unity of Plato’s Sophist*, 232-233. The mistake here results from misunderstanding or ignoring the “εἰς ταῦτόν” at 251d8-9 (cf. 251e9; ἔχειν κοινωνίας εἰς μηδέν). Understanding “ἢ τὰ μὲν, τὰ δὲ μή;” in 251d9-e1 along the lines of “Or are some capable and others not?” fails to make sense of the stranger’s argument, at least if one takes the translation literally. For all the kinds are capable of communing with all others, just as all letters are capable of being joined in various words with all others. What all letters cannot do is join together in the same particular word. Rather only some can, and each that can must do so in a certain order. What the third alternative affirms is not that some kinds have the power to commune and some do not, but rather that some can commune together in the same thing (at the same time, in the same respect,

question is a cow. Some kinds are willing to commune with one another in that thing—for instance, the kinds cow, four-footed animal, horned, and so on. Others, however, are not—for instance, the kinds housefly, flying animal, winged, and so on. If this third possibility were true, then we could truly say things like “motion is” or “a cow is a four-footed animal,” but not things like “motion is rest” or “a cow is a four-footed animal and a housefly.” The stranger and Theaetetus will, unsurprisingly, conclude that the third alternative is correct. They make this determination by considering in turn what would follow from (1) and (2).

The stranger explains that if (1) were true, then no one who has ever said anything about what being is would have spoken the truth. Those who say that everything that is is moved, those who say that everything that is is resting as one, those who say that being is the forms, and so on, all attach some predicate other than being—rest, motion, form, etc.—to being (252a5-b6). Moreover, the account of the late learners themselves could not be true if no kind had the power to commune with any other. After all, as the stranger points out, the late learners “are compelled to use ‘to be,’ ‘apart,’ ‘from the others,’ ‘by itself,’ and thousands of other expressions about all things” (252c2-4). Thus they refute themselves.⁷⁶ As Crivelli succinctly puts it, “the claim that no kinds blend cannot be consistently stated.”⁷⁷ So much for (1).

The stranger then asks about (2) and Theaetetus volunteers to show what would follow from it (252d2-4). Theaetetus reasons that all forms do not have the power to commune with all others, because if they did, “motion itself would be altogether at rest, and rest in turn would itself be moved” (252d6-7). “But this,” affirms the stranger, “is by

and in relation to the same thing) and others cannot. Contrary kinds, for example, cannot commune together “in the same thing.” The discussion of the Principle of Non-Opposition in *Republic* IV (436a8-437a2) is relevant here and defines “ταὐτόν” in this sense. In fact, the terminological overlap between Socrates’ discussion of the Principle of Non-Opposition and the stranger’s critique of the late learners is striking. The Principle defines “the same thing” (ταὐτόν) in terms of being willing (cf. *Soph.*, 252e2, e9; ἐθελεῖν) to affect and to be affected (cf. *Soph.*, 247d8 ff.; ποιεῖν ἢ πάσχειν). Likewise, the discussion of the Principle of Non-Opposition uses motion and rest as contraries in its example.

⁷⁶ Cf. J. L. Ackrill, “ΣΥΜΠΛΑΟΚΗ ΕΙΔΩΝ,” *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 2 (1955); repr., in *Plato 1: Metaphysics and Epistemology*, ed. Gregory Vlastos (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1971), 204 (citations refer to the reprint edition); Notomi, *The Unity of Plato’s Sophist*, 233; Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 113-114. Crivelli sums up the argument nicely: “If the claim expressed by some sentence like ‘Every kind is separately from the others on its own’ were true, then every kind would blend with the kinds expressed by ‘to be,’ ‘separately from,’ ‘others,’ and ‘on its own,’ so that distinct kinds would blend, whence the claim would be false. Therefore, if the claim were true then it would be false. Hence it is false” (Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 113).

⁷⁷ Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 113.

the greatest necessities impossible: that motion should rest, and rest should be moved (κίνησιν τε ἴστασθαι καὶ στάσιν κινεῖσθαι)?" (252d9-10). Here again, as above,⁷⁸ "motion" (κίνησις) designates the form or kind motion, understood as "what is being moved"; while "rest" (στάσις) designates the form or kind rest, understood as "what rests." The stranger is correct that in this sense it is impossible for motion to rest or rest to be moved.⁷⁹ An opposite cannot be its opposite,⁸⁰ and opposites cannot be in the same thing at the same time, in the same respect, and in relation to the same thing (cf. *Rep.*, IV.436a8-437a2). Otherwise things would be unintelligible and true speech would be impossible.⁸¹ So much for (2).

Since (1) and (2) must be false, the stranger and Theaetetus conclude that (3) is true. The stranger then uses an analogy to clarify the sense in which (3) is true: "Now since some are willing (ἐθέλει) to do this [commune with one another in the same thing] and others not, they'd be in a condition much like letters" (252e9-253a1; ὅτε δὴ τὰ μὲν ἐθέλει τοῦτο δοῦναι, τὰ δ' οὐ, σχεδὸν οἷον τὰ γράμματα πεπονθότ' ἄν εἴη). "For," the stranger continues, "also among letters, I suppose, some don't fit with one another and others do" (253a1-2; καὶ γὰρ ἐκείνων τὰ μὲν ἀναρμοστέϊ που πρὸς ἄλληλα, τὰ δὲ συναρμόττει). Just as only certain letters can combine to compose a given word, so only certain kinds can combine in a given thing.⁸² Furthermore, just as "the vowels differ from the others in passing through them all as a sort of bond (οἷον δεσμός διὰ πάντων κεχώρηκεν),⁸³ so that without some of them it is impossible for the others to fit, one with another" (253a4-6), so some kinds are more fundamental than others insofar as they serve as a bond (δεσμός) without which the other kinds could not commune. There are certain kinds that any communion of the others presupposes. These, as we will see, turn out to

⁷⁸ See §3, pp. 127-129 above.

⁷⁹ The stranger suggests at 256b6-c2 that there may be another way of understanding the statement "motion rests" such that it would not be false. This would involve understanding "motion rests" not in the sense of "what is being moved is what rests," but rather in the sense of "motion somehow shares (πῆ μετελάμβανεν) in rest" (cf. 256b6). Cf. Seligman, *Being and Not-Being*, 49; Bluck, *Plato's Sophist*, 111-115; Ray, *For Images*, 47-50 Crivelli, *Plato's Account of Falsehood*, 115.

⁸⁰ Cf. Notomi, *The Unity of Plato's Sophist*, 233.

⁸¹ Cf. chap. I.3.

⁸² Sallis, *Being and Logos*, 506. Sallis points out that the fact that only certain kinds can commune in the same thing, and must do so in a structured way, reveals a way in which kinds are different from mathematical units, bare countable ones, which are combinable in any way.

⁸³ Cf. Plato, *Parm.*, 162a4; Gilbert Ryle, "Letters and Syllables in Plato," *The Philosophical Review* 69, no. 4 (1960): 445; William Bondeson, "Non-Being and the One: Some Connections between Plato's *Sophist* and *Parmenides*," *Apeiron* 7, no. 2 (1973): 16-17.

be the five greatest kinds.⁸⁴ The five greatest kinds are those kinds which any whole/part compound presupposes. Any whole of parts is an individual countable object. Thus it is, is the same as itself, is different from others. Furthermore, a whole of parts is always a structured unity. Insofar as it is structured it is being moved. And insofar as it is being moved it presupposes the resting causally prior normative principles in terms of which it is moved and structured.

The way in which vowels and the five greatest kinds are fundamental, however, must in certain respects be differentiated from the way in which the norms that govern a given whole/part compound and the normative principles that are the source of those norms are fundamental. So the stranger uses the letters analogy to make this further point:

Stranger: Then does everyone know which sort [of letters] can commune with which, or does he who is to join them properly need an art?

Theaetetus: He needs an art.

Stranger: Which one?

Theaetetus: The art of spelling.

ΞΕ. Πᾶς οὖν οἶδεν ὅποια ὁποίοις δυνατὰ κοινωνεῖν, ἢ τέχνης δεῖ τῷ μέλλοντι δρᾶν ἰκανῶς αὐτό;

ΘΕΑΙ. Τέχνης.

ΞΕ. Ποίας;

ΘΕΑΙ. Τῆς γραμματικῆς. (253a8-12)

The art of spelling is the norm that governs how letters commune with one another (cf. *Phil.*, 18b6-d2). While the vowels are fundamental in the sense that they are a necessary condition without which the letters could not commune with one another, the norms which govern spelling are fundamental in the sense that they are the cause of the communing and determine how the letters commune. Furthermore, these norms are fundamental in the sense that the very determination and recognition of the various letters presupposes them. As Socrates says when discussing the art of spelling in the *Philebus*,

⁸⁴ Cf. Lentz, "The Problem of Motion," 103. Lentz affirms that the five kinds, including motion and rest, are "vowel-forms." Although I think Lentz is correct on this, his view is non-standard. For the standard view see Alfonso Gómez-Lobo, "Plato's Description of Dialectic in the *Sophist* 253d1-e2," *Phronesis* 22, no. 1 (1977): 38; J. M. E. Moravcsik, *Plato and Platonism: Plato's Conception of Appearance and Reality in Ontology, Epistemology, and Ethics, and its Modern Echoes* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 168; Crivelli, *Plato's Account of Falsehood*, 116.

since Theuth “realized that none of us could gain any knowledge of a single one of them [a single letter], taken itself by itself without understanding them all, he considered this one link that somehow unifies them all and called it the art of spelling” (18c7-d2).⁸⁵ In the case of the communion of kinds, not only are there certain kinds without which the others could not commune—analogous to vowels—but there are also norms which govern the communing—as there are norms which govern spelling. These norms constitute an art or science⁸⁶ that determines those norms. That science of the communion of kinds is dialectic (*Soph.*, 253b9-d3).

B. Dialectic (252e9-254b7)

The account of true speech about the forms that the stranger and Theaetetus have so far developed asserts that the object of knowledge—the communion of kinds—is an eidetic whole/part compound. True speech about the forms reflects the structure of the communion of kinds, that is, reflects the way in which kinds commune with one another. The ways in which the kinds commune with one another presuppose norms that govern the communing—the norms which constitute the art of dialectic. As we will see shortly, dialectic and its norms are themselves sourced in a causally prior normative principle: the nature of each form.

The discussion of dialectic in this part of the digression primarily describes and outlines the sort of thing that the stranger and Theaetetus will actually do during their

⁸⁵See Plato, *Phil.*, 18b6-d2: “ΣΩ. Ἐπειδὴ φωνὴν ἄπειρον κατενόησεν εἴτε τις θεὸς εἴτε καὶ θεῖος ἄνθρωπος—ὡς λόγος ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ Θεῦθ τινα τοῦτον γενέσθαι λέγων, ὃς πρῶτος τὰ φωνήεντα ἐν τῷ ἀπείρῳ κατενόησεν οὐχ ἓν ὄντα ἀλλὰ πλείω, καὶ πάλιν [18c] ἕτερα φωνῆς μὲν οὐ, φθόγγου δὲ μετέχοντά τινος, ἀριθμὸν δὲ τινα καὶ τούτων εἶναι, τρίτον δὲ εἶδος γραμμάτων διεστήσατο τὰ νῦν λεγόμενα ἄφωνα ἡμῖν · τὸ μετὰ τοῦτο διήρει τὰ τε ἄφθογγα καὶ ἄφωνα μέχρι ἐνὸς ἐκάστου, καὶ τὰ φωνήεντα καὶ τὰ μέσα κατὰ τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον, ἕως ἀριθμὸν αὐτῶν λαβῶν ἐνί τε ἐκάστῳ καὶ σύμπασι στοιχείῳ ἐπωνόμασε · καθορῶν δὲ ὡς οὐδεὶς ἡμῶν οὐδ’ ἂν ἐν αὐτὸ καθ’ αὐτὸ ἄνευ πάντων αὐτῶν μάθοι, τοῦτον τὸν δεσμὸν αὐτὸν λογισάμενος ὡς [18d] ὄντα ἓνα καὶ πάντα ταῦτα ἐν πως ποιοῦντα μίαν ἐπ’ αὐτοῖς ὡς οὐσαν γραμματικὴν τέχνην ἐπεφθέγγετο προσειπὼν.” “Socrates: The way some god or god-inspired man discovered that vocal sound is unlimited, as an account in Egypt claims for a certain deity called Theuth. He was the first to discover that the vowels in that unlimited variety are not one but several, and again [18c] that there are others that are not voiced, but make some kind of noise, and that they, too, have a number. As a third form of letters he established the ones we now call mute. After this he further subdivided the ones without sound or mutes down to every single unit. In the same fashion he also dealt with the vowels and the intermediates, until he found out the number for each one of them, and then he gave all of them together the name ‘letter.’ And as he realized that none of us could gain any knowledge of a single one of them, taken by itself, without understanding all of them, he considered that the one bond that [18d] somehow unifies them all and called it the art of spelling.”

⁸⁶ The stranger speaks of dialectic here as an “ἐπιστήμη” analogous to the “γραμματικὴ τέχνη.”

account of the five greatest kinds.⁸⁷ As a result, my comments on this section are primarily prefatory to my interpretation of the account of the five greatest kinds, which I develop in Chapters IV and V. I will outline here what I hope to demonstrate more rigorously there.

The stranger initially articulates dialectic as the sort of knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) that someone must possess “if he intends to show whether there are some kinds which, present throughout, hold the other kinds together, so that they can blend, and again whether there are other kinds which, where there are divisions, are the cause of division throughout the whole” (253c1-3; διὰ πάντων εἰ συνέχοντ’ ἅττ’ αὐτ’ ἐστίν, ὥστε συμμείγνυσθαι δυνατὰ εἶναι, καὶ πάλιν ἐν ταῖς διαρέσεσιν, εἰ δι’ ὄλων ἕτερα τῆς διαρέσεως αἴτια). In light of the argument against the friends of the forms, the first sort of kinds characterized in this passage—“some kinds which, present throughout, hold the other kinds together, so that they can blend”—are being, motion, and rest. The stranger described the communion of the forms motion and rest as a communion of their being (οὐσία) (250b8-11). Being is the bond that holds the communion together and explains why both motion and rest are. Motion and rest, likewise, serve to hold the communion of kinds together. Rest allows for, and motion simply is, the relations of causal priority and posteriority that constitute the communion of kinds. As we will see during the discussion of the five greatest kinds, the kinds same and different will be identified as those which “are the cause of division throughout the whole.”⁸⁸ Even here in his discussion of dialectic, however, the stranger hints that the same and different are the cause of division, when he claims that “it belongs to dialectical knowledge to divide by kinds and not regard the same form as other nor the other as the same” (253d1-3).

After these initial descriptions of dialectic, the stranger goes on to offer the most detailed characterization of it that we find in the *Sophist*. This characterization adds a

⁸⁷ Cf. Gómez-Lobo, “Plato’s Description of Dialectic,” 36; Notomi, *The Unity of Plato’s Sophist*, 235, 239.

⁸⁸ Cf. Bluck, *Plato’s Sophist*, 124; Gómez-Lobo, “Plato’s Description of Dialectic,” 38; Ray, *For Images*, 54; Lentz, “The Problem of Motion,” 103-105; Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 116. My own views on this are similar to those of Lentz, who argues that motion and rest are the bonds that hold the kinds together, while same and different are the cause of divisions. I differ from Lentz in that I also include being as a bond that holds the kinds together. In contrast, Bluck, Gómez-Lobo, Ray, and Crivelli claim that being is the kind that holds the other kinds together and different is the cause of divisions (with Ray granting that same might be a kind that holds the others together as well). That “συνέχοντ’ ἅττ’ αὐτ’” and “ἕτερα” are plural, however, suggest that there is more than one kind that holds the others together and more than one that is the cause of division (cf. Bluck, *Plato’s Sophist*, 124; de Rijk, *Plato’s Sophist*, 127).

number of important distinctions to the notion of form that the stranger has been developing since his discussion of the one itself during his critique of the monists:

Then the man who is able to do this [divide by kinds] distinctly perceives one form extended everywhere through many, each one of which lies apart, and also many forms different from one another, which are embraced by one form external to them; again, he perceives one form through many wholes combined into one, as well as many forms divided off as entirely separate.

Οὐκοῦν ὁ γε τοῦτο δυνατὸς δρᾶν μίαν ιδέαν διὰ πολλῶν, ἐνὸς ἐκάστου κειμένου χωρὶς, πάντη διατεταμένην ἱκανῶς διαισθάνεται, καὶ πολλὰς ἑτέρας ἀλλήλων ὑπὸ μιᾶς ἔξωθεν περιεχομένης, καὶ μίαν αὖ δι' ὅλων πολλῶν ἐν ἐνὶ συνημμένην, καὶ πολλὰς χωρὶς πάντη διωρισμένης. (253d5-e1)

The stranger identifies five different senses of “form” in this passage. The practitioner of dialectic has the ability to distinctly perceive (ἱκανῶς διαισθάνεσθαι) the relationship between these various senses of “form,” in particular the relations between each form as “one” and the forms as “many.” The discussion of knowledge during the stranger’s critique of the friends of the forms emphasized its discursivity. Here, for the first time, we see the intuitive dimension of knowledge explicitly marked. Dialectic involves an articulate insight into a form. It includes an insight into both that form’s power for communing with other forms and its power for governing the way in which other forms commune with one another. The stranger’s description of the philosopher a few lines later suggests that while this insight can be expressed in true speech, it nevertheless exceeds it. Speech, in other words, cannot exhaust the insight. The philosopher, says the stranger, “always devotes himself, through discursive reasoning, to the form of being” (254a8-9; ὁ δέ γε φιλόσοφος, τῇ τοῦ ὄντος ἀεὶ διὰ λογισμῶν προσκείμενος ιδέα). Yet, continues the stranger, the philosopher “is not at all easy to see due to the brightness of his region; for the eyes of the soul of the many are powerless to endure looking away toward the divine” (254a9-b1; διὰ τὸ λαμπρὸν αὖ τῆς χώρας οὐδαμῶς εὐπετὴς ὀφθῆναι τὰ γὰρ τῆς τῶν πολλῶν ψυχῆς ὄμματα καρτερεῖν πρὸς τὸ θεῖον ἀφορῶντα ἀδύνατα). The brightness of that into which the philosopher has insight exceeds the vision of the many, who, although they may hear his accounts (λόγοι), cannot see the norms that guide them nor the source of those norms.

I propose that the five ways of understanding “form” the stranger identifies in this passage can be characterized as follows. I take each sense in turn:

(1) Form *qua* one extended everywhere through many kinds,⁸⁹ each of which lies entirely apart. This sense of “form,” I submit, describes form *qua* nature insofar as it is structuring and immanent within an eidetic whole. I will develop the notion of form *qua* nature in more detail in Chapters IV and V. For now, however, let it suffice to say that “form *qua* nature” indicates the nature of each form. The nature of each form is the power each has to commune in determinate ways with others. This power is the power each form has to structure its eidetic relations with other forms. This first sense of “form” describes form *qua* nature insofar as it is structuring the eidetic whole/part compounds that it structures, that is, insofar as it is immanent in many kinds.

(2) Form *qua* one external to and embracing many forms. This sense of “form,” I submit, is form *qua* nature insofar as it is causally prior to and independent of the eidetic wholes that it structures. In other words, this sense of “form” is form at rest. The stranger characterizes this sense of “form” as external to and embracing many forms because form *qua* nature is causally prior to and independent of the eidetic compounds that it structures.⁹⁰ The stranger invoked this sense of the form being during his development of the paradoxes concerning being, motion, and rest,⁹¹ when he said “being is not both motion and rest together, but surely something different from these” (250c3-4) and characterized it, “according to its own nature” (250c6; *κατὰ τὴν αὐτοῦ φύσιν*), as “outside of” (250d2; *ἐκτός*) but

⁸⁹ Cornford, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge*, 267; Bluck, *Plato's Sophist*, 126-127; de Rijk, *Plato's Sophist*, 135-138; cf. Seligman, *Being and Not-Being*, 53; Gómez-Lobo, “Plato's Description of Dialectic,” 31; Rosen, *Plato's Sophist*, 259; Ray, *For Images*, 55. Bluck argues that since “*πολλῶν*” at 253d6 is neuter, because it is in apposition to “*ἐνὸς ἐκάστου*,” it should, *contra* Cornford, be taken to refer to spatio-temporal particulars as opposed to forms. Building on Bluck's reading and other considerations, de Rijk argues that “the whole procedure described at 253d1-e2 should be taken primarily as the dialectician's investigation into the true nature of particulars” (de Rijk, *Plato's Sophist*, 136). I, on the other hand, take “*πολλῶν*” at 253d6 to refer to kinds. “*Υένος*,” the word for “kind,” is of course neuter.

⁹⁰ Cf. Rosen, *Plato's Sophist*, 260. Rosen argues that “*ἔξωθεν*” indicates that the form which embraces “retains its independent identity.” On my reading, “*ἔξωθεν*” also indicates a sort of independence; not the independence of identity, however, but rather the independence of that which is causally prior from that which is causally posterior.

⁹¹ See §3.

nevertheless embracing motion and rest (250b8-9; τρίτον ἄρα τι παρὰ ταῦτα τὸ ὄν ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ . . . ὡς ὑπ’ ἐκείνου τὴν τε στάσιν καὶ τὴν κίνησιν περιεχομένην).⁹²

- (3) Form *qua* a one of the many. This sense of “form,” I submit, describes form *qua* determinately intelligible countable object. Each form can be counted alongside the others (cf. 254d12) because each can be considered as an individual countable object. In order to speak of the forms, each must be, be the same as itself, and be different from others. That is, each must be a one of many. If this were not the case, discursive knowledge and true speech about the forms would be impossible, since speech always addresses its subject as some one individual or collection of individuals (cf. 237d6-10, 239a3, a5-6, a8-11).
- (4) Form *qua* combined into one through many wholes. Both (4) and (5) below, I submit, describe form *qua* fully determinate. A form is fully determinate insofar as it is itself or is embedded within an eidetic whole/part structure. A form *qua* fully determinate, in other words, is a form insofar as it can be discursively known and truly defined in *logos* through collection and division. Form *qua* combined into one through many wholes corresponds to the “collection” moment of the method of collection and division. Collection selects a given form and then considers the way in which it is embedded in many eidetic wholes (253d8-9; ὅλων πολλῶν) and ultimately into one (253d9; ἐν ἐνί) overarching whole. For example, in defining angling, the stranger considered the way that angling is embedded in various eidetic wholes—the art of production, the art of acquisition, the art of exchange, the art of competing, the art of hunting, and so on—and ultimately in one overarching whole, “expertise” (τέχνη) (219e1-221c3).
- (5) Form *qua* divided as many separate forms. As I mentioned, I take both senses (4) and (5) to be instances of form *qua* fully determinate. While form *qua* combined into one through many wholes (=4) describes a form insofar as it can be collected into various eidetic whole/part compounds, form *qua* divided as many separate forms (=5) describes a form insofar as it can be divided out as occupying a specific position in the various eidetic wholes in which it is embedded. This

⁹² Cf. Bluck, *Plato’s Sophist*, 127; Ray, *For Images*, 56; de Rijk, *Plato’s Sophist*, 135; Notomi, *The Unity of Plato’s Sophist*, 236.

sense of “form,” then, corresponds to the “division” moment of the method of collection and division.⁹³ Angling, for instance, was divided off as a distinct and specific part of expertise, whose position within expertise could not be occupied by any other form.

The stranger’s description of the difference between the philosopher and sophist, with which he immediately follows this account of dialectic, sheds some light on how noetic insight perceives the relationship between these five senses of “form.” The stranger claims that the power of dialectic must only be attributed to the one who “philosophizes purely and justly (τῷ καθαρῶς τε καὶ δικαίως φιλοσοφοῦντι)” (253e4-5), and then contrasts the philosopher and the sophist. He says that both the philosopher and the sophist are “difficult to see distinctly (ιδεῖν μὲν χαλεπὸν ἐναργῶς),” but for different reasons (253e8-254a2). The sophist is difficult to see due to the darkness of his region, whereas the philosopher is difficult to see due to the brightness of his. I suggest that this contrast can help articulate the relationship between the five senses of “form” which the stranger has just differentiated.

Both the sophist and the philosopher practice a sort of collection and division, and so both deal with forms in senses (3), (4), and (5). The sophist can make fine distinctions when he wants to, as well as combine ideas that do not really combine so as to cover over distinctions which do not suit his purposes. The stranger claims that the sophist feels his way around and makes his distinctions and attributions through mere practice or experience (254a5; τριβῆν προσαπτόμενος αὐτῆς). The attempt to collect and divide forms need not be guided by noetic insight. After all, each form, if it is to be or to be embedded within an eidetic structure (=4 and 5), must first be a one of many (=3), an individual intelligible object whose intelligible content is accessible in abstraction from noetic insight into the normative principles (=1 and 2) that structure it. A form in sense (3), and consequently to some extent a form in sense (4) and (5), is accessible not only to mathematical thinking, but also to the manipulation of the sophist, who makes his collections and divisions without worrying about whether he does so, as Socrates puts it

⁹³ Many commentators on 253d5-e1 only identify (4) and (5) in the passage, since they think that the passage simply describes the collection and division of eidetic wholes. See for example, Cornford, *Plato’s Theory of Knowledge*, 267-269; Stenzel, *Plato’s Method of Dialectic*, 96-106; A. C. Lloyd, “Plato’s Description of Division,” *Classical Quarterly* 2, no. 1-2 (1952): 110-111; Bluck, *Plato’s Sophist*, 125-132; Sallis, *Being and Logos*, 508.

in the *Phaedrus*, by cutting “along the natural joints” (265d1-2; διατέμνειν κατ’ ἄρθρα ἢ πέφυκεν).⁹⁴

The philosopher, on the other hand, “always devotes himself, through discursive reasoning, to the form of being” (254a8-9). His collections and divisions of forms in the sense of (3), (4), and (5) are guided by noetic insight into the governing form *qua* nature (=1 and 2),⁹⁵ which “the eyes of soul of the many are powerless to endure” (254a10-b1). Form in sense (2) is the transcendent normative source which embraces the forms *qua* ones of many (=3), structuring them and governing their relations (=4 and 5). A form in sense (2) can be characterized as transcendent and external because it is causally prior to, and thus not dependent upon, the whole/part compounds that it structures. The philosopher, who perceives a form *qua* nature in its transcendence, however, also perceives that form *qua* nature as immanent within and structuring the whole/part compounds that it structures (=1). The philosopher, in other words, perceives form *qua* nature extended throughout the many forms which commune with one another. The transcendence of form *qua* nature, then, is in no way incompatible with its immanence, but is rather the necessary condition of that immanence.⁹⁶ The transcendence or causal priority of the nature of each form is what constitutes and governs the eidetic wholes that it structures. Without this causal priority and independence of form *qua* nature, there could be no whole of parts within which that nature could be immanent. Form *qua* nature, then, can be characterized as immanent within or extended everywhere through the eidetic wholes that it structures because its causally prior normativity is present throughout those wholes, ordering their many parts in relation to one another. As we will see in Chapter V.1, form *qua* nature is not some one of the many forms which it governs, yet neither is it other than the many forms it governs. Rather, it is simply causally prior, and to perceive it is to perceive this causal priority, both as extended everywhere through and as external to that which it structures.

⁹⁴ Cf. Plato, *Plt.*, 287c3-5.

⁹⁵ Cf. Rosen, *Plato's Sophist*, 259-260; Ray, *For Images*, 53-54.

⁹⁶ Cf. Miller, *Plato's Parmenides*, 120-121. In the context of a discussion of the way in which form governs the whole/part composition of spatio-temporal individuals, Miller makes an argument similar to the one I am making here. He argues that a form's transcendence with respect to a spatio-temporal whole of parts that it governs is not at odds with its immanence, but rather that the transcendence and immanence of form necessarily entail one another.

Since the forms in senses (3), (4), and (5) are structured and governed by form in the sense of (1) and (2), noetic insight into form in the sense of (1) and (2) is necessary for the one who would collect and divide forms correctly, “along the natural joints.” This noetic insight is precisely what has been lacking in many of the various divisions of the sophist that the stranger and Theaetetus have attempted throughout the dialogue. This lack of a guiding insight explains why they found none of those divisions satisfactory. The stranger and Theaetetus have certainly collected and divided forms. Yet without noetic insight into the nature of sophistry that would structure the eidetic whole/part compound that is the sophist, Theaetetus will be unsure of whether their divisions are true or false. Without noetic insight, Theaetetus will simply be feeling his way around in the darkness, like the sophist.

Chapter IV: Selecting the Five Greatest Kinds (254b8-255e2)

We now come to the beginning of the pivotal and most well-known portion of the digression, the stranger's discussion of the five greatest kinds. In what has proceeded, the stranger led Theaetetus from an understanding of being as individual beings to an understanding of being as eidetic structure and as the power that structures it. The stranger will now begin to solidify this understanding of being, by selecting five kinds—being, rest, motion, same, and different—that, like vowels, allow for the possibility of eidetic composition.

In Chapter III, we saw how the stranger led Theaetetus to a discussion of dialectic and its practitioner, the philosopher. The philosopher, as the stranger said, is the one who can see the norms that structure the communion of kinds; norms which, as in the *Republic*, are here represented as light (254a9). The philosopher, the stranger explained, who “devotes himself, through discursive reasoning (διὰ λογισμῶν), to the form (ιδέα) of being” (254a8-9), is the one who can clearly see and differentiate the various senses of “form” and their interrelations (253d5-e2). Following the stranger, I identified five senses of “form”:¹ (1) Form *qua* one extended everywhere through many kinds, (2) form *qua* one external to and embracing many forms, (3) form *qua* a one of the many, (4) form *qua* combined into one through many wholes, and (5) form *qua* divided as many separate forms. I proposed that (1) describes form *qua* nature insofar as it is imminent in the structure which it governs, that (2) describes form *qua* nature insofar as it is transcendent to the structure which it governs, and that (3) describes form *qua* one of many, *qua* countable object. Furthermore, I proposed that (4) and (5) describe form *qua* fully determinate. A form is fully determinate insofar as it is embedded within eidetic whole/part structures, and thus insofar as it can be known and truly defined through the method of collection and division. I proposed that, (4) describes a form insofar as it can be collected into various eidetic wholes, and (5) describes a form insofar as it can be

¹ See chap. III.4.B., pp. 144-146.

divided out as occupying a specific position in the various eidetic wholes in which it is embedded.²

The stranger moved from his discussion of dialectic to a consideration of those forms that are “spoken of as greatest” (254c3-4). As we will see, these forms are “spoken of as greatest” because everything that is must have a share in them.³ In this Chapter, I show how the arguments by which the stranger selects the five greatest kinds further differentiate and clarify the various senses of “form” that the stranger identified in his description of dialectic. More concretely, I show that the arguments by which the stranger selects the five kinds differentiate the sense of “form” *qua* fully determinate (sense (4) and (5)), the sense of form *qua* one of many (sense (3)), and the sense of form *qua* nature (senses (1) and (2)). The distinction between these senses of “form” prepares the way for the stranger’s discussion of the power the forms have for communing and the parts of difference (255e3-259e2) that we will consider in Chapter V. The stranger’s selection of the five greatest kinds falls into three sections. In the first, he identifies being, rest, and motion as three of the greatest kinds, and then introduces same and different, asking whether they should be counted as two additional kinds (254d4-255a3). In the next two sections, he argues that same and different are in fact two additional kinds. First, he argues that same and different are not identical to rest and motion (255a4-b7). He then argues that same and different are not identical to being (255b8-e2).⁴

§1. Being, Rest, and Motion (254d4-255a3)

The stranger begins his selection of the greatest kinds by choosing being, rest, and motion as three of them. The text reads as follows:

² De Rijk, *Plato’s Sophist*, 142-143. De Rijk argues that various senses of “form” are at stake in the stranger’s discussion of the five greatest kinds. The senses of “form” she considers, however, are significantly different from the ones I have identified here.

³ One could even translate “μέγιστα” as “largest” or “very large” (cf. Russell M. Dancy, “The Categories of Being in Plato’s *Sophist* 255c-e,” *Ancient Philosophy* 19, no. 1 [1999]: 56ff.) instead of “greatest.” Such a translation is appropriate, since the five kinds have the largest possible extension.

⁴ I use “not identical” synonymously with “not the same.” I do not take either, however, to be synonymous with “different.” In fact, I think that the account the stranger develops in 254b8-259e2 requires that “not identical” and “different” are not synonymous. In the context of my analysis of the stranger’s selection of the five greatest kinds (254b8-255e2), by “not identical” I mean “fails to be identical,” “fails to be the same”; whereas by “different” I simply mean “different.” See chap. V.1.B, p. 190.

Stranger: Surely the greatest of the kinds are those we were going through just now: being itself, rest, and motion.

Theaetetus: By far the greatest.

Stranger: Moreover, we affirm that the members of one pair of them are unblended with one another.

Theaetetus: Definitely.

Stranger: But being is blended with both, for I suppose both are.

Theaetetus: Of course.

Stranger: Then these come to be three.

Theaetetus: Certainly.

Stranger: Then each of them is different from the remaining pair but itself the same as itself.

Theaetetus: Just so.

ΞΕ. Μέγιστα μὴν τῶν γενῶν ἃ νυνδὴ διῆμεν τό τε ὄν αὐτὸ καὶ στάσις καὶ κίνησις.

ΘΕΑΙ. Πολύ γε.

ΞΕ. Καὶ μὴν τὴν γε δύο φαμὲν αὐτοῖν ἀμείκτω πρὸς ἀλλήλω.

ΘΕΑΙ. Σφόδρα γε.

ΞΕ. Τὸ δέ γε ὄν μεικτὸν ἀμφοῖν ἔστων γὰρ ἄμφω που.

ΘΕΑΙ. Πῶς δ' οὔ;

ΞΕ. Τρία δὴ γίγνεται ταῦτα.

ΘΕΑΙ. Τί μὴν;

ΞΕ. Οὐκοῦν αὐτῶν ἕκαστον τοῖν μὲν δυοῖν ἕτερόν ἐστιν, αὐτὸ δ' ἑαυτῷ ταυτόν.

ΘΕΑΙ. Οὕτως. (254d4-e1)

The stranger begins by identifying being, rest, and motion as three of the greatest kinds. This raises two questions. (1) Why are these selected as three of the greatest kinds? (2) Given the various senses of “form” now in play, what exactly is a kind (γένος) in this context? An initial answer to these questions can be formulated on the basis of the stranger’s discussions of the friends of the forms and the late learners.

I consider the second question first. In proposing to select the greatest kinds at 254b8-d2 the stranger summed up the things to which he and Theaetetus had agreed thus far. He said that they had agreed “that some kinds are willing to commune with one another and others not” (254b8-9; ὅτ' οὖν δὴ τὰ μὲν ἡμῖν τῶν γενῶν ὁμολόγηται

κοινωνεῖν ἐθέλειν ἀλλήλοις, τὰ δὲ μή). He then suggested that they “look, not into all the forms . . . but only into some, having selected those spoken of as greatest” (254c2-4; σκοποῦντες, μὴ περὶ πάντων τῶν εἰδῶν . . . ἀλλὰ προελόμενοι τῶν μεγίστων λεγομένων ἅττα). A kind, therefore, is, unsurprisingly, in some sense a form (εἶδος).⁵ Both the argument against the friends of the forms and the argument against the late learners focused on beings—forms or kinds—as the objects of discursive knowledge and the subjects of true speech. What the arguments by which the stranger selects the five greatest kinds invite us to ask is what characteristics any object must have in order to be an object of knowledge insofar as knowledge is discursive and can be expressed in true speech. I submit that the stranger is using the term “kind” here to designate what objects must minimally be, with respect to their determinacy, in order to be objects of discursive knowledge. I am proposing, then, that a kind is any object insofar as it is simply considered as a possible object of discursive knowledge. Given that the forms are what qualify as objects of knowledge, a kind is a form. The term “kind,” however, does not designate form as such, in all its various senses, but form simply *qua* object of discursive knowledge, as opposed to form *qua* structuring spatio-temporal beings, form *qua* one over many, form *qua* object of non-discursive noetic insight, and so on. Forms play all of these roles. A kind, however, is a form simply considered insofar as it is an object of discursive knowledge.⁶ Objects of discursive knowledge, as we saw in Chapter III, must be embedded within eidetic whole/part structures, the sort of structures which the method of collection and division articulates. The sense of “form” that can also be called a kind, then, is ultimately form *qua* fully determinate. Furthermore, since each form *qua* fully determinate is also a one of many, a kind also includes the sense of form *qua* one of many.

⁵ Most commentators take “form” and “kind” to be synonymous (see for example, Cornford, *Plato’s Theory of Knowledge*, 261n1; John Warrington, trans., *Plato: Parmenides, Theaitetos, Sophist, and Statesman* (New York: Dutton, 1961), 204n1; Seligman, *Being and Not-Being*, 56; Bluck, *Plato’s Sophist*, 133). De Rijk argues that a kind is a certain sort of form, namely the sort that encompasses others (de Rijk, *Plato’s Sophist*, 143-144). According to McCabe, “kind” designates any countable individual as such (McCabe, *Plato’s Individuals*, 240).

⁶ Thus, by “dividing by kinds,” one can avoid regarding “the same form as other or the other as the same” (253d1-3; τὸ κατὰ γένη διαιρεῖσθαι καὶ μήτε ταῦτὸν εἶδος ἕτερον ἠγήσασθαι μήτε ἕτερον ὄν ταῦτὸν μῶν οὐ τῆς διαλεκτικῆς φήσομεν ἐπιστήμης εἶναι;).

Since a kind is a form insofar as it stands in determinate intelligible whole/part relationships to other forms, the stranger's selection of being, rest, and motion should come as no surprise. The stranger has defined being as something that has the power to affect and/or be affected. Since a kind stands in structured eidetic whole/part relations to other kinds, it must be such that it has the power to affect and be affected. Eidetic whole/part relations include relations of causal priority and posteriority, and those relations are an affecting and being affected.⁷ Each kind, therefore, must be. Likewise, the argument against the friends of the forms asserted that an object of discursive knowledge must both rest and be moved. An object of discursive knowledge is embedded within an eidetic whole of parts. Since the parts of an eidetic whole are structured in relation to one another, they are being moved. The structure in terms of which they are structured, however, is unchanging and therefore at rest. Thus, rest and motion are selected for the same reason as being: whatever can be discursively known must be, be at rest, and be moved.⁸

After stating that being, rest, and motion are among the greatest kinds, the stranger, speaking of rest and motion, next claims "that the members of one pair of them are unblended (ἀμείκτω) with one another" (254d7-8). What is "blending" (μείγνυσθαι, συμμείγνυσθαι)? And why is it that rest and motion are unblended? During the argument against the late learners, the stranger used a number of terms to designate the way in which beings could "commune" or "blend" with one another.⁹ In my translations of the argument against the late learners, I used "communing" to translate verbs or expressions which have their root in "κοινωνεῖν,"¹⁰ and "blending" to translate verbs or expressions which have their root in "μείγνυσθαι" or related words.¹¹ In addition to these two terms, the stranger and Theaetetus also used forms of "μεταλαμβάνειν" (251d7), "μετέχειν" (251e10), and "ἐπιγίγνεσθαι" (252d7) to refer to the relationship that can generally be described as "communing" or "blending." As we will see, during his

⁷ See chap. III.2.

⁸ *Contra* Cornford and Malcolm, I do not think that "any other pair of incompatible Forms" could be substituted for rest and motion (Cornford, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge*, 277-278; cf. Malcolm, "Plato's Analysis," 140n21, 141n23).

⁹ Cf. Cornford, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge*, 255-256; Rosen, *Plato's Sophist*, 253, 263.

¹⁰ See Plato, *Soph.*, 253a8, 253e1 (κοινωνεῖν); 251d9 (ἐπικοινωνεῖν); 251e9 (ἔχειν κοινωνίας); 252d2-3 (ἔχειν ἐπικοινωνίας) 252a2-3 (προσκοινωνεῖν); 252b9-10 (κοινωνία παθήματος ἐτέρου).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 252e2 (συμμείγνυσθαι); 251d7 (ἀμεικτα); 252b6 (σύμμειξις).

discussion of the five greatest kinds, the stranger will begin to differentiate these various terms. He will use “κοινωνεῖν” (to commune) as a general term, which when applied to kinds or forms could refer to any sort of relationship or association between them. “Μετέχειν” (to participate) will designate a relationship that I will call “participation,” in which the thing participated in is causally prior to the participant. “Μείγνυσθαι” (to blend) and related words, in turn, will designate the way in which a form *qua* one of many can have multiple characters.

“Blending” is the first notion that comes to take on a very specific meaning in the stranger’s account of the five kinds. At 254b8-9, the stranger claims that “some kinds are willing to commune with one another and others not” (ὅτ’ οὖν δὴ τὰ μὲν ἡμῖν τῶν γενῶν ὁμολόγηται κοινωνεῖν ἐθέλειν ἀλλήλοις, τὰ δὲ μή). It is this sort of “communing” that the stranger begins to specify as blending as he selects the greatest kinds. As I argued in Chapter III.4.A, this sort of communing is a communing in “the same thing” (cf. 251d8-9; εἰς ταὐτόν).¹² When the stranger claims that “some kinds are willing to commune with one another and others not” he does not mean that there are certain kinds that simply never commune. Rather, he means that certain kinds are willing to commune with one another in the same thing, while certain other kinds are unwilling. What does the stranger mean by “the same thing” (ταὐτόν)? First, “the same thing” is something that is the same “in relation to itself” (256b1; πρὸς ἑαυτήν), which is to say, “the same as itself” (254d15; αὐτὸ δ’ ἑαυτῷ ταὐτόν). Second, this and the stranger’s inference at 254d12-15 from the countability of being, rest, and motion to their self-sameness indicate that anything which is the same as itself is numerically self-identical as a result of being the same as itself. Third, given the sort of inferences the stranger makes throughout the digression, and especially during his selection of the five kinds, we can infer that Plato would like his readers to understand “the same thing” in the *Sophist* according to how he had Socrates characterize it during the discussion of the Principle of Non-Opposition in *Republic* IV, 436a8-437a2. With terminology similar to what we see in the *Sophist*,¹³ the Principle of Non-Opposition states that “the same thing will not at the same time be willing to affect or be affected by opposites in the same respect or in relation to the same

¹² Cf. chap. III.4.A, esp. 137n75; Plato, *Soph.*, 251e9 (ἔχειν κοινωνίας εἰς μηδέν).

¹³ See chap. III.4.A, esp. 137n75.

thing” (436b8-9; ταὐτὸν τάναντία ποιεῖν ἢ πάσχειν κατὰ ταὐτόν γε καὶ πρὸς ταὐτὸν οὐκ ἐθελήσει ἅμα). Any object of discursive knowledge must be intelligible. The Principle of Non-Opposition states a minimal condition of intelligibility.¹⁴ Any object of discursive knowledge, therefore, is a self-same object as defined by Non-Opposition. This characterization of an object that is the same as itself is what is behind the stranger’s claim that rest and motion are “unblended with one another” (254d7-8).¹⁵ Blending occurs in a kind. Since kinds are atemporal, blending is atemporal. Hence the “at the same time” (ἅμα) qualification does not apply to blending. Likewise, since blending occurs in a kind rather than in relation to anything, the “in relation to the same thing” (πρὸς ταὐτόν) qualification does not apply to blending. Furthermore, since blending occurs in a kind insofar as that kind is a self-same individual, that is, in the same respect, blending necessarily always occurs “in the same respect” (κατὰ ταὐτόν). A kind is at the very least a self-same object within which various other kinds can blend, although the kinds that blend cannot be opposites. A kind that possesses the character rest, then, cannot blend with the kind motion, since rest and motion are opposites.

Blending occurs in a kind, yet a kind is not an empty unit in which others can blend.¹⁶ Rather each kind has a unique “definitive character” in reference to which it is

¹⁴ See chap. I.3.

¹⁵ Some might question why I am using the Principle of Non-Opposition instead of the Principle of Non-Contradiction in order to define “the same thing,” especially given the stranger’s comments about non-large in 257b3-7. The stranger claims in 257b3-7 that while large and small are opposites, large and equal are not. Large, small, and equal, however, are incompatible properties: the same thing cannot be both small and large, small and equal, or large and equal, at the same time, in the same respect, or in relation to the same thing. The stranger’s claims make the class of opposite properties a subset of the class of incompatible properties, that is, there are incompatible properties that are not opposites. As a result, the stranger’s comments about non-large seem not only to suggest that the Principle of Non-Opposition and the Principle of Non-Contradiction are not equivalent, but that Non-Contradiction is more basic than Non-Opposition (cf. Fred D. Miller, “Plato on the Parts of the Soul,” in *Plato and Platonism*, ed. Johannes M. van Ophuijsen [Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1999], 92-93). Not all blending excluded by Non-Contradiction, it seems, would be excluded by Non-Opposition. As a result, it may appear as if my choice to characterize blending and self-sameness in terms of Non-Opposition instead of Non-Contradiction saddles the stranger, and ultimately Plato, with a weak argument. This is not the case, however. At this point in the digression, “is not” has not yet been clearly defined and its meaning is in question. Since Non-Contradiction is based on the notion of “is not” and since its formulation uses the term “not be” explicitly, the stranger’s argument would beg the question if it were to use Non-Contradiction, in a way that it does not if it uses Non-Opposition. Using the Principle of Non-Opposition to characterize blending and self-sameness makes the stranger’s argument stronger rather than weaker.

¹⁶ Cf. Charlotte Stough, “Two Kinds of Naming in the *Sophist*,” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 20, no. 3 (1990): 376. “If participation of one Form in another is intended to explain how a Form can have more than one name, it does so at the risk of raising another problem. Granted that Forms can blend among themselves, there is nothing yet to guarantee their integrity as just the Forms that they are. A Form must be

named and that determines with which among the other kinds it can blend. Rest, for instance, is the definitive character of the kind rest. Motion, likewise, is the definitive character of the kind motion. Each kind's definitive character is that which determines with which other kinds it is willing to blend and with which it is not. Rest and motion, for example, are two kinds each of which has the definitive character that its name indicates. Rest and motion, however, are unblended because their definitive characters are opposites. Being, on the other hand, blends with both motion and rest, since both are (254d10).

Being, motion, and rest, then, says the stranger, "come to be three." Since each kind is a one of many, it must be the same as itself and different from the others. The stranger, however, wonders to what the terms "same" and "different" refer. He says:

What in the world are the things of which we have just now spoken, the same and the different? Are they themselves some two kinds other than the first three yet always blended with them by necessity; and must one look into five and not three as those that are? Or are we unwittingly addressing one of those three when we say "same" and "different"?

Τί ποτ' αὖ ἄ νῦν οὕτως εἰρήκαμεν, τό τε ταῦτόν καὶ θάτερον; πότερα δύο γένη τινὲ αὐτῶ, τῶν μὲν τριῶν ἄλλω, συμμειγνυμένω μὴν ἐκείνοις ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἀεὶ, καὶ περὶ πέντε ἄλλ' οὐ περὶ τριῶν ὡς ὄντων αὐτῶν σκεπτέον, ἢ τό τε ταῦτόν τοῦτο καὶ θάτερον ὡς ἐκείνων τι προσαγορεύοντες λαθάνομεν ἡμᾶς αὐτούς; (254e2-255a2)

If we can meaningfully say that a kind is the same as itself and different from others, then it must be possible to truly define whatever it is that we indicate by the word "same" and whatever it is that we indicate by the word "different." The objects indicated by "same" and "different," therefore, must be objects of discursive knowledge. They must be kinds, in other words. The stranger asks whether they are two additional kinds, or simply two of the previous three under different names.

§2. *Same and Different are not Identical to Rest and Motion (255a4-b7)*

The stranger argues that same and different are in fact two additional kinds. The first leg of his argument shows that same and different are not identical to rest and motion (255a4-b7). The second leg shows that same and different are not identical to being

able to blend with other Forms without being those Forms. . . . Being, Sameness, and Difference make it possible for a Form to be something other than itself without ceasing to be itself, without losing its nature."

(255b8-e2). Both legs of the argument taken together confirm that the sense of form *qua* fully determinate is distinct from the sense of form *qua* one of many. They do so, however, by introducing another sense of “form,” form *qua* nature. The stranger introduces the sense of form *qua* nature during the first leg of the argument, which we will now consider. The text reads as follows:

Stranger: But certainly motion and rest are neither different nor the same.

Theaetetus: How so?

Stranger: Whatever we call motion and rest in common, that cannot be either of them.

Theaetetus: Why?

Stranger: Motion will be at rest, and rest in turn will be moved. For concerning both, whichever member of the pair becomes other will compel the other to change into the opposite of its own nature, by participating in the opposite.

Theaetetus: Exactly.

Stranger: And yet both participate in same and different.

Theaetetus: Yes.

Stranger: Then let us not say that motion at least is either same or different, nor in its turn rest.

ΞΕ. Ἄλλ’ οὐ τι μὴν κίνησις γε καὶ στάσις οὔθ’ ἕτερον οὔτε ταῦτόν ἐστι.

ΘΕΑΙ. Πῶς;

ΞΕ. Ὅτιπερ ἂν κοινῇ προσείπωμεν κίνησιν καὶ στάσιν, τοῦτο οὐδέτερον αὐτοῖν οἷόν τε εἶναι.

ΘΕΑΙ. Τί δή;

ΞΕ. Κίνησις τε στήσεται καὶ στάσις αὖ κινήσεται · περὶ γὰρ ἀμφοτέρα θάτερον ὀποτερονοῦν γιγνόμενον αὐτοῖν ἀναγκάσει μεταβάλλειν αὖ θάτερον ἐπὶ τούναντίον τῆς αὐτοῦ φύσεως, ἅτε μετασχὸν τοῦ ἐναντίου.

ΘΕΑΙ. Κομιδῇ γε.

ΞΕ. Μετέχeton μὴν ἄμφω ταῦτοῦ καὶ θατέρου.

ΘΕΑΙ. Ναί.

ΞΕ. Μὴ τοίνυν λέγωμεν κίνησιν γ’ εἶναι ταῦτόν ἢ θάτερον, μηδ’ αὖ στάσιν. (255a4-b6)

The stranger’s explanation of why whatever we call motion and rest in common cannot be either of them is compact, but nevertheless vital to the distinction between the various senses of “form” we are considering. The stranger claims that motion cannot be

at rest and rest cannot be moved. “Being moved” is the definitive character of the kind we call motion, while “being at rest” is the definitive character of the kind we call rest. Since being moved and being at rest are contraries, they cannot blend in the same thing, and therefore cannot blend in the same kind. Given that the kind motion is a self-same object that possesses the definitive character of being moved, it cannot be at rest (in the sense of possessing the character of being at rest),¹⁷ since being at rest is the contrary of being moved. Likewise, given that the kind rest is a self-same object that possesses the definitive character of being at rest, it cannot be moved (in the sense of possessing the character of being moved), since being at rest is the contrary of being moved.¹⁸ The stranger further details why this entails that whatever we call both motion and rest in common cannot be either of them. He says, “For concerning both [rest and motion], whichever member of the pair [e.g., rest] becomes other [e.g., same] will compel the other [i.e., motion] to change into the opposite [i.e., rest] of its own nature [i.e., motion], by participating in the opposite [i.e., rest].”¹⁹ The Greek of this passage is elliptical and has been construed in various ways.²⁰ The basic sense of the argument is clear, however. If either rest or motion were identical to either same or different, then, since both rest and motion participate in same and different, either rest would participate in motion or motion would participate in rest, both of which are impossible given that rest cannot be moved and motion cannot rest. Or to simplify, say that rest were identical to same. Then since

¹⁷ Given the stranger’s comments at 256b6-c2, I think that there is a sense in which motion is being at rest and rest is being moved (see chap. V.1.D; cf. chap. III.4.A, p. 139n79).

¹⁸ There are various ways of understanding the justification of the principle that motion cannot be at rest and rest cannot be moved in this passage. My reading closely resembles that of McCabe (McCabe, *Plato’s Individuals*, 228-229; cf. Vlastos, “An Ambiguity in the *Sophist*”; Bluck, *Plato’s Sophist*, 113-115). For other ways of interpreting this passage see Moravcsik, “Being and Meaning in the *Sophist*,” 45-47; *Plato and Platonism*, 184; Fred R. Berger, “Rest and Motion in the *Sophist*,” *Phronesis* 10, no. 1 (1965): 70-77; Malcolm, “Plato’s Analysis,” 141n23; Bluck, *Plato’s Sophist*, 142-143; Sallis, *Being and Logos*, 515-518; Ketchum, “Participation and Predication,” 42-62; R. E. Heinaman, “Self-Predication in the *Sophist*,” *Phronesis* 26, no. 1 (1981): 55-66; Reeve, “Motion, Rest, and Dialectic in the *Sophist*”; Stough, “Two Kinds of Naming in the *Sophist*,” 376-377; Job van Eck, “Plato’s Logical Insights: *Sophist* 254d-257a,” *Ancient Philosophy* 20, no. 1 (2000): 53-79; Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 119-136; cf. Frede, *Prädikation und Existenzaussage*, 30-35.

¹⁹ Cf. Cornford, *Plato’s Theory of Knowledge*, 280; Taylor, *The Sophist and the Statesman*, 160; Ray, *For Images*, 62; McCabe, *Plato’s Individuals*, 225; White, *Sophist*, 277; Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 119.

²⁰ My translation of 255a11-b1 closely parallels that of Cornford, Benardete, and Brann et al. (Cornford, *Plato’s Theory of Knowledge*, 280; Benardete, *Plato’s Sophist*, 50; Brann et al., *Plato: Sophist*, 64). For a discussion of various ways to construe the Greek see Bluck, *Plato’s Sophist*, 138-139, 154-156; Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 118n46.

motion participates in same, because motion is the same as itself, motion would participate in rest, which is impossible given that motion cannot rest.

The argument raises a number of questions for the critical reader, questions both about the nature (φύσις) of rest and motion and about participation (μετέχειν). I will start with the stranger's use of the term "nature" in this passage. The stranger claims that if either rest or motion were identical to either same or different, one of the pair would "compel the other to change into the opposite of its own nature (τῆς αὐτοῦ φύσεως)." The stranger here suggests a distinction between two dimensions of the forms he is considering. He points to a distinction between a form *qua* self-same object (αὐτοῦ) and a form *qua* nature. A form *qua* self-same object is what I have been calling a "kind." This distinction raises a question. To what does the name "rest" or "motion" refer in the argument here? Does each refer to a self-same eidetic object (kind) or to the nature which that object possesses? Do kinds have natures? Or are kinds natures? The stranger's use of the phrase "its own nature (τῆς αὐτοῦ φύσεως)" indicates that kinds have natures. The object, for instance, to which the name "rest" refers in the stranger's argument here would be a form *qua* kind. The nature of rest, on the other hand, would indicate the source of the norms which dictate that this kind should be called "rest," the norms that explain the way in which this kind is intelligibly related to other kinds.²¹ A kind is a countable object that has a nature. That nature is the source of the norms which dictate how that kind *qua* countable object relates to other kinds within eidetic whole/part structures. The nature of a kind, in other words, constitutes a kind *qua* one of many as a kind *qua* fully determinate. The nature of a kind explains why a kind, over and above being a one of many, is also fully determinate. Hence the nature of a kind is what explains why a kind has the definitive character that it has.

With this understanding of form *qua* nature in place we are now in the position to ask what the stranger means by "participating" (μετασχόν) in 255b1. Is "participating" simply another word for blending? Or does it indicate a different sort of communing? I think that "participating" indicates a different sort of communing which the stranger is

²¹ Cf. Stough, "Two Kinds of Naming in the *Sophist*," 365.

introducing here for the first time.²² I do not think that the stranger uses “participating” in the sense of “blends,” because the argument here says more than that motion and rest cannot blend. Consider what the argument would be if “participating” meant blending. Say that rest is identical to same. The stranger has claimed that motion is the same as itself (254d14-15). Since motion is the same as itself, we can call motion “same,” which presupposes that motion blends with whatever kind is called “same,” although it is not thereby identical with whatever kind we call same. If the kind we call “same” were identical with the kind we call “rest,” then by blending with same motion would blend with rest, which is impossible since motion and rest are unblended (ἀμείκτω) (254d7-8). If this were the stranger’s argument in 255a11-b1, then there would be no talk of how one member of the pair rest and motion would “compel (ἀναγκάσει) the other to change (μεταβάλλειν) into the opposite of its own nature.” The dynamic language of “change” and “compel” or “necessitate” suggests something more than the mere fact that motion and rest are unblended. It suggests that the stranger is attempting to explain why motion and rest are unblended in terms of the norms that govern their intelligible relations. Why are motion and rest unblended? Because if one [e.g., motion] were to participate in the nature of its opposite [i.e., rest], that nature would compel it [i.e., motion] to change into its opposite [i.e., rest]. The notion of participation (μετέχειν), then, indicates a relationship of causal priority.²³ That which is participated in is causally prior to its participant.

Yet what is that which is participated in at 255b1? The text says that if either rest or motion were identical to either same or different, one of the pair would “compel the other to change into the opposite of its own nature, by participating in the opposite (ἐπὶ τοῦναντίον τῆς αὐτοῦ φύσεως, ἅτε μετασχὼν τοῦ ἐναντίου).” Does the stranger mean “by participating in the nature of the opposite” or “by participating in the opposite kind”? I think the former. The initial “τοῦναντίον” seems to refer to a form *qua* kind, a form *qua* affected (subject to necessity and to eidetic change [μεταβάλλειν]), and so a form *qua*

²² He used the word “μετέχειν” at various places earlier in the dialogue, but this is where I think he introduces the technical notion of “participation.”

²³ I say “the notion of participation” because I do not mean to suggest that every time the stranger uses the word “μετέχειν” he is invoking this notion. In 255b1, 255e3-256d10, and elsewhere the stranger will use “μετέχειν” to indicate what I am calling the “notion of participation.” At other places, however, he uses the word “μετέχειν” in a less technical sense, for example at 251e10 and 255d4.

causally posterior to the form *qua* nature affecting it. For the sake of clarity, let us consider the counterfactual scenario in which rest is identical with same (call it rest-same) and so motion has to participate in it. The stranger plainly says that motion's participation in rest-same would result in motion's changing into the opposite of its own nature. He does not say that it would result in the nature of motion changing into the nature of rest. Rather he says that motion *qua* self-same object, *qua* kind, would change into the opposite of its own nature, that is, into rest *qua* self-same object. In other words, motion *qua* kind would become identical to rest *qua* kind, and this "new" kind would have the nature of rest. This change would happen because of participation in the opposite (ἄτε μετασχὼν τοῦ ἐναντίου). Hence, "the opposite" here cannot indicate rest *qua* kind—or motion *qua* kind if we were to run the scenario the other way—but must indicate "the nature of the opposite," because only participation in the nature of rest could explain why the kind we call "motion" would change into and become identical with the kind we call "rest." Form *qua* nature is that which is participated in and is causally prior to its participants.

§3. *Same and Different are not Identical to Being (255b8-e2)*

Participation in the nature of a given kind, then, explains that kind's definitive character, the character by which it occupies a specific position within eidetic whole/part structures. As we will see, participation in the nature of being, in contrast, explains a kind's capacity to have a definitive character, that is, the power that a kind has for communing with other kinds.²⁴ Participation in the nature of same and different, likewise, explains why each kind is the same as itself and different from others. Sameness and difference, in turn, are the properties by which a kind is a countable unit, a one of many. Thus, the norms which constitute a kind as a countable object are sourced in the nature of same and different. The stranger highlights this by differentiating same and different from being.

²⁴ In this I differ from Charlotte Stough, who claims that participation in the nature of being explains a kind's definitive character, as opposed to simply a kind's capacity to have a definitive character. See Stough, "Two Kinds of Naming in the *Sophist*," 376. "By participating in Being, a Form is just the nature that it is (the F itself is F). Thus Motion is by participating in Being, which is to say, Motion is just what it is to be Motion (Motion has the nature of Motion). Participation in the remaining two vowel Forms guarantees that each Form is the same as itself and different from others, logical properties that can no longer be taken for granted once it is allowed that Forms can blend among themselves."

Kinds, since they can be objects of discursive knowledge and since they are embedded within eidetic whole/part structures, must all have certain properties or affections (πάθη)—such as being, sameness, difference—in addition to their definitive characters. These properties cannot be distinct in the sense that they occupy different positions within the kind that possesses them. Hence the stranger distinguishes these properties in terms of participation.²⁵ A kind is the same as itself (has sameness) because it participates in the nature of the same. A kind is different from others (has difference) because it participates in the nature of different. A kind is (has being) because it participates in the nature of being. The stranger’s argument for why same and different are not identical to being proceeds by (a) pointing out differences in a kind’s properties—discernable in the way we speak—and then (b) claiming that the natures which explain those properties are not identical to one another.

A. Same is not Identical to Being (255b8-c8)

The stranger begins by differentiating same from being. He asks whether “we should think of being and same as some one [kind]?” (255b8-9; ἀλλ’ ἄρα τὸ ὄν καὶ τὸ ταῦτόν ὡς ἓν τι διανοητέον ἡμῖν;). His argument for why we should not runs as follows:

Stranger: But should we then think of being and the same as some one [kind]?

Theaetetus: Perhaps.

Stranger: But if “being” and “same” signify nothing distinct, then when we turn back to motion and rest, saying that both are, we will in this way call both²⁶ of them the same thing,²⁷ since they are.²⁸

²⁵ Cf. McCabe, *Plato’s Individuals*, 237.

²⁶ De Rijk is wrong to interpret the two double occurrence of “ἄμφοτερα” as “each of them is both” (de Rijk, *Plato’s Sophist*, 150). See van Eck, “Plato’s Logical Insights,” 67; Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 139-140.

²⁷ I translate “ταῦτόν” here as “the same thing” so as to avoid ambiguities in English that are not present in the Greek (cf. Taylor, *The Sophist and the Statesman*, 160; van Eck, “Plato’s Logical Insights,” 67). Since “ταῦτόν” is singular and “ἄμφοτερα . . . αὐτά” is plural, to call the referent of “ἄμφοτερα . . . αὐτά” “ταῦτόν” can only mean to call it “the same thing”: “. . . both of them [together] the same thing.” “Ἄμφοτερα . . . αὐτά ταῦτόν . . . προσερούμεν” cannot mean that we will call both motion the same as itself and rest the same as itself, for that would be to call each of them the same as itself. The alternative, “we will call both of them the same as itself” is not a properly formed expression. And “we will call both of them the same as themselves” would be expressed by the plural “ταυτά” rather than the singular “ταῦτόν”: “ἄμφοτερα αὐτά ταυτά [πρὸς ἑαυτά] προσερούμεν.” For a defense of the interpretation I have adopted, see van Eck, “Plato’s Logical Insights,” 66-69. The failure to recognize that “ταῦτόν” at 255c1 should be translated in the way I have indicated has led some commentators to think that the argument of 255b11-c2

Theaetetus: But that is certainly impossible.

Stranger: Then it is impossible for the same and being to be one.

Theaetetus: Pretty much.

Stranger: Must we then posit the same as a fourth in addition to the three forms?

Theaetetus: By all means.

ΞΕ. Ἄλλ' ἄρα τὸ ὄν καὶ τὸ ταὐτὸν ὡς ἓν τι διανοητέον ἡμῖν;

ΘΕΑΙ. Ἴσως.

ΞΕ. Ἄλλ' εἰ τὸ ὄν καὶ τὸ ταὐτὸν μηδὲν διάφορον σημαίνεται, κίνησιν αὖ πάλιν καὶ στάσιν ἀμφοτέρα εἶναι λέγοντες ἀμφοτέρα οὕτως αὐτὰ ταὐτὸν ὡς ὄντα προσερούμεν.

ΘΕΑΙ. Ἀλλὰ μὴν τοῦτό γε ἀδύνατον.

ΞΕ. Ἀδύνατον ἄρα ταὐτὸν καὶ τὸ ὄν ἓν εἶναι.

ΘΕΑΙ. Σχεδόν.

ΞΕ. Τέταρτον δὴ πρὸς τοῖς τρισὶν εἶδεσιν τὸ ταὐτὸν τιθῶμεν;

ΘΕΑΙ. Πάνυ μὲν οὖν. (255b8-c8)

The argument asks us to consider whether “being” and “same” are simply two names for some one kind, or whether “being” and “same” name two different kinds (cf. 254e3-255a2). If “same” and “being” were simply two names for some one kind, then by the act of saying “motion and rest both are” we would be calling both of them the same thing. The apodasis of this conditional expresses the heart of the argument of 255b8-c8. What the apodasis shows is that to say that something is the same thing is to say more than simply that something is.²⁹ Consider the contrast between saying that two things are, on the one hand, and calling both of them together the same thing, on the other hand. If x and y are, I can call them both together beings. In calling them beings, I treat both of them together as a plurality. In calling both x and y taken together the same thing,

is problematic or fallacious. See for example, A. L. Peck, “Plato and the *ΜΕΓΙΣΤΑ ΓΕΝΗ* of the *Sophist*: A Reinterpretation,” *Classical Quarterly* 2, no. 1 (1952): 48; Bluck, *Plato's Sophist*, 144-145; Owen, “Plato on Not-Being,” 453-454; Vlastos, “An Ambiguity in the *Sophist*,” 286n42; Bostock, “Plato on ‘Is-Not,’” 91; de Rijk, *Plato's Sophist*, 150; Ambuel, *Image and Paradigm*, 146.

²⁸ The “ὡς ὄντα” can be variously translated. My translation is similar to that of Fowler and Brann et al., in that it takes “ὡς” as a causal conjunction: “since” (Fowler, *Plato VII*, 409; Brann et al., *Plato: Sophist*, 65). For other construals, see Campbell, *The Sophistes and Politicus*, 151; Cornford, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge*, 280; Taylor, *The Sophist and the Statesman*, 160; Benardete, *Plato's Sophist*, 51; White, *Sophist*, 278; Ambuel, *Image and Paradigm*, 230; van Eck, “Plato's Logical Insights,” 66; Crivelli, *Plato's Account of Falsehood*, 137.

²⁹ Van Eck, “Plato's Logical Insights,” 68.

however, I construe them as one, rather than a plurality. In other words, by calling both x and y together the same thing, I claim that they together constitute a self-identical individual, that at the very least is not willing to affect or be affected by opposites at the same time, in the same respect, or in relation to the same thing. That x and y both are, it should be noted, does not exclude that possibility that x and y can constitute one and the same thing.³⁰ Rather, that x and y both are opens that possibility. Yet it also opens up others, such as the possibility that x and y are different things.³¹ The character of objects insofar as they are, therefore, is not identical to the character of objects insofar as they are the same thing. As a result, by saying that motion and rest are, we do not thereby call both of them together the same thing. Thus, although the conditional at 255b11-c2 is true, its apodasis is false, which in turn entails that its protasis is false. It is not the case that “being” and “same” are two names for some one kind. Therefore, same must be counted as another kind in addition to being.³²

The argument of 255b8-c8 reveals that the forms being and same *qua* kinds, *qua* objects of discursive knowledge, are different from one another. The critical reader of the digression will understand that they are different because the nature of each does not produce the same affection or property in the objects that participate in it. Participation in the nature of same explains why a kind is a self-same object in which contraries cannot blend. Participation in the nature of being, in contrast, explains why a kind is determinate, that is, why a kind is the sort of thing that can have a definitive character. While participation in the nature of being explains why a kind has the power to affect and be affected, participation in the nature of same explains why a kind is a self-identical individual, a one as opposed to a bare plurality. Participation in both being and same together, then, explains why a kind can blend with some but not with others.

³⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*, 69, esp. n29.

³¹ Cf. Taylor, *The Sophist and the Statesman*, 160.

³² My interpretation of the argument of 255b8-c8 is similar to that of van Eck (van Eck, “Plato’s Logical Insights,” 66-69). For alternative interpretations see Peck, “Plato and the *ΜΕΤΕΤΑ ΓΕΝΗ*,” 48; A. R. Lacey, “Plato’s *Sophist* and the Forms,” *Classical Quarterly* 9, no. 1 (1959): 49; Runciman, *Plato’s Later Epistemology*, 93; J. R. Trevaskis, “The μέγιστα γένη and the Vowel Analogy of Plato, *Sophist* 253,” *Phronesis* 11, no. 2 (1966): 103-104; Bluck, *Plato’s Sophist*, 143-145; Owen, “Plato on Not-Being,” 453-454; Sallis, *Being and Logos*, 519; Vlastos, “An Ambiguity in the *Sophist*,” 286n42; Bostock, “Plato on ‘Is-Not,’” 91; de Rijk, *Plato’s Sophist*, 150; McCabe, *Plato’s Individuals*, 229-230; Ambuel, *Image and Paradigm*, 146; Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 137-140.

Participation in the nature of being explains the power to commune, while participation in the nature of same explains why that power can be exercised toward some but not toward others. Or to put it differently, participation in the nature of same explains why a kind is a one that as a one can be a part of various eidetic structures, while the nature of being enables a kind to be such that it can have the definitive character by which it can occupy a specific position within those structures.

B. Different is not Identical to Being (255c9-e2)

After differentiating being from same, the stranger argues that being and different are not identical. This portion of the stranger's argument will enable us to confirm that the sense of form *qua* nature, of form *qua* fully determinate, and of form *qua* one of many are distinct. The text reads as follows:

Stranger: Well then, must we say that the different is a fifth? Or is it necessary to think of "different" and "being" as two distinct names for one kind?

Theaetetus: Maybe.

Stranger: But I suppose you grant that among the things that are, some are said themselves by themselves, while others are always said in relation to something different.

Theaetetus: Certainly.

Stranger: And what is different is always said in relation to something different, isn't it?

Theaetetus: Just so.

Stranger: This would not be the case if being and the different were not entirely distinct. But if different participated in both forms, then just as with being, there would sometimes also be something different among the different things not [said]³³ in relation to something different. And yet it has now inescapably fallen out for us that whatever is different is necessarily what it is from something different.

Theaetetus: It is just as you say.

Stranger: Then the nature of the different must be said to be a fifth among the forms we are selecting.

Theaetetus: Yes.

³³ The argument of 255c9-255e2 as a whole (see my account of the argument below, esp. 171-175) requires that "οὐ πρὸς ἕτερον" here at 255d5-6 is understood with reference to "λέγεσθαι" at 255c15.

ΞΕ. Τί δέ; τὸ θάτερον ἄρα ἡμῖν λεκτέον πέμπτον; ἢ τοῦτο καὶ τὸ ὄν ὡς δὴ
ἅπαντα ὀνόματα ἐφ’ ἐνὶ γένει διανοεῖσθαι δεῖ;

ΘΕΑΙ. Τάχ’ ἄν.

ΞΕ. Ἀλλ’ οἴμαι σε συγχωρεῖν τῶν ὄντων τὰ μὲν αὐτὰ καθ’ αὐτά, τὰ δὲ
πρὸς ἄλλα ἀεὶ λέγεσθαι.

ΘΕΑΙ. Τί δ’ οὐ;

ΞΕ. Τὸ δὲ γ’ ἕτερον ἀεὶ πρὸς ἕτερον · ἢ γάρ;

ΘΕΑΙ. Οὕτως.

ΞΕ. Οὐκ ἄν, εἴ γε τὸ ὄν καὶ τὸ θάτερον μὴ πάμπολυ διεφερέτην · ἀλλ’
εἴπερ θάτερον ἀμφοῖν μετεῖχε τοῖν εἰδοῖν,³⁴ ὥσπερ τὸ ὄν ἦν ἄν ποτέ τι καὶ
τῶν ἐτέρων ἕτερον οὐ πρὸς ἕτερον · νῦν δὲ ἀτεχνῶς ἡμῖν ὅτιπερ ἄν ἕτερον
ἦ, συμβέβηκεν ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἐτέρου τοῦτο ὅπερ ἐστὶν εἶναι.

ΘΕΑΙ. Λέγεις καθάπερ ἔχει.

ΞΕ. Πέμπτον δὴ τὴν θατέρου φύσιν λεκτέον ἐν τοῖς εἶδεσιν οὕσαν, ἐν οἷς
προαιρούμεθα.

ΘΕΑΙ. Ναί. (255c9-e2)

The argument here raises a number of questions. First, what does the stranger mean by his claim that “of the things that are, some are said themselves by themselves, while others are always said in relation to something different” (255c14-15)? The contrasting demonstrative “τά”s in the “μὲν . . . δέ” clause at 255c14-15 indicate two contrasting sets of objects.³⁵ Various alternatives have been suggested as to what these two sets of objects are or represent.³⁶ I submit that the first set consists of objects insofar as they are such that they can be expressed by words with a complete use, such as the verb “to be” (εἶναι), which has both a complete and an incomplete use; while the second set consists of objects insofar as they are such that they can only be expressed by words with solely an incomplete use.³⁷ Second, the stranger claims that “if different

³⁴ Editors generally put the comma after “ὥσπερ τὸ ὄν” instead of before (see Campbell, *The Sophistes and Politicus*, 152; Burnet, *Platonis Opera*; Fowler, *Plato VII*, 408; Diès, *Platon: Oeuvres complètes*; Duke et al., *Platonis Opera*, 449; Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 141). To make the best sense of the argument, the comma should be before.

³⁵ Smyth, 1106-1111; Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 147.

³⁶ For an overview of the main interpretations see Crivelli, *Plato’s Theory of Falsehood*, 142-145.

³⁷ For the complete/incomplete distinction, see chap. I.6; Brown, “Being in the *Sophist*,” 461-464. For commentators who take the “αὐτὰ καθ’ αὐτά”/“πρὸς ἄλλα” distinction to indicate a distinction between complete and incomplete uses of words, see Peck, “Plato and the *ΜΕΓΙΣΤΑ ΓΕΝΗ*,” 48; Lacey, “Plato’s *Sophist* and the Forms,” 49n1; Moravcsik, “Being and Meaning in the *Sophist*,” 48, 54; Bostock, “Plato on ‘Is-Not,’” 92-94; Brown, “Being in the *Sophist*,” 476-449. Note that I escape Crivelli’s objection against those who take the “αὐτὰ καθ’ αὐτά”/“πρὸς ἄλλα” distinction to indicate a distinction between complete

participated in both forms, then just as with being, there would sometimes also be something different among the different things not [said] in relation to something different” (255d4-6). What does the stranger mean by “both forms” (ἀμφοῖν τοῖν εἰδοῖν) and “participated” (μετεῖχε) at 255d4?

Given the stranger’s striking terminological consistency during the discussion of the five kinds,³⁸ “both forms” would most naturally refer to the two forms under consideration here: being and different. I will argue that this reading of “both forms” is both possible and the only plausible reading that avoids saddling the stranger, and ultimately Plato, with a terminological inconsistency that would render the argument problematic. Although modern interpretations of the argument of 255c9-e2 significantly differ from one another, nearly all share the feature of understanding “τοῖν εἰδοῖν” at 255d4 in a non-technical sense.³⁹ That is, they claim that “τοῖν εἰδοῖν” at 255d4 does not refer to the forms or kinds, but rather to two traits or features of something: the feature of being said itself by itself and the feature of being said in relation to something different. Although Plato is notorious for avoiding an overly technical vocabulary and although he has his characters in various dialogues use the word “εἶδος” in non-technical senses,⁴⁰ in the *Sophist* the word “εἶδος” is used almost exclusively in a technical sense—to refer to

and incomplete uses by making the “ἀτὰ καθ’ αὐτά”/“πρὸς ἄλλα” distinction a distinction between “objects insofar as they are such that . . .” (see Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 147).

³⁸ See chap. V.1.A, p. 184.

³⁹ See for example, Campbell, *The Sophistes and Politicus*, 152; Taylor, *The Sophist and the Statesman*, 161; Frede, *Prädikation und Existenzaussage*, 24; Seligman, *Being and Not-Being*, 61; Bluck, *Plato’s Sophist*, 146-150; R. E. Heinaman, “Communion of Forms,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 83 (1982-1983): 186; de Rijk, *Plato’s Sophist*, 151; Reeve, “Motion, Rest, and Dialectic in the *Sophist*,” 54; Notomi, *The Unity of Plato’s Sophist*, 242n70; Malcolm, “A Way Back for *Sophist* 255c12-13,” 275. Rosen and Dancy are exceptions, although their respective views are radically different. Rosen argues that “τοῖν εἰδοῖν” refers to “the pure forms *being* and *otherness*” (Rosen, *Plato’s Sophist*, 269). In this I completely agree with him. See note 44 below for why I think his overall account of the argument nevertheless fails. Dancy, in contrast, argues that the “τοῖν εἰδοῖν” refers to the two forms Standalone and Relative (Dancy, “The Categories of Being,” 60ff.). For why I think Dancy’s account is incorrect, see p. 168 below. Cornford is a partial exception to those who read “τοῖν εἰδοῖν” in a non-technical sense. Cornford understands “τοῖν εἰδοῖν” to refer to “characters” or “natures” (he uses those terms synonymously in this context, see Cornford, *Plato’s Theory of Knowledge*, 284), although not to any two of the five kinds, nor to any two specific forms, but rather to “the characters belonging respectively to things which ‘are what they are just in themselves’ (καθ’ αὐτά) and things which ‘are what they are with reference to other things’ (πρὸς ἄλλα)” (ibid., 282).

⁴⁰ See for example, Plato, *Phd.*, 97e5; *Rep.*, III.406c2; *Soph.*, 266c3.

forms or kinds. “Εἶδος” appears forty-eight times in the *Sophist*.⁴¹ Excepting from consideration its use at 255d4, the only time “εἶδος” is used in a non-technical sense in the *Sophist* is at 266c3 during the final divisions by which the stranger attempts to define sophistry. There “εἶδος” is used to describe the image or reflection produced by mirrors and other smooth surfaces. In all other instances, again excepting 255d4 from consideration, the word “εἶδος” clearly refers to forms or kinds. Moreover, since the stranger’s use of technical terminology during his discussion of the five greatest kinds is remarkably consistent, it is implausible to suppose that he uses “τοῖν εἰδοῖν” and “μετεῖχε” in an ambiguously non-technical sense at 255d4 without noting it to Theaetetus and the listeners. This implausibility is even greater given that the conclusion which the stranger immediately draws from his argument in 255d3-7 is that “the nature of the different must be said to be a fifth among the forms (τοῖς εἶδεσιν) we are selecting” (255d9-e1). If “τοῖν εἰδοῖν” at 255d4 does not refer to two forms, and not just to any two, but two among the five they are selecting, then the terminological inconsistency involved in its use would render the argument problematic. Consider, for example, Russell M. Dancy’s interpretation, according to which “τοῖν εἰδοῖν” refers to the forms Standalone and Relative.⁴² I find Dancy’s reading implausible because if it were correct, the stranger’s conclusion at 255d9-e1 would be poorly stated. If Dancy’s reading were correct, either the stranger should have counted Standalone and Relative as two other greatest kinds, along with the five, and should have concluded that “the nature of the different must be said to be a seventh among the forms (τοῖς εἶδεσιν) we are selecting”; or, if the stranger expected his hearers to recognize Standalone and Relative as forms here, but chose not to include them “among the forms we are selecting”—presumably because, although forms, they were not among the greatest—he should have explained why they are not among the greatest. Any interpretation of the argument of 255c9-e2 that does not understand “τοῖν εἰδοῖν” at 255d4 as referring to two of the five greatest kinds will render the stranger’s conclusion at 255d9-e1 problematic in a similar way. The

⁴¹ Plato, *Soph.*, 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.

⁴² Dancy, “The Categories of Being,” 60ff.

interpretation that I propose, therefore, construes “τοῖν εἰδοῖν” as referring to the nature of the kind being and the nature of the kind different.

Before I present and argue for my reading of 255c9-e2, there are a few ambiguities in the text that must be considered and sorted out. The first two ambiguities are introduced in 255c14-15. A third ambiguity concerns the “ὡσπερ τὸ ὄν” at 255d5.

The first ambiguity concerns the scope of “ἀεὶ” (always) in 255c15. The text of 255c14-15 reads as follows: “Ἄλλ’ οἶμαί σε συγχωρεῖν τῶν ὄντων τὰ μὲν αὐτὰ καθ’ αὐτά, τὰ δὲ πρὸς ἄλλα ἀεὶ λέγεσθαι.” The scope of “ἀεὶ” is unclear. Either the “ἀεὶ” governs both “τὰ μὲν αὐτὰ καθ’ αὐτά” and “τὰ δὲ πρὸς ἄλλα,” or it governs only the immediately preceding “τὰ δὲ πρὸς ἄλλα.” “But I suppose you grant that among the things that are, some are always said themselves by themselves, while others are always said in relation to something different” translates the first alternative.⁴³ “But I suppose you grant that among the things that are, some are said themselves by themselves, while others are always said in relation to something different” translates the second. The way that I will propose to read the argument of 255c9-e2 requires the second alternative, wherein “ἀεὶ” only governs the immediately preceding “τὰ δὲ πρὸς ἄλλα.”⁴⁴ The second alternative is preferable because of the “ποτέ” (sometimes) at 255d5. Since “ποτέ” here applies “in the case of being” (ὡσπερ τὸ ὄν),⁴⁵ 255d5-6 indicates that an object insofar as it participates in being is such that sometimes it can be said itself by itself and sometimes in relation to something different, as opposed to always said itself by itself, as the first alternative would have it.

The second ambiguity concerns how the “τά” in “τὰ μὲν . . . τὰ δὲ . . . λέγεσθαι” (255c14-15; some are said . . . others are said) should be understood. As I already pointed out, the demonstrative “τά”s in the “μὲν . . . δέ” clause indicate two contrasting

⁴³ For translators who adopt this alternative, see Fowler, *Plato VII*, 409; Cornford, *Plato’s Theory of Knowledge*, 281; Brann et al., *Plato: Sophist*, 65. For translators who adopt the narrower scope, see Taylor, *The Sophist and the Statesman*, 161; Benardete, *Plato’s Sophist*, 51; White, *Sophist*, 278; Ambuel, *Image and Paradigm*, 230; Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 141.

⁴⁴ This is where my reading of the argument of 255c9-e2 differs from that of Rosen, *Plato’s Sophist*, 269-271. Rosen thinks that objects insofar as they participate in being are always said themselves by themselves (ibid., 270), and thus translates “ἀεὶ” in 255c14-15 according to the alternative with a wider scope and tellingly does not include “sometimes” in his translation of 255d5 (ibid., 269). Instead, he mistranslates “ἦν ἄν ποτέ τι καὶ τῶν ἐτέρων ἕτερον” at 225d5 as “there would be a sort of ‘other’ among the others” (ibid.).

⁴⁵ See pp. 170-171 below.

sets of objects.⁴⁶ The problem is determining what the objects of those two sets are. The “λέγεσθαι” indicates that they are things said, but “things said” is ambiguous.

On the one hand, “things said” could refer to words, phrases, or statements; or to specific uses of words, phrases, or statements. If “τὰ μὲν . . . τὰ δὲ . . . λέγεσθαι” is understood according to this first alternative, the stranger is contrasting two different sorts or uses of words, phrases, or statements. For example, as some commentators suggest, he could be contrasting the complete and incomplete uses of words such as “to be” and “different.” “To be” has both a complete and an incomplete use.⁴⁷ In the incomplete use, it is used with either an explicit or elided complement, as in “motion is a form.” In the complete use, it is used without a complement, as in “motion is.” “Different” only has an incomplete use, since it is always used with an explicit or elided complement. According to this reading, “said itself by itself” indicates the complete use of a word, whereas “said in relation to something different” indicates the incomplete use.

On the other hand, “things said” could refer to the things about which something is said.⁴⁸ According to this second alternative, the “things said” are the things about which something is said. The statement “motion is said to be,” for instance, means “‘motion is’ is said about the entity motion.” On this reading, “τὰ μὲν . . . τὰ δὲ . . . λέγεσθαι” would describe two sets of objects about which someone could speak in two correspondingly different ways. The interpretation of the argument I am proposing requires this second alternative.

The third ambiguity concerns whether “ὥσπερ τὸ ὄν” at 255d5 belongs to the protasis or apodasis of “ἀλλ’ εἴπερ θάτερον ἀμφοῖν μετεῖχε τοῖν εἰδοῖν ὥσπερ τὸ ὄν ἦν ἄν ποτέ τι καὶ τῶν ἐτέρων ἕτερον οὐ πρὸς ἕτερον” (255d4-6). Editors generally place a comma after “ὥσπερ τὸ ὄν,” thus making it part of the protasis.⁴⁹ My interpretation of the argument requires that “ὥσπερ τὸ ὄν” is part of the apodasis, which is why I place the comma directly before “ὥσπερ τὸ ὄν.”⁵⁰ The following translates the conditional with “ὥσπερ τὸ ὄν” in the protasis: “But if different participated in both forms, as does being, then there would sometimes also be something different among the different things not

⁴⁶ See p. 166 above.

⁴⁷ See note 37 above.

⁴⁸ LSJ, s.v. “λέγω,” III.3.

⁴⁹ See note 34 above.

⁵⁰ See p. 166 above.

[said] in relation to something different.” With “ὡςπερ τὸ ὄν” in the apodasis, on the other hand, the conditional can be translated: “But if different participated in both forms, then just as in the case of being, there would sometimes also be something different among the different things not [said] in relation to something different.” If “ὡςπερ τὸ ὄν” is part of the apodasis, then “τοῖν εἰδοῖν” at 255d4 can be understood as referring to the nature of being and the nature of different. I will explain how in some detail below. If “ὡςπερ τὸ ὄν” is part of the protasis, however, “τοῖν εἰδοῖν” at 255d4 cannot be understood as referring to the nature of any two of the five kinds. With “ὡςπερ τὸ ὄν” in the protasis, being would participate in “both forms” (255d4; ἀμφοῖν μετεῖχε τοῖν εἰδοῖν), while different would only participate in one of the two. Yet the stranger explicitly says that all the kinds participate in being, same, and different (254d14 ff., 255e3-4, 256d12-e4), and suggests that they all have a share in (μεταλαμβάνειν) both motion and rest (see 249d3-4, 256b6). Thus, if “τοῖν εἰδοῖν” at 255d4 refers to the nature of two of the five kinds, then different cannot fail to participate in one of them. Since, as we have seen, “τοῖν εἰδοῖν” can only plausibly refer to the nature of two of the five kinds, and since “τοῖν εἰδοῖν” does not refer to the nature of any two of the five kinds if “ὡςπερ τὸ ὄν” at 255d5 is understood as part of the protasis, we have reason to think that it is part of the apodasis rather than part of the protasis.

My reading of the argument of 255c9-e2 can be formulated as follows. I will first state it, and then discuss each step.

- (1) Entities insofar as they have certain sorts of characteristics (πάθη) are said themselves by themselves (cf. 255c14-15). In other words, entities insofar as they have certain sorts of characteristics are such that they can be said by words with a complete use, such as the verb “to be” (εἶναι), which has both a complete and an incomplete use (Premise).
- (2) Entities insofar as they have certain other sorts of characteristics are always said in relation to something different (cf. 255c14-15).⁵¹ In other words, entities insofar as they have certain other sorts of characteristics are such that they can only be said by words with solely an incomplete use (Premise).
- (3) An entity insofar as it is different (has the characteristic different) is always said in relation to something different (255d1) (Premise).
- (4) An entity insofar as it is (has the characteristic being) is sometimes said itself by itself (cf. 255d5-6) (Premise).

⁵¹ Cf. Aristotle, *Categories*, vii.6a32-b12.

- (5) Entities have the specific characteristics they do because of their participation in the corresponding forms that produce those characteristics (Premise). For example, entity *o* has characteristic *x* because it participates in form *x*, and characteristic *y* because it participates in form *y*.
- (6) Either “being” and “different” name two distinct forms, or they name one and the same form (cf. 254e3-255a2) (Premise).
- (7) If “being” and “different” name one and the same form, then the characteristics of an entity insofar as it participates in both the form named by “being” and the form named “different” (255d4; “both forms,” “ἀμφοῖν . . . τοῖν εἰδοῖν”) will be identical to the characteristics of an entity insofar as it participates in either only the form named by “being” or only the form named by “different.” After all, both names name one and the same form (from (5)).
- (8) But, an entity insofar as it participates in different has a characteristic such that it can only be said by words which have solely an incomplete use, namely, “different,” “other,” “ἕτερον,” “θᾶτερον,” “ἄλλο,” etc. (cf. 255d1);⁵² whereas an entity insofar as it participates in being has a characteristic such that it can be said by a word, the verb “to be,” that has both a complete and an incomplete use (cf. 255d5-6) (from (1)-(5)).
- (9) Therefore, the characteristics of an entity insofar as it participates in different are not identical to the characteristics of an entity insofar as it participates in being (from (8)).
- (10) Therefore, it is not the case that “being” and “different” name one and the same form (from (7)-(9)).
- (11) Therefore, “being” and “different” name two distinct forms (from (6) and (10)).

Steps (1) and (2) formulate what the stranger states in 255c14-15: “among the things that are [i.e., entities], some are said themselves by themselves, while others are always said in relation to something different (τῶν ὄντων τὰ μὲν αὐτὰ καθ’ αὐτά, τὰ δὲ πρὸς ἄλλα ἀεὶ λέγεσθαι).” As indicated by the “τὰ μὲν . . . τὰ δέ” clause, I understand the stranger to be referring to two sets of objects here. The objects in the first set—those said themselves by themselves—are entities insofar as they have characteristics (πάθη) such

⁵² The word “different” and its synonyms have only an incomplete use because in predication they are always used with an explicit or elided complement (cf. Brown, “Being in the *Sophist*,” 477). The word “different” can, of course, be used as a name. It can be used to name the form different, for instance. Thus, “different” can be used in statements with complete, one-place predicates, as for example in “different is a form.” The use of “different” here, however, is neither complete nor incomplete, because the complete/incomplete distinction applies either to words used in predication, or to a predicative expression as a whole. (Complete uses of a word can only occur in a complete predication, but in some cases, incomplete uses of a word can occur in both complete and incomplete predications. For example, the incomplete predications “. . . is taller” and “. . . is taller than . . .” contain an incomplete use of “to be,” while “. . . is a form,” although a complete predication, also contains an incomplete use of “to be.” The term “different” is such that it only has an incomplete use and can only be used in incomplete predications. Cf. note 56 below.)

that they can be said by words with a complete use. The objects in the second set—those said in relation to something different—are entities insofar as they have characteristics such that they can only be said by a word or words which have solely an incomplete use.⁵³

Step (3) formulates 255d1-2: “What is different is always said in relation to something different (τὸ δὲ γ’ ἕτερον ἀεὶ πρὸς ἕτερον)” I take “τὸ . . . ἕτερον” (what is different, the different) here to indicate an entity insofar as it is different.⁵⁴ I understand the phrases “an entity insofar as it is *F*,” “an entity insofar as it has the characteristic of being *F*,” and “an entity insofar as it participates in *F*” to be synonymous,⁵⁵ as I indicate in step (5). Thus, I understand 255d1-2 to mean that an entity insofar as it is different (has the characteristic of being different, participates in different) is such that it can only be said in relation to something different. In other words, it is such that it can only be said by words which have solely an incomplete use, that is, words whose use requires an explicit or elided complement. “Different” and its synonyms have solely an incomplete use: the word “different,” when used in predication, requires an explicit or elided complement preceded by the word “from.” In statements such as “*x* is different from *y*” the complement is explicit, while in statements such as “*x* is different” the complement is elided.

Step (4) is drawn from the apodasis of the conditional in 255d4-6: “. . . then just as with being, there would sometimes also be something different among the different things not [said] in relation to something different (ὥσπερ τὸ ὄν ἦν ἄν ποτέ τι καὶ τῶν ἐτέρων ἕτερον οὐ πρὸς ἕτερον).” I take “τὸ ὄν” (being) here to indicate an entity simply insofar as it is (has the characteristic of being, participates in being), and I take “ὥσπερ” to indicate that “τὸ ὄν” is to be taken as an example for something: “just as with being. . . ,” “as in the case of being . . . ,” “as for instance happens with being” One thing that happens in the case of an entity insofar as it participates in the nature of being is that it is said both to be and to be a being (cf. 256a1, d9). Thus, entities insofar as they participate in being are sometimes said with the complete use of “is” and sometimes said with the

⁵³ Cf. Dancy, “The Categories of Being,” 60. Dancy argues that the “insofar as” (*qua*) qualification is necessary in the context of the argument of 255c9-e2.

⁵⁴ Cf. Bluck, *Plato’s Sophist*, 148. Although my reading of the argument differs significantly from Bluck’s, I agree with him that “instances” of different play a key role in the argument.

⁵⁵ Cf. Heinaman, “Communion of Forms,” 186.

incomplete use of “is.” In other words, they are sometimes said themselves by themselves and sometimes said in relation to something different. An example of the former is “piety is,” and an example of the latter is “piety is a being.”⁵⁶ Yet, if this were to happen in the case of entities insofar as they participated in the nature of different—that is, if entities insofar as they had the characteristic of being different could sometimes be said themselves by themselves—then it would sometimes happen that the word “different” or its synonyms could be said of those entities without an explicit or elided complement.⁵⁷ This is impossible, however, since an entity insofar as it is different is only what it is in relation to something different (255d6-7).⁵⁸

Step (5), as I mentioned, is merely clarificatory, so I turn now to the heart of the argument, steps (6)-(11). The basic structure of (6)-(11) is the following:

- (6') $A \oplus B$
 (7') $B \rightarrow C$
 (9') $\sim C$ ⁵⁹
 (10') $\vdash \sim B$
 (11') $\vdash A$

⁵⁶ Some commentators argue that the “αὐτὰ καθ' αὐτά”/“πρὸς ἄλλα” distinction is a distinction between complete and incomplete predications (see for example, Heinaman, “Being in the *Sophist*,” 14; cf. Taylor, *The Sophist and the Statesman*, 161), or a distinction between complete predications and certain sorts of incomplete predications (see for example, Malcolm, “A Way Back for *Sophist* 255c12-13”). Thus, the complete predications in, for example, “Socrates exists” and “Socrates is human” would be things said themselves by themselves, while the incomplete predications in, for example, “Socrates is wiser than Meletus” and “Socrates is older than Theaetetus” would be things said in relation to something different (ibid., 275). This way of understanding the “αὐτὰ καθ' αὐτά”/“πρὸς ἄλλα” distinction is incorrect because it does not account for the fact that the stranger’s argument makes a distinction between entities insofar as they participate in being and entities insofar as they participate in different. The “ποτέ” (sometimes) at 255d5, since it applies “in the case of being” (ὅσπερ τὸ ὄν), indicates that an entity insofar as it participates in being is such that sometimes it can be said itself by itself and sometimes in relation to something different. An entity insofar as it participates in being, however, can only be said to be and to be a being. In other words, “. . . is” (in its complete use) and “. . . is being” are the only two predications that can be made of an object simply insofar as it participates in being (cf. 256a1, d9). Although one of these predicates—“. . . is a being”—involves an incomplete use of the verb “to be,” neither of them is an instance of incomplete predication. In both “. . . is” and “. . . is a being” the predicate as a whole is complete (cf. note 52 above). Consequently, entities simply insofar as they participate in being cannot be subjects of incomplete predication, although they can be subjects of an incomplete use of the verb “to be.” Hence the “αὐτὰ καθ' αὐτά”/“πρὸς ἄλλα” distinction does not point to a distinction between complete and incomplete predications, but rather to a distinction between complete and incomplete uses of the verb “to be” (cf. Brown, “Being in the *Sophist*,” 476-449).

⁵⁷ This conditional requires that “οὐ πρὸς ἕτερον” at 255d5-6 is understood with reference to “λέγεσθαι” at 255c15.

⁵⁸ This ontological fact explains why it is impossible to use the word “different” or its synonyms in predication without an explicit or elided complement.

⁵⁹ Step (8) demonstrates the conclusion stated in step (9) on the basis of (1)-(5). So (8) is omitted here.

Step (6) is based on the guiding alternatives that the stranger formulated in 254e3-255a2. The stranger there asked whether the names “same” and “different” named two further kinds in addition to being, rest, and motion, or whether they were just two additional names for being, rest, or motion. By 255c9, the stranger has already eliminated the possibility that “same” could name being, rest, or motion, and the possibility that “different” could name rest or motion. Consequently, the question is now whether “different” names being or whether it names a further form in addition to being, rest, and motion. In other words, the question is now whether “being” and “different” name two distinct forms or name one and the same form. Step (7) points out that if “being” and “different” name one and the same form, then the characteristics of an entity insofar as it participates in the form named “different” will be identical to the characteristics of an entity insofar as it participates in the form named “being.” After all, if “being” and “different” named one and the same form, then the form named by “being” and the form named by “different” would be one and the same. Thus, the characteristics of an entity insofar as it participates in both of the allegedly two forms, one named “being” and one named “different,” should be identical to the characteristics of an entity insofar as it participates in only one of those allegedly two forms. As step (8) points out, however, an entity insofar as it participates in the form named “being” can be said itself by itself, whereas an entity insofar as it participates in the form named “different” can only be said in relation to something different. Therefore, step (9), it is not the case that the characteristics of an entity insofar as it participates in the form named “different” are identical to the characteristics of an entity insofar as it participates in the form named “being.” Hence, step (10), it is not the case that “being” and “different” name one and the same form. Consequently, step (11), given the alternatives stated in step (6), “being” and “different” name two distinct forms: the form being and the form different. Since the way that objects are affected and structured insofar as they participate in the nature of being is not identical to the way that objects are affected and structured insofar as they participate in the nature of different, the natures of being and different are not identical. Thus, being and different can be counted as two different kinds.

The stranger, therefore, concludes by claiming that “the nature of the different must be said to be a fifth among the forms we are selecting” (255d9-e1). To be different

is to be different from another object or objects. To be, by contrast, is to be determinate, to be such as to have a definitive character. If an object has the property of being different, it is necessarily related to some different object. If an object has the property of being, on the other hand, it is such that it can have a definitive character, by which it can be embedded within eidetic whole/part structures. Since these properties differ, the natures participated in that explain these properties are not identical. Hence, if we are counting kinds with reference to the nature they exhibit as their definitive character, the kind different, which has the nature of different as its definitive character, can be counted as the fifth among the greatest kinds.

§4. Conclusion: Form qua Nature, qua Fully Determinate, and qua One of Many

As we turn from the stranger's selection of the five greatest kinds to his discussion of what sort each is and their power for communing (cf. 254c4-6), it will be helpful to keep the following results of our analysis in mind. The arguments by which the stranger selects the five kinds enable their critical reader to identify what results from participation in the nature of being, same, and different⁶⁰ and to differentiate form *qua* nature, form *qua* fully determinate, and form *qua* one of many. Participation in the nature of different explains why objects are different from one another. Participation in the nature of same explains why objects are self-identical such that contraries cannot blend within them. Participation in the nature of being explains why objects are determinate, why they are such that they can have a definitive character. That is, participation in the nature of being explains why objects are the sort of things that can have a character in reference to which they are embedded within eidetic whole/part structures. Being, same, and different, then, are the properties that any object must have insofar as it is a countable object, a one of many. Consequently, participation in being, participation in same, and participation in different explain why each kind is a countable object. Every kind, therefore, must participate in the nature of being, same, and different. Participation in being, same, and different constitutes a kind as a countable object that is such that it can have a definitive character.

⁶⁰ The nature of rest and motion are easier to identify with reference to the stranger's arguments in 255e3-256d10, which I will consider in Chapter V.

In order to be such that they can be embedded within eidetic compounds, kinds must be countable objects, that is, they must participate in the nature of same and the nature of different. Similarly, in order to be such that they can occupy specific positions within those eidetic compounds, that is, to be such that they can compose eidetic wholes, kinds must be such that they can have a definitive character. They must, therefore, participate in the nature of being. The possession of a definitive character, in turn, constitutes a kind as fully determinate. In this way, the senses of form *qua* nature, form *qua* fully determinate, and form *qua* one of many are distinct.

Chapter V: The Five Greatest Kinds and Non-Being (255e3-259e2)

Having selected the five greatest kinds, the stranger turns to a set of arguments that reveal what sort each is and their power for communing (cf. 254c4-6). These arguments are the heart of the digression. They bring to light the nature of being and by doing so open the path for the discovery of non-being.

This Chapter seeks to demonstrate four major theses. The first is that the stranger's discussion of the five greatest kinds demonstrates that and clarifies how form *qua* nature is causally prior to form *qua* fully determinate and form *qua* one of many. The second thesis concerns the way in which the distinction between form *qua* nature and form *qua* fully determinate explains the relationship between the stranger's two earlier definitions of being as power. The third thesis concerns the rest and motion of forms. I argue that form *qua* nature is at rest, while a form insofar as it participates in form *qua* nature is being moved. The fourth thesis is that on the basis of the distinction between form *qua* nature and form *qua* determinately intelligible, the stranger demonstrates that and defines what non-being is. He demonstrates that non-being is a part of the form different and defines it as derivative of the nature of being and the nature of different. In Chapter VI, I will show how the stranger uses the notion of non-being he develops in 257b1-259e2 in order to define true and false speech.

As we turn to the stranger's discussion of what sort each of the five kinds is and their power for communing, it will be helpful to keep in mind the following results of our analysis of his selection of the five kinds. Participation in the nature of different explains why objects are different from one another. Participation in the nature of same explains why objects are self-same such that opposites cannot blend within them. Participation in the nature of being explains why kinds are such that they can have a definitive character, in reference to which they can be embedded within eidetic whole/part structures. Every determinately intelligible countable object, then, must participate in the nature of all three of those kinds. Participation in being, same, and different, however, does not explain what a given kind's definitive character is. Rather participation in being, same, and different renders an object as a countable object of the sort that can have a definitive character.

§1. *The Four Quartets* (255e3-256d10)

Having selected the five greatest kinds, the stranger next defines what sort of thing each of these five kinds is. My analysis of this portion of the digression seeks to establish this Chapter's first three theses: that the stranger's discussion of the five greatest kinds demonstrates that and clarifies how form *qua* nature is causally prior to form *qua* fully determinate and form *qua* one of many; that the distinction between form *qua* nature and form *qua* fully determinate explains the relationship between the stranger's two earlier definitions of being as power; and that form *qua* nature is at rest, while a form insofar as it participates in form *qua* nature is being moved.

A. That Form *qua* Nature is Causally Prior to Form *qua* One of Many

In 255e3-256d10, the stranger presents four arguments, each of which has four lines. Lesley Brown aptly calls these arguments Plato's "Four Quartets."¹ My contention is that these four arguments work to further differentiate form *qua* one of many and form *qua* fully determinate from form *qua* nature, and to demonstrate the causal priority of form *qua* nature. The text of the passage reads as follows:

Stranger: And we shall claim that it [the nature of different] has indeed run through all of them: for each one is different from the others not because of its own nature, but because it participates in the form of different.

Theaetetus: Exactly so.

Stranger: So let's pronounce on the five in this way, taking them up one by one.

Theaetetus: How?

Stranger: First motion, that it is completely different from rest. Or how do we say it?

Theaetetus: Just so.

Stranger: Then it is not rest.

Theaetetus: In no way.

[256a]

Stranger: But it is, at any rate, because it participates in being.

¹ Brown, "The *Sophist* on Statements," 444.

Theaetetus: It is.

Stranger: Now again, motion is different from the same.

Theaetetus: Pretty much.

Stranger: Then it is not the same.

Theaetetus: No indeed.

Stranger: But surely it was² the same, since all things in turn participate in the same.

Theaetetus: Very much.

Stranger: 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 that when we say that it is the same and not the same, we have spoken similarly. Rather, whenever we call it the same, we speak thus because of its participation in the same in relation to itself. But whenever we call it not the same, this is in turn because of its communion with the different, because of which community, motion, being separated off from the same, has become not the same but different. So that, again, it is correctly said [to be] not the same.

Theaetetus: By all means.

Stranger: Then even if motion itself were in some way to have a share in rest, it would not be out of place to call it "resting"?

Theaetetus: Absolutely right, if indeed we are going to grant that some of the kinds are willing to blend with one another while others are not.

[256c]

Stranger: And surely we achieved the demonstration of this point before our present inquiry, by proving that it is this way according to nature.

Theaetetus: Of course.

Stranger: Then let us say it again: is motion different from the different, just as it was different from both the same and from rest.

Theaetetus: Necessarily.

Stranger: Then according to our present account, it is in some way not different and different.

Theaetetus: True.

Stranger: Then what about what comes after this? Shall we claim that motion is different from the three yet deny that it is different from the fourth, [256d] even though we have agreed that there are five about which and among which we propose to inquire?

² The imperfect "ἦν" (was) here is perhaps a reference to the stranger's claim at 254d14-15 that each of the greatest kinds, including motion, is the same as itself. Cf. Crivelli, *Plato's Account of Falsehood*, 151n137.

Theaetetus: How could we? For it is impossible to grant that their number is less than what has now come to light.

Stranger: Shall we therefore say and contend fearlessly that motion is different from being?

Theaetetus: Most fearlessly.

Stranger: Then isn't it clearly the case that motion is really non-being and also being, since it participates in being?

Theaetetus: It's as clear as can be.

ΞΕ. Καὶ διὰ πάντων γε αὐτὴν αὐτῶν φήσομεν εἶναι διεληλυθυῖαν ἃ ἐν ἕκαστον γὰρ ἕτερον εἶναι τῶν ἄλλων οὐ διὰ τὴν αὐτοῦ φύσιν, ἀλλὰ διὰ τὸ μετέχειν τῆς ιδέας τῆς θατέρου.

ΘΕΑΙ. Κομιδῆ μὲν οὖν.

ΞΕ. Ὡδε δὴ λέγωμεν ἐπὶ τῶν πέντε καθ' ἓν ἀναλαμβάνοντες.

ΘΕΑΙ. Πῶς;

ΞΕ. Πρῶτον μὲν κίνησιν, ὡς ἔστι παντάπασιν ἕτερον στάσεως. ἢ πῶς λέγομεν;

ΘΕΑΙ. Οὕτως.

ΞΕ. Οὐ στάσις ἄρ' ἐστίν.

ΘΕΑΙ. Οὐδαμῶς.

[256a]

ΞΕ. Ἔστι δέ γε διὰ τὸ μετέχειν τοῦ ὄντος.

ΘΕΑΙ. Ἔστιν.

ΞΕ. Αὐθις δὴ πάλιν ἢ κίνησις ἕτερον ταῦτοῦ ἐστίν.

ΘΕΑΙ. Σχεδόν.

ΞΕ. Οὐ ταῦτόν ἄρα ἐστίν.

ΘΕΑΙ. Οὐ γὰρ οὖν.

ΞΕ. Ἀλλὰ μὴν αὕτη γ' ἦν ταῦτόν διὰ τὸ μετέχειν αὐτῶν πάντ' αὐτοῦ.³

³ The main manuscripts have “αὕτη . . . πάντ' αὐτοῦ.” Robinson adapts an emendation suggested by Madvig that renders the text “αὕτη . . . πᾶν ταῦτοῦ” (see Madvig, *Adversaria critica ad scriptores*, 383; Duke et al., *Platonis Opera*, 450; David B. Robinson, “Textual Notes on Plato's *Sophist*,” *Classical Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (1999): 156; cf. Crivelli, *Plato's Account of Falsehood*, 150n135). Many editors do not adopt the emendation: for example, Campbell, *The Sophistes and Politicus*, 154; Burnet, *Platonis Opera*; Fowler, *Plato VII*, 410; Diès, *Platon: Oeuvres complètes*. I do not adopt the emendation because I see no need and because given the distinction between “πᾶν” and “πάντα” that Socrates suggests near the end of the *Theaetetus* (203e2-205a10; see chap. I.5.C), “πάντα” participate in the same” is better than “πᾶν” participates in the same,” although I grant that the stranger may not be speaking according to that distinction here. While I prefer the text of the main manuscripts, my exegesis of the argument is also compatible with Madvig's emendation.

ΘΕΑΙ. Καὶ μάλα.

ΞΕ. Τὴν κίνησιν δὴ ταυτόν τ' εἶναι καὶ μὴ ταυτόν ὁμολογητέον καὶ οὐ δυσχεραντέον. οὐ γὰρ ὅταν εἴπωμεν αὐτὴν ταυτόν καὶ μὴ ταυτόν, ὁμοίως εἰρήκαμεν, ἀλλ' [256b] ὁπόταν μὲν ταυτόν, διὰ τὴν μέθεξιν ταύτου πρὸς ἑαυτὴν οὕτω λέγομεν, ὅταν δὲ μὴ ταυτόν, διὰ τὴν κοινωνίαν αὐτῷ θατέρου, δι' ἣν ἀποχωριζομένη ταύτου γέγονεν οὐκ ἐκεῖνο ἀλλ' ἕτερον, ὥστε ὀρθῶς αὐτὸ λέγεται πάλιν οὐ ταυτόν.

ΘΕΑΙ. Πάνυ μὲν οὖν.

ΞΕ. Οὐκοῦν κὰν εἴ πη μετελάμβανεν αὐτὴ κίνησις στάσεως, οὐδὲν ἂν ἄτοπον ἦν στάσιμον αὐτὴν προσαγορεύειν;

ΘΕΑΙ. Ὅρθότατά γε, εἴπερ τῶν γενῶν συγχωρησόμεθα τὰ μὲν ἀλλήλοις ἐθέλειν μείγνυσθαι, τὰ δὲ μή.

[256c]

ΞΕ. Καὶ μὴν ἐπὶ γε τὴν τούτου πρότερον ἀπόδειξιν ἢ τῶν νῦν ἀφικόμεθα, ἐλέγχοντες ὡς ἔστι κατὰ φύσιν ταύτη.

ΘΕΑΙ. Πῶς γὰρ οὐ;

ΞΕ. Λέγωμεν δὴ πάλιν· ἡ κίνησις ἐστὶν ἕτερον τοῦ ἐτέρου, καθάπερ ταύτου τε ἦν ἄλλο καὶ τῆς στάσεως;

ΘΕΑΙ. Αναγκαῖον.

ΞΕ. Οὐχ ἕτερον ἄρ' ἐστὶ πη καὶ ἕτερον κατὰ τὸν νυνδὴ λόγον.

ΘΕΑΙ. Ἀληθῆ.

ΞΕ. Τί οὖν δὴ τὸ μετὰ τούτου; ἄρ' αὐτῶν μὲν τριῶν ἕτερον αὐτὴν φήσομεν εἶναι, τοῦ δὲ τετάρτου μὴ φῶμεν, [256d] ὁμολογήσαντες αὐτὰ εἶναι πέντε, περὶ ὧν καὶ ἐν οἷς προουθέμεθα σκοπεῖν;

ΘΕΑΙ. Καὶ πῶς; ἀδύνατον γὰρ συγχωρεῖν ἐλάττω τὸν ἀριθμὸν τοῦ νυνδὴ φανέντος.

ΞΕ. Ἀδεῶς ἄρα τὴν κίνησιν ἕτερον εἶναι τοῦ ὄντος διαμαχόμενοι λέγωμεν;

ΘΕΑΙ. Ἀδεέστατα μὲν οὖν.

ΞΕ. Οὐκοῦν δὴ σαφῶς ἡ κίνησις ὄντως οὐκ ὄν ἐστὶ καὶ ὄν, ἐπεὶπερ τοῦ ὄντος μετέχει;

ΘΕΑΙ. Σαφέστατά γε. (255e3-256d10)

The structure of the four main arguments in this passage can be formulated as follows:⁴

⁴ My formulations here are almost identical to those of Brown, "The *Sophist* on Statements," 444.

Quartet 1: Motion and Rest

	1a	Motion is different from rest	(255e10)
so	1b	Motion is not rest	(255e14)
but	1c	Motion is	(256a1)
because	1d	Motion participates in being	(256a1)

Quartet 2: Motion and Same

	2a	Motion is different from the same	(256a3)
so	2b	Motion is not the same	(256a5)
but	2c	Motion is the same	(256a7)
because	2d	Motion participates in the same	(256a7, b1)

Quartet 3: Motion and Different

	3a	Motion is different from different	(256c5)
so	3b	Motion is not different	(256c8)
but	3c	Motion is different	(256c8)
because	3d	Motion participates in different	(255e3-6) ⁵

Quartet 4: Motion and Being

	4a	Motion is different from being	(256d5)
so	4b	Motion is not being	(256d8)
but	4c	Motion is being	(256d8-9)
because	4d	Motion participates in being	(256d9)

⁵ While presenting Quartet 3 in 256c4-8, the stranger appears to omit the claim that motion participates in different, simply stating that “according to our present account, it [motion] is in some way not different and different.” There is no real omission here, however, because the stranger has already stated that all things “participate (μετέχειν) in the form of different” at 255e3-6. This claim in 255e3-6 explains and justifies the statement in line *a* of each Quartet. The omission could also be explained by the fact that “motion is different” and “motion is not different” follow directly from “motion is different from different” (cf. Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 159): “motion is different” because “motion is different from different,” while “motion is not different” because “motion is different from different.” That motion is different from anything, including different, however, is because motion participates in different as stated at 255e3-6. Thus, even if “motion is different” and “motion is not different” could both be inferred from “motion is different from different,” “motion is different” is still explained by its participation in different.

Most contemporary commentators interpret the arguments of the Quartets as an attempt to make some sort of semantic distinction that would disambiguate the seemingly contradictory statements in lines *b* and *c*.⁶ Some claim that the arguments are attempting to make a distinction between different senses or different uses of the verb “to be,”⁷ while others suggest that the distinction does not concern the verb “to be,” but rather is a distinction between adjectives and abstract nouns, or between different sorts of sentence structures.⁸ As I read it, however, the stranger is making ontological distinctions in the Quartets.⁹ Some semantic distinctions do, of course, follow, but the ontological distinctions are those with which the stranger is actually concerned.

These ontological distinctions can be discerned through an analysis of the structure of the Quartets. The terminological and structural consistency in the Four Quartets is striking. The stranger consistently uses “μετέχειν” to designate the relationship of participation expressed in line *d*. Line *a* of each Quartet is explained and justified by the stranger’s claim in 255e3-6 that all things “participate (μετέχειν) in the form of different.” 255e3-6 also accounts for the stranger’s omission of the claim that motion participates in different during his presentation of Quartet 3 at 256c4-8, wherein he simply states that “according to our present account, it [motion] is in some way not different and different.”¹⁰ The structure of the final three Quartets is identical. The way the stranger structures Quartet 1, however, varies from the other three in certain ways. In Quartet 1, he claims that motion “is completely (παντάπασιν) different from rest.” He then drops the “παντάπασιν” in line *a* of the other three Quartets. Likewise, the “ἔστι” in the claim that “motion is” in *1c* (see 256a1; ἔστι δέ γε διὰ τὸ μετέχειν τοῦ ὄντος) lacks

⁶ For an overview of the main ways in which the argument of 255e3-256d10 is interpreted, see Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 154-161.

⁷ See for example, Ackrill, “Plato and the Copula”; Ryle, “Letters and Syllables in Plato,” 446; Taylor, *The Sophist and the Statesman*, 60; Runciman, *Plato’s Later Epistemology*, 89-90; Moravcsik, “Being and Meaning in the *Sophist*,” 51; Crombie, *An Examination of Plato’s Doctrines*, 2:400, 499; Malcolm, “Plato’s Analysis,” 145; Gómez-Lobo, “Plato’s Description of Dialectic,” 39-40; Bluck, *Plato’s Sophist*, 151-152; Gregory Vlastos, “A Metaphysical Paradox,” in *Platonic Studies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 46-47; “An Ambiguity in the *Sophist*,” 287-293; “Self-Predication and Self-Participation in Plato’s Later Period,” in *Platonic Studies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 336; Ray, *For Images*, 66-68; van Eck, “Plato’s Logical Insights,” 69-72.

⁸ See for example, Owen, “Plato on Not-Being,” 442-446; Frank A. Lewis, “Did Plato Discover the *Estin* of Identity?” *California Studies in Classical Antiquity* 8 (1975): 127-136; Michael Lockwood, “On Predicating Proper Names,” *Philosophical Review* 84, no. 4 (1975): 479n12; Ketchum, “Participation and Predication”; Brown, “Being in the *Sophist*,” 472-473; “The *Sophist* on Statements,” 447-449.

⁹ In this I agree with McCabe, *Plato’s Individuals*, 236-237.

¹⁰ Cf. note 5 above.

even an implicit complement,¹¹ whereas in line *c* of the other three Quartets the “ἔστι” (or “ἦν” at 256a7) has an explicitly stated complement (see 256a7; ἦν ταῦτόν, 256c7; ἐστὶ πη καὶ ἕτερον, 256d8-9; ἐστὶ καὶ ὄν). In §1.C below, I will discuss these differences between Quartet 1 and the other three Quartets in more detail. Putting aside these differences for the moment, however, the structure of each of the four arguments can be formulated as follows:¹²

- a K is different from E (*on the basis of participation in different*, 255e3-6)
- so b K is not E (*on the basis of a*)
- but c K is E (*on the basis of d*)
- because d K participates in E

The Quartets serve both to differentiate and relate the sense of form *qua* nature from form *qua* countable object and form *qua* fully determinate. To begin, let us consider the distinction between form *qua* countable object and form *qua* nature. The way that the Quartets differentiate form *qua* countable object from form *qua* nature begins to reveal itself through the role that motion plays in the arguments. The nature of motion—what it is to move—is irrelevant to the argumentative structure of the Quartets.¹³ That the nature of motion is irrelevant is even true in the case of Quartet 1, since the fact that motion is not rest does not depend on its being the opposite of rest, but simply on its being different from rest, just as it is different from being, same, and different. That the Quartets are indifferent to the nature of motion can be confirmed by substituting any form other than one of the five greatest kinds into the arguments. If one were to substitute, for instance, “treeness” for “motion” in the arguments, the arguments would function in the same way. The same would hold if one were to substitute “beauty,” “justice,” “angling,” “bedness,” or any other form different from rest, being, same, and different. The nature of motion is irrelevant to the arguments because the

¹¹ Cf. Owen, “Plato on Not-Being,” 443; Brown, “Being in the *Sophist*,” 460-464, 473-476. Owen argues that “ἔστι” in 256a1 has an elided complement. Brown’s notion of C2 completion allows her to show, *contra* Owen, that “ἔστι” in 256a1 has no complement, explicit or elided.

¹² Again, I am closely following Brown here. See Brown, “The *Sophist* on Statements,” 445.

¹³ Cf. Cornford, *Plato’s Theory of Knowledge*, 285; Ambuel, *Image and Paradigm*, 152. I think that Ambuel is correct to note that while the specific nature of motion is irrelevant to the argumentative structure of the Quartets, the stranger’s use of it as a representative for any countable object is ironic, since if motion “is taken to mean the things that are in motion, then there is clearly a sense in which what is in motion is not always the same as itself,” and so not a countable object. For more on the stranger’s choice of motion as the subject term of the Quartets, see §1.D, p. 197 below.

arguments are only concerned with motion insofar as it is a countable object, a one of many. The Quartets consider motion *qua* countable object, rather than *qua* nature, so as to reveal the relations that define countable objects as such,¹⁴ as well as the normative principles that govern these relations.¹⁵

Every countable object is, is the same as itself, and is different from every other countable object. Every countable object, in other words, has these three characters or properties. Yet what explains why countable objects have these characters? Let us consider each character in turn, beginning with difference. A countable object can only be different from every other countable object if all countable objects participate in the nature of different, as the stranger claims that they do in 255e3-6. Participation in the nature of different explains why objects are different from one another such that they can be counted as ones of many.¹⁶ The nature of different, in other words, is the normative principle that structures relations of difference. Since participation in the nature of different constitutes and governs the relation of difference between objects, participation in the nature of different is presupposed by line *a* of each Quartet. Line *a*, in turn, allows for the inference in line *b*. In the same way, participation in the nature of being explains why a countable object is (*=Ic*) and is being (*=4c*) (cf. 256e3-4). Likewise, the self-identity of countable objects presupposes participation in the nature of same. The nature of being, the nature of same, and the nature of different are, therefore, causally prior to countability.¹⁷ Something only gets to be a countable object through participation in the nature of being, the nature of same, and the nature of different. This entails a few interesting consequences.

First, the participation named in line *d* is not a relationship that obtains between two countable objects. There can be no countable object prior to participation in being, same, and different, since such participation is what explains why an object is

¹⁴ Cf. McCabe, *Plato's Individuals*, 236-237.

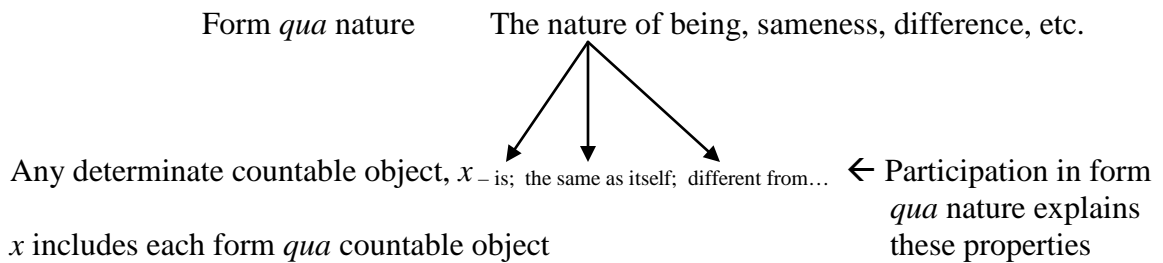
¹⁵ Cf. Plato, *Parm.*, 143a4-144a5; Sanday, *A Study of Dialectic*, chap. 4.1b.

¹⁶ Note the stranger's use of "ἐν" at 255e4 ("... ἐν ἑκάστων γὰρ ἕτερον εἶναι τῶν ἄλλων οὐ διὰ τὴν αὐτοῦ φύσιν, ἀλλὰ διὰ τὸ μετέχειν τῆς ιδέας τῆς θατέρου." "... for each one is different from the others not because of its own nature, but because it participates in the form of different."). The "ἐν" would be superfluous were he not identifying that which explains a form's countability.

¹⁷ Pace Lacey, who claims that the relationship of participation in the Quartets is symmetrical, rather than asymmetrical (Lacey, "Plato's *Sophist* and the Forms," 49).

countable.¹⁸ The being, same, and different participated in are causally prior to that which participates in them. Since all countable objects participate in being, same, and different, the being, same, and different participated in cannot, as such, be countable objects.¹⁹ This is represented in the following diagram:

Why Form *qua* Nature is Necessarily Uncountable



Second, and consequently, the nature of being, the nature of same, and the nature of different participated in are as such uncountable. Hence, in one sense, we are speaking incorrectly when we say “natures” or “a nature,” as if the nature of a kind such as being, same, and different were itself countable. In order to talk about “a” nature at all, however, we must address it as a one of many (cf. 239a3, 10-11). This is not a problem so long as we understand that that which we are addressing is causally prior to the properties which constitute something as a one of many. Furthermore, in a sense we even speak correctly by speaking of “a” nature in this way, since the nature of being, of same, and of different produces (cf. ἀπεργαζομένη at 256e1) and thereby manifests itself (cf. ἐφάνη at 258a8) as the countable forms being, same, and different.²⁰ “A” nature can be

¹⁸ Likewise, there is no difference prior to participation in different. As a result, the nature of different does not have the property difference, and so is not different from the kinds that participate in it. The distinction between the nature of different and the kinds that participate in it is not a distinction based on the relationship of difference between self-identical objects, but rather on the relationship of eidetic rest and motion. See §1.D below.

¹⁹ Cf. Rosen, *Plato’s Sophist*, 267; Miller, *Plato’s Parmenides*, 100-101; Lloyd Gerson, “Plato on Identity, Sameness, and Difference,” *The Review of Metaphysics* 58, no. 2 (2004): 327, 331; Sanday, *A Study of Dialectic*, chap. 4.1b.

²⁰ This “production” and “manifestation” are of course atemporal. See §1.C, p. 194 below.

said “to be,” in other words, because we can address it as the countable objects it produces. It itself, however, is causally prior to those countable objects.²¹

Plato seems to have been aware of the uncountability of form *qua* nature. In the *Sophist* and in similar discussions in related dialogues, such as the *Parmenides* and *Statesman*, he carefully words the discourse in such a way that his characters never use the word *physis* in the plural.²² Rather the characters, the stranger in our case, always speak of the nature “of something” or “of somethings”—“the nature of beautiful” (257d12-13) or “the nature of the kinds” (257a9), for example. The “something” or “somethings” in the genitive, which are of course countable, are that through which we can address “a” nature as a countable one—even though form *qua* nature is uncountable. In what follows, I will for the most part adopt this way of speaking of “a” nature, referring to it by means of a genitive “something” which has it.

Plato’s terminology in the *Sophist*, then, is consistent on my reading. “Φύσις” (nature) is used only in the singular, to talk about form in the sense described above. “Εἶδος” (form) is used in both singular and plural, and is the general term for “form” in any or in all of its senses, depending on the context. “Ἰδέα” (form) is only used four times in the *Sophist*,²³ again, seemingly as a general term, like “εἶδος,” but perhaps with more of an emphasis on form *qua* nature. “Γένος” (kind) is used to speak about a form insofar as it can be an object of discursive knowledge. In reference to the forms, then, “γένος” designates a form *qua* fully determinate, which of course includes the sense of form *qua* one of many.²⁴ In order to further clarify how these various senses of “form” are related, we must turn back to the argument of the Quartets.

²¹ What I am calling form *qua* nature bears a striking resemblance to what Plotinus, Proclus, and others in the Neo-Platonic tradition speak of as the One or Good beyond being, which is causally prior to all things and of which “one,” “something” (τι), and “good” cannot even be predicated (cf. Plotinus, *Enneads*, V.3[49].11.23-24, 12.52-53, 15.16-19, VI.7[38].38, VI.9[13].5.30-35).

²² The word “φύσις” only appears in the singular in the *Sophist* and *Parmenides*. In the *Statesman*, Plato has the stranger use the word “φύσις” both in the technical sense as it applies to the forms and in the non-technical sense as it applies to various animals. In the latter sense, “φύσις” sometimes appears in the plural. For examples of the former, see Plato, *Plt.*, 265b9, 269d7, 278d1, e6, 283d11, e3, 284a2, 308b7, d1, 310a5, d7. For examples of the latter, see *ibid.*, 257d3, 262c4, 270e6, 271a5, b5, 272c3, 273b5, 274b7, 275c3, 306e11, 307c3, 309a1, a8, e3, e5, 310a2, d3. For cases in which “φύσις” could be understood in either or both senses, see *ibid.*, 264a2, 265e8, 266b1, 267b4, 268b2, 270c8, 278b2, 302a3.

²³ Plato, *Soph.*, 235d2, 253d5, 254a9, 255e5.

²⁴ Cf. Lloyd Gerson, *God and Greek Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1994), 49-52.

B. The Causal Structure Revealed by the Quartets

The foregoing clarifications about the language and purpose of the Quartets put us in position to consider the causal structure they reveal in more detail. The Quartets articulate the relations of causal priority and posteriority involved in the intelligible structure of forms insofar as they are countable objects of which “. . . is . . .” and “. . . is not . . .” can be said. Consider again the causal structure articulated by the relations of entailment in each Quartet:

 a K is different from E (*on the basis of participation in different*, 255e3-6)
so b K is not E (*on the basis of a*)
but c K is E (*on the basis of d*)
because d K participates in E

Lines *b* and *c* are the dual conclusions of the argument. The relation among kinds indicated in line *b* is explained by the relation of difference indicated in line *a*. The relation expressed by line *a*, in turn, is made possible by the participation in the nature of different expressed in 255e3-6: “For each one is different from the others not because of its own nature, but because it participates in the form of different.” That which is expressed by 255e3-6—participation in difference—is causally prior to that which is expressed by line *a*—difference from some specific object. Likewise, that which is expressed by line *a*—difference from some specific object—is causally prior to that which is expressed by line *b*—the “bond of non-being” (cf. *Parm.*, 162a4) between K and E. By means of the bond of non-being, together with the bond of being expressed in line *c*, the determinate intelligibility of both K and E can be known and expressed in *legein* (speech). In the same way, that which line *c* indicates—the “bond of being” between K and E—is explained by the participation indicated in line *d*. Consequently, that which is expressed by line *d* is causally prior to that which is expressed by line *c*.

The reading of the Quartets that most modern commentators offer is incompatible with the explanatory role that I want to grant to line *a*. According to the standard reading, lines *a* and *b* are simply two ways of saying the same thing. Most commentators, for example, claim that “motion is not . . .,” in the context of the Quartets, is equivalent in meaning to “motion is different from . . .,” because both simply mean

“motion is not identical to”²⁵ Hence, lines *a* and *b*, according to this view, just say the same thing in different words. The purpose of the Quartets, so the standard story goes, is to differentiate an “is” of identity from an “is” of predication.²⁶ Line *c* contains an “is” of predication and line *b* contains an “is” of identity. Since “is not” is ambiguous such that it could express either non-identity or negative predication, Plato includes line *a* so as to disambiguate the “is not” in *b*, clarifying that the “is not” in *b* indicates non-identity. Thus, on this reading, the inference from line *a* to line *b* is not explanatory. In other words, what is expressed by line *a* is not causally prior to what is expressed by line *b*. In fact, the inference from *a* to *b* is not an inference at all. Rather the two lines simply express the same thing in different words. Line *a* simply states what is expressed in line *b* more clearly. “Is not . . .” in *b* simply means “different from . . . ,” which in turn simply means “not the same as . . .” or “not identical to”

I contend that this standard reading of the relationship between lines *a* and *b* of the Quartets is incorrect. It is incorrect because it fails adequately to account for the way the stranger characterizes non-being or “. . . is not . . .” as a part of different (257b1-258e5). If “. . . is not . . .” is a part of different, then, given the relationship between eidetic parts and wholes as discussed in Chapter I.5.B-C, “. . . is not . . .” must be posterior in *logos* to different. Yet if it is posterior in *logos* to different, then it is also causally posterior to different. “The nature of different,” as the stranger will state explicitly, “by producing each as different from being, makes each non-being” (256d12-e2; ἡ θατέρου φύσις ἕτερον ἀπεργαζομένη τοῦ ὄντος ἕκαστον οὐκ ὄν ποιεῖ).²⁷ The nature of different, therefore, is causally prior to “. . . is not” Since “is not identical to . . .” is an instance of “. . . is not . . . ,” the nature of different is causally prior to “is not identical to” Therefore, “is different from . . .” cannot be equivalent in meaning to “not identical to”²⁸ Rather the former explains the latter, and not *vice versa*.

On my reading, participation in the nature of different explains why every countable object is different from other countable objects. Participation in different explains why each is different from others, but does not, by itself, explain why this

²⁵ For a defense of this position, see van Eck, “Plato’s Logical Insights,” 74-75.

²⁶ See note 7 above.

²⁷ This “producing” is of course atemporal. See §1.C, p. 194 below.

²⁸ Cf. Seligman, *Being and Not-Being*, 64-65, 75; Bostock, “Plato on ‘Is-Not,’” 119.

particular one is not that other particular one. In order to explain why this one, *x*, is not that particular other one, *y*, the one from which *x* is different—that is, *y*—must be specified (cf. 257d7-13, 258d5-3). This specification, as I have argued, is not equivalent to a denial of identity. Line *a* does not claim that *K* is not the same as *E*. Line *a* is not a negation, but rather a positive attribution of reciprocal difference to *K* and *E*. The reciprocal difference expressed in line *a* explains the “is not” expressed in line *b*. Because *x* participates in different with respect to *y*—that is, because *x* is different from *y*—*x* is not *y*. Lines *a* and *b*, on my reading, are not two different ways of saying the same thing. Rather that which line *a* expresses is causally prior to that which line *b* expresses. Likewise, that which 255e3-6 expresses is in turn causally prior to that which line *a* expresses. Finally, that which line *d* expresses is causally prior to that which line *c* expresses.

C. Form *qua* Nature, Form *qua* Kind, and Being as Power

With this basic understanding of the causal structure articulated by each Quartet, we are now in position to inquire into the sense of “to be” operative in the Quartets. As we have seen, the stranger has been developing a notion of being throughout the digression. This notion must ultimately allow for the possibility of both true and false speech. In order to allow for that possibility, however, the stranger’s notion of being cannot exclude non-being. The clearest articulation so far of the stranger’s positive account of being came at the end of his critique of the materialists, where he defined being in two ways (247d8-e4).²⁹ According to the first, that which possesses any sort of power either to affect (*ποιεῖν*) or to be affected (*παθεῖν*) really is. According to the second, the things that are are nothing other than power. The causal structure revealed by the Quartets, I will argue, clarifies why being must be defined in both of these ways.

The distinction between form *qua* nature and form *qua* kind—that is, form *qua* fully determinate—is the key to understanding the two definitions of being as power.

²⁹ “Λέγω δὴ τὸ καὶ ὁποιαοῦν τινα κεκτημένον δύναμιν εἶτ’ εἰς τὸ ποιεῖν ἕτερον ὀτιοῦν πεφυκὸς εἶτ’ εἰς τὸ παθεῖν καὶ σμικρότατον ὑπὸ τοῦ φαυλοτάτου, κὰν εἰ μόνον εἰς ἅπαξ, πᾶν τοῦτο ὄντως εἶναι· τίθεμαι γὰρ ὄρον ὀρίζειν²⁹ τὰ ὄντα ὡς ἔστιν οὐκ ἄλλο τι πλὴν δύναμις.” “I say, then, that that which possesses any sort of power—either by nature to affect anything else whatsoever or to be affected even in the least by the most trivial thing, even if only once—I say that all this really is. For I set down as a limit by which to delimit the things that are, that they are nothing other than power.”

Form *qua* nature is the power to affect and to be affected.³⁰ Affecting and being affected, however, are necessarily relations among objects. Hence, in order for affecting and being affected to be, there must be objects that are the agents and patients of that affecting and being affected. And, as the Quartets make clear, in order for objects to be, they must affect and be affected. All objects, for instance, must be affected by same and different. Yet objects only affect and are affected on the condition that they have the power to affect and be affected. The power to affect and be affected as such, however, is causally prior to the objects that are affecting and being affected. Moreover, that power as such cannot be an object. Objects can possess it, but it itself is not an object. If this power is going to affect and be affected, however, it must produce (ἀπεργάζεται) itself as objects that possess it.³¹ These objects are the kinds. The kinds are inasmuch as they are self-identical objects that possess the power to affect and be affected. The power to affect and be affected—form *qua* nature—produces the kinds, structures the kinds, and thereby makes itself intelligible in the kinds. While the power itself is not an object, it is intelligible as an object through the kinds it structures. To put it as precisely as possible, whatever is, is because it possesses the power to affect and be affected. That power as such, then, cannot be some one of the things that are. Rather it is that which structures the things that are and that by which they are beings. The power to affect and be affected is the nature of beings. It is what beings really are.

Although this may sound rather mysterious, the basic structure I am articulating here is present in any sort of structured plurality. Consider the body of an animal, for example. Only the body's parts are sense-perceptible. Only the head, legs, torso, and so on can be perceived through the senses. The power that structures the body—that is, the soul—cannot as such be perceived. Yet in another sense, it is all that is ever perceived, since it is that which structures, and so is manifest in, the body that is perceived. In other words, the head, legs, torso, and so on are perceived as the body of an animal, that is, as the body organized by a soul. Analogously, if we consider being itself—the communion of kinds—the kinds are the objects of discursive knowledge. Discursive knowledge, knowledge insofar as it can be articulated in true speech, only ever apprehends kinds.

³⁰ Cf. Plotinus, *Enneads*, V.3[49].15.34-35, 16.1-5, VI.8[39].9.45-46; Rosen, *Plato's Sophist*, 265-266, 279-280. Plotinus characterizes the One as power (δύναμις).

³¹ This "production" is of course atemporal. See p. 194 below.

The objects of discursive knowledge are parts of the communion of kinds, and each part is, is self-identical, and is different from the others. The power that structures those parts, then, cannot as such be an object of discursive knowledge. Yet in another sense, that power is all that is ever discursively known. Hence the stranger's claim that "the things that are . . . are nothing other than power" (247e4; τὰ ὄντα . . . ἔστιν οὐκ ἄλλο τι πλὴν δύναμις). In other words, kinds are discursively known as determinately structured by the power to affect and be affected, by the nature of each kind. If the kinds are to be intelligible they must be structured in relation to one another as prior and posterior in *logos*. They must, in other words, possess the power to affect and be affected. That power as such, then, cannot be some one of them. Form *qua* nature is the power to affect and be affected, while the kinds it produces, and by which we address it, are the things (τινά) that have (ἔχειν) this power.

This account of being as power reveals both what was true and what was false in Theaetetus' original assumption that "to be" is simply to be an individual thing or individual things. What are are individuals, beings. These individuals, however, only are beings because they participate in the nature of being. And the nature of being is prior to individual beings and so not an individual being. To put it another way, what are are individuals that have the power to affect and be affected, but that power itself is not an individual, since it is causally prior to individuality.

The Quartets identify the structure of individuality and the power that explains and structures it. Every individual is, is the same as itself, is different from others, and is being. The first Quartet claims that motion, like any individual, participates in being and concludes that motion is. The second claims that motion participates in same and concludes that motion is the same, the third that motion participates in different and hence is different, and the fourth that motion participates in being and hence is being. The different way that Quartets 1 and 4 characterize the result of participation in being highlights how form *qua* nature produces itself as the individuals to which it is causally prior.

Quartet 1, recall, can be formalized as follows:

	1a	Motion is different from rest	(255e10)
so	1b	Motion is not rest	(255e14)
but	1c	Motion is	(256a1)
because	1d	Motion participates in being	(256a1)

The stranger begins by claiming that motion “is completely different from rest” (255e11-12; ἔστι παντάπασιν ἕτερον στάσεως). Motion is “completely” different from rest in that it is incompatible with rest. Motion has a unique definitive character. Although, as I argued above,³² the structure of even the first Quartet is indifferent to the fact that motion is incompatible with rest, the stranger highlights this incompatibility so as to identify motion as a definitive character. By means of its definitive character, a kind can stand in relations of “is” and “is not” to other kinds. The Quartets argue, however, that any “is not” is explained by a prior “is,” the “is different from.” Yet the “is different from” of line *a* presupposes not only participation in the nature of different, but also the “is” expressed in line *1c*, and so the participation in the nature of being as expressed in *1d*. Because motion participates in being, motion is. That is to say, because motion participates in being, it is such that it can possess a definitive character in reference to which it can blend and not blend with other kinds. Since there can be no object prior to this participation in being, this participation is not that of one object in another, but is rather the production (cf. 256e1; ἀπεργαζομένη) of an intelligible object from a causally prior normative principle, which is not itself an object. This “production” and that which is “produced” are of course atemporal. “Production” does not indicate some temporal occurrence, but rather the relationship of causal priority between form *qua* nature and form *qua* kind. Participation in being produces an object such that it can have a definitive character. In the example at hand, that definitive character is motion. Participation in being explains why motion is.

A kind is not only such as possesses a definitive character, but is also the same as itself and different from others. A kind is the same as itself inasmuch as it is such that opposite characters cannot blend in it.³³ This self-identity of each kind is explained by its participation in the nature of same. The nature of same produces self-identical

³² §1.A, pp. 185-186.

³³ See chap. IV.1, esp. 154-155.

individuals. Likewise, the nature of different produces individuals as ones of many, as objects that are different such that they can be counted. A kind is different from others not because of its own nature, which bears the name of its definitive character, but because of its participation in the nature of different (255e4-6). The nature of motion is not difference from rest, or difference from anything else. Rather the nature of motion is that which explains why objects are moved and that which structures objects as moved. A kind, then, is different from other kinds because it participates in the nature of different, along with the other kinds that it is different from. “Participation in same,” then, describes the production of an object as self-identical; while “participation in different” describes the production of an object as denumerably different from other objects.

Participation in different is what explains how the “is” of line *Ic* can be determined to be the “is not” of line *b*. That motion *is* describes the fact that motion is such as to have a definitive character. Because motion is such as to have a definitive character, it is such that kinds can blend in it. As a result of blending, it has the various characters that blend in it. Since all the kinds blend with different, motion has the character different. That which explains why a kind has the character different is participation in the nature of different. The nature of different names the power that the kind motion possesses inasmuch as it participates in the nature of different: the power to be different. Because it possesses this power, motion is different from other objects. That motion *is different* from other objects, however, entails that motion *is not* those other objects. So motion both “is” and “is not,” but that motion “is not” presupposes that motion “is.”

The first and fourth Quartet both claim in *d* that motion participates in being. Yet while the first concludes from this that motion is, the fourth concludes that motion is being. Furthermore, at the end of the Four Quartets, the stranger claims that we can truly say that all things, “because they participate in being, are and are beings” (256e3-4; ὅτι μετέχει τοῦ ὄντος, εἶναί τε καὶ ὄντα). Why these seemingly different consequences from the same participation? In order to address this question we must compare the way that being is characterized in the first Quartet with how it is characterized in the fourth. As we saw, the first Quartet emphasized the definitive character of the kind motion. In the

fourth Quartet, by contrast, the definitive character of motion is not the focus. Rather, the claim that motion is not being is the focus. Motion is not being in the fourth Quartet because motion is different from the kind being. The kind being, of course, is the kind that has being as its definitive character. It is the kind by which we think and speak about the nature of being. Since motion is different from the kind being, motion is not the kind being. Motion, however, is being. In other words, motion is what is in the sense that it is one of the kinds, one of the things that are. Participation in being produces an object that possesses the power to affect and be affected. The kind motion is such an object and so is what is. The first Quartet and its conclusion that motion is, emphasizes the power that motion has to affect and be affected; while the fourth Quartet and its conclusion that motion is being, emphasizes that motion is something that possesses that power.

D. Form *qua* Nature, Form *qua* Kind, and the Rest and Motion of Forms

An interesting consequence of the interpretation of the Quartets that I have been developing is that it is not the case that the nature of a given kind is different from that kind. The nature of a given kind, after all, does not participate in different and so cannot be different from the kind whose nature it is. In the same way, the nature of a given kind does not participate in same and so cannot be the same as the kind whose nature it is. Even in stating this, however, I rely on a distinction between a kind and its nature. How are we to understand this distinction if not on the basis of difference? Plato provides his critical readers with the tools for answering this question by having the stranger suggest that motion itself could in some way rest:

Stranger: Then even if motion itself were in some way to have a share in rest, it would not be out of place to call it “resting”?

Theaetetus: Absolutely right, if indeed we are going to grant that some of the kinds are willing to blend with one another while others are not.

Stranger: And surely we achieved the demonstration of this point before our present inquiry, by proving that it is this way according to nature.

ΞΕ. Οὐκοῦν κἂν εἴ πη μετελάμβανεν αὐτὴ κίνησις στάσεως, οὐδὲν ἄν ἄτοπον ἦν στάσιμον αὐτὴν προσαγορεύειν;

ΘΕΑΙ. Ὅρθότατά γε, εἴπερ τῶν γενῶν συγχωρησόμεθα τὰ μὲν ἀλλήλοις ἐθέλειν μείγνυσθαι, τὰ δὲ μή.

ΞΕ. Καὶ μὴν ἐπὶ γε τὴν τούτου πρότερον ἀπόδειξιν ἢ τῶν νῦν ἀφικόμεθα,
ἐλέγχοντες ὡς ἔστι κατὰ φύσιν ταύτη. (256b6-c2)

In Chapter III, I argued that the forms were being moved inasmuch as they were being structured in relation to one another by a causally prior unique nature of each form.³⁴ I argued that this causally prior unique nature of each must be at rest, since it must explain that which is posterior while itself not requiring further explanation. It must be at rest because it cannot be posterior in any sense, since it must remain unchanging throughout the communion of kinds that it structures. The nature of each kind must be at rest if it is to be causally prior to the kinds that it structures. Rest and being moved, then, describe the causal structure articulated by the Four Quartets. The nature participated in named in line *d* of each Quartet is at rest. The participation (μετέχειν) itself is the motion, and that which participates is being moved. Hence, the subject of each line of the Quartets—the kind motion—is being moved.³⁵ The constitution of individual countable objects articulated by the Quartets, then, presupposes the rest and being moved. The rest and motion of forms is in this sense the condition of, and therefore prior to, their identity in difference. The rest and being moved of forms simply is the relationship of causal priority between a kind and the natures in which it participates. “At rest,” in other words, can be said of the power that the kinds have for communing, while “being moved” can be said of the kinds, since they possess that power and affect one another in their communing. The distinction between a kind and its nature is not a distinction between two different objects, nor are a kind and its nature identical. Rather a kind is being moved, while its nature is at rest.

Let us examine how this account of the rest and motion of forms fits with the text of 256b6-c2 above. The stranger’s first question is stated as a counterfactual:³⁶ “Then

³⁴ Chap. III.2.C, esp. 122.

³⁵ This explains why the stranger uses the kind motion as a representative for any kind *qua* one of many in the Quartets. Any kind, precisely insofar as it is a kind, is being moved.

³⁶ That the stranger’s question is counterfactual has led some to argue that the stranger thinks that motion can in no way have a share in rest and that it is always absurd to call motion “resting.” See for example, Lacey, “Plato’s *Sophist* and the Forms,” 50; John Malcolm, “Vlastos and Pauline Predication,” *Phronesis* 30, no. 1 (1985): 85n14; de Rijk, *Plato’s Sophist*, 162-163; Jean Roberts, “The Problem about Being in the *Sophist*,” *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 3, no. 3 (1986): 240n5; Stough, “Two Kinds of Naming in the *Sophist*,” 365; Notomi, *The Unity of Plato’s Sophist*, 242n71; van Eck, “Plato’s Logical Insights,” 57; Brown, “The *Sophist* on Statements,” 445n20, 448. Others argue against such an interpretation. See for example, James P. Kostman, “The Ambiguity of ‘Partaking’ in Plato’s *Sophist*,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 27, no. 3 (1989): 348-349; Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 162-163.

even if motion itself were in some way to have a share in (μετελάμβανεν) rest, it would not be out of place to call it ‘resting’?” “Motion itself” here indicates the nature of motion. Note that the stranger uses “μετελάμβανεν,” which I have translated as “were to have a share in,” instead of “μετείχεν” (were to participate in). The stranger in the *Quartets* only uses “μετέχειν” to designate the relationship of participation in which that which participates is causally posterior to that in which it participates. Motion itself or the nature of motion, however, is not causally posterior to anything, and so could not, strictly speaking, participate in rest. The stranger suggests that it might somehow have a share in rest, though. This share in rest would allow us to call the nature of motion “resting” (στάσιμον). What sort of “sharing in” could the stranger have in mind here? I propose that the stranger is suggesting that we can address the nature of motion as if it were an object that is causally prior to others.

The nature of motion, of course, is causally prior to its participants and is not causally posterior to anything. Yet it is not an object, and so cannot strictly speaking share in anything. In order to speak about it at all, however, we must address it as if it were an object. In other words, although the nature of motion, since it is prior to participation in being, same, and different, is neither one nor many, we nevertheless can address it as if it were a one of many (cf. 239a3, a10-11). That is to say, we can address it as and by means of the kind motion. Discursive knowledge of the kind motion in its communion with other kinds presupposes noetic insight³⁷ into the nature of motion. Discursive knowledge presupposes this insight because discursive knowledge presupposes determinately intelligible countable forms that are embedded within eidetic whole/part structures. The eidetic wholes within which determinately intelligible forms are embedded, and the position that each form occupies within them, are only intelligible as wholes on the basis of noetic insight into the principle by which those wholes are structured.³⁸ That principle—or principles, since it is neither one nor many—is the nature of each determinately intelligible form, that is, the nature of each kind. Discursive knowledge necessarily presupposes insight into this principle, although that principle is not as such an object of discursive knowledge, since the objects of discursive knowledge

³⁷ Cf. chap. I.2.

³⁸ Cf. Miller, “Unity and ‘Logos.’”

are self-identical and different from one another. *Nous* (mind, intellect, intelligence), in other words, necessarily presupposes that what perfectly is (*παντελῶς ὄν*, cf. 248e8-249a1) is both at rest and being moved (248d7-249d5).³⁹ We must conclude that what perfectly is—the forms—is being moved, because knowledge, since it can be articulated in true speech, is of eidetic wholes of parts. For this reason, however, we must also conclude that what perfectly is is at rest, because whole/part structures are only intelligible on the basis of insight into the causally prior principle(s)—form *qua* nature—that explain(s) their structure. Although the nature of motion is not itself an object of discursive knowledge, it is necessarily presupposed by discursive knowledge of the kind motion. Since the nature of motion structures the kind motion, the nature of motion can be safely addressed, at least by the person who has the relevant knowledge, as if it were the kind motion. In this way, one can make statements about the nature of motion, despite the fact that the nature of motion itself is never the subject of such statements.⁴⁰ When we mean to refer to the nature of motion with the kind motion, then we speak of the kind motion as resting.⁴¹ When we refer to the kind motion itself, we speak of it as being moved.

Theaetetus responds to the stranger’s question about whether motion itself might rest by saying, “Absolutely right, if indeed we are going to grant that some of the kinds are willing to blend with one another while others are not” (256b9-10). It is hard to tell how well Theaetetus is following the argument, but what Plato has him say here fits with the account of the rest and motion of forms I have been developing.⁴² If some kinds are willing to blend with one another while others are not, then there must be a causally prior

³⁹ Cf. chap. III.2.B-C.

⁴⁰ See my discussion of the difference between the subject of a statement and that which the statement is about in chap. VI.B.

⁴¹ This account of how resting could be attributed to motion itself differs from that of most commentators. Many commentators argue that the stranger does not think that resting could in any sense be attributed to motion itself (see note 36 above and cf. Vlastos, “An Ambiguity in the *Sophist*,” 284n40). Others argue that the stranger thinks that motion itself can be called resting insofar as motion itself is a form (Apelt, *Platonis Sophista*, 174; Frede, *Prädikation und Existenzaussage*, 34; Runciman, *Plato’s Later Epistemology*, 93; Kostman, “The Ambiguity of ‘Partaking,’” 348-349; Mann, *The Discovery of Things*, 181; Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 162-166).

⁴² Some commentators argue that the text is corrupted near 256b8-10, since they are unable to explain how “some of the kinds are willing to blend with one another while others are not” is relevant to the argument here. See for example, Ludwig Friedrich Heindorf, *Platonis Dialogi Selecti*, vol. 4 (Berlin: Libraria Nauckiana, 1810), 413-414; Cornford, *Plato’s Theory of Knowledge*, 287; Roberts, “The Problem about Being in the *Sophist*,” 240n5. For further discussion, see Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 165n179.

principle that explains the order and structure of this blending. That causally prior principle is the “resting” nature of each kind. If some kinds are willing to blend with one another and others not, then there must be a sense in which the kinds are at rest. They are at rest in that the nature of each is at rest. The motion that is blending presupposes this rest. Hence, the stranger responds: “And surely we achieved the demonstration of this point before our present inquiry, by proving that it is this way according to nature (κατὰ φύσιν)” (256c1-2).

The five greatest kinds, then, are those in terms of which any combination of forms is structured.⁴³ The nature of each form or kind can be characterized as resting, since it is the unchanging principle in terms of which combinations of forms are structured. The forms that are so structured are being moved, since they are causally posterior to the nature of each form. Each form participates in the nature of same, since each is self-identical. Likewise, each form participates in the nature of different, since each is different from the others. Finally, each form participates in being, since each is such that it can have a definitive character, by which it occupies a unique place in the communion of forms.⁴⁴

By means of the Four Quartets, the stranger enacts the sort of refutation that I attributed to him in Chapter I.4.B(ii). The opinions (δόξαι) concerning being that various ontological theories put forward are shown to be opinions but not yet knowledge. Furthermore, even the stranger’s own claims about the five greatest kinds are shown to be opinions. Knowledge requires noetic insight into the normative principle—the nature of each form—that governs and explains the structure of reality. Since this normative principle is not itself an object of discursive knowledge, however, it must necessarily exceed the claims (δόξαι) that the stranger or anyone else could make about being.

⁴³ Cf. Roberts, “The Problem about Being in the *Sophist*,” 232.

⁴⁴ The account I have offered here is in many ways similar to that of Plotinus and other Neo-Platonists. What I am calling the nature of each kind parallels what Plotinus would call the One or Good. Likewise, what I am calling the communion of kinds, parallels what Plotinus would call Intellect (νοῦς). Plotinus’ own account of the five greatest kinds, however, differs from my own. He discusses the five greatest kinds at some length as part of his critique of Aristotle’s ten categories, characterizing them as the five categories of the intelligible realm. See Plotinus, *Enneads*, VI.2[43].

§2. *Non-Being and the Nature of Different* (256d11-259e2)

The Four Quartets clarify what being is, at least for those who on the basis of insight into the nature of each form can follow the argument. Being, what is, is both at rest and being moved. It is both the power to affect and be affected and something that possesses that power. What non-being is, however, is still rather unclear by the end of the Quartets. The Quartets certainly demonstrate that non-being is and that it is as a consequence of participation in the nature of different, but in order to identify the nature (φύσιν at 258b11) of non-being, the stranger and Theaetetus will have to continue the inquiry.

The fourth Quartet demonstrates that non-being is in the case of motion's difference from the kind being. Since motion participates in the nature of different in relation to the kind being, motion is not being. Given that any form other than being could be substituted for motion in the fourth Quartet without altering the argument,⁴⁵ the non-being that results from being different from the kind being can be attributed not only to motion, but to any form other than the kind being.⁴⁶ As I will argue, however, according to the stranger, non-being as a result of difference from the kind being is only the clearest (σαφέστατα at 259b1, cf. σαφῶς at 256d8) instance of non-being,⁴⁷ and should not be confused with what non-being is as such.⁴⁸ Having shown *that* non-being is by means of the Quartets, the stranger explains *what* the nature of non-being is by means of a two-stage argument that runs from 256d11 to 259e2.⁴⁹

In the first stage, 256d11-257a12, the stranger argues that non-being, what is not, is in the case of any form insofar as that form is different from some other object. Thus, as already implied by Quartets 1-3, what is not is in the case of motion insofar as motion is not any object from which it is different. For example, since motion is different from the kinds rest, same, different, and being, motion is not rest, is not same, is not different, and, in the same way, is not being. In other words, line *b* in each Quartet, not only in

⁴⁵ Cf. §1.A, pp. 185-186.

⁴⁶ Many commentators (see note 57 below) claim that the stranger makes this point in 256d11-e4. For reasons I offer below, I do not think that this is the point the stranger is making in 256d11-e4.

⁴⁷ Cf. Job van Eck, "Not-Being and Difference: On Plato's *Sophist*, 256d5-258e3," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 23 (2002): 84.

⁴⁸ In this I am in agreement with van Eck. See *ibid.*, 80-84.

⁴⁹ Cf. Job van Eck, "Falsity without Negative Predication: On *Sophistes* 255e-263d," *Phronesis: A Journal of Ancient Philosophy* 40, no. 1 (1995): 35.

Quartet 4, characterizes motion as non-being: as what is not the kind from which it is different. I will argue that in 256d11-257a12 the stranger shows that this sort of what is not applies not only to motion, but to all the forms.

In the second stage, 257b1-259e2, the stranger defines non-being as an *antithesis* (setting-against each other)⁵⁰ of the nature of a part of different and the nature of being (258a11-b1, cf. e2-3). In the process of defining non-being in this way, he shows that the sort of what is not from the first stage (256d11-257a12), although an instance of what is not, does not exhaust the scope of non-being.⁵¹ What is not is not defined by difference from other objects, but rather by a qualitative difference from the nature of some other kind.⁵² The distinction between a kind and its nature continues to be crucial in the stranger's account of non-being, and will also be crucial to his characterization of true and false speech about the forms.

A. What Is Not as Difference from Other Objects (256d11-257a12)

The first stage of the stranger's discussion of what non-being is corrects a possible misunderstanding of what non-being is. This misunderstanding is a possibility due to how the argument of the fourth Quartet is stated. The fourth Quartet is set up so as to show clearly (256d8; σαφῶς) that motion is non-being, and so non-being is. It does so by focusing on the difference between the kind motion and the kind being. Since motion is different from being, motion is not being. By the same argument, any other kind different from the kind being is non-being as well. Although whatever is different from the kind being is an instance of non-being, if one were to think that non-being as such was simply difference from the kind being, one would misunderstand its nature. It is this misunderstanding that the stranger will work to exclude as a possibility in 256d11-257a12. The stranger will show that non-being appeared in line *b* of each of the Quartets,

⁵⁰ I will leave “ἀντίθεσις” untranslated, since “contrast” (adopted by Cornford, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge*, 292; Crivelli, *Plato's Account of Falsehood*, 216) is too weak, “setting against each other” (adopted by White, *Sophist*, 281) is awkward, and the only other plausible English rendering of the word, “opposition” (adopted by Fowler, *Plato VII*, 419; Taylor, *The Sophist and the Statesman*, 166; Benardete, *Plato's Sophist*, 55; Ambuel, *Image and Paradigm*, 234), is confusing in the context of 257b1-259e2, wherein the stranger emphasizes that the subjects of “ἀντίθεσις” are not opposite (ἐναντία) to one another.

⁵¹ Edward N. Lee, “Plato on Negation and Not-Being in the *Sophist*,” *The Philosophical Review* 81, no. 3 (1972): 285-286.

⁵² For the sense in which a nature can be subject to difference, see §2.B(i).

and so is not, as such, a result of participation in the nature of different in relation to the kind being, but is rather a result of participation in the nature of different in relation to any object different from the participant. The text reads as follows:

Stranger: Therefore it is 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 the different, by producing each as different from what is, makes each not what is. So in this same way we will correctly call all things non-beings and again, because they participate in being, we will say that they both are and are beings.

Theaetetus: Possibly.

Stranger: Then concerning each of the forms, what is is many, while what is not is unlimited in multitude.

Theaetetus: It seems.

[257a]

Stranger: Therefore even being itself must be said to be different from the others.

Theaetetus: Necessarily.

Stranger: Then in our view, however many others there are, in relation to that many, even being is not. For not being those others, it is one, namely, itself; and in turn it is not an unlimited number of things, namely, the others.

ΞΕ. Ἐστὶν ἄρα ἐξ ἀνάγκης τὸ μὴ ὄν ἐπὶ τε κινήσεως εἶναι καὶ κατὰ πάντα τὰ γένη · κατὰ πάντα γὰρ ἢ θατέρου φύσις ἕτερον ἀπεργαζομένη τοῦ ὄντος ἕκαστον οὐκ ὄν ποιεῖ, καὶ σύμπαντα δὴ κατὰ ταῦτα οὕτως οὐκ ὄντα ὀρθῶς ἐροῦμεν, καὶ πάλιν, ὅτι μετέχει τοῦ ὄντος, εἶναί τε καὶ ὄντα.

ΘΕΑΙ. Κινδυνεύει.

ΞΕ. Περὶ ἕκαστον ἄρα τῶν εἰδῶν πολὺ μὲν ἐστὶ τὸ ὄν, ἄπειρον δὲ πλήθει τὸ μὴ ὄν.

ΘΕΑΙ. Ἔοικεν.

[257a]

ΞΕ. Οὐκοῦν καὶ τὸ ὄν αὐτὸ τῶν ἄλλων ἕτερον εἶναι λεκτέον.

ΘΕΑΙ. Ἀνάγκη.

ΞΕ. Καὶ τὸ ὄν ἄρ' ἡμῖν, ὅσαπέρ ἐστὶ τὰ ἄλλα, κατὰ τοσαῦτα οὐκ ἔστιν · ἐκεῖνα γὰρ οὐκ ὄν ἔν μὲν αὐτὸ ἐστὶν, ἀπέραντα δὲ τὸν ἀριθμὸν τἄλλα οὐκ ἔστιν αὐτό. (256d11-257a6)

In order to understand the stranger's claims in this passage, one must consider what each kind is as a result of its participation in the nature of being and in the nature of

different. All the kinds participate in the nature of being. This participation results in their having the power to affect and be affected. In other words, this participation results in their being able to possess a definitive character by which they can occupy a specific position within eidetic whole/part structures. Thus, as a result of participation in the nature of being, a kind is (=1c) and is being (=4c) (256a1, d8-9). To say that a kind “is being” is to say that a kind “is what is.”⁵³ Both “being” and “what is” translate the participle “ὄν.” Thus, every kind is what is (=4c) because every kind participates in the nature of being (256d8-9). Furthermore, participation in the nature of being enables a kind to participate in the nature of other kinds.⁵⁴ Consider the way in which participation in the nature of both being and same affects a kind. As a result of participation in the nature of being, kind *K* is what is. Likewise, as a result of participation in the nature of same as well as the nature of being, *K* is what is the same. Now consider what follows from participation in the nature of both being and different. As a result of participation in the nature of being and different, kind *K* is what is different from others. This, however, entails that *K* is what is not those others.⁵⁵ Given that the complement of “is what is not . . .” can be elided, just as the complement “. . . from *X*” of “is different . . .,” if *K* is what is not *X*, it follows that *K* is what is not.⁵⁶ Since all the kinds participate in the nature of both being and different, every kind is what is and is what is not. That is, every kind is being and non-being.

⁵³ See §1.C above.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ I take it that the stranger considers the following statements to be identical in meaning: “*K* is what is not those others,” “*K* is not those others,” “*K* is not being those others,” “*K* is being not those others.” See Frede, “The *Sophist* on False Statements,” 406-407; van Eck, “Not-Being and Difference,” 69.

⁵⁶ I do not think that “what is not” (τὸ μὴ ὄν) has a complete use (for what I mean by “complete use,” see chap. I.6 and the C2 complete use in Brown, “Being in the *Sophist*,” 460-462), since like “different,” “what is not” requires an explicit or elided complement (cf. chap. IV.3.B, esp. 172n52; Brown, “Being in the *Sophist*,” 477). Van Eck argues that “what is not” or “not being” (τὸ μὴ ὄν) does have what Brown terms a C2 complete use (van Eck, “Not-Being and Difference,” 71-72, 84). Yet he describes this complete use as “not being something” (ibid., 72, 84). “Not being something,” however, just like “being something,” is not a C2 complete use. The C2 complete use of the verb “to be” is simply “to be,” not “to be something.” “To be something” is an incomplete use (Brown, “Being in the *Sophist*,” 462). After all, “something” (τι) is the complement of “to be” in “to be something.” Thus, Brown is clear that “motion is” (C2 complete use) for example, entails “motion is something” (incomplete use), just as “Jane teaches” (C2 complete use) entails “Jane is teaching something” (incomplete use) (ibid.). Since that which is expressed by “motion is” entails that which is expressed by “motion is something,” their meanings are not identical. Hence, although the verb “to be” has a C2 complete use, according to Brown the word “different” does not (ibid., 477). Therefore, while I agree with van Eck that “not being” means “not being something,” for that very reason I cannot agree that “not being” has a C2 complete use (cf. ibid., 465-470, esp. 470).

This holds in the same way for the kinds being and different themselves, since they are among all the kinds.⁵⁷ The stranger makes this explicit in the case of being. The kind being is what is, since it participates in the nature of being. Yet the kind being is also, for example, what is not different, since the kind being participates in the nature of different in relation to the kind different.⁵⁸ Thus the stranger claims in 257a1-6 that since “being itself is different from the others” (257a1), it follows that “however many others there are, in relation to that many, even being is not” (257a4-5). Something similar holds

⁵⁷ In 256d11-e4, the stranger plainly claims that all the kinds are beings and non-beings. He uses the word “πάντα” twice and “σύμπαντα” once. Most commentators, however, fail to take the stranger at his word, and instead construe the argument of 256d11-e4 as if the stranger were claiming that non-being is with respect, not to all the kinds, but to all the kinds other than the kind being (see for example, Campbell, *The Sophistes and Politicus*, 156; Seligman, *Being and Not-Being*, 76; Bluck, *Plato’s Sophist*, 158; Sallis, *Being and Logos*, 521-522; John McDowell, “Falsehood and Not-Being in Plato’s *Sophist*,” in *Language and Logos: Studies in Ancient Greek Philosophy Presented to G. E. L. Owen*, ed. Malcolm Schofield and Martha Nussbaum (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 177-118; Ray, *For Images*, 68; Frede, “Plato’s *Sophist* on False Statements,” 403; Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 168, 170, 172n198, 175). In other words, these commentators argue that when the stranger says “with respect to all the kinds” in 256d11-e4, what he really means is “with respect to all the kinds except being.” According to these commentators, only at 257a1-6 does the stranger claim that being itself is what is not. My interpretation of the argument of 256d11-e4 has the advantage of being able to explain why the stranger says “with respect to all the kinds” as opposed to “with respect to all the kinds except being” Owen, van Eck, and Leigh offer interpretations of the argument of 256d11-e4 that are similar to mine in this respect. See Owen, “Plato on Not-Being,” 424, esp. n19; van Eck, “Plato’s Logical Insights,” 73-74; “Not-Being and Difference,” 68-72; Leigh, “The Copula in Plato’s *Sophist*,” 115. As I read it, the stranger’s claims at 257a1-6 simply make explicit something that was already stated in 256d11-e4.

⁵⁸ Van Eck comes to the same conclusion, but does so on the basis of a controversial reading of 256d11-12 (“ἔστιν ἄρα ἐξ ἀνάγκης τὸ μὴ ὄν ἐπὶ τε κινήσεως εἶναι καὶ κατὰ πάντα τὰ γένη”). The controversy concerns whether or not the prepositions “ἐπὶ” and “κατὰ” must be more or less synonymous here due to the “τε . . . καὶ” construction (McDowell, “Falsehood and Not-Being,” 118n5; van Eck, “Not-Being and Difference,” 65-70; Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 173-174). Van Eck presents two possible readings of “ἐπὶ” and “κατὰ” in 256d11-12. According to the first, “non-being is in the case of both change and all the other kinds, in the sense that all the kinds are different from being” (van Eck, “Not-Being and Difference,” 65). This is the standard reading (cf. note 57 above). According to the second reading, one would “take κατὰ in the same sense as it has in 257a4: not-being κατὰ X is being different from X” (ibid.). Van Eck argues that we should adopt this second alternative in the following way: “we should read ‘not-being is . . . in respect of all the kinds’ in 256d11-12 in the sense that for all kinds X, there is not-being X, i.e. difference from X” (ibid.). The two alternatives for reading 256d11-12 that van Eck presents, however, are not our only options. My reading of 256d11-12 takes “ἐπὶ” and “κατὰ” to be more or less synonymous, but still gets the result van Eck wants: not-being is not-being X. According to my reading, not-being is in the case of motion and in the case of all the kinds, because all the kinds, including motion, are not-being in relation to that from which they are different. The Four Quartets demonstrate this in the case of motion. Motion is not being rest, is not being same, is not being different, is not being being, and is not being whatever else is different from motion. The “is not being being” (which can of course simply be expressed as “is not being”) in the fourth Quartet is only one instance of the not-being that is in the case of motion. This applies not only in the case of (ἐπὶ) motion, but also in the case of (κατὰ) all the kinds (if one wants to render “κατὰ” as more or less synonymous with “ἐπὶ”), since all the kinds are different from other objects. My reading, then, ends up with the same results as van Eck’s controversial interpretation of “ἐπὶ” and “κατὰ” in 256d11-12, but does so on the basis of the standard interpretation.

for the kind different. The kind different is what is not, for example, the kind being, since the kind different participates in the nature of different in relation to the kind being.

If we understand what the stranger says in 256d11-e4 and 257a1-5 in this way, then his claim that “concerning each of the forms, what is is many, while what is not is unlimited in multitude” (256e6-7) naturally follows. “Forms” here should be understood in the sense of form *qua* kind. What is is many because each kind is what is in relation to the many kinds in whose natures it participates.⁵⁹ The kind human being, for example, is what is the same as itself, is what is different from others, is what is a kind of animal, and so on. What is is many, as opposed to unlimited in multitude, because every kind participates in the nature of a determinate number of kinds. This must be the case given that the kinds compose a structured community (cf. 257a8-9). Yet concerning each kind, what is not is unlimited in multitude, because each kind is what is not in relation to whatever is different from it, and whatever is different from it includes not only all the other kinds, but all spatio-temporal beings, and so on. As the stranger puts it, “not being those others, it [the kind being] is one, namely, itself; and in turn it is not an unlimited number of things, namely, the others” (257a5-6).

B. The Nature of Non-Being and the Parts of Different (257b1-259e2)

Having shown that all the kinds are non-being insofar as they are different from other objects, in 257b1-259e2 the stranger focuses his inquiry directly on the question of what non-being is. I take this inquiry to be the second stage of the stranger’s two-stage account of non-being that runs from 256d11 to 259e2. The stranger’s primary goal in this second stage is to define what non-being is and to demonstrate that non-being is a form (εἶδος at 258c4, d6, cf. 260b7-8), has a nature (φύσιν at 258b11), and so “is being (οὐσία) to no less degree . . . than being itself (αὐτοῦ τοῦ ὄντος)” (258b2, cf. b9-10). This he accomplishes by 258b7-c5. Then, from 258c7-259e2, he sums-up his account of non-being and claims that with it he has gone beyond Parmenides.⁶⁰ As we will see in Chapter VI, the stranger’s account of true and false speech depends upon the understanding of non-being he develops in 257b1-259e2.

⁵⁹ Cf. Ambuel, *Image and Paradigm*, 156-157.

⁶⁰ At least the Parmenides presented in the *Sophist*. Whether or not the stranger has gone beyond the historical Parmenides is another question. See §3 below.

The stranger will successfully define the nature of non-being as an *antithesis* (setting-against each other) of the nature of a part of different and the nature of being (258a11-b1, cf. e2-3). He will characterize an instance of what is not—that is, an object insofar as it is normatively structured and governed by the nature of non-being—as a part of different. He will employ three examples as instances of non-being: what is not large, what is not beautiful, and what is not just. All of these “negative kinds”⁶¹ are instances of the form non-being.⁶² The *antithesis* of the nature of a part of different and the nature of being structures each of these negative kinds as an intelligible range of objects that differ from whatever is structured by the nature of the kind negated. The stranger’s account can be divided into four sections:

- (i) What is not large and qualitative difference (257b1-c4).
- (ii) Non-being as a part of different (257c5-e5).
- (iii) The nature of non-being as the *antithesis* of the nature of a part of different and the nature of being (257e6-258e5).

I take each of these sections in turn.

B(i). What Is Not Large and Qualitative Difference (257b1-c4)

At 257b1, the stranger begins to address the question of what non-being is directly. What is non-being? The first answer one might be tempted to give is that non-being is the opposite of being. This is, of course, the conception of non-being that was operative throughout the initial paradoxes concerning non-being in 236c9-241c6. As we saw in Chapter II, this conception of non-being is based on a conception of being that reduced “to be” to being an individual thing or things. The paradoxes were generated because if beings are individuals, then non-beings must be non-individuals, and to speak coherently about a non-individual seems impossible (238a1-239a12). For a non-individual would be something uncountable (238a11-b1). The words that we use when we speak and think, however, since they are singular or plural (or dual in Ancient Greek),

⁶¹ That the stranger posits “negative kinds” or “negative forms” is clear from 258b11-c4, d6-7, 260b7-8. Negative forms are, however, derivative of and in certain ways structurally dissimilar to non-negative forms (cf. Plato, *Plt.*, 262a3-264b6). See Frede, *Prädikation und Existenzaussage*, 92; Gail Fine, *On Ideas: Aristotle’s Criticism of Plato’s Theory of Forms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 113-116; van Eck, “Not-Being and Difference,” 73-84; Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 205-206, 212-214; cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, I.9.990b13-14, XIII.4.1079a9-10.

⁶² Cf. Frede, “Plato’s *Sophist* on False Statements,” 405-408; van Eck, “Not-Being and Difference,” 73-84.

always treat their objects as countable objects, that is, as objects that are, are the same as themselves, and are different from others. The Four Quartets revealed an alternative to the conception of being that reduces “to be” to being an individual. They, along with the stranger’s earlier definitions of being as power, revealed that being, in its most fundamental sense, is the power to affect and be affected, rather than the individuals, the countable objects, that possess that power. With this understanding of being as power, the stranger has what he needs to show what non-being is. In order to show what non-being is, however, he will have to reveal a more fundamental sense of difference: difference from the nature of a given kind (cf. 257d11-13). Now this should sound problematic, since the nature of a given kind is causally prior to participation in difference and so not subject to difference. Yet as a result of the Quartets, the stranger and Theaetetus in what follows will show themselves willing to address the nature of a given kind as the kind that possesses it.⁶³ In this way, they will be willing to address the nature of a given kind as a one (cf. 257d4-5), as something (257e3), as different (257d11-13), and as a being (257e3, 258a8), although they understand that the nature of a given kind is, as such, causally prior to these affections. By proceeding in this manner, the stranger and Theaetetus are following the arch of dialectical inquiry as described in *Republic VI*. Having, in the Quartets, completed the ascent to the first principle, the stranger is now, in his account of non-being, reversing the direction of the inquiry and proceeding toward a conclusion, “without making use of anything visible whatsoever, but of forms themselves, moving through forms, into forms, and ending in forms” (*Rep.*, VI.511b3-c2).⁶⁴

⁶³ Cf. §1.D, pp. 198-199.

⁶⁴ The whole passage reads as follows: “Τὸ τοίνυν ἕτερον μάνθανε τμήμα τοῦ νοητοῦ λέγοντά με τοῦτο οὐδ’ αὐτὸς ὁ λόγος ἄπτεται τῆ τοῦ διαλέγεσθαι δυνάμει, τὰς ὑποθέσεις ποιούμενος οὐκ ἀρχὰς ἀλλὰ τῶ ὄντι ὑποθέσεις, οἷον ἐπιβάσεις τε καὶ ὀρμάς, ἵνα μέχρι τοῦ ἀνυποθέτου ἐπὶ τὴν τοῦ παντὸς ἀρχὴν ἴων, ἀψάμενος αὐτῆς, πάλιν αὐτὸν ἐχόμενος τῶν ἐκείνης ἐχομένων, οὕτως ἐπὶ τελευτὴν καταβαίῃ, αἰσθητῶ παντάπασιν οὐδενὶ προσχρόμενος, ἀλλ’ εἶδεν αὐτοῖς δι’ αὐτῶν εἰς αὐτά, καὶ τελευτᾶ εἰς εἶδη.” “Then also understand that, by the other subsection of the intelligible, I mean that which *logos* itself grasps through the power of dialectic, which makes for itself hypotheses, not first principles but instead real hypotheses, as stepping stones to take off from, to enable it to reach the unhypothetical first principle of everything; and having grasped that principle, it reverses itself and holding onto what follows from the principle, comes down to a conclusion, without making use of anything visible whatsoever, but of forms themselves, moving through forms, into forms, and ending in forms.” For a discussion of how this arch of inquiry appears throughout the dialogues, see Miller, “Platonic Mimesis.”

The stranger begins this descent by arguing, *contra* the paradoxes in (236c9-241c6), that non-being is not the opposite of being.⁶⁵ Making a clear break with the discussion of 256d11-257a12, the stranger begins at 257b1 by saying: “Then let us look into this as well” (257b1).⁶⁶ Theaetetus asks, “What?” (257b2). The text then continues:

Stranger: Whenever we say “what is not,”⁶⁷ it seems, we do not speak of something opposite to what is, but only different.

Theaetetus: How so?

Stranger: For instance, when we call something “not large” do we then appear to you to indicate the small by that expression any more than the equal?

Theaetetus: How do you mean?

Stranger: Then whenever the negative is said to signify an opposite, we will not agree, but will concede only this much: that the “not” prefixed to the names that follow indicates something different from those names, or rather, different from whatever objects to which the names uttered after the negative are given.

ΞΕ. Ὅποταν τὸ μὴ ὄν λέγωμεν, ὡς ἔοικεν, οὐκ ἐναντίον τι λέγομεν τοῦ ὄντος ἀλλ’ ἕτερον μόνον.

ΘΕΑΙ. Πῶς;

ΞΕ. Οἷον ὅταν εἰπωμέν τι μὴ μέγα, τότε μᾶλλον τί σοι φαινόμεθα τὸ μικρὸν ἢ τὸ ἴσον δηλοῦν τῷ ῥήματι;

ΘΕΑΙ. Καὶ πῶς;

ΞΕ. Οὐκ ἄρ’, ἐναντίον ὅταν ἀπόφασις λέγῃται σημαίνειν, συγχωρησόμεθα, τοσοῦτον δὲ μόνον, ὅτι τῶν ἄλλων τί μὴ γνῶναι τὸ μὴ καὶ τὸ οὐ προτιθέμενα τῶν ἐπιόντων ὀνομάτων, μᾶλλον δὲ τῶν πραγμάτων περὶ ἅτ’ ἂν κήται τὰ ἐπιφθεγγόμενα ὕστερον τῆς ἀποφάσεως ὀνόματα. (257b3-c3)

Unlike most commentators,⁶⁸ I do not think that the stranger’s reference to not-large here indicates a shift of focus from negative identity statements to negative

⁶⁵ Cf. van Eck, “Not-Being and Difference,” 74-75.

⁶⁶ Cf. Allen Silverman, *The Dialectic of Essence: A Study of Plato’s Metaphysics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 190; Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 179.

⁶⁷ For why it is likely that “what is not” (τὸ μὴ ὄν) is mentioned here, rather than used, see van Eck, “Falsity without Negative Predication,” 30n21; Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 179-180.

⁶⁸ See for example, Moravcsik, “Being and Meaning in the *Sophist*,” 66, 68ff.; Wiggins, “Plato’s Problem of Non-Being”; Lee, “Plato on Negation,” 288-298; James P. Kostman, “False *Logos* and Not-Being in Plato’s *Sophist*,” in *Patterns of Thought*, ed. J. M. E. Moravcsik (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1973), 196ff.; Ketchum, “Participation and Predication”; McDowell, “Falsehood and Not-Being”; Ray, *For Images*, 69-77; Michael T. Ferejohn, “Plato and Aristotle on Negative Predication and Semantic Fragmentation,” *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 71, no. 3 (1989): 257-282; Frede, “The *Sophist* on

predication.⁶⁹ The stranger's focus here is not on negative predication, but on the ontology of non-being: what non-being is.⁷⁰ The stranger claims that non-being is not the opposite of being. When Theaetetus asks for clarification, the stranger offers an instance of what is not.⁷¹ The instance he offers is what is not large, that is, something that we call "not large" (257b6; εἴπωμέν τι μὴ μέγα). The stranger points out that when we say that something is not large, we do not thereby indicate that it is small, any more than we indicate that it is equal.⁷² Small is the opposite of large, but equal is not. Both, however, are different from large. Thus, the "not" prefix does not indicate the opposite of that which the name that follows it indicates, but only something different from that which the name that follows it indicates. This should come as no surprise, since the instances of what is not considered during and after the Four Quartets have been cases of "what is different from."

Yet, the way that the stranger characterizes what is not large is radically different from what we have seen during and after the Quartets in the following two ways.⁷³ First, the stranger uses "not large" to characterize "something" (τι), rather than some form or kind. This was done neither in the Quartets, nor in the first stage of the stranger's account of non-being (256d11-257a12), where the focus remained exclusively on forms or kinds. Second, the stranger suggests that "not large" indicates a determinate range of entities—small and equal—rather than just anything different from the kind large. As we

False Statements," 405-412; Silverman, *The Dialectic of Essence*, 190ff.; Mary Louise Gill, "Method and Metaphysics in Plato's *Sophist* and *Statesman*," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2009 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2009/entries/plato-sophstate/>. For an overview of the major exegeses of 257b1-258e5, see Francis Jeffrey Pelletier, "Plato on Not-Being: Some Interpretations of the ΣΥΜΠΛΟΚΗ ΕΙΔΩΝ (259E) and their Relation to Parmenides' Problem," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 8, no. 1 (1983): 38-54; *Parmenides, Plato, and the Semantics of Not-Being* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 45-93; Crivelli, *Plato's Account of Falsehood*, 184-204.

⁶⁹ In this I agree with van Eck, "Falsity without Negative Predication," 25-35.

⁷⁰ Cf. van Eck, "Not-Being and Difference," 74.

⁷¹ I take the "οἷον" in 257b6 to introduce an example (cf. LSJ, s.v. "οἷον" V.2.b; Fowler, *Plato VII*, 417; Taylor, *The Sophist and the Statesman*, 164; Benardete, *Plato's Sophist*, 53; Brann et al., *Plato: Sophist*, 68; Ambuel, *Image and Paradigm*, 233; Crivelli, *Plato's Account of Falsehood*, 178). The other option would be to take the "οἷον" here to introduce an analogy, in which case it could be translated as "as," "just as," or "in the same way as" (LSJ, s.v. "οἷον" V.2.a; Cornford, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge*, 290). *Pace* Crivelli (Crivelli, *Plato's Account of Falsehood*, 182-183), I contend that not-large is introduced as an example of what is not. Although, as Crivelli points out, the expression "not large" (μὴ μέγα) "does not contain 'to be'" (ibid., 182), that to which "not large" refers is a being.

⁷² Cf. Plato, *Parm.*, 150d4-e3, 161c7-e2, 164a1-2.

⁷³ Cf. Lee, "Plato on Negation," 285-287.

will see, this way in which what is not large is a determinate range modifies the understanding of non-being put forward in 256d11-257a12.

In 256d11-257a12, the stranger characterized what is not as any kind insofar as it participated in the nature of different in relation to some other object. For example, motion is not the same, since it participates in the nature of different in relation to the kind same. Likewise, since the kind small participates in the nature of different in relation to the kind large, it follows that small is not large. In the same way, however, since motion participates in the nature of different in relation to the kind large, it follows that motion is not large. Yet now in 257b6-7, the stranger seems to privilege small and equal as instances of what is not large. And his privileging of small and equal seems to make intuitive sense: it would be strange if he had said that whenever we call something “not large,” we no more indicate small than motion, for example.

The stranger’s reference to something ($\tau\iota$) that we call “not large” offers a clue as to why he identifies small and equal as special instances of what is not large. Insofar as something can be called “not large,” that something is different from things that are structured by the nature of large. The nature of large structures not only the kind large, but also objects that have a certain size.⁷⁴ Objects that have size, of course, could be small, equal, or large. The sort of difference that the stranger is here claiming the “not” indicates, therefore, is not, as it was in 256d11-257a12, difference from a kind. I will argue instead that the sort of difference that the stranger claims the “not” indicates is difference from the nature of some kind. Theaetetus will in fact soon make this explicit, when at 257d11-13 he will claim that “what on any occasion we call ‘not beautiful,’ that thing is different from the nature of the beautiful and from nothing else” (257d11-13; ὁ γὰρ μὴ καλὸν ἐκάστοτε φθεγγόμεθα, τοῦτο οὐκ ἄλλου τινὸς ἕτερόν ἐστιν ἢ τῆς τοῦ καλοῦ φύσεως).⁷⁵

⁷⁴ This class of objects, objects that have size, includes spatial beings, but need not be restricted to spatial beings. After all, the *megista genē* (greatest/largest kinds) are presumably *mega* (large) in some sense, and so presumably have some sort of size.

⁷⁵ Commentators have found Theaetetus’ emphasis on difference from the nature of the beautiful here puzzling. See for example, Kostman, “False *Logos* and Not-Being,” 198-200; Bostock, “Plato on ‘Is-Not,’” 116; de Rijk, *Plato’s Sophist*, 171-172; van Eck, “Falsity without Negative Predication,” 27; “Plato’s Logical Insights,” 64; Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 208-212.

Since the nature of some kind is not an object, the difference here must be qualitative.⁷⁶ It must be such that it cannot be reduced to the difference between objects operative in the Four Quartets. In the Quartets, difference is always an instance of the difference between self-identical objects.⁷⁷ The difference between self-identical objects is of course a certain sort of qualitative difference—a difference between what are qualitatively, due to participation in the nature of same, self-identical objects. This difference between self-identical objects, however, is only one instance of qualitative difference. Thus, if we were only to think of “is not” in terms of the difference between self-identical objects, as was done in the Quartets and in 256d11-257a12, we would have an incomplete understanding of “is not.” Given this incomplete understanding, what is not large is just as clearly the kinds motion, same, tree, and every other self-identical object, as it is small and equal. In order to explain why small and equal are special instances of what is not large, we will need to identify a more basic sense of different. I propose that this more basic sense is qualitative difference. Qualitative difference from what it means to be large is what explains why small and equal are clearer instances of what is not large than motion, same, and so on. Since the nature of large is what it means to be large, and since difference from what it means to be large is necessarily qualitative, “qualitative difference from what it means to be large” can simply be described as “difference from the nature of large.”

Generally, when we speak about something as “not large,” we mean to indicate that it is small or equal. This is because small and equal are related to what it means to be large in terms of the nature of size, which is prior in *logos* to all three.⁷⁸ Size constitutes a continuum that is differentiated in terms of the nature of small, equal, and large. Since the continuum of small, equal, and large is simply size differentiated, small, equal, and large are not only explained by the nature of size, but also by the nature of different. What it means to be small, what it means to be equal, and what it means to be large are not as such different from one another, since “each one is different from the

⁷⁶ Cf. Moravcsik, “Being and Meaning in the *Sophist*,” 66, 68. Moravcsik briefly mentions that the sense of difference in the stranger’s account of non-being might be qualitative. He does not develop the notion of “qualitative difference” in any detail, though, and what he means by it is somewhat unclear.

⁷⁷ Perhaps the stranger presents Quartet 2, which deals with participation in same, before Quartet 3, which deals with participation in different, in order to emphasize that the difference operative in the Quartets is difference between self-identical objects.

⁷⁸ Cf. Seligman, *Being and Not-Being*, 82; Gill, “Method and Metaphysics,” sec. 6.1.

others not because of its own nature, but because it participates in the form of different” (255e4-6). Small, equal, and large do, however, constitute different places on the continuum size. This difference on the continuum is explained by participation in the nature of different. The nature of different, in other words, is what explains the difference between the kinds small, equal, and large on the continuum of size. Participation in the nature of different, then, not only explains difference between self-identical objects—the sort of difference relevant in the Quartets—but also the difference in position within eidetic wholes of parts. Hence, participation in different not only explains the difference that the kind large has in relation to every other countable object, but also the difference that the kind large has in relation to small and equal—the other forms on the continuum of size.

This difference between the large and the other parts of size—small and equal—is more fundamental than the difference between one countable object and another in the following way. The kind large only is as a part of size. As a part of size, it is also part of the communion of kinds, and so one of the many kinds that are. Yet it is a specific part of the communion of kinds, part of the kind size. In other words, large is only part of the communion of kinds because it is part of size. In the same way, the kind large is only different from all the other kinds because it is different from small and equal. The nature of different produces the communion of kinds “from the inside out,” so to speak. For an illustration of what I mean by this, consider the way that angling is constituted as different from other kinds. Angling is first different from spear-fishing, then from those other sorts of aquatic hunting that are not fishing, then from those other sorts of hunting that are not aquatic hunting, and so on. Since the nature of different produces the kinds in this way, difference from the nature of large, to return to our previous example, is itself a continuum that ranges from kinds more closely related to the kind large within the communion of kinds, to kinds more distantly related to the kind large. Likewise, difference from the nature of angling is a continuum that ranges from kinds more closely related to angling, such as spear-fishing, to kinds more distantly related, such as farming, or even kinds that are not part of expertise at all. That the kinds are structured in their difference from one another in this way explains why when we call something “not large,” we generally mean small and equal, as opposed to motion, same, or whatever else

is different from the kind large. Small and equal are more closely related to the kind large within the eidetic structure in which the kind large is embedded.

The difference operative in the communion of kinds, then, is fundamentally qualitative. Even the difference between self-identical objects is itself an instance of this more fundamental qualitative difference—that is, difference from the nature of *X*. Thus, the “is not” presented in the first stage of the stranger’s account of non-being (256d11-257a12)—that is, the “is not” that is a consequence of difference from other objects—is only one instance of “is not.” By his characterization of what is not large, the stranger identifies a more fundamental sort of difference. This more fundamental sort of difference was, of course, already operative in the Quartets and the first stage of the account of non-being. Just as the first stage showed that the “is not” operative in the Quartets is not simply difference from the kind being, but rather difference from any countable object, so the second stage of the stranger’s account of non-being has begun to show that the “is not” operative in both the Quartets and in the first stage is not simply difference from any countable object, but rather qualitative difference—difference from the nature of *X*. Difference from any countable object is only one case of qualitative difference, just as difference from the kind being is only one case of difference from any countable object. The “not” prefix indicates qualitative difference. This is the most fundamental sense of difference. Hence, to paraphrase Theaetetus, that which “on any occasion” (ἐκάστοτε) we call “not *X*” is different from the nature of *X* (cf. 257d11-12).

B(ii). Non-Being as a Part of Different (257c5-e5)

The stranger has introduced qualitative difference through his characterization of what is not large. He now needs to show in detail how qualitative difference produces what is not. This will involve explaining what negative-kinds or non-beings are, and then defining the nature of non-being—the power to affect and be affected that negative kinds possess. The stranger argues that negative kinds—such as not-large, not-beautiful, not-just, and so on—are parts of different. They are parts of different analogous to the way that the various arts and sciences are parts of knowledge. The stranger sets up the analogy in the following way:

Stranger: And let us consider this next point, if it too seems agreeable to you.

Theaetetus: What is it?

Stranger: It appears to me that the nature of the different is all chopped up, just like knowledge.

Theaetetus: How so?

Stranger: Knowledge also is one, I suppose; but each part of it, by coming to be over something, is marked off and has a certain title peculiar to it. For this reason there are many so-called arts and sciences.

Theaetetus: Certainly.

Stranger: Then the parts of the nature of different have been affected in this same way, although this nature is one.

ΞΕ. Τόδε δὲ διανοηθῶμεν, εἰ καὶ σοὶ συνδοκεῖ.

ΘΕΑΙ. Τὸ ποῖον;

ΞΕ. Ἡ θατέρου μοι φύσις φαίνεται κατακεκερματίσθαι καθάπερ ἐπιστήμη.

ΘΕΑΙ. Πῶς;

ΞΕ. Μία μὲν ἐστὶ πού καὶ ἐκείνη, τὸ δ' ἐπὶ τῷ γιγνόμενον μέρος αὐτῆς ἕκαστον ἀφορισθὲν ἐπωνυμίαν ἴσχει τινὰ ἑαυτῆς ἰδίαν · διὸ πολλὰ τέχνηαι τ' εἰσὶ λεγόμεναι καὶ ἐπιστήμῃαι.

ΘΕΑΙ. Πάνυ μὲν οὖν.

ΞΕ. Οὐκοῦν καὶ τὰ τῆς θατέρου φύσεως μόρια μιᾶς οὔσης ταῦτόν πέπονθε τοῦτο. (257c5-d5)

Knowledge is a general notion, but it has “parts” insofar as there are different sorts of arts and sciences (ἐπιστήμῃαι). The various arts and sciences are constituted by the fact that knowledge is concerned about or directed toward different kinds of things. Knowledge is a power that can relate to different things, and when it does, this power is specified, although it still remains one, and a “part of knowledge” is constituted.⁷⁹ When knowledge is directed toward number, for example, mathematics is constituted as a part of knowledge. The various arts and sciences—such as mathematics, geometry, navigation, angling, horse breeding—structurally differ from one another. Yet what explains why they differ is not simply knowledge, but the different objects to which knowledge is applied.⁸⁰ The concern with ideal shapes rather than the breeding of horses

⁷⁹ For a detailed analysis of the analogy between the parts of knowledge and the parts of different see Lee, “Plato on Negation,” 269-276.

⁸⁰ Cf. Gill, “Method and Metaphysics,” sec. 6.1.

explains the difference between geometry and horse breeding. The concern with catching fish using baited hooks rather than getting from point *a* to point *b* explains the difference between angling and navigation. By analogy, the power or nature of different, when directed toward the power or nature of various kinds, constitutes non-beings, negative kinds, as its parts.⁸¹

In what follows, the stranger explains precisely how this constitution or production (cf. 256e1; ἀπεργαζομένη) of non-being occurs:

Stranger: Is there some part of different that is opposed to the beautiful?

Theaetetus: There is.

Stranger: Shall we say that this is nameless or that it has some title?

Theaetetus: That it has one. For what on any occasion we call “not beautiful,” that thing is different from the nature of the beautiful and from nothing else.

Stranger: Come then, and tell me this.

Theaetetus: What?

Stranger: Has the non-beautiful turned out to be just this—some different thing⁸² that is marked off from some one kind among the things that are and again set against something among the things that are?

Theaetetus: Just so.

ΞΕ. Ἔστι τῷ καλῷ τι θατέρου μόριον ἀντιτιθέμενον;

ΘΕΑΙ. Ἔστιν.

ΞΕ. Τοῦτ’ οὖν ἀνόνημον ἐροῦμεν ἢ τιν’ ἔχον ἐπωνυμίαν;

ΘΕΑΙ. Ἐχον· ὁ γὰρ μὴ καλὸν ἐκάστοτε φθεγγόμεθα, τοῦτο οὐκ ἄλλου τινὸς ἕτερόν ἐστιν ἢ τῆς τοῦ καλοῦ φύσεως.

ΞΕ. Ἴθι νυν τόδε μοι λέγε.

⁸¹ For an overview of the main interpretations of the stranger’s account of the parts of different, see Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 206n95.

⁸² How to translate the “ἄλλο τι” in this passage is a matter of controversy. I closely follow Brann et al. and translate the “ἄλλο τι” as “some different thing. . . .” Unlike Owen, I do not take the “ἄλλο τι” with the “τῶν ὄντων” (Owen, “Plato on the Not-Being,” 430n31). Like Lee, I think that prior to 257e6-7, the Stranger is not yet in a position simply to state that the negative kind not-beautiful is among the things that are (Lee, “Plato on Negation,” 278n15). What the stranger says in 257e2-4 is an attempt to explain how the not-beautiful is among the things that are. If the “ἄλλο τι τῶν ὄντων” is taken to refer to the not-beautiful, then the stranger would be presupposing the very thing that he is trying to explain at 257e2-4—namely that the not-beautiful is among the things that are. I differ from Lee and others (for example, Gill, “Method and Metaphysics,” sec. 6.1; Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 215), however, in that I do not take the “ἄλλο τι” as the Latin interrogative “*nonne*.” As Owen points out, “a question answering another question does not need such a prefix (e.g., 257d6-7)” (Owen, “Plato on the Not-Being,” 430n31). Rendering the “ἄλλο τι” as “some different thing . . .” avoids the pitfalls of both Owen’s and Lee’s translations.

ΘΕΑΙ. Τὸ ποῖον;

ΞΕ. Ἄλλο τι τῶν ὄντων τινὸς ἐνὸς γένους ἀφορισθὲν καὶ πρὸς τι τῶν ὄντων αὖ πάλιν ἀντιτεθὲν οὕτω συμβέβηκεν εἶναι τὸ μὴ καλόν;

ΘΕΑΙ. Οὕτως. (257d7-e5)

The not-beautiful, explains the stranger, is structured by being both “marked off” (ἀφορισθὲν) from some one of the things that are and “set against” (ἀντιτεθὲν) some one of the things that are. That against which the part of different called “not beautiful” is set is the nature of the beautiful, as Theaetetus states in 257d11-13. What this “some one kind” is, however, from which the non-beautiful is marked off, is more difficult to determine. Two answers seem initially plausible. (1) The “some one kind” from which the non-beautiful is marked off is the kind different.⁸³ (2) The “some one kind” from which the non-beautiful is marked off is a range of incompatible forms that includes the beautiful.⁸⁴

I contend that (1) is correct. The stranger’s use of the verb “ἀφορισθὲν” a few lines earlier at 257c11 supports this reading. At 257c11 the stranger claimed that each part of knowledge, “by coming to be over something, is marked off and has a certain title peculiar to it.” That from which a part of knowledge is marked off is the kind knowledge. So analogously, that from which the not-beautiful is marked off would be the kind different.⁸⁵ Those who support option (2), tend to do so in part because they think it can better explain negative predication and in part because they think it can explain the stranger’s mention of small and equal as instances of what is not large at 257b6-7. On my reading, however, negative predication is not at issue in the stranger’s account of non-being. Likewise, my reading⁸⁶ explains why the stranger selects small

⁸³ See Frede, *Prädikation und Existenzaussage*, 86-87; Owen, “Plato on the Not-Being,” 430n31; Lee, “Plato on Negation,” 278-79; Bluck, *Plato’s Sophist*, 168.

⁸⁴ See D. W. Hamlyn, “The Communion of Forms and the Development of Plato’s Logic,” *Philosophical Quarterly* 5, no. 21 (1955): 292; Ferejohn, “Plato and Aristotle on Negative Predication,” 262ff.; Gill, “Method and Metaphysics,” sec. 6.1; Lesley Brown, “Negation and Not-Being: Dark Matter in the *Sophist*,” in *Presocratics and Plato: A Festschrift at Delphi in Honor of Charles Kahn*, ed. A. Hermann, V. Karasmanis, and R. Patterson (Las Vegas: Parmenides Publishing, 2012), 233-254; cf. Wiggins, “Plato’s Problem of Non-Being,” 291, 301.

⁸⁵ Lee, “Plato on Negation,” 278-279.

⁸⁶ See §2.B(i). My reading, although different from the “incompatibility range” interpretation proposed by commentators such as Gill, is influenced by their notion of an intelligible range or continuum (see §2.B(i), pp. 212-213 above).

and equal as instances of what is not large.⁸⁷ Given my reading, then, there is no reason for the textually less plausible (2).⁸⁸

The not-beautiful, then, is a marked off part of the kind different. It is marked off by being set against something among the things that are (257e3; $\tau\iota\ \tau\acute{\omega}\nu\ \delta\upsilon\tau\omega\nu$). This something is the nature of the beautiful, as Theaetetus stated at 257d11-13. The kind not-beautiful is marked off as the part of different set against the nature of the beautiful. The same holds for all other negative kinds. Negative kind x_n is marked off as a part of different set against the nature of x .

B(iii). The Nature of Non-Being as the *Antithesis* of the Nature of a Part of Different and the Nature of Being (257e6-258e5).

The stranger has identified the kind prior in *logos* to negative kinds as the kind different. Each negative kind is marked off from different by its *antithesis*, its being set against, the nature of some positive kind. The stranger must still, however, define the power or nature that these negative kinds possess. He does so in the following:

Stranger: Then, as it seems, the not-beautiful turns out to be some *antithesis* of being against being.

Theaetetus: Quite right.

Stranger: What then? According to this account, is the beautiful for us any more among the things that are and the not-beautiful any less?

Theaetetus: Not at all.

[258a]

Stranger: Then the not-large as well as the large itself must likewise be said to be.

Theaetetus: Likewise.

Stranger: Then also in the same way the not-just must be posited with the just, in that neither of them is to a greater degree than the other?

Theaetetus: Certainly.

⁸⁷ Owen and Lee support (1) instead of (2). Their account of the stranger's selection of small and equal as instances of what is not large, however, is unsatisfactory. Both Owen and Lee maintain that the stranger could have chosen any kinds different from the kind large: motion, rest, same, tree, human being, etc. (Owen, "Plato on Not-Being," 424n18; Lee, "Plato on Negation," 285-288, 291n37). Lee argues that the stranger's comments about not-large and its relation to small and equal are not part of the account of non-being as a part of different (Lee, "Plato on Negation," 268, 287).

⁸⁸ For further discussion of why (2) is textually less plausible than (1), see Bluck, *Plato's Sophist*, 163; Lee, "Plato on Negation," 278-279, 287-288, 291n37; Crivelli, *Plato's Account of Falsehood*, 191-192.

Stranger: And we shall speak of the others in the same way, since the nature of the different is manifest as being among the things that are. And with that nature being, it is also necessary to posit that its parts are no less than anything else.

Theaetetus: Of course.

Stranger: Then, it seems, the *antithesis* of the nature of a part of different [258b] and the nature of being,⁸⁹ which are set against each other, is being to no less degree—if there is sanction for saying so—than being itself. For it signifies not the opposite of being but only this much: the different from it.

Theaetetus: That is quite clear.

Stranger: What then should we call this *antithesis*?

Theaetetus: Clearly not-being, the very thing we were seeking because of the sophist.

Stranger: Is it the case, then, as you were saying, that it falls short of none of the others in being? And from now on must we boldly say that non-being firmly has its own nature? And that just as the large [258c] was large and the beautiful was beautiful, and the not-large not-large and the not-beautiful not-beautiful, so too in the same way, non-being was and is non-being, to be counted as one form among the many that are? Or do we, Theaetetus, still harbor any doubt about this matter?

Theaetetus: None at all.

ΞΕ. ὄντος δὴ πρὸς ὃν ἀντίθεσις, ὡς ἔοικ', εἶναί τις συμβαίνει τὸ μὴ καλόν.

ΘΕΑΙ. Ὀρθότατα.

ΞΕ. Τί οὖν; κατὰ τοῦτον τὸν λόγον ἄρα μᾶλλον μὲν τὸ καλὸν ἡμῖν ἐστὶ τῶν ὄντων, ἤττον δὲ τὸ μὴ καλόν;

ΘΕΑΙ. Οὐδέν.

⁸⁹ There is some debate on how to translate this passage. The first matter of contention is how to translate “τῆς θατέρου μορίου φύσεως.” Campbell, Cornford, Taylor, Benardete, and Ambuel translate it as “of a part of the nature of the different” (Campbell, *The Sophistes and Politicus*, 161; Cornford, *Plato’s Theory of Knowledge* 291-292; Taylor, *The Sophist and the Statesman*, 166; Benardete, *Plato’s Sophist*, 55; Ambuel, *Image and Paradigm*, 234). The only way to accurately translate it, however, is “of the nature of a part of different” (see Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 216; cf. Fowler, *Plato VII*, 419; White, *Sophist*, 281; Brann et al., *Plato: Sophist*, 69). The second matter of contention concerns the “τῆς τοῦ ὄντος” and is more difficult to decide. The “τῆς τοῦ ὄντος” (“that of being”) could stand for either “the nature of being” (“τῆς τοῦ ὄντος <φύσεως>”) or “the nature of a part of being” (“τῆς τοῦ ὄντος <μορίου φύσεως>”). As Crivelli points out, which of these two alternatives is correct cannot be decided on purely linguistic grounds (Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 216n122). Van Eck, however, persuasively argues that “μορίου” should not be supplied or understood here (van Eck, “Not-Being and Difference,” 77-78). If “μορίου” were understood here, non-being in the sense of difference from being itself (cf. 256d5-12) “would be excluded from the definition of non-being . . .,” since “being is not a part of itself” (ibid., 78).

[258a]

ΞΕ. Ὅμοίως ἄρα τὸ μὴ μέγα καὶ τὸ μέγα αὐτὸ εἶναι λεκτέον;

ΘΕΑΙ. Ὅμοίως.

ΞΕ. Οὐκοῦν καὶ τὸ μὴ δίκαιον τῷ δίκαιῳ κατὰ ταῦτὰ θετέον πρὸς τὸ μὴδὲν τι μᾶλλον εἶναι θάτερον θατέρου;

ΘΕΑΙ. Τί μὴν;

ΞΕ. Καὶ τᾶλλα δὴ ταύτη λέξομεν, ἐπεὶπερ ἡ θατέρου φύσις ἐφάνη τῶν ὄντων οὕσα, ἐκείνης δὲ οὐσίας ἀνάγκη δὴ καὶ τὰ μόρια αὐτῆς μὴδενὸς ἦττον ὄντα τιθέναι.

ΘΕΑΙ. Πῶς γὰρ οὐ;

ΞΕ. Οὐκοῦν, ὡς ἔοικεν, ἡ τῆς θατέρου μορίου φύσεως [258b] καὶ τῆς τοῦ ὄντος πρὸς ἄλληλα ἀντικειμένων ἀντίθεσις οὐδὲν ἦττον, εἰ θέμις εἰπεῖν, αὐτοῦ τοῦ ὄντος οὐσία ἐστίν, οὐκ ἐναντίον ἐκείνῳ σημαίνουσα ἀλλὰ τοσοῦτον μόνον, ἕτερον ἐκείνου.

ΘΕΑΙ. Σαφέστατά γε.

ΞΕ. Τίν' οὖν αὐτὴν προσείπωμεν;

ΘΕΑΙ. Δῆλον ὅτι τὸ μὴ ὄν, ὃ διὰ τὸν σοφιστὴν ἐζητοῦμεν, αὐτὸ ἐστὶ τοῦτο.

ΞΕ. Πότερον οὖν, ὥσπερ εἶπες, ἔστιν οὐδενὸς τῶν ἄλλων οὐσίας ἐλλειπόμενον, καὶ δεῖ θάρροῦντα ἤδη λέγειν ὅτι τὸ μὴ ὄν βεβαίως ἐστὶ τὴν αὐτοῦ φύσιν ἔχον, ὥσπερ τὸ [258c] μέγα ἦν μέγα καὶ τὸ καλὸν ἦν καλὸν καὶ τὸ μὴ μέγα <μὴ μέγα> καὶ τὸ μὴ καλὸν <μὴ καλόν>,⁹⁰ οὕτω δὲ καὶ τὸ μὴ ὄν κατὰ ταῦτὸν ἦν τε καὶ ἔστι μὴ ὄν, ἐνάριθμον τῶν πολλῶν ὄντων εἶδος ἓν; ἢ τίνα ἔτι πρὸς αὐτό, ὃ Θεαίτητε, ἀπιστίαν ἔχομεν;

ΘΕΑΙ. Οὐδεμίαν. (257e6-258c6)

According to the stranger at 257e2-4, what is not beautiful is “some different thing that is marked off from some one kind among the things that are and again set against (ἀντιτεθέν) something among the things that are.” He follows this up in 257e6-7, however, with the claim that what is not beautiful “turns out to be some *antithesis* of being against being.” These divergent characterizations of what is not beautiful raise the following question: Is what is not beautiful a marked off part of different, as in 257e2-4, or the *antithesis* by which that part of different is marked off, as in 257e6-7? These divergent characterizations point to the distinction between the negative kind not-

⁹⁰ These emendations, adopted by Robinson, were first proposed by August Böckh, *In Platonis qui vulgo fertur Minoem eiusdemque libros priores de Legibus* (Halle: Libraria Hemmerdeana, 1806), 150. Cf. Robinson, “Textual Notes on Plato’s *Sophist*,” 158.

beautiful and its nature. In 257e2-4, the stranger describes what is not beautiful as a kind. He characterizes what is not beautiful as a structured determinately intelligible object. In 257e6-7, by contrast, the stranger describes the nature of what is not beautiful. He characterizes this nature as “some *antithesis* of being against being.” He then goes on to describe this *antithesis* further as “the *antithesis* of the nature of a part of different and the nature of being” (258a11-b1). This *antithesis* is the power to affect and be affected that negative kinds possess, while the various parts of different are the negative kinds which possess that power.

The stranger characterizes the nature of what is not beautiful as an *antithesis* of being against being, as opposed to an *antithesis* of, say, different against beautiful. He does so because different and beautiful, as 257e2-4 indicates, are instances of what is. Different is different and beautiful is beautiful, which is to say, different is what is different and beautiful is what is beautiful. The *antithesis* that produces negative kinds, according to the stranger, is an “*antithesis* of the nature of a part of different and the nature of being” (258a11-b1), or alternatively, an *antithesis* of the nature of a part of different and the being of each kind (258e2-3).⁹¹ The nature of being is the power to affect and be affected. Each kind participates in this nature together with the nature of its definitive character. The kind beautiful, for instance, participates in the nature of being together with the nature of beautiful. Participation in the nature of being explains why the kind beautiful has the power to affect and be affected, that is, why the kind beautiful is such that it can have a definitive character; while participation in the nature of beautiful explains why the kind beautiful is affecting and is affected by others in the specific ways that it is—why the kind beautiful occupies the position it does in eidetic whole/part structures. The nature of being and the nature of beautiful, however, are not two different intelligible objects, but rather two ways of naming the simple and uncountable power that structures the kind beautiful. The name “being” indicates the power of the kind beautiful, since being is in its most fundamental sense the power to affect and be affected. The

⁹¹ “Τὸ πρὸς τὸ ὄν ἐκάστου μόνιον αὐτῆς ἀντιτιθέμενον ἐτολήσαμεν εἰπεῖν ὡς αὐτὸ τοῦτό ἐστιν ὄντως τὸ μὴ ὄν.” “We dared to claim that a part of it [the nature of different] set against the being of each, that this itself really is what is not.” Robinson emends the “ἐκάστου” at 258e2 (. . . πρὸς τὸ ὄν ἐκάστου . . .) in the main manuscripts, replacing it with “ἕκαστον” (Duke et al., *Platonis Opera*, 455; for Robinson’s defense of the emendation see Robinson, “Textual Notes on Plato’s *Sophist*,” 157-158). I follow van Eck in rejecting the emendation for both syntactical and philosophical reasons. For a defense of the choice of “ἐκάστου” over “ἕκαστον” at 258e2, see van Eck, “Not-Being and Difference,” 75ff.

name “beautiful,” in contrast, indicates the way that this power affects and is affected. That is, the name “beautiful” indicates what explains the specific position that the kind beautiful occupies within eidetic whole/part structures. Since the name “being” can indicate the power to affect and be affected that a kind possesses, “being” can be used simply to indicate the nature of each kind. For instance, we can speak about the nature of the beautiful as the being of the beautiful. This is precisely what Socrates does throughout the dialogues when he characterizes something’s form as its being: “οὐσία,” “τὸ ὄν,” or “ὃ ἔστιν.” Likewise, this is what the stranger does when he characterizes that which a part of different is set against (ἀντιτεθέν) as “the being of each” (258e2; τὸ ὄν ἐκάστου) and “the nature of being” (258b1; τῆς τοῦ ὄντος <φύσεως>). The nature of a negative kind is the *antithesis*, the setting against, of the nature of a part of different and the nature of what is. The nature of what is not beautiful, for example, is the *antithesis* of the nature of a part of different and the nature of what is beautiful. The nature of what is not large is the *antithesis* of the nature of a part of different and the nature of what is large. The nature of the kind not- x is the *antithesis* of the nature of a part of different and the nature of the kind x . In other words, the nature of what is not x is the *antithesis*, the setting against, of the nature of a part of different and the nature of what is x . The nature of what is not x is an *antithesis* of being and being. It is this *antithesis*, this setting against, that produces and explains the constitution of negative kinds. This *antithesis* is the nature of what is not.

Negative kinds, in turn, are instances of this *antithesis*. What is not beautiful, for example, is the part of different set against what is beautiful. What is not large is the part of different set against what is large. What is not x is the part of different set against what is x . In other words, the kind not- x is the part of different set against the nature of x . The what is not x that can be characterized as the kind not- x is “what is not” in the sense of something that possesses the nature or power of non-being; while the what is x that can be characterized as the nature of x is “what is” in the sense of the nature or power that x possesses. In this way, all negative kinds are instances of what is not.

All negative kinds, therefore, are non-beings. Furthermore, they are collectively the kind non-being (cf. 260b7-8). This explains the stranger’s conclusion that “non-being in the same way was and is non-being” (258c2-3; τὸ μὴ ὄν κατὰ ταὐτὸν ἦν τε καὶ ἔστι μὴ

ὄν). The stranger uses the contrasting “was” (ἦν) and “is” (ἔστι) together with the “in the same way” (κατὰ ταὐτὸν) in order to indicate how the one kind, non-being, is also in the same way the many negative kinds. In the fourth Quartet, non-being was characterized as non-being in the same way that the not-beautiful has been characterized as not-beautiful and the not-large as not-large. Non-being was characterized as a certain part of different set against being. While this characterization was not incorrect, it could be misunderstood in a way that would entail that negative kinds such as not-beautiful or not-large were not instances of non-being. That is, one could mistakenly think that not-large and not-beautiful were not non-being, since not-beautiful was difference from beautiful, not-large difference from large, and non-being difference from being. Non-being, however, is difference from what is *x*. Thus, non-being is what is not beautiful, what is not large, what is not just, and so on. Just as the kind being encompasses all the kinds—including negative kinds—since all the kinds participate in the nature of being, so the kind non-being encompasses all negative kinds, since all negative kinds participate in the nature of non-being.

§3. Conclusion: Disobeying Parmenides

The stranger concludes his account of non-being by asking Theaetetus, “Do you see then that we have disobeyed Parmenides far beyond his prohibition?” (258c7-8). Theaetetus asks the stranger what he means. The stranger answers: “I mean that we have kept pressing onward in our inquiry and have shown him more than he told us not to look into . . . because he says somewhere: ‘This should never prevail: that things which are not are; but you, while searching, keep your thought shut off from this path (οὐ γὰρ μήποτε τοῦτο δαμῆ, εἶναι μὴ ἐόντα, ἀλλὰ σὺ τῆσδ’ ἀφ’ ὁδοῦ διζήσιος εἶργε νόημα)’” (258c10-d2).⁹² If my reading of the stranger’s account of being and non-being is correct—especially with respect to the distinction it prompts between a kind and its nature—then there is not a little Platonic irony expressed in the stranger’s comments about Parmenides here and throughout the digression. The stranger and Theaetetus have disobeyed Parmenides insofar as they have demonstrated that things that are not, are (258d5-6; τὰ μὴ ὄντα ὡς ἔστιν ἀπεδείξαμεν). Furthermore, they have “declared that the form of non-

⁹² DK 28 B7.1-2; cf. Plato, *Soph.*, 237a8-9.

being in fact is” (258d6-7; τὸ εἶδος ὃ τυγχάνει ὄν τοῦ μὴ ὄντος ἀπεφηνάμεθα). They have only disobeyed him, however, by obeying him on a more fundamental level. For in order to demonstrate that and what non-being is, they had to recognize a distinction between being in the sense of the power to affect and be affected, and being in the sense of something which possesses that power. That is, they had to recognize a distinction between a kind and its nature. Recognizing and understanding this distinction, however, amounts to recognizing and understanding the one being about which Parmenides wrote. It amounts to recognizing and understanding what Parmenides has the goddess characterize as “how ___is___ and how it is not possible ___not to be___” (B2.4; ὅπως ἔστιν τε καὶ ὡς οὐκ ἔστι μὴ εἶναι),⁹³ where the “is” has no subject or predicate. The opposite of this “___is___” cannot be thought or understood, because this “___is___” itself is not some individual thing, which could thereby be opposed to another.⁹⁴ Rather, this “___is___” is what the stranger defines as the power that all things are (cf. 247e4; τὰ ὄντα ὡς ἔστιν οὐκ ἄλλο τι πλὴν δύναμις). The mistake of the monists, as they are characterized in the *Sophist*, is to count this simple power as one in addition to the whole of being that it structures.⁹⁵ This power, however, is not one in addition to the whole. Instead it is causally prior to the whole and to the self-sameness and difference characteristic of all countable objects. The “. . . is the same” and “. . . is different” that individual entities possess presupposes the causally prior “___is___” that is the power to affect and be affected. Likewise, the bond of “. . . is not . . .” (cf. *Parm.*, 162a4) that characterizes individual entities presupposes this causally prior “___is___” as well.

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⁹³ I adopt the Greek text printed by Alexander P. D. Mourelatos, *The Route of Parmenides* (Las Vegas: Parmenides Publishing, 2008), 280.

⁹⁴ For an excellent reading of Parmenides’ Fragment 2 along the lines I am suggesting here, see Mitchell Miller, “Ambiguity and Transport: Reflections on the Proem to Parmenides’ Poem,” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 30 (2006): 1-47.

⁹⁵ See chap. II.5.B(ii).

Chapter VI: Truth and Falsehood (259e3-263d5)

The stranger's account of the nature and structure of being and non-being provides the foundation for his account of true and false speech (λόγος). As I proposed in Chapter I.1, the true and false speech with which the *Sophist* is concerned is true and false speech about the forms. True and false speech of any sort, of course, necessarily presupposes the possibility of true and false speech about the forms.¹ I can only identify Theaetetus as a human being, sitting, not-flying, with eyes, ears, snub-nosed, and so on, because human being, sitting, not-flying, eyes, ears, snub-nose, etc. are forms and are intelligible due to the necessary relations they bear toward other forms. For example, the form human being is intelligible on the basis of its being posterior in *logos* to the form animal. Likewise, the forms sitting and flying are related to one another in the continuum of an animal body's motion and rest.² Furthermore, eyes, ears, and nose are intelligible as things called for by the form face, which is in turn intelligible as something called for by the form human being. Without the necessary relations among forms, spatio-temporal beings would be unintelligible and so could not be subjects of true and false speech.

In this Chapter, I will show how the stranger's ontological account of the communion of kinds grounds his account of true and false speech about the forms. This will require a careful exegesis of the account of true and false speech in 259e3-263d5. I will argue that truth in its most fundamental sense is the normative power exhibited by the nature of each kind. If statements about the forms are governed by the normative principle that structures the communion of kinds, those statements are true. Otherwise, those statements are false.

This Chapter is divided into four sections. In the first, I examine the stranger's articulation of the question of whether speech (λόγος) can blend with non-being (259e3-261c10). In the second, I consider the stranger's discussion of the structure of statements (λόγοι) (261d1-263a11). In the third, I define what it means for a statement (λόγος) to be true or false through an analysis of 263a12-d5. Finally, in the fourth, I conclude this study of truth and falsehood in the *Sophist* by considering how the ontological account

¹ Cf. chap. I.3.

² Cf. Gill, "Method and Metaphysics," sec. 6.1.

offered in the digression preserves the notion of the communion of forms against the regress problem that I posed in Chapter I.1.

Before continuing, I should note how I will render “λόγος” in this Chapter. As the previous paragraph indicates, “λόγος” in 259e3-263d5 cannot be consistently translated. Furthermore, the semantic range of “λόγος” in certain passages in 259e3-263d5 is such that it cannot be acceptably rendered in English. In such cases, I will simply transliterate. In passages where “λόγος” is used in determinate senses such that translation into English is possible without an unacceptable narrowing of its semantic range, I will translate it as “speech” or “statement” depending on the context.

§1. The Question of Whether Logos Blends with Non-Being (259e3-261c10)

The stranger and Theaetetus began their inquiry into non-being so as to demonstrate that false speech and false opinion are real. When they began, they were in the midst of defining the sophist as an image- and appearance-maker. The stranger, however, claimed that the sophist would object to their attempt to define him in this way. The sophist would argue that he could not possibly be an image- or appearance-maker, because images, appearances, and falsehood are only intelligible if non-being is. But he would contend that non-being is nothing at all. With the account of non-being in place, the stranger has now warded off this objection (260d5-e1). The stranger has demonstrated that non-being is something: it is “some one kind that is among the others, dispersed throughout all the things that are” (260b7-8; τὸ μὲν δὴ μὴ ὄν ἡμῖν ἔν τι τῶν ἄλλων γένος ὄν ἀνεφάνη, κατὰ πάντα τὰ ὄντα διεσπαρμένον). Yet the sophist, explains the stranger, might still attempt to defend himself along different lines. The sophist could argue that he cannot possibly make false images in *logos*, because, although he grants that non-being is, he will not concede that it can blend with *logos* and opinion (δόξα). And if non-being does not blend with *logos* and opinion, *logos* and opinion are always true, and falsehood is impossible (260c1-3, d6-e2, 261c6-9). In order to define the sophist, then, the stranger must clarify how his account of non-being can explain false *logos* and opinion.

The stranger introduces the sophist’s new objection against the possibility of falsehood in terms of whether or not non-being blends with *logos*. The sophist, explains

the stranger, could claim “that some of the forms participate in non-being while others do not, and that *logos* and opinion are among the non-participating ones” (260d7-8; φαίη τῶν εἰδῶν τὰ μὲν μετέχειν τοῦ μὴ ὄντος, τὰ δ’ οὐ, καὶ λόγον δὴ καὶ δόξαν εἶναι τῶν οὐ μετεχόντων). What exactly the sophist would mean by this is unclear. Moreover, the stranger presents it as unclear by referring to the “participation” between non-being and *logos* with a number of different terms: first “μείγνυσθαι” (260b11, c1-2), then “μετέχειν” (260d7-8), then “κοινωνεῖν” (256e2-5), and finally “ἄπτεσθαι” (261c8).³ In order to formulate the sophist’s objection, the stranger leaves behind the terminological rigor we saw during his discussion of the five kinds, and returns to the terminologically less precise argumentation that we witnessed in the argument against the late learners (251d5-252e8).⁴ By being inconsistent with his terminology, the stranger prompts his listeners to recall the distinctions that were made on the basis of his account of the five kinds, and to ask themselves whether the objection of the sophist here respects those distinctions.

What would it mean for *logos* to participate in or blend with non-being? The stranger is clear about what the consequences of this blending are. If non-being does not blend with *logos*, “then of necessity all things are true; but if it does blend, then both false opinion and false *logos* come to be” (260c1-3; μὴ μείγνυμένου μὲν αὐτοῦ τούτοις ἀναγκαῖον ἀληθῆ πάντ’ εἶναι, μείγνυμένου δὲ δόξα τε ψευδῆς γίγνεται καὶ λόγος · τὸ γὰρ τὰ μὴ ὄντα δοξάζειν ἢ λέγειν, τοῦτ’ ἔστι που τὸ ψεῦδος ἐν διανοίᾳ τε καὶ λόγοις γιγνόμενον). If non-being blends with *logos*, the result is that false *logos* is possible. If non-being does not blend with *logos*, then false *logos* is impossible. I propose that what the stranger is hinting at in posing the problem in terms of whether or not non-being blends with *logos* is that the structure of *logos* is different from the structure of the communion of kinds. He will note this difference explicitly in 261d1-262b3, as I will show in some detail below. But that this difference between the structure of *logos* and the structure of the communion of kinds is what is at issue can already be discerned from his formulation of the question of whether or not non-being blends with *logos*.

³ Cf. Cornford, *Plato’s Theory of Knowledge*, 298-299, 302.

⁴ Cf. chap. IV.1, pp. 153ff.

Consider how the stranger transitions in 259d9-260b2 from his earlier account of non-being to his account of true and false *logos*. The stranger concludes his account of non-being with a final jab against the late learners. “To attempt to separate everything from everything . . .” says the stranger, “belongs to someone altogether unmusical and unphilosophical” (259d9-e2; τό γε πᾶν ἀπὸ παντὸς ἐπιχειρεῖν ἀποχωρίζειν . . . παντάπασιν ἀμούσου τινὸς καὶ ἀφιλοσόφου). Theaetetus asks why. The stranger answers that “to detach each from all is the final destruction of all *logos*” (259e4-5; τελεωτάτη πάντων λόγων ἐστὶν ἀφάνισις τὸ διαλύειν ἕκαστον ἀπὸ πάντων). “For *logos* has come to be for us,” he continues, “through the interweaving of forms” (259e4-6; διὰ γὰρ τὴν ἀλλήλων τῶν εἰδῶν συμπλοκὴν ὁ λόγος γέγονεν ἡμῖν). With these comments, the stranger notes a relationship between *logos* and the interweaving of forms or communion of kinds. *Logos* is dependent upon the communion of kinds such that if there were no communion there would be no *logos* and, as the stranger points out, “we would no longer be able to speak” (260a9; οὐδὲν ἂν ἔτι που λέγειν οἱοί τ’ ἦμεν).⁵

While *logos* depends on the communion of kinds, the stranger also claims that *logos* is “some one of the kinds that are” (260a5-6; τὸ τὸν λόγον ἡμῖν τῶν ὄντων ἓν τι γενῶν εἶναι). He then goes on to remind Theaetetus that non-being is also “some one kind that is among the others, dispersed throughout all the things that are” (260b7-8; τὸ μὲν δὴ μὴ ὄν ἡμῖν ἓν τι τῶν ἄλλων γένος ὄν ἀνεφάνη, κατὰ πάντα τὰ ὄντα διεσπαρμένον).⁶ If non-being, however, is dispersed through all the things that are, and *logos* is a kind that is, then clearly *logos* would blend with non-being.⁷ After all, *logos* is not in relation to all the kinds from which it is different. Yet, immediately after the stranger states that non-being is dispersed throughout all the things that are, he suggests that “the next thing we must consider is whether it [non-being] blends with both opinion and *logos*” (260b10-11; οὐκοῦν τὸ μετὰ τοῦτο σκεπτέον εἰ δόξη τε καὶ λόγῳ μείγνυται). Given the stranger’s account of non-being, blending with non-being should be a result of some sort of difference. The question that the stranger is asking his listeners and Theaetetus to consider, then, is the question of what sort of difference plays a role in the

⁵ Cf. Moravcsik, “Being and Meaning in the *Sophist*,” 60; Malcolm, “Plato’s Analysis,” 143-144; Seligman, *Being and Not-Being*, 89-97; Ray, *For Images*, 83-86.

⁶ The “κατὰ πάντα τὰ ὄντα” is of course reminiscent of 256d11-e4, where the stranger claimed that all the kinds are non-beings, since they are not the things from which they differ.

⁷ Cf. Ambuel, *Image and Paradigm*, 163.

possibility of false *logos*.⁸ It is that question which we will see the stranger begin to address directly in 261d1-263a11.

§2. *The Structure of Logos (261d1-263a11)*

The stranger insists that he and Theaetetus should determine what *logos* is (260a7-8; λόγον ἡμᾶς διομολογήσασθαι τί ποτ' ἔστιν). Determining what *logos* is requires identifying its structure. The stranger will identify the structure of *logos* by considering the most basic instance of that structure (cf. ἐλάχιστόν τε καὶ πρῶτον at 262c10): *logos* in the sense of a statement. The stranger's overall articulation of the structure of *logos* identifies three basic characteristics of a statement. (1) A statement is a combination of a name (ὄνομα) and predicative expression (ῥῆμα) (cf. *Crat.*, 431b6-c2; *Tht.*, 206d1-2).⁹ (2) A statement is about something. (3) A statement has a certain quality.

The stranger begins to identify the structure of *logos* by differentiating that structure from the structure of the communion of kinds. As we will see, the possibility of false *logos* is a result of the difference between the structure of *logos* and the communion of kinds. This difference is the sort of non-being with which *logos* must blend if *logos* can be false. I contend that the difference between the structure of *logos* and the structure of the communion of kinds allows for the possibility of false *logos* in the following way. The communion of kinds is a structured plurality. Likewise, a *logos*—both in the sense of a statement and in the sense of many statements coherently weaved together—is a structured plurality. Since *logos* has its own structure it can maintain its structural integrity while failing to be informed by the normative power that structures the

⁸ Cf. Seligman, *Being and Not-Being*, 87.

⁹ Translators of and commentators on the *Sophist* usually translate “ὄνομα” and “ῥῆμα” as “noun” and “verb” respectively. One ought to be careful, however, not to impose certain dimensions of our contemporary lexical and grammatical understanding of noun and verb onto “ὄνομα” and “ῥῆμα” here. On my reading, “ὄνομα” and “ῥῆμα” in the *Sophist* do not refer to lexical categories or parts of a sentence, but rather to parts of a proposition: “ὄνομα” to the subject of a proposition and “ῥῆμα” to the copula-predicate, or predicative expression (cf. Jason Xenakis, “Plato on Statement and Truth-Value,” *Mind* 66, no. 262 [1957]: 168; Seligman, *Being and Not-Being*, 99; de Rijk, *Plato's Sophist*, 298-299; Stough, “Two Kinds of Naming in the *Sophist*,” 370-371; Frede, “The *Sophist* on False Statements,” 413-414; Crivelli, *Plato's Account of Falsehood*, 244). Throughout 259e3-263d3, I translate “ὄνομα” as “name” and “ῥῆμα” as “predicative expression.”

communion of kinds. When a *logos* fails to be informed by the normative power that structures the communion of kinds, it is false.

A. The Structure of *Logos* Differentiated from the Communion of Kinds (261d1-262e3)

The exchange between the stranger and Theaetetus by which they differentiate the structure of *logos* from the structure of the communion of kinds is one of the dramatically richest passages in the entire dialogue. The text reads as follows:

Stranger: Come then, just as we were saying about the forms and letters, let us go back and look into names in the same way. For this is how the object of our present inquiry reveals itself.

Theaetetus: What is it about names to which we must pay attention?

Stranger: Whether all fit together with one another, or none do, or whether some are willing and some not.

Theaetetus: This at least is clear, that some are willing and some not.

Stranger: Perhaps you're saying something like this: that some of them, when spoken in succession [261e], also fit together and indicate something, while some do not fit together and signify nothing by their succession.

Theaetetus: What do you mean by that?

Stranger: The very thing which I thought you assumed when you agreed. For we have, it seems, a dual kind of vocal indicators of being.

Theaetetus: How is that?

[262a]

Stranger: One is called "names," and the other, "predicative expressions."

Theaetetus: Say what each is.

Stranger: The one which is an indicator of actions we call, I suppose, a "predicative expression."

Theaetetus: Yes.

Stranger: But the other, the vocal sign applied to those themselves who do the actions, we call a "name."

Theaetetus: Exactly.

Stranger: Then a statement (*λόγος*) is never composed of names alone spoken in succession, nor again of predicative expressions that have been spoken apart from names.

Theaetetus: I don't understand this.

[262b]

Stranger: Clearly you had something else in view when you agreed just now. For I meant to say just this: that these [words] spoken in succession in the following way are not a statement.

Theaetetus: In what way?

Stranger: For instance, “walks runs sleeps,” and the other predicative expressions, however many signify actions, even if someone were to say them all in a row, do not, for all that, produce a statement.

Theaetetus: Of course not.

Stranger: And again, whenever “lion deer horse” is said, and however many names of those who do the actions [262c] are pronounced, according to this sequence as well no statement is ever composed. For in neither this way nor the way mentioned before does what is uttered indicate the action or inaction or being of a thing that is or a thing that is not, until someone blends predicative expressions with names. Then they fit together, and their first interweaving immediately becomes a statement, perhaps the first and shortest of statements.

Theaetetus: How do you mean this?

Stranger: Whenever someone says “Man learns,” do you affirm that this is the shortest and first statement.

[262d]

Theaetetus: I do.

Stranger: For now, I suppose, he indicates something concerning the things that are or come to be or have come to be or will come to be. He does not merely name but accomplishes something by weaving together predicative expressions with names. Hence we say that he speaks and does not merely name; and furthermore, we give the name “statement” to this weaving.

Theaetetus: Correct.

Stranger: Thus, just as some objects fitted together and others did not, so too with vocal signs, some do not fit together, but those of them that fit produce [262e] a statement.

Theaetetus: That’s altogether so.

ΞΕ. Φέρε δὴ, καθάπερ περὶ τῶν εἰδῶν καὶ τῶν γραμμάτων ἐλέγομεν, περὶ τῶν ὀνομάτων πάλιν ὡσαύτως ἐπισκεψώμεθα. φαίνεται γὰρ πῆ ταύτη τὸ νῦν ζητούμενον.

ΘΕΑΙ. Τὸ ποῖον οὖν δὴ περὶ τῶν ὀνομάτων ὑπακουστέον;

ΞΕ. Εἴτε πάντα ἀλλήλοις συναρμόττει εἴτε μηδέν, εἴτε τὰ μὲν ἐθέλει, τὰ δὲ μή.

ΘΕΑΙ. Δῆλον τοῦτό γε, ὅτι τὰ μὲν ἐθέλει, τὰ δ’ οὔ.

ΞΕ. Τὸ τοιόνδε λέγεις ἴσως, ὅτι τὰ μὲν ἐφεξῆς λεγόμενα [261e] καὶ δηλοῦντά τι συναρμόττει, τὰ δὲ τῆ συνεχείᾳ μηδὲν σημαίνοντα ἀναρμοστεῖ.

ΘΕΑΙ. Πῶς τί τοῦτ' εἶπας;

ΞΕ. Ὅπερ ᾤηθην ὑπολαβόντα σε προσομολογεῖν. ἔστι γὰρ ἡμῖν που τῶν τῆ φωνῆ περὶ τὴν οὐσίαν δηλωμάτων διττὸν γένος.

ΘΕΑΙ. Πῶς;

[262a]

ΞΕ. Τὸ μὲν ὀνόματα, τὸ δὲ ῥήματα κληθέν.

ΘΕΑΙ. Εἰπέ ἐκάτερον.

ΞΕ. Τὸ μὲν ἐπὶ ταῖς πράξεσιν ὃν δῆλωμα ῥῆμά που λέγομεν.

ΘΕΑΙ. Ναί.

ΞΕ. Τὸ δέ γ' ἐπ' αὐτοῖς τοῖς ἐκείνας πράττουσι σημεῖον τῆς φωνῆς ἐπιτεθὲν ὄνομα.

ΘΕΑΙ. Κομιδῆ μὲν οὔν.

ΞΕ. Οὐκοῦν ἐξ ὀνομάτων μὲν μόνων συνεχῶς λεγομένων οὐκ ἔστι ποτέ λόγος, οὐδ' αὖ ῥημάτων χωρὶς ὀνομάτων λεχθέντων.

ΘΕΑΙ. Ταῦτ' οὐκ ἔμαθον.

[262b]

ΞΕ. Δῆλον γὰρ ὡς πρὸς ἕτερόν τι βλέπων ἄρτι συνωμολόγεις · ἐπεὶ τοῦτ' αὐτὸ ἐβουλόμην εἰπεῖν, ὅτι συνεχῶς ᾧδε λεγόμενα ταῦτα οὐκ ἔστι λόγος.

ΘΕΑΙ. Πῶς;

ΞΕ. Οἷον “βαδίζει τρέχει καθεύδει,” καὶ τᾶλλα ὅσα πράξεις σημαίνει ῥήματα, κἂν πάντα τις ἐφεξῆς αὐτ' εἴπη, λόγον οὐδὲν τι μᾶλλον ἀπεργάζεται.

ΘΕΑΙ. Πῶς γάρ;

ΞΕ. Οὐκοῦν καὶ πάλιν ὅταν λέγηται “λέων ἔλαφος ἵππος,” ὅσα τε ὀνόματα τῶν τὰς πράξεις αὐτῶν πραττόντων [262c] ὀνομάσθη, καὶ κατὰ ταύτην δὴ τὴν συνέχειαν οὐδεὶς πῶ συνέστη λόγος · οὐδεμίαν γὰρ οὔτε οὔτως οὔτ' ἐκείνως πρᾶξιν οὐδ' ἀπραξίαν οὐδὲ οὐσίαν ὄντος οὐδὲ μὴ ὄντος δηλοῖ τὰ φωνηθέντα, πρὶν ἂν τις τοῖς ὀνόμασι τὰ ῥήματα κεράσῃ. τότε δ' ἤρμωσέν τε καὶ λόγος ἐγένετο εὐθύς ἢ πρώτη συμπλοκή, σχεδὸν τῶν λόγων ὁ πρῶτός τε καὶ σμικρότατος.

ΘΕΑΙ. Πῶς ἄρ' ᾧδε λέγεις;

ΞΕ. Ὅταν εἴπη τις · “ἄνθρωπος μανθάνει,” λόγον εἶναι φῆς τοῦτον ἐλάχιστόν τε καὶ πρῶτον;

[262d]

ΘΕΑΙ. Ἐγωγε.

ΞΕ. Διλοῖ γὰρ ἤδη που τότε περὶ τῶν ὄντων ἢ γιγνομένων ἢ γεγονότων ἢ μελλόντων, καὶ οὐκ ὀνομάζει μόνον ἀλλὰ τι περαίνει, συμπλέκων τὰ ῥήματα τοῖς ὀνόμασι. διὸ λέγειν τε αὐτὸν ἀλλ' οὐ μόνον ὀνομάζειν εἵπομεν, καὶ δὴ καὶ τῷ πλέγματι τούτῳ τὸ ὄνομα ἐφθεγξάμεθα λόγον.

ΘΕΑΙ. Ὅρθῶς.

ΞΕ. Οὕτω δὴ καθάπερ τὰ πράγματα τὰ μὲν ἀλλήλοις ἤρμοττεν, τὰ δ' οὔ, καὶ περὶ τὰ τῆς φωνῆς αὖ σημεῖα τὰ μὲν [262e] οὐχ ἀρμόττει, τὰ δὲ ἀρμόττοντα αὐτῶν λόγον ἀπηγάσατο.

ΘΕΑΙ. Παντάπασι μὲν οὖν. (261d1-262e3)

The initial exchange between the stranger and Theaetetus in the above passage reveals that Theaetetus was confusing the structure of *logos* with the structure of the communion of kinds. The stranger proposes to Theaetetus that they examine the structure of *logos* in much the same way as they had examined the structure of the communion of kinds (see 251d5-e2): by asking whether all are willing to fit together, or none, or whether some are willing to fit with some but not with others. Theaetetus misunderstands the stranger's proposal¹⁰ by equating the structure of the communion of kinds with the structure of *logos*. Hence, when the stranger says that concerning names, they must consider "whether all fit together with one another, or none do, or whether some are willing and some not" (261d6-7), Theaetetus eagerly affirms the third alternative (261d8), thinking, presumably, that they had already established that the third is correct in their argument against the late learners. The stranger then points out this misunderstanding to Theaetetus, saying, "clearly you had something else in view when you agreed just now" (262b1-2). Theaetetus is surprised when the stranger claims that what it would mean for some words to fit together and some not is "that some of them, when spoken in succession, also fit together and indicate something, while some do not fit together and signify nothing by their succession" (261d9-e2). Theaetetus initially fails to recognize that the communing of kinds and the fitting together of names and predicative expressions compose two different structures. The structure of the communion of kinds differs from the structure of *logos*, and, as we will see, it is this difference in structure which will allow for the possibility of false *logos*.

¹⁰ Cf. Crivelli, *Plato's Account of Falsehood*, 223.

After correcting Theaetetus and emphasizing that the structure of *logos* is different from the structure of the communion of kinds, the stranger begins in earnest to articulate the structure of *logos*. He points out that there are two kinds of vocal indications by which we speak about being: *onomata* and *rēmata*, names and predicative expressions.¹¹ Predicative expressions, such as “walks,” “runs,” and “sleeps” signify actions or affections (cf. *πρᾶξις* and *ἀπραξίαν* at 262c3). Names, such as “lion,” “deer,” and “horse,” signify the objects which do the actions or suffer the affections. Names in a row and predicative expressions in a row do not compose a *logos* or statement. A statement is a whole, whose parts must occupy specific positions within its structure.¹² A statement does not merely name, as the late learners thought, but rather accomplishes something.¹³ Speaking produces a structured compound, a statement. That compound is, so long as its names and predicative expressions are properly combined. Having established that the structure of a statement is distinct from the communion of kinds, the stranger next shows how statements about the forms are nevertheless subject to the normativity that structures the communion of kinds.

B. *Logos* is About Something (262e4-263a11)

A *logos* or statement is not only a compound composed of a name and predicative expression; it is also necessarily about something. I will argue that the stranger’s primary focus is on the sense in which statements about the forms are about something.¹⁴ The

¹¹ Cf. note 9 above.

¹² Cf. Seligman, *Being and Not-Being*, 99; Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 230.

¹³ For what the stranger means by “accomplishes something” (*τι περᾶναι*), see Xenakis, “Plato on Statement and Truth-Value,” 168-169; Stough, “Two Kinds of Naming in the *Sophist*,” 371, 379; George Rudebusch, “Does Plato Think False Speech is Speech?” *Noûs* 24, no. 4 (1990): 601-602; cf. Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 227-228; Plato, *Crat.*, 425a2-3; *Tht.*, 180a6; *Grg.*, 272b8; *Symp.*, 217c1-2, *Rep.* IV.426a2.

¹⁴ Although many commentators grant that the predicative expressions in “Theaetetus sits” and “Theaetetus flies” refer to forms, most commentators do not think that the stranger’s concern here is primarily with statements whose subject terms refer to forms (see for example, Cornford, *Plato’s Theory of Knowledge*, 314-315; Moravcsik, “Being and Meaning in the *Sophist*,” 60; Malcolm, “Plato’s Analysis,” 143-144; Ray, *For Images*, 83-86; Donald Davidson, *Truth and Predication* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005], 82; Thomas, “Speaking of Something,” 647n37; Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 224, 237n54, 238, 252-255). Brian Reese is an exception. He argues that “Theaetetus sits” and “Theaetetus flies” ought to be understood of Theaetetus only insofar as he is an instance of the kind human being (Brian Reese, “False Statement in the *Sophist*: A New Proposal” [paper presented at the Thirty-First Annual Joint Meeting of the Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy with the Society for the Study of Islamic Philosophy and Science, Fordham University, New York City, October 2013]).

way in which statements about the forms about something ties the discussion of *logos* here to the ontology articulated in the stranger's account of the five greatest kinds, in particular to the distinction between a kind and its nature. While the stranger's comments in 261d1-262e3 served to differentiate the structure of *logos* from the communion of kinds, his discussion of the way in which statements are about something will show how the structure of *logos* and the communion of kinds are related.

The stranger employs two different ways of expressing how a statement is about something. In some instances, he uses a genitive or a possessive pronoun, such as “τινός” or “ἐμός.” In other instances, he uses “περί” plus a genitive pronoun. My view is that the difference between these two ways of expressing “about something” is important for correctly interpreting this portion of the dialogue. Thus, I will render these two ways of expressing “about something” differently throughout my translations of the relevant passages. When a genitive pronoun is used alone I will translate it as “about . . .”—rendering “τινός” as “about something,” “ἐμοῦ” and “ἐμός” as “about me,” and so on. When a genitive pronoun is used together with “περί,” I will translate “περί” as “concerning . . .”—rendering “περὶ ἐμοῦ” as “concerning me,” and so on. The stranger describes the way in which statements are always about something in the following passage:

Stranger: One further little thing.

Theaetetus: Of what sort?

Stranger: It is necessary that a statement (λόγος), whenever there is a statement, be a statement about something, and impossible for it not to be about something.

Theaetetus: Just so.

Stranger: Therefore it must also be of a certain quality?

Theaetetus: Of course.

Stranger: Then let's pay close attention to one another.

Theaetetus: We must.

Stranger: Then I will speak a statement to you by putting an object together with an action by means of a name and a predicative expression. And you tell me what the statement is about.

[263a]

Theaetetus: I will do what I can.

Stranger: “Theaetetus sits.” Not a long statement, is it?

Theaetetus: No, but quite measured.

Stranger: Now your job is to say both what it is concerning and what it is about.

Theaetetus: Clearly, it is concerning me and about me.

Stranger: And what about this one?

Theaetetus: Which one?

Stranger: “Theaetetus (with whom I am now speaking) flies.”¹⁵

Theaetetus: With this one too, no one would say anything other than that it is about me and concerning me.

ΞΕ. Ἔτι δὴ σμικρὸν τόδε.

ΘΕΑΙ. Τὸ ποῖον;

ΞΕ. Λόγον ἀναγκαῖον, ὅταν περ ἦ, τινὸς εἶναι λόγον, μὴ δὲ τινὸς ἀδύνατον.

ΘΕΑΙ. Οὕτως.

ΞΕ. Οὐκοῦν καὶ ποιόν τινα αὐτὸν εἶναι δεῖ;

ΘΕΑΙ. Πῶς δ’ οὖ;

ΞΕ. Προσέχωμεν δὴ τὸν νοῦν ἡμῖν αὐτοῖς.

ΘΕΑΙ. Δεῖ γοῦν.

ΞΕ. Λέξω τοίνυν σοι λόγον συνθεῖς πρᾶγμα πράξει δι’ ὀνόματος καὶ ῥήματος · ὅτου δ’ ἂν ὁ λόγος ἦ, σύ μοι φράζειν.

[263a]

ΘΕΑΙ. Ταῦτ’ ἔσται κατὰ δύναμιν.

ΞΕ. Θεαίτητος κάθηται. μὴν μὴ μακρὸς ὁ λόγος;

ΘΕΑΙ. Οὐκ, ἀλλὰ μέτριος.

ΞΕ. Σὸν ἔργον δὴ φράζειν περὶ οὗ τ’ ἐστὶ καὶ ὅτου.

ΘΕΑΙ. Δῆλον ὅτι περὶ ἐμοῦ τε καὶ ἐμός.

ΞΕ. Τί δὲ ὅδ’ αὖ;

ΘΕΑΙ. Ποῖος;

ΞΕ. Θεαίτητος, ᾧ νῦν ἐγὼ διαλέγομαι, πέτεται.

ΘΕΑΙ. Καὶ τοῦτον οὐδ’ ἂν εἷς ἄλλως εἴποι πλὴν ἐμόν τε καὶ περὶ ἐμοῦ.
(262e4-263a11)

¹⁵ Since this second sample statement is described in 263c3 as “one of the shortest,” the “with whom I am now speaking” (ᾧ νῦν ἐγὼ διαλέγομαι) should not be understood as part of the sample statement, which is simply “Theaetetus flies” (Θεαίτητος πέτεται).

Recall that the stranger's account of *logos* identifies three basic characteristics of a statement. (1) A statement is a combination of name(s) and predicative expression(s). (2) A statement is about something. (3) A statement has a certain quality. In 261d1-262e3, the stranger discussed the way in which a statement is a combination of names and predicative expressions. Then, at the beginning of the passage just cited, he lists the remaining two characteristics: a statement must be about something and have a certain quality. The stranger will in 263a12-d5 lead Theaetetus to identify truth and falsehood as qualities of a statement. It should be noted that the stranger articulates an inferential relationship between the way in which a statement is about something and the fact that it has a quality.¹⁶ This inferential relationship is indicated by the “οὐκοῦν” (therefore) at 262e9. Because it is “impossible for [a statement] not to be about something . . . therefore (οὐκοῦν) it must also be of a certain quality” (262e6-9). My interpretation of the stranger's characterization of how a statement is about something will explain the inference at 262e9. Likewise, it will also explain why the stranger uses both “περί” plus genitive and unaccompanied genitive/possessive pronouns to describe the way in which a statement is about something.¹⁷

On my reading, the stranger's discussion of true and false statements is first and foremost an analysis of statements about the forms, as opposed to statements about spatio-temporal beings, and so on. Much of the stranger's account would, of course, apply to statements about spatio-temporal beings as well, but the concern which guides the account is how true and false statements about the forms are possible. As I will show, reading the stranger's account here as an account of true and false statements about the forms best explains his account as a whole and best explains why he employs both the “περί” plus genitive and the unaccompanied genitive/possessive pronoun constructions.

A common objection to reading the stranger's account of true and false speech as an account of true and false speech about the forms, and the reason why very few

¹⁶ Cf. Xenakis, “Plato on Statement and Truth-Value,” 169; Frede, “The *Sophist* on False Statements,” 414.

¹⁷ Most commentators simply take both the “περί” plus genitive and the unaccompanied genitive/possessive pronoun constructions to be two ways of saying the same thing, despite the fact that the difference between these two constructions is conspicuous. De Rijk and Frede are exceptions to this (de Rijk, *Plato's Sophist*, 202-203, 205-206; Frede, “The *Sophist* on False Statements, 416). De Rijk's and Frede's interpretations of what the two constructions indicate differ significantly from one another, and both differ from my interpretation as well.

commentators adopt such a reading,¹⁸ is that the stranger’s own example statements are about a spatio-temporal being: Theaetetus. If the stranger’s account is primarily or exclusively concerned with true and false speech about the forms, then why does he choose “Theaetetus sits” and “Theaetetus flies” as his sample statements? I maintain that the stranger chooses these statements as examples because they reveal something concerning statements about the forms; namely, how a statement about a form is in one way about the nature of that form and in another way about that form *qua* countable object.

In order to show that the stranger’s use of “Theaetetus sits” and “Theaetetus flies” indicates how to differentiate the way in which a statement about a form is about that form’s nature, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, about that form *qua* countable object, we will need to carefully consider (a) how the stranger’s account develops after his first sample statement, “Man learns”; and (b) how Socrates used Theaetetus in his sample judgments (δόξαι) at the end of the *Theaetetus*.

The stranger’s initial sample statement is “Man learns” (262c9; ἄνθρωπος μανθάνει). He characterizes this statement as “the shortest and first statement” (262c9-10; λόγον εἶναι . . . τοῦτον ἐλάχιστον τε καὶ πρῶτον), by which he presumably means a *logos* in its most elementary configuration.¹⁹ “Man learns” is composed of only two words, each of which plays the role of one of the two necessary parts of any *logos*—name and predicative expression.²⁰ After presenting “Man learns” as a sample statement, the stranger claims that the person who says this statement “indicates something concerning the things that are or come to be or have come to be or will come to be” (262d2-3; δηλοῖ γὰρ ἤδη πού τότε περὶ τῶν ὄντων ἢ γιγνομένων ἢ γεγονότων ἢ μελλόντων). The stranger here reintroduces the distinction between being and becoming that the friends of the forms maintained. “Man learns” could refer to any human being that learns, has learned in the past, or will learn in the future. It could also, however, refer to the kind human being,²¹ and that kind’s necessary relation to the kind learning. A human being is the

¹⁸ See note 14 above.

¹⁹ Cf. Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 227.

²⁰ Cf. Frede, “The *Sophist* on False Statements,” 413. I have translated “ἄνθρωπος μανθάνει” as “man learns” rather than “human being learns” so that the translation reflects the stranger’s characterization of “ἄνθρωπος μανθάνει” as an example of “the shortest and first statement.”

²¹ Cf. Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 231.

kind of thing that learns, because learning is an essential characteristic of the kind human being—of what it means to be human. By means of his reintroduction of the distinction between being and becoming at 262d2-3, the stranger prompts those who have been listening to his account—and Plato prompts the critical reader of the dialogue—to have the distinction between speech about forms and speech about spatio-temporal beings in mind as his account continues.

The stranger follows his discussion of the statement “Man learns” with the further claim that a statement is always about something, and “therefore (οὐκοῦν) it must also be of a certain quality” (262e9). The qualities the stranger has in mind here include truth and falsehood,²² as he will soon make explicit. If the fact that a statement is about something explains why it can have the quality of truth or falsehood, then the quality of truth and falsehood in some way depend upon that which the statement is about. In order to identify what exactly this relationship of dependence is, we must do as the stranger instructs Theaetetus to do, and “pay close attention” (262d11) to the ensuing exchange wherein the stranger uses “Theaetetus sits” and “Theaetetus flies” as sample statements. By having the stranger tell Theaetetus that they must “pay close attention to one another” (262d11), Plato indicates to his critical readers that something important, but at the same time easy to overlook, is about to occur.

The stranger then introduces the sample statements “Theaetetus sits” and “Theaetetus flies,” and has Theaetetus say about each statement “both what it is concerning and what it is about” (263a5; περὶ οὗ τ’ ἐστὶ καὶ ὅτου). By requiring Theaetetus to answer what the statement is “about” in both senses, the stranger seems to indicate that there is a distinction between “about” in the sense of “περὶ οὗ” and “about” in the sense of “ὅτου.” He never makes such a distinction explicit, though. The way that “περὶ οὗ” and “ὅτου” are used, therefore, is something to which the critical reader of the dialogue ought to pay close attention.

Likewise, the critical reader should pay attention to the predicative expressions used in the sample statements, “sits” and “flies.” The critical reader should note that sitting and not flying are not merely accidental attributes of Theaetetus. Theaetetus, since

²² Cf. Dorter, *Form and Good in Plato’s Eleatic Dialogues*, 163; Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 233. Crivelli points out that nothing the stranger or Theaetetus say “commits them to the view that every sentence [λόγος] is either true or false. . . .”

he is a human being, is the kind of thing that sits, but he is not the kind of thing that flies. Sitting and not flying, just like learning, apply not only to Theaetetus as an individual, but to the kind human being. The stranger could have used sample statements that would not have applied to the kind human being in this way. For instance, the stranger could have used “Theaetetus stands” as a false statement, if in fact Theaetetus was sitting and not standing. Instead, however, the stranger uses sample statements that highlight the eidetic structures constitutive of Theaetetus—eidetic structures such as the relationship between the kind human being, the kind sitting, and the kind flying. While the stranger is clear that Theaetetus, the one with whom he is now speaking (263a9), is the subject of “Theaetetus sits” and “Theaetetus flies,” the predicative expressions he uses in these sample statements point the critical reader toward the necessary relations between kinds.²³

Furthermore, the statements “Theaetetus sits” and “Theaetetus flies” ought to recall for the critical reader of the dialogues Socrates’ sample judgments (δόξαι) about Theaetetus at the end of the *Theaetetus*. Socrates’ use of Theaetetus in those examples arguably indicates something about the objects of knowledge.²⁴ Although what the objects of knowledge are is never made explicit in the *Theaetetus*, which in part explains its apparently aporetic conclusion, in the *Sophist* it is certainly clear that the objects of knowledge are the forms or kinds. Socrates’ use of Theaetetus in his sample judgments at the end of the eponymous dialogue emphasizes the way in which the objects of knowledge must be “unique,” or more precisely, the distinction between the sense in which each object of knowledge is different from the others and the sense in which each

²³ Further evidence that Plato is pointing his critical reader to the necessary relations between kinds in the statements “Theaetetus sits” and “Theaetetus flies” is found in the cross-reference at 263b11-12. Commenting on the false statement “Theaetetus flies,” the stranger claims that “[it says] things that are, but things that are different from the things that are concerning you. For we claimed, I suppose, that concerning each there are many things that are and many that are not” (263b11-12; ὄντων δέ γε ὄντα ἕτερα περὶ σοῦ. πολλὰ μὲν γὰρ ἔφαμεν ὄντα περὶ ἕκαστον εἶναί που, πολλὰ δὲ οὐκ ὄντα). The claim that “concerning each (περὶ ἕκαστον) there are many things that are and many that are not” is apparently a reference to 256e6-7, where the stranger and Theaetetus agree that “concerning each of the forms (περὶ ἕκαστον . . . τῶν εἰδῶν), what is is many, while what is not is unlimited in multitude.” Since at 256e6-7 the “ἕκαστον” (each) refers to each of the forms (τῶν εἰδῶν), the “ἕκαστον” in the stranger’s cross-reference at 263b11-12 should also be understood as referring to each of the forms. Cf. Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 252-255.

²⁴ Miller, “Unity and ‘Logos,’” 102-109.

is “unique” prior to its difference from others.²⁵ This distinction between difference and uniqueness parallels the distinction between a kind and its nature. A kind is different from every other kind. The nature of each kind, however, since it is prior to participation in different is not different from anything. The nature of each is unique in that it is not the same as the nature of any other, and furthermore, in that it calls for and determines the relationships of difference between kinds.

So where do our reflections so far leave the critical reader? The critical reader has been warned to “pay close attention” to what is said in the stranger’s discussion of the sample statements “Theaetetus sits” and “Theaetetus flies” (262d11). That “sits” and “flies” are the predicative expressions used in these statements calls the reader’s attention to the necessary relationships between kinds, such as human being, sitting, and flying. The critical reader already has the distinction between statements about forms and statements about spatio-temporal beings in mind as a result of the stranger’s reintroduction of the distinction between being and becoming during his analysis of the statement “Man learns” (262c9-d3). That Theaetetus is the subject of the stranger’s sample statements in 263a2 and a9 points the critical reader back to the discussion near the end of the *Theaetetus*. And the critical reader still has the unanswered question of what the stranger’s apparent distinction between “περὶ οὗ” (concerning what) and “οὗτου” (about what) indicates. I will argue that the key to this distinction can be found in the discussion near the end of the *Theaetetus*.

Near the end of the *Theaetetus*, Socrates and Theaetetus are testing the claim that knowledge is true judgment (δόξα) with a *logos*. After running into difficulties in their attempts to determine how judgment and *logos* would be related so as to produce knowledge, Socrates suggests that they consider what *logos* means in this context (206c7-8). They consider three possible meanings of *logos*. The first is “making one’s thought apparent vocally by means of names and predicative expressions (μετὰ ῥημάτων τε καὶ ὀνομάτων)” (206d1-2). The second is being able to identify an object’s elemental parts (206e6 ff.). The third is “being able to tell some mark (τι σημεῖον) by which the object you are asked about differs from all other things (τῶν ὑπάντων διαφέρει τὸ ἐρωτηθέν)” (208c7-8). The initial example that Socrates gives in order to bring to light this third

²⁵ Ibid., 102-103, 105-106, 109.

sense of *logos* is the *logos* someone might offer in order to identify the sun. If you asked someone to give you a *logos* of the sun, Socrates says, “you would be satisfied with the answer that it is the brightest of bodies which move around the earth in the heavens” (208d1-3). This *logos* of the sun, as Mitchell Miller suggests, identifies the way in which the sun is unique, at least relative to the other heavenly bodies.²⁶ Socrates asks whether having this third kind of *logos*, in addition to a correct judgment about the object in question, would render one a knower of that object. He suspects not. So he turns to another example, which is more complicated, although no less common than our familiarity with the sun: the way in which we recognize another person with whom we are familiar. The example that Socrates uses is his own recognition of Theaetetus. The exchange between Socrates and Theaetetus concerning this second example is worth quoting at length:

Socrates: . . . Suppose I have a correct judgment concerning you; if I can grasp your *logos* in addition, I know you, but if not, I am merely judging.

Theaetetus: Yes.

Socrates: And a *logos* was to be a matter of expounding your differentness?

Theaetetus: That is so.

Socrates: Then when I was merely judging, my thought failed to grasp any point of difference between you and everyone else?

Theaetetus: Apparently.

Socrates: What I had in mind, it seems, was some common characteristic—something that belongs to you no more than to anyone else.

Theaetetus: Yes, that must be so.

Socrates: Then tell me, by Zeus, how, if that was so, did it come about that you, and no one else, were the object of my judgment? Suppose my thought is that “This is Theaetetus—one who is a human being, and has a nose, eyes, and mouth,” and so on through the whole list of limbs. Will this thought cause me to be thinking of Theaetetus rather than of Theodorus, or of the proverbial “remotest Mysian”?

Theaetetus: No, how could it?

²⁶ Ibid., 105. The sun is of course, as Miller notes, not unique in the sense that the nature of a form is, since the sun is structured as an object in terms of same, different, and so on, whereas the nature of a form is not (ibid., 104-105, 108-109).

Socrates: But suppose I think not merely of “the one with nose and eyes,” but of “the one with a snub-nose and prominent eyes.” Shall I even then be judging about you any more than about myself or anyone else who is like that?

Theaetetus: Not at all.

Socrates: It will not, I take it, be Theaetetus who is judged in my mind until this snub-nosedness of yours has left imprinted and established in me a record that is different in some way from the other snub-nosednesses I have seen; and likewise with the other details of your make-up. . . .

ΣΩ. . . . ὀρθὴν ἔγωγε ἔχων δόξαν περὶ σοῦ, ἐὰν μὲν προσλάβω τὸν σὸν λόγον, γινώσκω δὴ σε, εἰ δὲ μή, δοξάζω μόνον.

ΘΕΑΙ. Ναί.

ΣΩ. Λόγος δέ γε ἦν ἢ τῆς σῆς διαφορότητος ἐρμηνεία.

ΘΕΑΙ. Οὕτως.

ΣΩ. Ἦνίκ' οὖν ἐδόξαζον μόνον, ἄλλο τι ἢ τῶν ἄλλων διαφέρεις, τούτων οὐδενὸς ἠπτόμην τῆ διανοίᾳ;

ΘΕΑΙ. Οὐκ ἔοικε.

ΣΩ. Τῶν κοινῶν τι ἄρα διανοοῦμην, ὧν οὐδὲν σὺ μᾶλλον ἢ τις ἄλλος ἔχει.

ΘΕΑΙ. Ανάγκη.

ΣΩ. Φέρε δὴ πρὸς Διός· πῶς ποτε ἐν τῷ τοιούτῳ σὲ μᾶλλον ἐδόξαζον ἢ ἄλλον ὄντινόν; θεὸς γάρ με διανοοῦμενον ὡς ἔστιν οὗτος Θεαίτητος, ὃς ἂν ἦ τε ἄνθρωπος καὶ ἔχη ῥίνα καὶ ὀφθαλμοὺς καὶ στόμα καὶ οὕτω δὴ ἐν ἕκαστον τῶν μελῶν. αὕτη οὖν ἡ διάνοια ἔσθ' ὅτι μᾶλλον ποιήσει με Θεαίτητον ἢ Θεόδωρον διανοεῖσθαι, ἢ τῶν λεγομένων Μυσῶν τὸν ἔσχατον;

ΘΕΑΙ. Τί γάρ;

ΣΩ. Ἀλλ' ἐὰν δὴ μὴ μόνον τὸν ἔχοντα ῥίνα καὶ ὀφθαλμοὺς διανοηθῶ, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸν σιμόν τε καὶ ἐξόφθαλμον, μή τι σὲ αὖ μᾶλλον δοξάσω ἢ ἑμαυτὸν ἢ ὅσοι τοιοῦτοι;

ΘΕΑΙ. Οὐδέν.

ΣΩ. Ἀλλ' οὐ πρότερόν γε, οἶμαι, Θεαίτητος ἐν ἐμοὶ δοξασθήσεται, πρὶν ἂν ἢ σιμότης αὕτη τῶν ἄλλων σιμοτήτων ὧν ἐγὼ ἐώρακα διάφορόν τι μνημεῖον παρ' ἐμοὶ ἐνσημνημαμένη κατάθῃται—καὶ τᾶλλα οὕτω ἐξ ὧν εἶ σύ. . . . (209a1-c9)

There are many ways in which Socrates can think about and describe Theaetetus.

Those thoughts and descriptions, however, fail to differentiate Theaetetus from any number of other people. True as it is that Theaetetus is a human being or that he has

prominent eyes and a snub-nose, these descriptions fail to identify that “snub-nosedness” of Theaetetus which is unlike any other snub-nosedness Socrates has seen. Like the sun, Theaetetus’ snub-nose and his other traits are unique relative to Socrates’ experience (cf. ὧν ἐγὼ ἐώρακα διάφορόν at 209c7). Miller shows in some detail how Socrates uses the sun and Theaetetus’ snub-nosedness to highlight the way in which the object of knowledge must be unique. Now of course spatio-temporal beings, such as the sun and Theaetetus, are not as such objects of knowledge. Likewise, they are not unique in the sense in which the object of knowledge is unique.²⁷ The sun and Theaetetus are only unique relative to a context—relative to the heavenly bodies in case of the sun (208d1-3) and to Socrates’ sense experience in the case of Theaetetus (209c7). The objects of knowledge and insight, however, are unique prior to any context. The nature of a kind is unique in the sense that it is causally prior to the identity and difference that define countable objects. The nature of a kind, in other words, is causally prior to participation in same and participation in different. Thus, it is not the case that all the kinds have the same nature, nor that they all have different natures. The nature of each is neither the same nor different, but rather unique. The unique nature of each is not subject to difference. Instead, the unique nature of each calls for the difference between kinds. The ability to identify the difference between kinds is grounded on noetic insight into the unique natures of those kinds. Socrates uses the traits of Theaetetus in his examples in order to highlight the uniqueness of the object of knowledge, the uniqueness of form *qua* nature.

How can these considerations from the end of the *Theaetetus* help us understand the distinction between what a statement is concerning (περὶ οὗ) and what a statement is about (ἔστω) in *Sophist* 262e4-263a11? The stranger’s use of Theaetetus in his example statements, just like Socrates’ use of Theaetetus in his example judgments, is intended to reveal something about the forms. In Socrates’ case, the example revealed something about what the forms must be, given that they are objects of knowledge. In the stranger’s case, I propose, the example reveals something about what the forms must be, given that they can be subjects of true and false speech. This is further evinced by the stranger’s reintroduction of the distinction between being and becoming at 262d2-3 and by his

²⁷ Ibid.

selection of “sits” and “flies” as the predicative expressions in his sample statements. Theaetetus in “Theaetetus sits” and “Theaetetus flies” serves to illustrate two distinct senses in which statements about the forms are about something. On the one hand, the Theaetetus named in the stranger’s sample statements is a generic “something.” I can say about him things that I can say about something. I can say “Theaetetus flies,” for example, despite the fact that Theaetetus is not even the kind of thing that can fly. Since something can fly, however, and since the name “Theaetetus” in one sense indicates a generic something (cf. τινός at 262e6-7), it is not incoherent to make false statements such as “Theaetetus flies.” On the other hand, the Theaetetus named in the stranger’s sample statements is an individual who exhibits the nature of human being and who is a unique instance of that nature, at least within the experience of the stranger and of the others listening to the discussion. In light of these considerations, “Theaetetus flies” is false in two ways. First, it is false because Theaetetus participates in human nature and so cannot fly. Second, it is false because Theaetetus, as this particular person, unique relative to the various contexts within which he is situated, is not in fact flying as the stranger is speaking to him. Analogously, in the case of a statement whose subject is a form, the name or subject term in that statement in one sense indicates that form insofar as it is a generic countable object, while in another sense it indicates that form insofar as it is a unique nature. I submit that in *Sophist* 262e4-263a11 the stranger indicates the former sense with the simple genitive or possessive pronoun, and the latter sense with the “περί” plus genitive construction.

Thus, when the stranger says that a statement is always “about *x*,” he indicates that in the case of a statement whose subject is a form, the name in that statement necessarily refers to the form in question *qua* countable object. That is, the name necessarily refers to a form insofar as it participates in same and different. When the stranger says “concerning *x*,” in contrast, he highlights the role that the unique nature of the countable form which the statement in question is about plays in the truth or falsehood of that statement. In the case of statements about the forms, each statement is not only about a countable form, but is also concerning the nature of that form. A statement is “concerning form *x*” insofar as it speaks of the unique nature of *x*, and is therefore subject to the normativity sourced in the nature of *x*. A statement is “about

form *x*” insofar as it refers to a form *x qua* countable object. The distinction between these two ways in which a statement signifies its subject is key to the possibility of false speech about the forms.

Let us turn back for a moment and consider how this distinction plays out in the text of 262e4-263d5. The stranger says that “It is necessary that a statement (λόγος) . . . be a statement about something (τινός)” (262e6). Structurally a statement is always about something. This is why even obviously false statements such as “Human being flies” are still statements. The statement “Human being flies” is about something (τινός), and there are somethings that fly, hawks for example.²⁸ The stranger, however, tellingly never uses the “περί” plus genitive construction with the indefinite pronoun, “τινός.” He never says that a statement is “περί τινός” (concerning something). The stranger introduces the “περί” plus genitive construction into the discussion by simply asking Theaetetus—in reference to the statement “Theaetetus sits”—“to say both what [that statement] is concerning and what it is about” (263a5; φράζειν περὶ οὗ τ’ ἐστὶ καὶ ὅτου). In what follows, both the stranger and Theaetetus only use the “περί” plus genitive construction with reference to Theaetetus, the subject of “Theaetetus sits,” “Theaetetus flies,” or other statements about him.²⁹ A statement does not concern (περί) an object *qua* countable object, but rather *qua* unique, or in the case of Theaetetus, unique relative to some specific context. A statement, however, must always be about some countable object. Hence, in the case of statements about forms, in order to say things concerning a form *qua* unique nature, I must address that form as a countable object. The nature of *logos* requires that in speaking, I always speak about something (τινός), some one of many.

Consider the statements “Motion is not the same” and “Angling is an expertise.” Each statement is about the countable kind named by the subject term. Each statement concerns the nature of the kind named. The stranger says that the predicative expression in a statement indicates the actions (πράξεις) or affections (ἀπραξίαι) of the object named (262a3-4, c3), and the name indicates “those themselves who do the actions” (262a6-7). In statements about forms, “those themselves who do the actions” are the kinds named by

²⁸ Cf. Frede, “The *Sophist* on False Statements,” 419.

²⁹ Cf. §3, p. 255 below.

the subject terms, while the predicative expressions in such statements indicate the “actions and affections,” that is, the intelligible relations of the kind named to other kinds. Since the nature of a kind explains its intelligible relations to other kinds, the nature of a kind can be revealed by predicative expressions that identify those intelligible relations.³⁰

A statement whose subject is a form is concerning (περί) the nature of that form. Such a statement addresses the nature that it concerns as the countable kind which has that nature, and identifies some of that kind’s actions or affections, that is, some of that kind’s intelligible relations to other countable kinds. False statements about the forms are possible due to (1) the “gap” between the nature of a kind and that kind simply insofar as it is a countable object; and (2) the “gap” between the structure of *logos* and the structure of the communion of kinds.

§3. True and False Statements (263a12-d5)

The stranger claims at 262e6-9 that since a statement is necessarily about something, “it must also be of a certain quality (ποιόν)” (262e9). After explaining what it means for a statement to be about something in 262e11-263a11, the stranger then turns to an examination of its quality in 263a12-d5. Taking the sample statements, “Theaetetus sits” and “Theaetetus flies,” the stranger asks Theaetetus what quality each has (263b2). Theaetetus answers that the one is true and the other false (263b3). The stranger then presents his definition of a true statement, followed by four formulations of his definition of a false statement.

The following are my translations of the stranger’s formulations of the definition of true and false statement.³¹ The stranger’s definition of a true statement is stated with reference to “Theaetetus sits”:

³⁰ Cf. Sallis, *Being and Logos*, 528. “In his statement of the first of the two requirements for *logos*—that a *logos* must be of something—the Stranger poses two alternatives: either a *logos* is of something, or it is “powerless” (αδύνατον) [263c10]. In effect, this statement serves to relate that condition of a *logos* which would consist in its not being powerless, i.e., that condition in which it would be connected with *dynamis*, to its being of something. But *dynamis* is *dynamis* of showing. Accordingly, for a *logos* to be of something means, not just that it has some indeterminate relations, some ‘reference,’ to something, but rather that it is essentially involved in the showing of something, in letting something show itself.”

³¹ My translations and reformulations below follow those of Brown in many respects. See Brown, “The *Sophist* on Statements,” 453-454, 457.

- T₁ “The true one says of things that are concerning you that they are.”
λέγει δὲ αὐτῶν ὁ μὲν ἀληθῆς τὰ ὄντα ὡς ἔστιν περὶ σοῦ. (263b4-5)

The stranger’s formulations of the definition of a false statement are stated with reference to “Theaetetus flies”:

- F₁ “The false one [says] different things from the things that are.”
ὁ δὲ δὴ ψευδῆς ἕτερα τῶν ὄντων. (263b7)
- F₂ “So it says of things that are not that they are.”
τὰ μὴ ὄντ’ ἄρα ὡς ὄντα λέγει. (263b9)
- F₃ “[It says] things that are, but things that are different from the things that are concerning you”
ὄντων δέ γε ὄντα ἕτερα περὶ σοῦ. (263b11)
- F₄ “Then when things are said concerning you, but different things are said to be the same, and things that are not are said to be things that are . . . a statement that is really and truly false comes to be.”
περὶ δὴ σοῦ λεγόμενα, <λεγόμενα>³² μέντοι θάτερα ὡς τὰ αὐτὰ καὶ μὴ ὄντα ὡς ὄντα . . . ὄντως τε καὶ ἀληθῶς γίνεσθαι λόγος ψευδῆς.
(263d1-4)

There are a number of ambiguities in the language of these formulations.³³ Is the “ὡς” in these formulations an adverb (“as”) or conjunction (“that”)? If “ὡς” is taken as an adverb, then in F₂, for instance, we have “So it says things that are not as if they are.” Whereas if “ὡς” is taken as a conjunction, then in F₂ we have “So it says of things that are not that they are.” Another ambiguity, found in T₁ (263b4-5), concerns whether the “περὶ σοῦ” goes with “λέγει,” “ὄντα,” or “ὡς ἔστιν.” If the “περὶ σοῦ” is taken with “λέγει,” we have “The true one says concerning you things that are that they are.” If the “περὶ σοῦ” is taken with “ὄντα,” we have “The true one says of things that are concerning you that they are.” If the “περὶ σοῦ” is taken with “ὡς ἔστιν,” we have “The true one says of things that are that they are concerning you.” Discussions of these textual questions can be found in the secondary literature.³⁴ With respect to the ambiguity concerning “περὶ σοῦ” in 263b4-5, I think that “περὶ σοῦ” can go with any of the three alternatives, but that it most readily fits with “λέγει” or “ὄντα.” With respect to the

³² This emendation, adopted by Robinson, was first proposed by Charles Badham, ed., *Platonis Euthydemus et Laches* (Jena: F. Frommann, 1865), xxxvii.

³³ For a discussion of the ambiguities, see David Keyt, “Plato on Falsity: *Sophist* 263b,” in *Exegesis and Argument: Studies in Greek Philosophy Presented to Gregory Vlastos*, ed. Edward N. Lee, Alexander P. D. Mourelatos, and Richard Rorty (Assen, The Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1973), 285-305.

³⁴ See for example, Keyt, “Plato on Falsity”; Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 242ff.

ambiguity of “ὁς,” I find David Keyt’s argument that the “ὁς” must be a conjunction convincing.³⁵ My reading of the stranger’s definitions of true and false statement, however, will bypass these textual controversies, since it is compatible with any of the ways in which one could plausibly decide the ambiguities.

For the sake of clarity and generality, I reformulate the stranger’s definitions of true and false statement in the following way:

- T₁’ A true statement says of the things that are concerning *x* that they are.
- F₁’ A false statement says concerning *x* things that are different from the things that are concerning *x*.
- F₂’ A false statement says of things that are not concerning *x* that they are.
- F₃’ A false statement says things that are, but things that are different from the things that are concerning *x*.
- F₄’ A false statement says things concerning *x*, but it says that things that are different from the things that are concerning *x* are the same as the things that are concerning *x*; in other words, it says that things that are not concerning *x* are things that are concerning *x*.

On my reading, these formulations are a way of defining how statements about the forms can be true or false. I discuss how I think each of these formulations ought to be understood below. I then compare my interpretation of the stranger’s definition of falsehood to some major interpretations in the secondary literature.

I begin with T₁’: A true statement says of the things that are concerning *x* that they are. In the case of statements about the forms, “the things that are concerning *x*” are the kinds which are structured in relation to one another by the normative power sourced in the nature of kind *x*, where kind *x* is the kind named by the subject term of the statement. Hence, in the case of the statement “Angling is an expertise,” the statement is concerning the nature of angling. “The things that are” concerning angling are the kinds which are ordered according to the normative power sourced in the nature of angling. These kinds include the kind angling itself. Likewise, they include both the kinds that we can say angling “is” in true affirmative statements—such as expertise, the acquisitive art, animal-hunting, aquatic hunting—and the kinds that we can say angling “is not” in true negative

³⁵ Keyt, “Plato on Falsity,” 287-291.

statements—such as the art of production, footed animal hunting, as well as all of the objects that are different from angling, such as the kind same or the kind being.³⁶

“The things that are,” the kinds in our case, are structured by the normative power of the nature of each kind. Statements also have a determinate structure, explained and governed by the nature of *logos*. A statement is an interweaving of name and predicative expression and it is about something (τινός). Furthermore, this structure of a statement is such that it can be or can fail to be informed by the same normative power that structures the communion of kinds. That is, a statement about kind *K* is such that it can be or can fail to be informed by the normative power sourced in the nature of *K*. A statement that is informed by the normative power sourced in the nature it is concerning is not just any combination of name and predicative expression. Rather, it is a combination whose name and predicative expression are such that the statement as a whole corresponds to the way in which the determinately intelligible kind it is about interweaves with other kinds. If a statement is informed by the nature of the kind that it is about, then that statement has the quality of being true, and can be said to correspond to the things that are. The nature of *logos* explains the structure of a statement. The nature of the kind which a statement is about explains that statement’s truth or falsehood, just as that nature explains the interweaving of kinds to which that statement corresponds, if that statement is true.

The structure of a statement, however, need not be informed by the normative power sourced in the nature of the kind which that statement is about. After all, a statement can be a statement, can maintain its structure, without being informed by that normativity. After all, the structural integrity of a statement is explained by the nature of *logos*, rather than by the nature of the kind which that statement is about. If a statement fails to be informed by the normative power sourced in the nature of the kind that it is about, then that statement has the quality of being false, and fails to correspond to the things that are. A false statement fails to correspond to the things that are because it says

³⁶ Since “is not” is derivative and a special case of “is,” I think that the stranger’s definition of a true statement here holds for true negative statements as well as for true affirmative statements. “Angling is not footed animal hunting” is equivalent to “Angling is not-footed-animal-hunting” (cf. chap. V.2.A, p. 204n55; Frede, “The *Sophist* on False Statements, 406-407; van Eck, “Not-Being and Difference,” 69). Hence, I contend that a true statement can say of the things that are not concerning *x* that they are not. “The things that are not”—negative kinds—are a subcategory of “the things that are”—the kinds. Cf. McDowell, “Falsehood and Not-Being,” 133n35; Frede, “The *Sophist* on False Statements,” 418; Brown, “The *Sophist* on Statements,” 454n47.

concerning x things that are different from the things that are concerning x ($=F_1'$).³⁷ The stranger further clarifies what he means by explaining that a false statement says of things that are not concerning x that they are ($=F_2'$). It is possible to say concerning x , things that are different from the things that are concerning x . By doing so, one says of the things that are not that they are, and thus speaks falsely.

Let x be the form angling. The nature of angling calls for a certain structure among “the things that are” concerning it. “The things that are” concerning it are the kinds which angling can truly be said to be and not to be, the kinds to which the kind angling is related *via* the bonds of being and non-being (cf. *Parm.*, 162a4). Any statement that names angling by its subject term is about angling and is thus concerning the nature of angling. A statement according to its own structure, however, is simply an interweaving of name and predicative expression. And any name can be combined with any predicative expression. Some predicative expressions signify things that are concerning angling, and some predicative expressions signify things that are different from the things that are concerning angling. For example, “footed animal hunting” and “flies” signify kinds that are different from those concerning angling. Hence, “Angling is footed animal hunting” and “Angling flies” say things different from the things that are concerning angling. Those statements say of things that are not concerning angling that they are concerning angling. Such statements are not informed by the normativity sourced in the nature of angling.

Having given his first two formulations of the definition of false statement in F_1 and F_2 , the stranger then, in F_3 emphasizes that even though a false statement says things that are not, it nevertheless always says things that are, since, as the discussion of the parts of different showed, things that are not are also things that are. F_3 claims that the false statement “Theaetetus flies” says “things that are, but things that are different from the things that are concerning you” (263b11; ὄντων δέ γε ὄντα ἕτερα περὶ σοῦ). The stranger then immediately explains how this can be the case, given that false statements say what is not: “For we say concerning each that there are many things that are, I suppose, and many that are not” (263b11-12; πολλὰ μὲν γὰρ ἔφαμεν ὄντα περὶ ἕκαστον

³⁷ What exactly it means to say things that are different from the things concerning x has been a subject of debate in scholarship on the *Sophist*. See pp. 255-257 below.

εἶναί που, πολλὰ δὲ οὐκ ὄντα). The stranger has already defined non-being as part of the nature of different.³⁸ During that discussion he pointed out that since different is, “it is also necessary to posit that its parts are no less than anything else” (258a8-9). A false statement, therefore, by saying things that are not, still says things that are. A false statement says thing that are not, since it says things that are different from that which it is concerning. Yet those things, although they are different, nevertheless are. Thus, a false statement says things that are, but things that are different from the things that are concerning x ($=F_3$ ’).

After his first three formulations of the definition of false statement, the stranger summarizes the structural characteristics of a statement and then offers one final formulation, F_4 . The stranger begins his summary by reminding Theaetetus that “Theaetetus flies” was “according to our definition of what a statement is, most necessarily one of the shortest” (263c2-3; ἐξ ὧν ὀρισάμεθα τί ποτ’ ἔστι λόγος, ἀναγκαιότατον αὐτὸν ἕνα τῶν βραχυτάτων εἶναι). Two word statements, such as “Theaetetus sits” and “Theaetetus flies,” are the shortest and simplest instantiations of the structure of *logos*. The stranger next reminds Theaetetus that a statement must be “about something” (263c5; τινός). “And if [a statement] were about nothing,” continues the stranger, “it would not be a statement at all” (263c9-10; μηδενὸς <δέ> γε ὧν οὐδ’ ἄν λόγος εἶη τὸ παράπαν). A statement is always about some countable object, the object named by the subject term. Then the stranger gives his final formulation of the definition of false statement:

Then when things are said concerning you, but different things are said to be the same, and things that are not are said to be things that are, it seems altogether the case that when this sort of synthesis comes to be out of both predicative expressions and names, there comes to be a statement that is really and truly false.

Περὶ δὴ σοῦ λεγόμενα, <λεγόμενα> μέντοι θάτερα ὡς τὰ αὐτὰ καὶ μὴ ὄντα ὡς ὄντα, παντάπασιν ἔοικεν ἢ τοιαύτη σύνθεσις ἕκ τε ῥημάτων γιγνομένη καὶ ὀνομάτων ὄντως τε καὶ ἀληθῶς γίγνεσθαι λόγος ψευδής. (263d1-4)

A statement is a combination of names and predicative expressions, a combination which is about something that is. When that something is a kind, that something has a nature, call it x , whose normative power structures “the things that are” concerning x . A

³⁸ Cf. chap. V.2.B.

statement says that things are concerning x . A false statement says things concerning x , but it says that things that are different from the things that are concerning x are the same as the things that are concerning x ; in other words, it says that things that are not concerning x are things that are concerning x ($=F_4$).

We can now consider how the reading of the stranger's definitions of true and false statement that I have offered here sits with some of the major interpretations of these definitions in the secondary literature. One question that some commentators raise about the Greek of these definitions is why Plato has the stranger use the plural "ὄντα" rather than the singular "ὄν."³⁹ After all, is it not the case that to say "Theaetetus sits" is to say "a thing that is" concerning Theaetetus—namely sitting—rather than "things that are" concerning him? Lesley Brown argues that Plato's use of the plural "ὄντα" (things that are) and "ἕτερα"/"θάτερα" (different things) in the definitions of true and false statement is "a stylistic device loved by Plato but confusing to the reader."⁴⁰ She does not explain why Plato would employ such a stylistic device. Rather her argument is that since Plato cannot have intended the "ὄντα"s and "ἕτερα"/"θάτερα"s to be understood as plurals, his use of them must be a stylistic device. Her argument for why Plato could not have intended the "ὄντα"s and "ἕτερα"/"θάτερα"s to be understood as plurals is the following. "Theaetetus sits" plainly says only one thing concerning Theaetetus, namely that he sits. Yet "Theaetetus sits" is described by the stranger at 263b4-5 as saying "ὄντα," "things that are," concerning Theaetetus. Thus, the plural "ὄντα"s and "ἕτερα"/"θάτερα"s, Brown argues, should be replaced with singulars.⁴¹ For example, the stranger's definition of a true statement should be recast as "the true one says of something that is concerning you (viz. sitting) that it is."⁴² Furthermore, Brown argues that "support for replacing plurals with singulars comes at 263d1-4, where the statement 'Theaetetus flies' is said to be 'a synthesis of verbs [i.e., ῥήματα, predicative expressions]⁴³ and names' when it is plainly a synthesis of one verb and one name."⁴⁴

³⁹ See for example, Frede, "The *Sophist* on False Statements," 418; Brown, "The *Sophist* on Statements," 454.

⁴⁰ Brown, "The *Sophist* on Statements," 454.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 454, 455n49.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 454.

⁴³ For why I translate "ῥήματα" as "predicative expression" rather than "verb," see note 9 above.

⁴⁴ Brown, "The *Sophist* on Statements," 454n45.

Brown takes this position because she cannot find another plausible explanation for Plato's use of the plurals here. Given my reading, however, there is a plausible explanation for Plato's use of the plurals. Plato has the stranger use the plural "ὄντα"s and "ἕτερα"/"θάτερα"s in his definitions of true and false statement because a statement always signifies at least three things: the object named by the subject term, the action or affection which the predicative expression signifies, and the "to be" implicit in any statement. Hence, I cannot agree with Brown that "Theaetetus sits" plainly says only one thing concerning Theaetetus. "Theaetetus sits" says at least the following two things that are concerning Theaetetus. First, it says "Theaetetus," and thereby addresses him as one something. Second, it says "sits," and thereby addresses sitting as one something. Theaetetus *qua* named, *qua* spoken about, is a countable object, and considered as such is interchangeable with any other countable object. Yet the referent of a statement concerning Theaetetus is Theaetetus *qua* this determinate individual in this context. A statement can only refer to Theaetetus *qua* determinate individual, however, by addressing Theaetetus *qua* countable object. Since Theaetetus *qua* countable object is one object, sitting another, and the "to be" implicit in "sits" yet a third,⁴⁵ in "Theaetetus sits" three things are said concerning Theaetetus *qua* determinate individual. He is addressed as a generic "something" or countable object, hence Theaetetus *qua* countable object is said of Theaetetus *qua* determinate individual. Likewise, Theaetetus is addressed as something that sits, hence sitting is said of him. Furthermore, he is addressed as something that is, hence being is said of him.

The same analysis holds even more clearly in the case of statements about the forms. "Angling is an expertise" is a statement concerning the nature of angling. Since the name in this statement, "angling," names the kind angling, "Angling is an expertise" says the kind angling of the nature of angling. Likewise, since the predicative expression, "is an expertise," indicates the kind being and the kind expertise, "Angling is an expertise" says the kind being and the kind expertise of the nature of angling. The kind angling, the kind being, and the kind expertise are three different kinds, and all three are said of the nature of angling in the statement "Angling is an expertise." The

⁴⁵ The verb "to be" is at least implicit in any statement. See chap. II.2.A, p. 66n27; Aristotle, *De Interpretatione*, 21b9; *Metaphysics*, V.7.1017a27-30; cf. Kahn, "On Terminology for *Copula* and *Existence*," 143-144.

distinction between what a statement is “concerning” (περὶ οὗ) and what a statement is “about” (τινός) explains why even “the shortest statements,” such as “Theaetetus sits” and “Theaetetus flies,” say “ὄντα,” say “things that are,” concerning their subject.

As to Brown’s comments about the use of the plural “ῥημάτων” (predicative expressions) and “ὀνομάτων” (names) in 263d1-4, I do not think that the stranger is referring to “Theaetetus flies” with his description of false statement in that passage. In 263c1-9, the stranger is certainly referring to “Theaetetus flies.” At 263c10, however, he makes a claim about the structure of a statement generally. Then in 263d1-4, I submit, he describes any false statement concerning Theaetetus: “Then when things are said concerning you. . .” (263d1; περὶ δὴ σοῦ λεγόμενα. . .). There is no strong textual evidence against understanding 263d1-4 as a description of any false statement concerning Theaetetus, and understanding 263d1-4 in that way explains why “ῥημάτων” and “ὀνομάτων” are plural without requiring that we replace them with singulars.

The textual issue of whether the “ὄντα”s and “ἕτερα”/“θάτερα”s should be understood as singular or plural is tied to the more substantial debate in the literature concerning how the notion of different (ἕτερα, θάτερα) in three of the stranger’s formulations of the definition of false statement—F₁, F₃, and F₄—ought to be understood.⁴⁶ There are three major interpretations. Brown identifies them as “the Oxford interpretation,” “the incompatibility interpretation,” and the “incompatibility range interpretation.”⁴⁷ Consider F₁: “The false one [says] different things from the things that are (ὁ δὲ δὴ ψευδῆς ἕτερα τῶν ὄντων).” The context allows us to supply “concerning Theaetetus,” so that “The false one [says concerning Theaetetus] different things from the things that are [concerning Theaetetus].” Brown describes the problem that the “Oxford,” “incompatibility,” and “incompatibility range” interpretations attempt to solve in the following way: “Suppose Theaetetus is sitting, and suppose I state, ‘Theaetetus is talking.’ Then I have said about Theaetetus something that is different from something that is about him—viz., sitting. But of course he may be talking as well

⁴⁶ For an overview of the debate concerning the notion of different in F₁, F₃, and F₄, see Keyt, “Plato on Falsity,” 290ff.; Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 238-242.

⁴⁷ For a discussion of these three interpretations see Brown, “The *Sophist* on Statements,” 455-458; cf. Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falsehood*, 238-239.

as sitting, in which case my statement is true.”⁴⁸ I will refer to this problem as “problem *p*.” Each of the three interpretations solves problem *p*. The question is which of these solutions is the one warranted by the text of the *Sophist*.

The Oxford interpretation solves problem *p* by arguing that “Theaetetus flies” is false because it says something different than all the things that are concerning Theaetetus. Flying is not one of all the things that are concerning Theaetetus, and hence “Theaetetus flies” is false. By saying “Theaetetus is talking,” I am certainly saying something concerning him (talking) different from some other thing (sitting) concerning him, but I have not thereby said something false. I have not said something false because talking is not different from all the things that are concerning Theaetetus, for talking is one of the things that are concerning Theaetetus, given that he is talking.⁴⁹

The incompatibility interpretation, in contrast, solves problem *p* by arguing that “different” in the stranger’s formulations means incompatible. “Theaetetus flies” is false, on this interpretation, because it asserts that something is concerning Theaetetus which is incompatible with one or more of the things that are concerning Theaetetus. By saying “Theaetetus is talking,” I say something concerning him (talking) different from some other thing (sitting) concerning him. I do not, however, say something false, because unlike flying and sitting, talking and sitting are not incompatible with one another, and “different” in the stranger’s formulations of the definition of false statement means “incompatible,” according to the incompatibility interpretation.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Brown, “The *Sophist* on Statements,” 455.

⁴⁹ See W. D. Ross, *Plato’s Theory of Ideas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press: 1951), 116; Runciman, *Plato’s Later Epistemology*, 115-118; Crombie, *An Examination of Plato’s Doctrines*, 2:401, 497; Frede, *Prädikation und Existenzaussage*, 58, 95; “The *Sophist* on False Statements,” 419-420; Owen, “Plato on Not-Being,” 428, 448; Wiggins, “Plato’s Problem of Non-Being,” 294-295; J. C. B. Gosling, *Plato* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), 216-220; William Bondeson, “Plato’s *Sophist* and the Significance and Truth-Value of Statements,” *Apeiron* 8, no. 2 (1974): 45; Stephen Ferg, “Plato on False Statement: Relative Being, A Part of Being, and Not-Being in the *Sophist*,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 14, no. 3 (1976): 340-341; Patricia Ann Johnson, “Keyt on ἕτερον in the *Sophist*,” *Phronesis* 23, no. 2 (1978): 151; McDowell, “Falseness and Not-Being,” 126-127; Edward M. Galligan, “*Logos* in the *Theaetetus* and the *Sophist*,” in *Essays in Ancient Greek Philosophy*, vol. 2., ed. John P. Anton and Anthony Preus (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), 273-274; Ray, *For Images*, 88-92; de Rijk, *Plato’s Sophist*, 206-207; Rudebusch, “Does Plato Think False Speech is Speech?” 602-603; van Eck, “Falsity without Negative Predication,” 39-42; Silverman, *The Dialectic of Essence*, 204-205; Blake E. Hestir, “A ‘Conception’ of Truth in Plato’s *Sophist*,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 41, no. 1 (2003): 5; Thomas, “Speaking of Something,” 650; Crivelli, *Plato’s Account of Falseness*, 240.

⁵⁰ See John Burnet, *Greek Philosophy: Thales to Plato* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1914), 288-289; Taylor, *The Sophist and the Statesman*, 67-68; Edith W. Schipper, “Souls, Forms, and False Statements in the *Sophist*,” *Philosophical Quarterly* 15, no. 60 (1965): 242; Kostman, “False *Logos* and Not-Being,”

Finally, the incompatibility range interpretation solves problem *p* by saying that “different” in the stranger’s formulations means “different,” but different within a certain range of incompatible attributes. The relevant range in the statements “Theaetetus sits” and “Theaetetus flies” would be the range between the incompatible forms rest and motion.⁵¹ “Theaetetus flies” is false, on this interpretation, because it asserts that something is which is different from one or more of the things that are concerning Theaetetus within the incompatibility range defined by a body’s rest and motion. Flying is a species of motion and is thus incompatible with sitting, which is a species of rest. By saying “Theaetetus is talking,” I say something concerning him (talking) different from some other thing (sitting) concerning him, but I have not thereby said something false, because, unlike flying and sitting, talking and sitting are not in the same incompatibility range.⁵²

I think that the Oxford interpretation is the most plausible. Brown, however, favors the incompatibility range interpretation. Yet problem *p* only arises when one replaces the plural “ὄντα”s and “ἕτερα”/“θάτερα”s in the stranger’s formulations with singulars, a move which I have already argued is unwarranted. The Oxford interpretation leaves the plurals plural and thereby solves problem *p* by avoiding it in the first place. The Oxford interpretation argues that “Theaetetus flies” is false, because flying is not among all the things that are concerning Theaetetus. The objection raised against the Oxford interpretation is that it introduces a universal quantifier into the stranger’s formulations that is not found in the text. The universal quantifier, however, is implied by the most natural reading of the passage. Consider *F*₁, for example. *F*₁ states, “The false one [says concerning Theaetetus] different things from the things that are [concerning Theaetetus]” (ὁ δὲ δὴ ψευδὴς ἕτερα τῶν ὄντων).” Given that replacing “things that are” with “something that is” is unwarranted, the “things that are” concerning Theaetetus either refers to all the things that are concerning Theaetetus or to some of the things that are concerning Theaetetus. One must either supply “some” or “all,” and “all” is clearly implied by a natural reading of the passages in question.

195-196; Seligman, *Being and Not-Being*, 110-112; Dorter, *Form and Good in Plato’s Eleatic Dialogues*, 163.

⁵¹ Cf. Gill, “Method and Metaphysics,” sec. 6.1.

⁵² See Ferejohn, “Plato and Aristotle on Negative Predication,” 258-262; Brown, “The *Sophist* on Statements,” 456-458; Gill, “Method and Metaphysics,” sec. 6.3.

My reading of the stranger's formulations of the definition of false statement is in line with the Oxford interpretation, but goes beyond it by explaining the ontological conditions that allow for the possibility of false statements and that delineate the nature of truth. A false statement about a form is possible because (1) the structure of *logos* is distinct from the structure of the communion of kinds, and because (2) a statement can, nevertheless, be informed by the normative power that structures the interweaving of kinds with the kind which that statement is about. A false statement is one that fails to be informed by the normative power that structures the interweaving of kinds with the kind which that statement is about. A true statement is one that is informed by the normative power that structures the interweaving of kinds with that kind which that statement is about. The quality of truth itself, then, is the normative power that structures the interweaving or communion of kinds, and this power can, but need not, inform the structure of *logos*. The quality of falsehood is the privation of that normative power. Therefore, the truth of statements about the forms is founded on the more fundamental truth that simply is the normativity sourced in the nature of each form.

Since truth in its most fundamental sense simply is the normative power of the nature of a given form, the truth that belongs to statements about the forms is derivative. A statement must always treat the nature of a given form as a countable object, in principle interchangeable with other countable objects, despite the fact that the nature of each form is incommensurable with any other and is causally prior to countability. Hence, on the one hand, insofar as a form's nature can be expressed in true statements, its nature can be thought, named, and said. Yet, on the other hand, insofar as a form's nature always exceeds—by its priority and incommensurability—what can be said about it, a form's nature cannot be thought, named, or said (cf. *Ep.*, VII.341c4-d2).

§4. Conclusion

I have argued that true or false speech about anything whatsoever necessarily presupposes the possibility of true speech about the forms. Consider again the three fingers example from *Republic VII*. True statements like “my ring finger is large in comparison to my pinky” or “my ring finger is small in comparison to my middle finger” could be neither true nor false if the large and the small themselves were not such that

one could make necessarily true and necessarily false statements about them.⁵³ If, for instance, “what is large is different from what is small” were not necessarily true, then a statement such as “my ring finger is large in comparison to my pinky,” would be no more true or false than “my ring finger is small in comparison to my pinky,” since there would be no difference between something insofar as it is large and something insofar as it is small. Thus, given that there is true speech at all, true speech about the forms must be possible.

Speech, however, addresses its subjects as objects that are at the very least structured in relation to other objects in terms of being, sameness, and difference. Hence, if the forms can be subjects of true speech, they must be structured in relation to one another in terms of being, sameness, and difference. That is, if the forms can be subjects of true speech, they must at the very least compose a structured totality. As I pointed out in Chapter I.1, however, that the forms are structured in relation to one another seems to entangle them in a regress problem. Any structured totality necessarily presupposes a higher order normative principle that explains its structure.⁵⁴ Yet in many of the dialogues, Socrates, for good reasons, characterizes the forms as if they are the most basic normative principles or causes. Thus, it would seem that the forms themselves should not presuppose a higher order normative principle. And even if the forms do require a higher order normative principle, as Socrates’ account of the form of the good in the *Republic* VI suggests (508e1-509b10), that principle would itself have to be such that it could be the subject of true and false speech. Otherwise, we could not even truly say of that principle that it structures the forms. If, however, that principle is itself a subject of true and false speech, then it, like the forms, must be structured in relation to others. For speech by its very nature addresses its subjects as objects that are at the very least structured in terms of being, sameness, and difference. If, however, the principle that was to explain the structure of the forms were itself to be subject to structured relations such as sameness and difference, then it would itself presuppose yet another higher order normative principle. Hence we would find ourselves involved in a vicious regress.

⁵³ See chap. I.3.

⁵⁴ Cf. chap. I.5.C.

I have argued that the stranger's account in the *Sophist* digression offers a solution to this regress problem and successfully shows how true and false speech about the forms is possible. The regress problem is solved by the distinction between a form and its nature. The nature of each form is the unique power that each has to affect and be affected by the others. Each form, as a possessor of that power, affects and is affected by others. That is, each form, as a possessor of that power, is structured in relation to others. The higher order normative principle that explains these structured relations between forms simply is the power that each form possesses. Since that higher order principle is power, rather than a countable object, it does not entangle the forms in a regress problem. Since it is not a countable object, the unique power that structures forms in relation to one another does not exhibit structured relations toward other countable objects. In fact, it is not structured at all. Yet since it structures the forms that possess it, this power can be a subject of true speech. In speaking, we can address the unique power that each form possesses as the combinations of forms which exhibit it. In other words, we can address the nature of a kind as that kind, as the kind that bears its name.

When we address the nature of a kind as that kind, we treat that nature as if it were the same thing as the kind that possesses it. Yet a kind and its nature are not the same thing, since the nature of a kind does not participate in same. It is this "gap" between a kind and its nature⁵⁵ that allows for the possibility of true and false speech about the forms. Since structurally speech only requires its subject to be some countable object, speech is not constrained to manifest and to conform to any unique nature that the object which happens to be its subject exhibits. Speech about a form is false when it fails to be responsive to and fails to be governed by the normativity sourced in the nature of that form. Speech about a form is true when it is responsive to and governed by the normativity sourced in the nature of that form. The normative power sourced in the nature of each form is that by which the statements that manifest it are true. Truth in its most fundamental sense, then, simply is the normative power of each form. Given that the normative power of each form is that which produces (cf. ἀπεργαζομένη at 256e1)⁵⁶ and structures the communion of forms, and through the forms what comes to be and

⁵⁵ Cf. Sanday, *A Study of Dialectic*.

⁵⁶ Cf. chap. V.1.C, p. 194.

passes away, truth in this most fundamental sense in many ways fits the description of the good itself that Socrates presents in *Republic* VI. Thus, the ontological concerns of the *Sophist* open onto the ethical concerns of the *Statesman*.

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