

Logos in Plato's Theaetetus and Sophist

by

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## Abstract

This thesis will explore the epistemological and ontological content of λόγος as it appears in Plato's Theaetetus and Sophist. As a tether between the realms being and becoming, λόγος occupies the dianoetic space in which meaningful, objective communication of ideas takes place. Complex in nature, λόγος exists as the combination of simple units; namely the forms, which provide themselves as the elements of this combination, of human knowledge, and the communication thereof. At issue is thus how, in response to the objections to the theory of forms raised in the Parmenides, the forms can exist as relational entities, and therefore as well how Plato understands the process by which λόγος is constructed.

## Acknowledgments

The seeds for this thesis were planted in Dr. Eli Diamond's 2009/10 graduate seminar on Plato's dialogues. I first came across the presence of λόγος as some sort of unique entity while preparing a presentation on the *Phaedo*. Shortly thereafter, I read the *Theaetetus* for the first time. Upon finishing the *Theaetetus*, with its final definition of knowledge as ἀληθῆ δόξα μετὰ λόγου and the resulting aporia, I decided to commit myself to an investigation of λόγος and what it meaning it has within Plato's philosophical position

To that end, I would like to thank my colleagues in the Department of Classics for maintaining an atmosphere in which we have been able to discuss our thoughts about these texts and others, openly and earnestly, and without any hint of pretension. I would also like to thank Dr. Diamond for not just leading the discussions in his seminar and helping the students work through some of Plato's very complex and difficult ideas, but also for agreeing to advise me over the course of this project. His insight into Platonic thought and his support over the past two years have proven invaluable. I would also like to thank Dr. Leona MacLeod and Dr. Michael Fournier for taking the time to read through this thesis in its final form and provide me with very useful comments and suggestions.

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Finally, I would like to thank caffeine.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

The *Parmenides* shows that Plato is aware of certain deficiencies in his own doctrine, and so the scholarly debate surrounding this dialogue in conjunction with the late trilogy, *Theaetetus*, *Sophist*, and *Statesman*, is whether Plato designed these dialogues to support the theories which he explicates in his middle dialogues or to revise them. In the *Parmenides* he specifically attacks the theory of the forms from a number of directions, pointing out the problems inherent in Socrates' doctrine of participation in the forms and their separation from the sensible world.<sup>1</sup> The final blow occurs when Parmenides demonstrates that the separation of the forms from any sensible particular results in their complete and utter unknowability.<sup>2</sup> But despite all of these objections, some type of formal theory must be maintained. As Parmenides himself admits:

...if anyone, with his mind fixed on all these objections and others like them, denies the existence of ideas of things, and does not assume an idea under which each individual thing is classed, he will be quite at a loss, since he denies that the idea of each thing is always the same, and in this way he will utterly destroy the power of carrying on discussion.<sup>3</sup>

This admission by Parmenides raises an important question: does Plato mean to reintroduce and offer a critical analysis of his own doctrine in order to solve its inherent problems in the later dialogues—the so-called 'unitarian' position; or is he explaining his reasons for moderately revising or radically rejecting his own theory?<sup>4</sup>

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1 *Parmenides*, 131a-134e. Kenneth Dorter provides a brief but detailed analysis of these objections in his commentary (Dorter 1994, 27-47).

2 *Ibid*, 133a-134e.

3 *Ibid*, 135b-c.

4 One of the chief proponents of the more extreme interpretation of the latter view is G. E. L. Owen, who on the one hand, by building upon a large body of what seems to be very impressive stylometric analysis by earlier scholars and commentators, demonstrates that Plato wrote his *Timaeus* during his middle period with Republic and other dialogues which deal heavily with his theory of forms (Owen 1953, 81). Placing the *Timaeus* earlier rather than later in Plato's thought means that there is no reaffirmation of this theory, which Owen proposes Plato abandoned due to the intense dissatisfaction with it which we find in the *Parmenides*.

John McDowell, on the other hand, provides evidence both for and against the usual ordering of the later tetralogy from the *Parmenides* to the *Statesman*. It can be shown, he says, that the *Parmenides* was written, and so should be read, either before or after the *Theaetetus* (McDowell 1973, 133, 177). Some of this evidence is conjectural: McDowell proposes that maybe, contrary to what most scholars seem to believe,



Contrary to proponents of the more radical position, some commentators argue that Plato is quite emphatically supporting his previous doctrines. Dorter, for example, states that, “On the contrary, the dialogues after the *Parmenides* show why the theory [of forms] must be espoused in spite of its limitations.”<sup>5</sup> The *Parmenides* demonstrates these limitations while the *Theaetetus* investigates the possibility of acquiring knowledge when one's gaze is rooted strictly within the realm of sensible becoming. Against the revisionists, the unitarian position argues that the *Theaetetus* demonstrates the necessity of intelligible ideas if one is to move beyond knowledge which is private and dependent upon the individual observer. The *Sophist*, they take it, performs the same investigation into the realm of the forms itself in order to obtain true, objective knowledge, leaving the *Statesman* to apply this reinvigorated theory to the political arena of ancient Greece.

Instead of making a case for why either a unitarian or revisionist position ought to be favoured (for such a debate is impossible to settle), this thesis will adopt Plato's own method and follow a middle path, following him as he travels between the philosophies of Heraclitus and Parmenides, the twin pillars of pre-Socratic thought. In other words, we ought to support a mean between either extreme: on the one hand, that Plato is dissatisfied with and so leaving behind his earlier thought; on the other, that Plato is wholly endorsing his previous theories by levying outside criticisms against them.<sup>6</sup> I suggest, therefore, that

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Socrates did actually meet with Parmenides during his youth, and so the namedrop in the *Theaetetus* (183e) refers to this historical meeting and a sequel rather than a prequel. The best evidence McDowell offers for this interpretation is that the *Parmenides* can be seen to correct the false analysis of the concept of a 'whole' in the *Theaetetus* (203e-205c; McDowell 1973, 243-44). He admits of the possibility, however, that Plato knows that the dream theory which entails the false analysis of this concept is false, and so he introduces this theory and what follows from it in order to retroactively approve the analysis in the *Parmenides*.

5 Dorter 1994, 12.

6 In this way I follow Dorter's suggestion rather closely: that we ought to “reject the strongly revisionist view that the Eleatic dialogues [*Parmenides* to *Statesman*] are a retreat from some of the more distinctive features of the theory of forms, and are a subsequent salvage of what remains. But [we must] also reject the diametrically opposed view, that Plato is not completely serious about the problems he raises in the Eleatic dialogues about the theory of forms, and that the objections are maintained only from a point of view that is not Plato's own” (Dorter 1994, 12). I disagree with Dorter, however, when he states next that no revision in

these late dialogues are a continuation of the thought and methodology which Plato develops during his 'middle' period.

The continuity between Plato's middle and late epistemology can be found in his development of λόγος in the *Theaetetus* and *Sophist* as it is utilized in the communication of philosophical truths. In these dialogues λόγος serves to bridge the χωρισμός between the sensible and intelligible realms of becoming and being. With the *Theaetetus* Plato brings the reader to recognize what he sees as the limits to the knowledge which the sensible world can yield, thereby creating the demand for the investigation into intelligible being which he takes up in the *Sophist*. It is no accident that these two dialogues take place dramatically on two consecutive days, as this small detail is informative of a much larger picture. In and of themselves the realms of being and becoming remain distinct and separate, but a proper understanding and meaningful communication of ideas requires a blending of these two realms and so a continuity between dialogues.

The purpose of this thesis is therefore to demonstrate how, in speaking about the world, one employs λόγος in order to communicate a necessary relation or combination of intelligible ideas in which sensible bodies participate. In this way, the necessary divide between these two realms which Parmenides creates remains intact, but the middle ground between them is what becomes occupied by human thought and communication thereof, simultaneously upholding the need he sees for meaningful διάλογος or διαλέγεσθαι.<sup>7</sup> The reader thus sails with Socrates on his Second Voyage, the nature of which is discussed in the

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this theory takes place because a) a revision would not sufficiently answer the criticisms of the *Parmenides* and b) any formal theory is necessarily flawed somehow. Plato clearly recognizes certain deficiencies in his theory of forms, but this fact is precisely why a moderate revision makes sense, regardless of whether or not the revised version is itself free from error.

7 Cf. *Sophist* 259e-260d: "The total separation of each thing from everything else is the obliteration of every λόγος. For λόγος has come into being for us through the weaving together of εἶδη with one another ... Our object was to establish λόγος as one of our γένη of being. For if we were deprived of this, we should be deprived of philosophy, which would be the greatest calamity."

*Phaedo* as follows:

I set out in this way, assuming in each case a λόγος which I think is strongest, and whatever appears to me to agree with it, I establish as being true, both with respect to a cause and any other part of its existence, but whatever does not agree with it, I consider false.<sup>8</sup>

Divine νοῦς, Socrates has discovered, is beyond any direct human mode of apprehension. Its necessary existence as the ontological and teleological cause of all other causes can be understood as such through inductive reasoning, but in and of itself this principle remains closed to human thought. Sensible particulars, at the other end of the Platonic spectrum of intelligibility, are precisely that. As mere visible images of invisible ideas, focusing on them is of similar worth in any attempt to acquire true knowledge. For this reason, Socrates employs his second-best method, turning his mind away from the purely divine and the purely sensible to pursue a middle ground: λόγος. He states further in the *Phaedo*:

I decided that I must be careful not to suffer the misfortune which happens to people who look at the sun and watch it during an eclipse. For some of them ruin their eyes unless they look at its image in water or something of the sort. I thought of that danger, and I was afraid my soul would be blinded if I looked at things with my eyes and tried to grasp them with any of my senses. So I thought that, having found safety in λόγοι, I must examine in them the truth of οὐσία.<sup>9</sup>

This appeal to λόγος is the first step he sees that one takes toward a true objective understanding of the nature of reality. The formal cause of the object of investigation cannot be known in and of itself, for it is blinding to look at; nor can this essence be understood through a mere image of it, for images shroud the soul in darkness and obscurity. λόγος, then, is an object of thought which occupies the intellectual space διανοία opens, in which “the mind uses the originals of the visible order in their turn as images, and has to base its inquiries on ὑπόθεσις and proceed from them not to a first principle but to a conclusion.”<sup>10</sup>

For Socrates there is a demand to investigate and communicate the necessary ordering of the

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8 *Phaedo*, 100a4-8. Thus Dorter: “The trilogy that follows the *Parmenides* can be read as an extended application of the method of hypothesis [of the *Phaedo*] in defense of the theory of forms” (Dorter 1994, 15).

9 *Phaedo*, 99e. Fowler's translation with Greek substituted.

10 *Republic*, 510b. Lee's translation with Greek substituted.

universe according to this mathematical or 'dianoetic' reasoning in an effort to establish a sort of objectivity which he hopes can pave the way to a higher, unhypothetical understanding.

The approach which scholars take to interpreting λόγος in these dialogues is varied. In an essay on the *Theaetetus*, Gail Fine argues for an “interrelation [sic] model of knowledge” in which λόγος is an account of the way in which a plurality of elements of a certain type, such as letters of the alphabet, combine to form compound bodies.<sup>11</sup> Cornford, moreover, suggests that the *Sophist* is meant, in part, to account for the possibility of combination and separation of forms themselves by forming true and false λόγοι about them.<sup>12</sup> This feat of showing how the forms themselves are related entities is something which in the *Parmenides* Socrates says would amaze him if anyone can demonstrate it.<sup>13</sup>

McDowell, however, argues that Cornford's suggestion that this approach to the forms solves all the problems inherent in the argument of the *Theaetetus* is not a sufficient answer to these problems. The conclusion of the *Theaetetus*, he says, implies that “ordinary individual things can be known. But absolutely no difference would be made by moving to examples involving Forms; it is not the case that the difficulties [in the *Theaetetus*] have their source in the assumption that things other than Forms can be known.”<sup>14</sup> To this end one can consider Mary-Louise Gill's article, *Models in Plato's Sophist and Statesman*, as an indirect reply to this criticism on Cornford's behalf. She demonstrates how the method of bifurcation employed in these two dialogues allows one to classify any particular object, sensible or intelligible, under a universal heading. This method, she argues, establishes the forms as the same sort of *paradeigmata* introduced in the *Phaedo* and *Republic* and

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11 Fine 2003, 248-251.

12 Cornford 1935, 11-12.

13 *Parmenides*, 129.

14 McDowell 1973, 258.

criticized in the *Parmenides*, but attempts to overcome the problem of separation by connecting the object with its essence using λόγος.<sup>15</sup>

Burnyeat's remarkable commentary on the *Theaetetus* concludes with the suggestion that Plato's initiation into the mysteries of epistemology leaves the reader in a better position than before to formulate a response to the questions, “What is knowledge?” and, “What does Plato think knowledge is?”<sup>16</sup> Plato's own reply to either question might invoke the final stage of the ascent out of the Cave of his *Republic*: that the reader can be in a better position to answer the Socratic question, τι ἐστί, by virtue of a shift from knowing things 'dianoetically' to 'epistemically', as it were, such that there is an account of things which occupies the intellectual space at this higher level of understanding. Certainly Plato wants to maintain the strong implication that the ability exists of gaining access to unhypothetical knowledge via this metaphorical ascent, but for the purpose of this thesis this implication will be left alone as such. McDowell suggests that the account of λόγος which is missing from the end of the *Theaetetus*, and what I believe must be sought in the *Sophist*, is an answer to the question “Why?”<sup>17</sup> Why is a word, for example, spelled the way it is? More generally, why is the essence of any given object explained as such through the identification of form with its content? For Plato, the answer to this question satisfies the imperative of Socrates' second voyage. In this way the account, definition, or statement communicated in λόγος about *what* an object is as it is known also contains an account of the epistemological process by which any such identification is made—*why* it is according to how it is known, existing on the side of both the knower and the thing known.

Once initiated into Plato's doctrines through consideration of dialogues such as the

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15 Gill 2006, §23-24.

16 Burnyeat 1990, 234-41.

17 McDowell 1973, 228-31; 257-58.

*Republic*, *Meno*, and *Phaedo*, the student of philosophy can continue his or her education in the academy of ancient Greece, having its contemporary parallel in the university. It is here that the student is given the space needed to pursue this subject in earnest without being burdened by the court's waterclock or departmental deadlines; if not literally, then at least metaphorically. It is a serious endeavor to work through Plato's earlier work in order to properly position oneself to the task of taking on these late dialogues. As Burnyeat shows, however, Plato himself structures these dialogues in such a way as to leave the focus of each (what ἐπιστήμη is in the *Theaetetus*, and what οὐσία is in the *Sophist*) open-ended. The student is forced to draw his or her own conclusion about the answers to these questions. The open obscurity of Plato's own answers, if indeed he offers any at all, is emblematic of the sheer difficulty one faces with these dialogues, but it is precisely this openness which also gives one the necessary, playful freedom from the exertion which otherwise defines this pursuit.

My own account of the late Platonic λόγος will begin by first establishing what I think Plato conceives this λόγος to be. The first chapter of this thesis is therefore devoted to an analysis of the geometrical demonstration which Theaetetus himself gives to Socrates at the outset of the *Theaetetus*. Here Plato shows Socrates himself to take this demonstration and the account it gives of *dynamis* to be paradigmatic of the kind of λόγος he demands in his second voyage. The interpretation I give of this demonstration depends heavily on Rosemary Desjardins' own in her commentary on this dialogue, *The Rational Enterprise: Logos in Plato's Theaetetus*.

As the general movement of the *Theaetetus* and *Sophist* corresponds roughly to the Divided Line of the *Republic*, the second chapter of this thesis will investigate the *Theaetetus* as it demonstrates what knowledge looks like when one's gaze is restricted to the

sensible world of becoming. As an analysis of the role of the sophist will come later, this chapter will focus on the final section of the dialogue in which Socrates and Theaetetus attempt to define λόγος as it pertains to sensation. Here I will demonstrate the shortcomings of their investigation, thus laying out the problems which they leave to be addressed in the *Sophist* on the following day. Before turning to that dialogue, however, the third chapter will entertain a digression which tries to make more explicit the presence of the divine which otherwise lingers in the background of these two dialogues. I assume, contrary to Owen's position, that the *Timaeus* ought to be included among the late dialogues. By detailing the activity of the δημιουργός in this dialogue, I hope to draw an effective parallel between the operation of divine and human νοῦς with respect to the creation of “real” beings and their images,<sup>18</sup> the corresponding modes of knowing with which they are created, and the ultimate goal of philosophy in “becoming like a god.”<sup>19</sup>

At this point this thesis will apply the same analysis of Theaetetus' geometrical model to the argument of the *Sophist* as it develops an understanding of knowledge of the realm of intelligible being through a consideration of the nature of the μέγιστα γένη, which I take to be not forms *per se*, but rather the elements of forms. Afterward, this dialogue revisits the question of the capacity of human language to effectively communicate what is known at this level. In the *Theaetetus*, Socrates scores two points against the notion of meaningful language when the essence of what is discussed is known only sensibly: one, that the most extreme version of Heraclitean flux utterly destroys any inherent meaning in what one says;<sup>20</sup> the other, that contrary to what seems to be taken as a commonly held belief the elements of knowledge are in fact *more* knowable than the compounds they form.<sup>21</sup> As the discussion

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18 As mentioned in the seventh definition of the sophist, summarized by the Stranger at 266d.

19 *Theaetetus*, 176a-b.

20 *Ibid*, 182a-183b.

21 *Ibid*, 206b.

of the *Sophist* shows, when the object of thought is known intelligibly, meaningful, objective communication which bridges the  $\chi\omicron\rho\acute{\omicron}\sigma\mu\omicron\varsigma$  between form and matter is very much possible.

The dramatic context of these dialogues, taking place only days before Socrates' trial in Athens, is clearly contrived to evoke Plato's earlier tetralogy (*Euthyphro*, *Apology*, *Crito*, *Phaedo*) and the inherent tension between Socrates and the sophists of his day. For this reason, the final chapter of this thesis will look at the nature of the philosopher and the sophist within the context of the conflict as it appears in the *Theaetetus* and *Sophist*. It is obviously of great importance to Plato that he create a clear distinction between the method of a Socrates and a Protagoras, for the latter is said to mimic the former so closely that the two can be confused with each other quite easily. This chapter will not explore the idea that Plato perhaps wants some sort of retroactive vindication of his teacher's method; after all, in the end Socrates saw fit to stay in Athens and await his execution, and his method does not even allow him to discuss the nature of the sophist with Theaetetus. Rather, the purpose of this last chapter is simply to offer an illustration of the practical aspect of the two types of theoretical knowledge, sensible and intelligible, in light of the discussion up to that point.



## Chapter 2

### 2.1: Introduction to the *Theaetetus*

In the *Theaetetus* and the *Sophist*, Socrates, Theaetetus, and the Eleatic Stranger examine the full scope of Platonic philosophy from the ground up. The investigation in the *Theaetetus* begins with the immediate perception of sensible particulars and progresses 'upward' through opinion and thought in their efforts to define knowledge. There appears to be an overarching logic to the progression of the argument in these dialogues which can be mapped against the well-known metaphors of the Divided Line and Cave of Plato's *Republic*. The first two definitions of knowledge in the *Theaetetus*, first that knowledge is perception and next that it is opinion, clearly cover the general scope of the visible world on the lower half of the Line. The *Sophist* should then correspond to the intelligible realm on the top half of the Line if its focus is, as Cornford puts it, a “study of [the Forms'] mutual relations [which] takes no account of individual instances, indefinite in number and beneath the level of knowledge.”<sup>22</sup> This dialogue, in other words, provides an account of one's understanding of the forms as they exist in this sort of “mutual relation” as well as a prior or given apprehension of the forms as they exist separately in and of themselves. As this thesis will ultimately demonstrate, while human knowledge of the forms certainly extends beyond what can be said about them, the communication of what one takes any form to be requires speaking about it in relation to another form.

Generally speaking, the first two definitions of knowledge in the *Theaetetus* are explored to determine what sort of knowledge belief and opinion can yield and how this knowledge can be expressed in meaningful language, if at all. Indeed, the firmest rejection of Heracleitean flux comes when Socrates takes its principle maxim “all is in motion” to its

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22 Cornford 1935, 185-86.

logical extreme, concluding that this position destroys meaningful language outright.<sup>23</sup>

Opinion fares little better as it does no more than to define what is true *for* someone; and ἐπιστήμη, of course, cannot be defined by the end of the *Theaetetus*. The discussion in each dialogue focuses on the communication of what one takes to be true knowledge using λόγος, such that what is understood at any level of knowing is communicated using λόγος.

Specifically, there is a repeated identification between διανοία as a mode of knowing and a corresponding λόγος which exists at a parallel mode of being.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, in the *Sophist* Theaetetus and the Eleatic Stranger do not try to define an object in and of itself, form or otherwise, as a separate entity, but rather in terms of its necessary relation to objects of the same order of being. As the Stranger states, “The total separation of each thing from everything else is the obliteration of every λόγος. For a λόγος has come into being for us through the weaving together of ideas with one another.”<sup>25</sup> The path which Socrates takes on his second voyage becomes further defined here, for there is an inherent safety found in communicating knowledge using mathematical reasoning. λόγος of this type opens up a middle ground, so to speak, between the purely accidental realm of material becoming and the hypothetical realm of intelligible being.

In the *Theaetetus*, Socrates and Theaetetus endeavor to construct a λόγος which communicates in rational terms precisely what ἐπιστήμη itself is. Each definition of knowledge presented in the *Theaetetus* comes up short to some degree, leaving the interlocutors and the reader in an apparent ἀπορία at the end. To paraphrase a later comment in the *Sophist*,<sup>26</sup> if there is a multiplicity of things which can be defined according to a common element, the inability to define that element properly constitutes a failure or lack of

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23 *Theaetetus*, 182a ff.

24 *Theaetetus*, 189e; *Sophist*, 263e.

25 *Sophist*, 259e.

26 *Ibid*, 232a.

understanding in the person trying to come up with the definition, not of the thing's ability to be defined. Much of this difficulty is due to the fact that a definition here necessarily includes every manifestation of the idea being defined and at the same time excludes any manifestation which is other than it. Hence Theaetetus has no trouble listing off a number of different arts as *types* of knowledge at the outset of the *Theaetetus*, but as to what knowledge itself is in terms this common element by which every art is said to be the knowledge of something, he has no idea.

At first glance this dialogue appears to end negatively, but it does not necessarily leave the reader entirely in the dark. Just prior to the first definition of knowledge, Theaetetus explains to Socrates a certain mathematical proof concerning square numbers or δυνάμεις which he and another student, also named Socrates, were able to deduce during one of their lessons with Theodorus. After hearing this proof and the final definition of a δύναμις, Socrates asks Theaetetus to use it as a model of the definitional process and apply it to knowledge. He says, “By imitating your answer concerning δυνάμεις, just as you embraced them under one idea despite being a plurality, in this way make an attempt to name the plurality of types of knowledge under one λόγος.”<sup>27</sup> Socrates here asks not for just a word (ὄνομα) such as 'δύναμις' which can represent an idea, but explicitly for a λόγος. He wants a single expression or statement which contains the essential meaning of one specific idea, ἐπιστήμη here or δύναμις just prior, which has, either apparently or in actual fact, an unlimited number (ἄπειρον) of manifestations. I want to suggest, then, that the *Theaetetus* appears to end negatively because it restricts Socrates and Theaetetus to define λόγος and ἐπιστήμη as objects of opinion, rather than thought. That is, the final definition of ἐπιστήμη

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<sup>27</sup> *Theaetetus*, 148d.

is not wholly incorrect, but merely deficient.<sup>28</sup>

Theaetetus' mathematical demonstration implicitly contains the correct idea of λόγος, but its completed form at the beginning of the dialogue presupposes certain arguments which are rendered incompletely in the final section in which he and Socrates attempt to define λόγος. As we will see over the course of this thesis, λόγος is a statement of the unification of a limiting principle with the unlimited. It defines a particular object according to an essential quality inherent in the object, or in the case of something more general such as δύναμις, an inherent quality which runs through every manifestation of that object. The apprehension of this unlimited continuum (e.g. magnitude) and its division into a multiplicity of elements (numbers) is what reveals both the notion of sameness and difference which exist inherently in the elements. Respectively, these principles govern the absolute and relative existence of each element. Finally, λόγος contains as well the principle by which these distinct elements are combined to form a single, unified entity, the communication of which in mathematical or 'rational' terms establishes a fixed, objective meaning of the object of investigation, allowing philosophy to pursue its one end: wisdom.

## 2.2: The Mathematical Paradigm

An examination of the geometrical model of definition which Theaetetus explains to Socrates will reveal what sort of λόγος the discussion demands, allowing us to understand the interrelation of the points enumerated above. This λόγος of δύναμις at the beginning of

28 Thus I support Reading A in Burnyeat's commentary on the *Theaetetus*, namely that Plato accepts the doctrines of Heraclitus and Protagoras up to a certain point (Burnyeat 1990, 7-8). These first definitions of knowledge are therefore not rejected outright, but set aside so that they may be incorporated into a better definition which encompasses and incorporates them. Similarly, the first six definitions of the sophist are not entirely correct, but neither are any of them wholly incorrect. Instead, as Cornford suggests, the first six definitions of the sophist are collected within the seventh, which identifies the characteristic common to them (Cornford 1935, 187). My interpretation is therefore opposed to Doull's, who suggests that each definition of knowledge is refuted by a standard internal to the mode of knowing with which the definition is made (cf. Doull 1977, 5-8).

the *Theaetetus* will thereby provide the model against which the various instances of λόγος in both the *Theaetetus* and *Sophist* can be compared as they move the argument forward.

First, Theaetetus outlines the general problem for Socrates:

Theodorus here was drawing something about δυνάμεις for us, showing [ἀποφάσκειν] that the lengths [μήκος] of three feet and five feet are not symmetrical with [the unit of] the foot, and taking each one in this way up until seventeen feet; but at that point he stopped. It came to our minds that, since the δυνάμεις appear [φάινεσθαι] to be infinite [ἄπειρος] in number, we should try to collect them under one term, by which we would then call all δυνάμεις.<sup>29</sup>

Theaetetus starts with the assumption of an infinite continuum of magnitude between greater and lesser quantities. This continuum is then divided into segments representing whole numbers using the foot (ποδός) as the most basic unit of measurement. This arithmetical unit and each subsequent segment are represented geometrically by a one-dimensional line of a magnitude proportional to its corresponding number.<sup>30</sup> Commentators generally agree that by 'δύναμις' Theaetetus here means 'square root', which explains why he says that the lengths of three and five feet are not symmetrical with the foot when considered as δυνάμεις. That is,  $\sqrt{3}$  and  $\sqrt{5}$  are irrational numbers, the existence and nature of which having been demonstrated by Pythagoras already.<sup>31</sup> The division of an infinite continuum such that the continuum can be examined on rational terms requires that the basic unit of this division be rational, so this unit, the foot, cannot be used to represent a number which is inherently *irrational*. Therefore, “the lengths of three feet and five feet [considered as roots] are not symmetrical with the unit of the foot,” but the lengths of four, nine, and sixteen feet are

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29 *Theaetetus*, 147d4-e1.

30 As Rosemary Desjardins explains in her commentary, “In the tradition of Pythagorean mathematics, [...] [there is one way of representing number] used here in the *Theaetetus* and also later by Euclid, according to which number was presented by straight lines proportional in length to the numbers they represented. [...] Nichomachus gives us the definition of number as 'a flow of quantity made up of units [*monadōn*]!'.” Euclid, she says, gives a definition in terms of “magnitudes...essentially involving infinite divisibility and incommensurability.” This approach “seems to accord with the Pythagorean view of points as boundaries (*horoi*) of spatial magnitudes (Aristotle, *Met.* N, 1092b9-10), as also with a Pythagorean definition of the unit which dates from the Platonic period, according to which a unit is understood as simply 'limiting quantity'” (Desjardins 1990, 229).

31 Burnyeat 1978, 503.

symmetrical, as the roots of those numbers are other whole numbers.

The demonstration continues as follows:

*So:* And did you find such a term?

*Th:* We appear to have done so. But see for yourself.

*So:* Go on.

*Th:* We divided all number under two terms. The one which can be made into a square figure when equal factors are multiplied together we called 'square', representing it by a square figure.

*So:* Well done!

*Th:* Therefore the numbers which fall between these ones, such as three and five and every number which cannot be made by multiplying equal factors, but only by multiplying a greater number by a lesser one or lesser by greater, and so is always contained in sides of greater and lesser value, this number we called 'oblong', representing it by an oblong figure.<sup>32</sup>

Every whole number can be represented with the geometrical unit of the foot, illustrated with a line proportional to the value of the number. That is, the number 'one' has a corresponding line of magnitude 'one', 'two' has a line with a magnitude of two, and so on. Theaetetus and the younger Socrates consider whole numbers not as such, but with respect to their rationality or irrationality as square roots, which they determine by the factors which produce any given number. So given the infinite continuum of number, they first divide the continuum into these two classes: numbers which can be produced by multiplying equal factors (rational), and numbers which can *only* be produced by multiplying unequal factors (irrational). Theaetetus concludes the demonstration by assigning names to these classes of number and the figures they can form:

*So:* Good. But what did you do after this?

*Th:* Those lines [γραμμαί] which form an equilateral figure and [represent] a square plane figure we called a 'length' [μήκος], and those [which form] an oblong figure, δυνάμεις, as they are not symmetrical with the others in length [μήκος], but only with respect to the plane figures which they can [form]. And so on in the case of solids.<sup>33</sup>

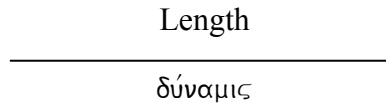
The first division, then, is of whole number: between those numbers of which the magnitude is represented by lines which can be formed by multiplying equal factors, such as four, nine, and sixteen, and unequal factors, such as three, five, and six. Let us call this the 'horizontal'

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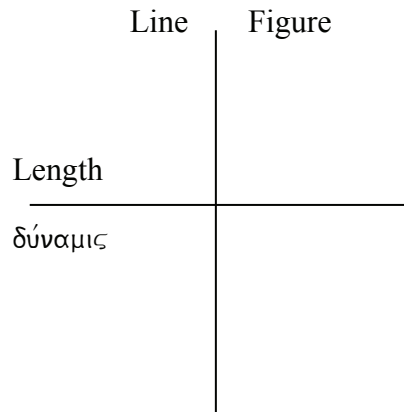
<sup>32</sup> *Theaetetus*, 147e2-148a4 .

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, 148a5-148b2 .

division of numbers, viz. between their one-dimensional representations using lines called “lengths” and “δυνάμεις”:



The second division, call it 'vertical', is of the figures used to represent whole numbers as such, not roots. That is, a square figure of area four is produced by multiplying equal factors, two and two. An oblong figure of area five is produced by multiplying unequal factors, one and five. The second division, then, is between the one- and two-dimensional representations of numbers:



Both divisions therefore yield four representations of number: a Length Line (LL) represents a magnitude having equal factors to produce it (such as four, nine, and sixteen); a Dynamis Line (DL) represents a magnitude produced by multiplying unequal factors (such as three, five, and six); a Length Figure (LF) is a square figure produced by combining the lines which represent the magnitude of its equal factors; and finally, a Dynamis Figure (DF) is an oblong figure produced by combining the lines which represent the magnitudes of its unequal factors.

In this way, the infinite continuum of magnitude is divided into a multitude of its basic constituent elements, individual numbers, having the foot as the basic unit of

measurement. Every whole number is symmetrical with the foot, but when considered as roots, a division is made between rational and irrational numbers, what Theaetetus refers to as “lengths” and “δυνάμεις” respectively. The next step, creating square and oblong figures through the combination of these two types of lines, demonstrates what Desjardins says is the “ability to deal with irrationals, and the ability to generate higher levels of dimensionality. For, as Theaetetus explains, what appears in linear dimension as incommensurable or irrational may, when raised to the second dimension, be rendered rational.”<sup>34</sup> The expert thus has a three-fold ability: one, he can apprehend both the unit appropriate to his art and the infinite continuum which underlies every object pertaining to his art. The mathematician, for example, apprehends the foot and the continuum of magnitude, and the grammarian the letter and sound; two, he can divide this continuum into a multitude of elements (numbers; letters) and separate the elements into classes or species according to an essential characteristic which runs throughout all the elements of that class (lengths and δυνάμεις; vowels and consonants); finally, the expert can combine the multitude of elements in each class into new, singular entities (square, oblong; words) which exist on a “higher level of dimensionality.” That is, the irrational elements have the power or δύναμις to be transformed into a rational figure, transporting them quite literally into a higher dimension, and so allowing them to be investigated on rational terms. These new entities can then be used as elements for still larger structures, namely “solids” such as cubic figures in the case of mathematics, and sentences in the case of grammar and language.

A parallel example of these abilities can be seen in Socrates' own explanation of his

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34 Desjardins 1990, 79.



special art of midwifery.<sup>35</sup> Midwives, he says, as experts, have better opinions than the layperson concerning child birth; they can prolong or induce labour as they see fit. They are, he says, “the most skilled matchmakers, as they are all-wise in knowledge concerning what sort of woman ought to be with (συνουσία) what sort of man so as to produce the best possible children.”<sup>36</sup> First, then, the midwife has an apprehension of a continuum which is effectively, though not literally, infinite in scope, and second, the ability to divide this continuum into its elements (people) and the elements into distinct classes (males and females). The ability to distinguish human beings from other objects and men from women is not anything special in and of itself, and no doubt something that anybody can do. The midwife, however, is “all-wise” and therefore has knowledge pertaining to not just the nature of the continuum as a whole, or either class of element, but the essential nature of each and every particular element divided from that continuum. She knows specifically which particular man and which particular woman will produce the best possible children, and by extension which union will produce the worst children and every degree in between those two extremes.<sup>37</sup> Socrates, of course, is a spiritual midwife, and so knows which union of souls between a student and teacher will produce the best possible ideas. He is able to test “in every way whether the mind of a young man produces a phantom and falsehood, or a genuine and true offspring,”<sup>38</sup> and then pass the student off to the appropriate teacher, be it a Prodicus or a stranger from Elea.

The third ability of the expert, pertaining to the combination of elements in the

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35 Desjardins' commentary focuses on elucidating what she calls *kompsoteros* theory, and in the process makes a striking comparison between Theaetetus' model of geometry, Socrates' art of midwifery, the birth of swift motions as the “offspring” of slow motions under a “secret” theory of sense perception, and the progression from letters to words to sentences and finally extended arguments. I owe much of my own interpretation of λόγος in the *Theaetetus* to hers.

36 *Theaetetus*, 149d.

37 Cf. *Phaedo*, 97d.

38 *Theaetetus*, 150c.

creation of a new, single entity, clearly has much more to do than just knowing the elements of any class. To be sure, elements of the same class can be combined with each other to produce any number of new objects. However, just as elements of one class are all alike insofar as they all have the same essential quality, so too must the elements which produce a higher dimensional object be directed toward the same object in order to create something with any meaning. For example, the letters 'e', 'i', 'm', and 't' have a variety of possible combinations, but only a small number of these permutations have any meaning in the English language.<sup>39</sup> In order to produce a meaningful entity, the elements cannot be combined or listed willy-nilly; they must 'fit' together in a certain way.

### 2.3: Problems

Theaetetus' model of geometry predicts the general movement of the dialogue in its examination of the three definitions of knowledge, and in doing so can be used to bring to light certain deficiencies in the argument as it unfolds. The geometrical demonstration implicitly contains the answers to these problems, but given that this dialogue ends aporetically, the overall solution must be found in the *Sophist*, the sequel to the *Theaetetus*.

Theaetetus suggests first that “knowledge is nothing other than perception,”<sup>40</sup> which begs the obvious question, why does a budding mathematician identify knowledge strictly with perception and nothing else? In his geometrical demonstration, Theaetetus tells Socrates that Theodorus was drawing (γράφειν) examples of δυνάμεις in order to show (ἀποφαίνειν) their asymmetry with the unit of the foot, providing enough examples that the number of δυνάμεις appear (φαίνεσθαι) to be infinite. The point of the exercise, he tells

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<sup>39</sup> What is more, when words themselves are taken as elements of still larger structures (sentences), which of these words is used depends on how it fits the sentence according to context, to say nothing of grammar or word order.

<sup>40</sup> *Theaetetus*, 151e.

Socrates, is to find a single term or statement—a λόγος—which defines the entire class of δυνάμεις and to which each individual δύναμις refers. This λόγος is used to identify the object of inquiry with its essential nature. If, as is the case here, the object of inquiry is a general class of things, each particular instance of this object, such as three, five, and seventeen which Theaetetus mentions explicitly, is likewise identified with the same core essence. That is, the word δύναμις is identified with the essential quality inherent in each and every δύναμις: two lines which represent magnitudes of unequal factors combine to form an oblong figure, thereby allowing an object which is inherently irrational to be understood on rational terms. In short, the λόγος is a statement which answers the question τι ἐστί? It conveys knowledge of an object's essential nature with respect to the elements which comprise it, such as forming a square or oblong figures by combining lengths or δυνάμεις.

On Desjardins' reading of this dialogue, perception is itself the “stuff” of knowledge, knowledge being “nothing other than” perception, just as magnitude is the stuff of mathematics and nothing other than relative magnitude.<sup>41</sup> The point of such a long discussion of the first definition, she says, is to demonstrate to Theaetetus that perception is not to be abandoned because it does not yield true knowledge, but that it is the first of many necessary steps in acquiring true knowledge. In brief, her interpretation is as follows: at the level of αἴσθησις, one divides this continuum of active and passive motion<sup>42</sup> into slow and fast motions<sup>43</sup> and combines these elements to form an emergent entity, which she says Socrates identifies as either a 'sense'—“not sight, but a seeing eye”—or a 'sensible'—“not whiteness, but [a] white [object].”<sup>44</sup> These emergent products then become in turn the elements of a higher mode of knowing; that is, at the level of δόξα the sense and sensible are

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41 Desjardins 1990, 129.

42 *Theaetetus*, 156a.

43 Ibid, 156c.

44 Ibid, 156e; Desjardins 1990, 80 and 164-66.

combined in order to form yet another emergent entity, namely an opinion; and so on in the case of λόγος at the level of διανοία. The three-fold process of apprehension, division, and combination enumerated above occurs at every level of knowing, λόγος itself being an entity which, classified as an object peculiar to διανοία, contains knowledge of the object of investigation beyond any mere opinion of it.

While I agree with Desjardins' methodology, adopting and wholly endorsing her account of the process by which a mathematical or 'dianoetic' λόγος is formed, I want to offer a broader interpretation of this method which does not relegate λόγος only to the level of διανοία. As Socrates explains to Theaetetus, Protagoras maintained the same definition of knowledge, that it is nothing other than perception, but expressed it in different terms: “man is the measure of all things, of things that are, as they are, and of things that are not, as they are not.”<sup>45</sup> Theaetetus gives his definition as it is because, he says, one knows what one perceives, and it is perceived as it appears (φαίνεσθαι). Along these lines Protagoras' doctrine is then faithfully reworded to state: “individual things are for me as they appear (φαίνεσθαι) to me, and for you as they appear to you.”<sup>46</sup> This doctrine encapsulates the essential nature of opinion and sensation: there is no objective measure of truth and so what is true for one person is not necessarily true for anyone else. At several points in the defense Socrates gives of the Protagorean position, his maxim is referred to as a λόγος.<sup>47</sup> The identification he makes between the object of investigation and the essence of that object can only be true at the level of knowing which informs him of the nature of the finite unit, infinite continuum, and class of elements, and so he interprets the nature of these principles only as they appear *to him*, not to everyone. Presumably, then, Protagoras goes through an

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45 *Theaetetus*, 152a.

46 *Ibid*, 152a.

47 *Ibid*, 166e1-2 and 167d4-7.

identical process as Theaetetus in constructing his λόγος.

In taking Socrates through this geometrical demonstration Theaetetus is able to arrive at a conception of λόγος which is objective and thus equally true for both of them and indeed any other interlocutor or reader. In retrospect then, it comes as no surprise that Socrates and Theaetetus decide just prior to the geometrical model that ignorance of the essential nature of the object of investigation prevents anyone from forming the mathematical λόγος they are looking for:

So: When you say “cobblery,” do you mean anything other than the knowledge of making shoes?

Th: No.

So: What about “carpentry”? Do you mean anything other than the knowledge of making wooden implements?

Th: Nothing else.

So: Then in both cases you define that to which each knowledge belongs?

Th: Yes.

So: But the question, Theaetetus, was not [to define] the knowledge of each thing, nor how many things [belong to it]; for we did not raise the question wanting to number them, but to understand what knowledge itself is.<sup>48</sup>

In giving examples of certain kinds of knowledge which are specific to certain arts, Theaetetus is merely defining “knowledge for someone.”<sup>49</sup> In these instances the definition of knowledge is true for a specific person or group of people, but not people generally. The demand Socrates places on Theaetetus is to define what knowledge is as it is known at a higher level of knowing than mere opinion. The communication of this kind of λόγος sets the object of investigation in an objective theater beyond the subjectivity of belief and opinion, allowing the interlocutors to discover if the λόγος is true for everyone instead of being simply true for someone. So it is in line with Desjardins' account that Socrates and Theaetetus agree that true opinions are “the results from reasoning [ἀναλόγισμα] about [sensations] with respect to being and utility.”<sup>50</sup> In his geometrical demonstration,

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48 *Theaetetus*, 146d-e.

49 *Ibid*, 147c1.

50 *Ibid*, 186c.

Theaetetus arrives at his λόγος of δύναμις through an analogous act of reasoning about the various appearances he describes in the demonstration, transforming these opinions into an objective statement by which anyone can understand any of the infinite number of δυνάμεις. The act of mathematical perception moves beyond sensation which sees things as they exist within perpetual flux. To the untrained eye the diagrams which Theodorus draws for his students are perceived in this 'lesser' way, and so the irrationality of certain roots remains as such, analogous to how Theaetetus first thought to define knowledge-for-someone. In a non-literal way, however, Theodorus 'draws' abstractly, and so by using Theaetetus' model the irrationality of any number can be made rational and thus made available to everyone, just as hopefully knowledge too can be define.

Why, then, does the discussion not end immediately after Theaetetus suggests that knowledge is nothing other than [a certain mode of] perception? Why is Socrates so eager to identify this definition with the doctrines of Protagoras, that man is the measure of all things, and Heraclitus, that everything is in motion, only to overturn both positions and by extension Theaetetus' definition? Are we supposed to learn, along with Theaetetus, that knowledge is not perception, or that knowledge is not *just* perception? Cornford suggests that the first six definitions of the sophist are collected into and embraced by the seventh and final definition,<sup>51</sup> similar to how Socrates wants Theaetetus to give a λόγος of knowledge which accounts for all instances of knowledge, just as his λόγος of δύναμις accounts for all instances of δύναμις. Perhaps, then, each attempt to define knowledge is not meant to be abandoned outright as it is surpassed, but brought into the discussion which emerges out of its rejection. Burnyeat, for instance, suggests a reading of the *Theaetetus* in which Plato accepts the positions of Protagoras and Heraclitus albeit if and only if they are kept entirely

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51 Cornford 1935, 187.

within the sensible, material realm.<sup>52</sup> As with the debate in the *Sophist* between the materialists and idealists (the γιγαντομαχία between the gods and giants) the idealists accept that active and passive power is a legitimate mark of an object's essence if and only if that object is corporeal and participates in becoming rather than being.<sup>53</sup>

Thus just as Socrates and Theaetetus test the various definitions of knowledge-for-someone in the preliminary remarks on λόγος and knowledge, in the discussion thereafter they test the Protagorean and Heracleitean λόγοι “man is the measure” and “all is motion” to see what sort of knowledge they will yield. As we know, the former position yields knowledge which is only true for someone and so far from being objective; as mentioned above, the latter position yields knowledge which is mere apprehension and devoid of any further epistemological reasoning as language itself comes to have no fixed meaning.

Thus Socrates and Theaetetus achieve precisely what Protagoras dares them to do in his defense. He says to them, “Upon these [positions] my λόγος remains safe. If you can dispute it from the beginning, do so by bringing an opposing λόγος against it.”<sup>54</sup> By demonstrating that false opinion exists and proposing that knowledge is true opinion, they take the next step in giving a true-for-everyone definition of knowledge. The power of the soul emerges as apprehending the essential qualities of any object of investigation, whereas the senses can only pick up the accidental qualities of how a thing appears to exist relative to the observer, rather than how a thing exists in and of itself independent of any observation of it. Here the reader gets a glimpse of the discussion which will take place in the *Sophist* on the following day: the multitude of elements which the soul enumerates are intellectual ideas rather than sensible appearances. Socrates and Theaetetus explicitly list three of the five

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52 Burnyeat 1990, 8.

53 *Sophist*, 248c.

54 *Theaetetus*, 167d.

μεγίστα γένη of the *Sophist* (being, sameness, and difference) in addition to a host of other ideas,<sup>55</sup> all of which are implicit in Theaetetus' geometrical demonstration.

Instead of pursuing this course, however, Socrates and Theaetetus continue with the proposition that knowledge is true opinion. They do not yet seek to identify knowledge with these essential qualities divorced from any particular context, but rather to contextualize the previous notion of opinion as knowledge-for-someone so that it can become true objectively.

Socrates describes the process of forming an opinion in the following way:

[διανοία is] a λόγος which the soul goes through in full, itself by itself, about whatever it might investigate. [...] Whenever [the soul] makes a decision [ὀρίζειν], whether this is done slowly or in a quick rush, and when there is no doubt about what it says, we establish this as its opinion. So I say that forming an opinion [δοξάζειν] is speaking, and opinion [δόξα] itself is a communicated λόγος, not aloud to someone else, but in silence with oneself.<sup>56</sup>

The simple act of forming an opinion is done without regard to whether or not the opinion is true, but only that the soul is sure about what it thinks about the information it is processing. Accordingly, Protagoras makes nothing of the truth or falsity of anyone's opinion, for each person's opinion is true for himself, but only which opinions are better or worse. Here, however, true opinion is identified with that mode of knowing with which the mathematical λόγος Socrates and Theaetetus are looking for is formed, as the soul, not the senses, identifies the true essence of the object of investigation. Thus how one can qualify an opinion as true or false emerges: it must be communicated out loud and openly in an objective theater in order to connect it with an objective, external truth available to everyone, for in silence whatever the soul believes to be true is remains true so long as it is believed, as is the case with opinion under the Protagorean measure doctrine.

One necessary condition for this definition to work is demonstrable proof of what exactly *false* opinion is. By this point in the dialogue the fact *that* false opinion exists has

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55 *Theaetetus*, 185a-d.

56 *Ibid*, 189e-190a.



been clearly demonstrated: the first definition of knowledge is offered as an opinion<sup>57</sup> and is soundly refuted on the one hand by indirectly overturning the Protagorean and Heracleitean maxims with which it is identified, and on the other in a direct appeal to the power of the soul over and above the senses. Moreover, this power of the soul gives one a view to an object's essence beyond the immediate and particular perception of it, allowing him to give a true opinion of what it will become in a future state, whereas a layperson is more likely to make an incorrect prediction on these grounds.<sup>58</sup>

The attempt to provide this proof in the *Theaetetus* is to include the vocal communication of the λόγος which accompanies an opinion formed silently by the soul talking with itself, and so the third and final definition is an attempt to correct the second, defining knowledge as true opinion with a λόγος. The geometrical demonstration, we know, provides a model of the method by which the infinite continuum is apprehended, divided into constituent elements, and then combined to form a new entity whose state of being is parallel with the mode of knowing through which it is created. The end result of this process of reasoning within διανοία is the identification of this new entity with its essential, objective nature. A mind which opines rather than calculates mathematically can only provide a statement of what is true for it and no other and so there is a gap between silent belief and actual knowledge with true and false opinion *sans* λόγος occupying the intermediary space. Socrates demonstrates the nature of this divide in a short digression after the second definition of knowledge. He gives the example of a judge presiding over a case in which he himself did not see the events in question first-hand, and so without properly knowing or not knowing these events nonetheless gives a correct judgment (ἀληθῆ δόξα) of what happened.<sup>59</sup>

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57 Ibid, 151e1

58 Ibid, 178c-e.

59 Ibid, 201a-c.

The same sort of divide occurs in the *Meno* in which Meno's eristic approach to knowledge is at loggerheads with Socrates' method of dialectic. Meno posits that either the object of inquiry is known, in which case inquiry is impossible, or the object is not known, in which case inquiry is likewise impossible.<sup>60</sup> Socrates maintains that inquiry *is* possible, and suggests therefore that the object of inquiry is neither known nor unknown, but occupies some middle ground.<sup>61</sup> This sort of judgment in the *Theaetetus* is entirely accidental to the truth, and so presumably λόγος will explain *why* or *how* it is the case beyond the judge supposing *that* it is the case.

A number of problems arise, the solutions to which the geometrical demonstration contains implicitly but the final definition of knowledge cannot solve: what in the world is λόγος in and of itself; how it is able to ground true opinion in objective reality; and how does Theaetetus manage to produce one? In his explanation of the so-called 'dream theory', Socrates defines the essence of λόγος as “the combination of ὀνόματα.”<sup>62</sup> This process of combination is what Theaetetus does at the beginning of the dialogue in not just explaining what the name (ὄνομα) δύναμις means, but in connecting this name to the essential idea contained in each and every instance of it.<sup>63</sup> In the final section of the dialogue, the goal is therefore to give a λόγος of λόγος. The three attempts to do so each fail, unfortunately. The first definition of λόγος, that it is the communication of one's thought, collapses the above distinction between knowledge and opinion, such that any expressed opinion is knowledge and therefore true. The second definition, that λόγος is the enumeration of its constituent elements, collapses the distinction between knowledge and true opinion, such that someone

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60 *Meno*, 80d-e.

61 *Ibid*, 81a-86c. Cf. Desjardins 1990, 94.

62 *Theaetetus*, 202b.

63 Thus Socrates: “...not mean merely the name [ὄνομα], but the thing named [τὸ ὀνομαζόμενον] must be the object of attention” (*Ibid*, 177e).

without real knowledge of how to spell can nonetheless correctly spell 'Theaetetus' by guessing. This definition is simply additive, making no room for the *productive* aspect of combination; that is, in his geometrical model, Theaetetus multiplies two factors to arrive at their product, and so 'multiplies' or combines their respective one-dimensional lines to form a two-dimensional product rather than adding them to create a longer line as the sum of their magnitudes. The third and final attempt to define λόγος identifies it as an explanation or account of an object's unique essence; the product, in other words, in Theaetetus' model. This definition results in a circularity as it defines knowledge as true opinion with knowledge of difference. It skips over the actual process of combining elements and so does not provide an account of why a given nature is unique, but only that it is as such.

#### 2.4: Solutions

Two crucial elements within Theaetetus' geometrical model are missing from the rest of the discussion on knowledge and λόγος. Coupled with the fact that the nature of false opinion as an interchange of opinion has not been proved, the ἀπορία we find ourselves in along with Socrates and Theaetetus is quite large indeed: the first definition of λόγος does not account for false opinion, which plainly exists; the second definition does not account for the combination of elements beyond simple addition; and the third definition does not account for the prior division of the infinite continuum into constituent elements.<sup>64</sup> The missing pieces, then, are these. First, no further attention is given to the essential nature of the object of investigation in terms of what it is with respect to its power to act and be acted upon. Theaetetus defines δυνάμεις not just as lines representing numbers produced by multiplying unequal factors, but also in how these numbers, though they are inherently

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64 Desjardins 1990, 143-44.

irrational, have the ability or δύναμις to become rational.<sup>65</sup> Second, no further attention is given to the fact that prior to forming a square or oblong figure, Theaetetus must have an idea of that figure in mind prior to its actual construction. In other words, he must be perceiving an irrational number rationally in order to produce a rational explanation of it.<sup>66</sup> A closer look at the final section of the *Theaetetus* and how the *Sophist* is a response to it will be undertaken in subsequent chapters. This section of the introduction will then suggest the general way in which the *Sophist* completes the otherwise incomplete arguments of the *Theaetetus*.

The Greek term λόγος has a variety of possible translations depending on the context in which it is used, meaning anything from a single “word” to an entire “account” of something. For this reason, each dialogue as a whole can be considered as a λόγος which is in fact how the discussion between Theaetetus and Socrates is introduced.<sup>67</sup> The reader is first introduced to two men, Eucleides and Terpsion, who were somewhat acquainted with Socrates during his lifetime. The conversation they are about to hear which took place between Socrates and Theaetetus occurred when the latter was still a youth, and at the end of the dialogue Socrates leaves to address the civil suit which Meletus brought against him in 399BC. The reader finds out, however, that the backdrop of this dialogue takes place when Theaetetus is much older and unfortunately quite ill, and so his return to Athens takes place well after Socrates' own death. To our good fortune, very soon after this discussion took place Eucleides requested from Socrates an account of his meeting with Theaetetus and had the presence of mind to record it for posterity. Not only that, but he removed any instance of

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65 For an explanation on the technical usage of δύναμις in this context, see Burnyeat 1978, 495-502.

66 Thus Desjardins: “For how could one ever recognize, for example, that letters have this 'power' to combine to form a word—unless one first had some notion or idea of what a word might be?” (Desjardins 1990, 74).

67 *Theaetetus*, 142d5, 143a5, 143b6. For a detailed analysis of the dialogues as λόγοι, see Desjardins 1990, 135-39.

“so and so said,” such that the reader or listener receives a first-hand account of the conversation as if he were sitting with Socrates and Theaetetus.

Eucleides does not actually read the text himself; rather, he and Terpsion recline comfortably on their couches and listen to a slave reading it aloud. Neither of them interrupt the reading even after the *Theaetetus* proper ends and the *Sophist* begins. Eucleides explains to Terpsion that he worked on his account—his λόγος—of the meeting in his free time (σχολή). Just prior to the lengthy digression on philosophy and rhetoric in the *Theaetetus* Socrates distinguishes the philosopher from the rhetorician through their use of σχολή, which he says the philosopher has in abundance but the lawman none. Free time, in fact, is the only time during which real philosophy actually takes place and what allows for this important digression to take place. It is the time, Socrates says, when philosophers are free to create their λόγοι.<sup>68</sup> As Theodorus notes as well, the λόγος does not dictate the circumstances under which philosophy takes place, but rather the philosopher decides when his λόγος has reached its natural end.<sup>69</sup>

The discussion in the *Theaetetus* does not come to a complete stop when the day is over; it simply shifts gears the next day in order to further investigate its core concern of defining knowledge. To that end, the connection between these two dialogues is more than just dramatic; it is also logical, and so a continuous narrative answers only in part the question as to why these two dialogues should be considered side by side. Near the beginning of the *Theaetetus*, Socrates enumerates two criteria necessary for true knowledge: one, knowledge is always of being; and two, it is free from error.<sup>70</sup> That is to say, true knowledge is of a thing in and of itself and is objective, remaining true independent of any

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68 *Theaetetus*, 172d.

69 *Ibid*, 173c.

70 *Ibid*, 152c.

belief or opinion about it. Thus the investigation in the *Theaetetus* into the nature of ἐπιστήμη necessitates a similar investigation into the nature of οὐσία itself, for the discussion at the end of the former dialogue is left struggling to break free from the realm of sensible becoming and enter into the world of intelligible being.

As mentioned before, the proper identification of the object of investigation with its essential nature is a statement of both sameness and difference, or absolute and relative existence. The mode of knowing through which the process of apprehension, division, and combination takes place informs how these and other principles of λόγος are perceived. For Protagoras, we recall, the object exists only as it exists *for* the observer. Within the realm of becoming even the observer is “never the same as himself”<sup>71</sup> and so his perception of absolute existence and relative existence is his alone (assuming that perception of something absolute in this realm is even possible). The identification is made between the object and its essence is accidental as it depends on which elements are being combined in this way: six is more than four but less than twelve.<sup>72</sup> The qualities of 'greater' and 'lesser' are not inherent in any number, but only exist in an intermediate space created by the observation of the relative difference between the two numbers.<sup>73</sup> In other words, the λόγος he forms at the level of opinion is additive, so to speak, rather than productive, for any number can only become greater by the addition of another number within the scope of one's observation, and it can only become more than itself through the addition of another number to itself (or less than itself through subtraction).<sup>74</sup> As Desjardins points out, however, “[Theaetetus] knows that non-additive generation does in fact occur: in particular, two-dimensional figures are

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71 Ibid, 154a8 .

72 Ibid, 154c.

73 This position works on the assumption that “nothing exists in itself, but all things of all sorts arise out of motion by intercourse with each other” (Ibid, 157a). Fowler's translation.

74 Ibid, 155a-b.

generated from the one-dimensional lines.”<sup>75</sup> Taken in isolation, the number six can become 'greater' through a greater mode of knowing. As a whole number it is represented as a one-dimensional line segment and remains irrational due to its incommensurability with the foot; as square root, however, it is represented a two-dimensional oblong figure, the rational *product* of two factors. In this way six becomes greater without anything being added to it, something which Protagoras thinks is impossible.

Over the course of the dialogue Socrates and Theaetetus are able to identify the operative power of the soul over and above mere sense perception, but they are not yet poised to undertake an investigation into the things which the soul itself perceives. As Theaetetus states, “It seems to me, Socrates, that the soul, by itself, investigates the common qualities of *all things*.”<sup>76</sup> In this part of the dialogue, they list not only the μέγιστα γένη of the *Sophist*, but also likeness, unlikeness, unity, duality, beauty, ugliness, goodness, and badness.<sup>77</sup> The specific investigation taken up in the *Sophist*, of course, is the nature of and disjunction between being and non-being. To be sure, the interlocutors know that this investigation needs to take place: very soon after Theodorus comments that the respective doctrines of Protagoras and Heracleitus have been successfully surpassed, Theaetetus chimes in, stating that the discussion is not over until they investigate Parmenides and the Eleatic school who maintain that everything is one and at complete rest. Socrates refuses to do so at this point because he seems to understand how complex the issue is, which would only take them further and further away from their current investigation of knowledge. Socrates does not say that Parmenidean logic has no bearing on the current argument, but for practical purposes a consideration of this position has to wait so that both issues, what knowledge is

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75 Desjardins 1990, 91-92 and 181-92. My interpretation of this section of the dialogue relies upon her reading of Theaetetus' ἀπορία here.

76 *Theaetetus*, 185d. Emphasis mine.

77 *Ibid*, 185a ff.

and what Parmenides says, can be given the attention they deserve. Philosophy happens during leisure time, and though we know from the *Symposium* that Socrates can go all night, Theodorus is properly a mathematician, not a philosopher, and Theaetetus is still just a child. What is more, we find out at the end of the dialogue that Socrates himself is short on time, having to defend himself against Meletus in the courtroom.

In the *Theaetetus*, they create a necessary shift from a consideration of ἐπιστήμη (what is known and what is not known) to οὐσία (what is and what is not).<sup>78</sup> An idea of a completed entity, we recall, is necessary in order to define the object of investigation and so it is clearly absurd, they say, to form an opinion about what is not known or what does not exist. We see, then, that once Protagoras, Heracleitus and the world of flux are surpassed and taken into the next stage of the argument, both dialogues assume the binary opposition which Parmenides defends, between being as what is real and non-being as what is totally unreal, as the correct alternative until this doctrine too is surpassed. Socrates and Theaetetus allow the μέγιστα γένη to rear their heads in the *Theaetetus*, but they have not yet uncovered the distinction between non-being as totally unreal and otherness, foreshadowing their separation in the *Sophist*. Upon the Parmenidean dichotomy, then, the only two possibilities that the *Theaetetus* allows are either that something is known or it is not known as it either exists or it does not exist.

In this way Socrates and Theaetetus establish existence as such as the necessary condition for an object to be known at all. That is, the object of investigation exists according to its essential nature independently of any perception of it. This does not mean that the preconception one has in mind of this essence<sup>79</sup> entails its necessary existence, but

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78 Ibid, 188a-189b.

79 Cf. pp. 28-29 above.



that the mode of knowing with which this idea is formulated approximates this idea to the object in and of itself. The prior idea one has, then, of a completed word or name stands in relation to the essence it signifies according to the mode of knowing with which this identification between object and essence is made. Forming an opinion about what is not known is therefore to form an opinion about no object whatsoever, further establishing the need to overcome the disjunction between being and non-being. Though the argument in the *Theaetetus* establishes the soul as that which perceives the essential qualities of things, it is in the *Sophist* that the Eleatic Stranger explicitly locates οὐσία in the soul.<sup>80</sup> Socrates and Theaetetus agree that the first thing one perceives about any object beyond any sensation of it is that it exists,<sup>81</sup> and so the other essential qualities, such as sameness, difference, rest, and motion are perceived second and only after an object's being has been established. Any perception of *what* a thing is, beyond the fact *that* it is, is perception of *how* it exists (or is existing) as interpreted in thought through knowledge corresponding to the mode of the knower.<sup>82</sup>

The argument here echoes the *Meno* once more. There, Socrates proposes contrary to Meno that inquiry is in fact possible, and therefore we are situated in some intermediary space between knowing and not knowing the object of inquiry. In the *Theaetetus*, Socrates now assumes, or continues to assume, that false opinion does indeed exist, and therefore occupies a middle ground between being and complete non-being. As if predicting the argument of the *Sophist*, he states, “To hold a false opinion is then something *other than*

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80 *Sophist*, 250b.

81 *Theaetetus*, 185a.

82 For example, see Socrates' import of the Protagorean Measure into Theaetetus' first definition: man is “the measure of all things, of the things that are, as [ὡς] they are, and of the things that are not, as [ὡς] they are not” (Ibid, 152a). The use of the adverb ὡς indicates the *manner in which* any particular thing appears to the observer; in this case, how anything is said to exist remains subjective or relative, depending on one's reading of the dative pronoun (Ibid, 152b ff).

holding an opinion of that which is not.”<sup>83</sup> The question is, then, why does Socrates not engage Theaetetus in a discussion of the nature of being and non-being? Why does he leave that investigation for the Eleatic Stranger to undertake in the *Sophist*?

The answer to these questions can be found in a consideration of the cathartic method of Socratic ἔλεγχος as described in the *Sophist*.<sup>84</sup> There, ἔλεγχος is described as “a purifier of soul, [removing] opinions which hinder learning.”<sup>85</sup> The point of this art is negative, not adding knowledge to the soul being purified, but rather subtracting a portion of ignorance in order to “cure” a disproportion between ignorance and knowledge.<sup>86</sup> Therefore, insofar as Socrates is applying this art to Theaetetus, he is removing any false opinions which might cause a “swerve” in his soul’s “impulse towards truth,”<sup>87</sup> causing it to miss the mark. In order to correctly define knowledge, any false understanding of it by which Theaetetus identifies it strictly with perception and then true opinion must be removed. Indeed, when Theaetetus suggests that knowledge is opinion *per se*, Socrates tells him to “wipe out everything said before” in order to get a “clearer look” at the issue.<sup>88</sup> As his first definition of knowledge was expressed as an opinion, Theaetetus immediately modifies what he has just said and identifies knowledge with *true* opinion.

We find out at the end of the dialogue, however, that the limit to Socratic elenchus is its ability to demonstrate to the interlocutor that he does not know what he thinks he knows. With his art of midwifery, Socrates knows that an understanding of this ἀπορία is as far as Theaetetus will be taken when their two souls are combined. At the very least, however, he

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83 Ibid, 189b.

84 Cornford argues that here Plato wants to single out Socrates as the only person truly practicing this art (Cornford 1935, 177).

85 *Sophist*, 231e.

86 Ibid, 228a ff.

87 Cornford 1935, 179.

88 *Theaetetus*, 187a-b.

has demonstrated conclusively why the “offspring” in this dialogue are nothing more than wind-eggs. He knows as well, then, that any further purification by which Theaetetus will “be pregnant with better [thoughts] than those of the current inquiry”<sup>89</sup> must be undertaken by someone with the ability to affect this change in his soul. The Eleatic Stranger, of course, fulfills this role in overcoming the disjunction between being and non-being, and thereby knowing and not knowing. But what status does οὐσία have such that a correct understanding of it allows for a full answer to the question as to what knowledge is? In the *Sophist*, the Eleatic Stranger eventually states that δύναμις is a mark of οὐσία.<sup>90</sup> That is, what an object is in and of itself is what the object is fashioned by nature to do or have done to it. When this proposition is included in a consideration of what knowledge is and what it means to know something, the inquiry necessarily moves beyond the identification of knowledge with perception in the formation of an opinion. More generally, stating that knowledge *qua* knowledge exists is to say that it has an active power and a passive power. It itself can be known and it puts other things into a position to be known as well. Knowledge of a thing is to know what that thing can do and what can be done to it according to the mode of the knower. So knowledge of a specific art, for instance Theaetetus' knowledge of mathematics, is for him to have power over the active and passive capacities of the object of that art, that is, the infinite continuum of number, in terms of its division into a multitude of elements and combination into a new, singular entity by which the irrational can be understood on rational terms.

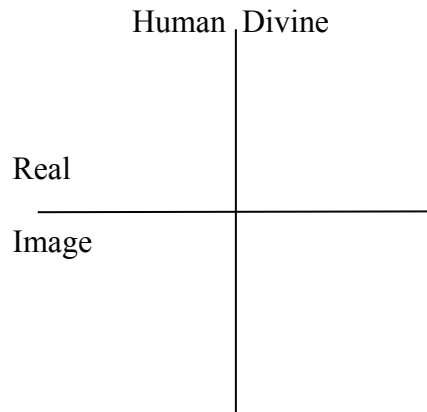
For these reasons, the *Sophist* must be read with the *Theaetetus* in order to correctly define what knowledge is. As Desjardins notes, the explanation in the *Theaetetus* of false

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89 *Theaetetus*, 210c.

90 *Sophist*, 247e and 248c.

opinion as interchanged opinion (αλλοδοξία) provides a solid account of the existence of false opinion, having as its object not nothing whatsoever but what is other than (ἄλλο τί) true opinion, but there is no basis for this conclusion until the disjunction between being and non-being is overcome in the *Sophist*.<sup>91</sup> More than just providing this basis, the *Sophist* seeks to establish what λόγος is such that there can be true and false instances of it. Just as Theaetetus makes a two-fold division of number, so too does the Stranger divide the continuum of reality itself between human and divine productions and images of these productions:<sup>92</sup>



Compared with the similar looking diagram above,<sup>93</sup> we see that the Divine Real is 'greater' than the Human Real, and as well that the Divine Image is 'greater' than the Human Image, just as each two-dimensional geometrical figure is 'greater' than the one-dimensional line segments which comprise them. In visible, sensible terms, the Divine Real is described as the natural, physical world<sup>94</sup> which as a 'given' entity represents the principle of any perceived infinite continuum but which exists prior to any perception of it. In invisible, intelligible terms, the Divine Real here represents the necessary, given nature of the realm of

91 Desjardins 1990, 110.

92 *Sophist*, 265b-266d.

93 Cf. p. 17.

94 In the Eleatic Stranger's words, what occupy this space are "every animal and plant which grows out of the earth from seeds and roots, and every soulless body, soluble and insoluble, formed within the earth" (*Sophist*, 265c).

formal being. Like physical nature, it is a principle which underlies all intelligible perception, an apprehension of which must exist in the mind logically prior to its division into elements and the combination of these elements, and so it is that natural things “come into being from the divine with λόγος and divine ἐπιστήμη.”<sup>95</sup> Thus in visible terms, a Divine Image is nothing more than a dream or reflection;<sup>96</sup> in invisible terms, however, this image is the hypothetical relationship between elements of formal being, a mathematical ratio such as that described in the *Timaeus*.<sup>97</sup>

Both the wise person (σόφος) and the sophist (σοφιστικός), they say, create a Human Image. The difference between the two is that the wise person has knowledge of that which he imitates, whereas the sophist does not. To paraphrase, then, what humans bring into being come from us with λόγος and human ἐπιστήμη or lack thereof. The image which the wise man creates is therefore analogous to the mathematical ordering of the cosmos as determined by the divine, whereas the sophist creates an image of his perception of the sensible instantiation of this reality. The definition of true ἐπιστήμη, knowledge-for-everyone which is infallible and always of what is, appears to reside in a Human Real production of the invisible world, whereas knowledge-for-someone—infallible as far as it is believed and always of what is or is becoming for someone—resides in an analogous production of the visible world.

Altogether there are four general points discussed in this chapter that will be explored in subsequent chapters. First, this thesis will determine the nature of λόγος as it stands at the end of the *Theaetetus* in order to determine how and why the third and final definition of ἐπιστήμη fails. Would the missing pieces mentioned earlier<sup>98</sup> satisfy this definition if they

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95 Ibid, 265c.

96 Ibid, 266c.

97 *Timaeus*, 32a-b.

98 Cf. pp. 28-29.

were included in this account of knowledge? Or does the complete picture surpass and incorporate this account in order to come to a 'greater' definition of knowledge, as happens with the first two? As we have just seen, the total scope of the argument across both dialogues includes the presence and activity of a δημιουργός and a divine mind.<sup>99</sup> Save for two instances, one in each dialogue, the operation of the δημιουργός retreats to the background of the argument. Therefore, the next step which is required in order to complete the picture Plato is painting here is to leave behind the *Theaetetus* and the *Sophist* and investigate the nature of this divinity and its effects. Of course, there is no better dialogue with which to do this than the *Timaeus*. Once these things have been established, this thesis will then take them into consideration in determining what λόγος really is in the *Theaetetus* and the *Sophist* by exploring its presentation near the end of the latter dialogue.

Finally, with the theory sufficiently explored, the more practical aspect of this philosophy can be entertained in a comparison of the active lives of the philosopher and the sophist as they are both presented in these two dialogues. As Socrates says to his friends in the *Phaedo*, the approach here is to assume a true λόγος, accepting what agrees with it and rejecting what does not. Thus to refute any such position one must overturn the argument from its very beginning, as Protagoras says in his defense. Assuming that the methodology each thinker employs in defining the essence of the object of investigation is the same, the difference in content between a true and a false λόγος must still be accounted for.

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<sup>99</sup> The verb δημιουργεῖν appears at *Sophist*, 265c4.

## Chapter 3

### 3.1: ἀληθῆ δόξα μετὰ λόγου

In the previous chapter, λόγος was defined as a certain type of statement which contains implicitly the principles of three things: the apprehension of a given infinite continuum; the division of this continuum into a multitude of constituent elements; and the combination of these elements into a new, singular entity. Theaetetus' geometrical demonstration gives a model of the process by which a λόγος is correctly constructed in order to produce objective, mathematical knowledge of the object of investigation. It is clear in this dialogue, however, that in actual practice this process does not have to be explained in so much detail. As is typical of a Platonic dialogue, when Socrates asks his interlocutor to define a certain form or idea, the answer he gets is a list of particular instances or manifestations of that idea. For example, when he asks Theaetetus to define ἐπιστήμη, Theaetetus replies by listing a number of arts, each as the knowledge *of something*. To correct Theaetetus, Socrates gives his own definition of clay as “earth mixed with water” as a model for the kind of definition he is looking for with respect to knowledge.<sup>100</sup> This kind of identification of the thing with its essential nature is “quick and easy,” Socrates says, whereas listing the particular examples of clay, such as the potter's, the oven-maker's, and the bricklayer's is a circumvention of the question at hand, doing little to help the discussion along.

Moreover, the identification of the object with a particular instance of it lends itself to an eristic argument which emerges later in the *Sophist*. There, the Eleatic Stranger rails against the spurious argument that statements such as “sameness exists” and “difference exists,” if they are understood as stating that sameness and difference are things 'of' being,

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<sup>100</sup> *Theaetetus*, 147a-c.

thereby participating in it, imply that “the same is different or the different is the same,” which the Stranger says is “not true ἔλεγχος, but plainly the newborn offspring of some brain that has just begun to lay hold upon the problem of οὐσία.”<sup>101</sup> So in saying that clay is of the potter and also of the bricklayer, the eristic argument leads to the conclusion that the potter's clay is the same thing as the bricklayer's clay and vice versa, when in fact they are plainly two different manifestations of the same idea. The philosopher who Socrates represents and the Stranger rather seek to define an object according a certain combination of elements which produce a new, unique entity. As Desjardins explains in her commentary, a proper combination has the power or δύναμις to communicate meaning and be qualified as true or false; power, we know from the *Sophist*, emerges as a “mark” of genuine being. An improper combination is meaningless and so communicates nothing and cannot be qualified in any way.<sup>102</sup> Socrates' statement that clay is earth and water is therefore an explanation of his apprehension of an infinite continuum of matter, we could say, its division into elements based on a certain unexpressed principle, and the combination of these elements into a single entity, namely clay, according to their power to produce this entity.

λόγος, then, is an account of the nature of this 'emergent entity' which exists on a higher dimension of reality, such as a two-dimension quadrilateral as compared to a one-dimensional line segment. More to the point, διανοία emerges as an objective, mathematical knowledge derived from perception, the soul perceiving “through” the senses as opposed to “with” them, as compared to opinion or belief as a subjective notion about a perception. The proximate goal of the *Theaetetus* is thus to construct a λόγος of knowledge which explains what it is objectively, or what knowledge-for-everyone is. The ultimate goal, then, is to take

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101 *Sophist*, 259d.

102 Desjardins 1990, 75-76.



this λόγος to the next level or 'dimension' of being in order to define what ἐπιστήμη is in and of itself; that is, to define ἐπιστήμη epistemically.

In her commentary, Desjardins endeavors to show how opinions are apprehended through public objects or events and can be communicated as true or false statements. These statements then become the elements of the next order of being and so are combined to form sound or unsound λόγοι of διανοία apprehended through “abstract entities in the intelligible world” and expressed as sound or unsound “theoretic arguments.”<sup>103</sup> As she explains, these abstract entities have modes of existence within διανοία, just as sensible particulars belong to opinion and appearances to perception. It follows, then, that third definition of knowledge is meant to identify ἐπιστήμη as the combination of knowledge of δόξα and διανοία; that is, the combination of one instance of an object's existence as it is known through sensation with the idea or form in which it participates. In other words, Desjardins says, ἐπιστήμη as such has as its elements “*both* the objects of opinion in the world of material becoming [in the *Theaetetus*] and the objects of διανοία and logos [sic] in the world of formal being [in the *Sophist*].”<sup>104</sup> So instead of finding fault with the definition itself, she finds that the aporetic ending of the *Theaetetus* has to do with the fact that Theaetetus does not know to 'multiply' these elements as he does with the one-dimensional line segments of his geometrical model, and so instead defines knowledge as true opinion “with” or “in addition to” λόγος.<sup>105</sup>

In attempting to define knowledge throughout the dialogue, Theaetetus is thus trying to give Socrates a correct proximate λόγος of knowledge as this kind of abstract entity. The third and final definition is nonetheless very significant in that it is the only attempt to define

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103 Desjardins 1990, 145. As mentioned in the last chapter, I suggest that we regard identifications between appearances and opinions as λόγοι which, as objects of thought, have an existence parallel to the mode of being with which they are formed.

104 Ibid, 166. Emphasis in original.

105 Ibid, 162. Cf. Chapter 1, pp. 31-32.

knowledge as the combination of certain elements, namely true opinion and λόγος. In doing so, however, Theaetetus introduces the need to define λόγος itself, just as his earlier attempt to define knowledge as knowledge *of something* requires an investigation into knowledge *qua* knowledge; and moreover, the language inherent in every identification eventually requires the investigation into being *qua* being undertaken in the *Sophist*. In other words, one goal of the final definition or λόγος of knowledge is to explicate in meaningful language a λόγος of λόγος itself. As the Eleatic Stranger states later, “Our object was to establish λόγος as one of our classes (γένη) of being. For if we are deprived of this, we would be deprived of philosophy, which would be the greatest calamity.”<sup>106</sup> Just as the other μεγάστα γένη are necessary ontological principles for distinguishing and governing the realms of static being and generative becoming, so too is this mathematical λόγος necessary for any meaningful communication and discussion of these principles in the search for human knowledge.

Opinions as to how the *Theaetetus* ends vary greatly among commentators. Many scholars argue that the theory of knowledge which Socrates recalls in his “dream for a dream”<sup>107</sup> is thoroughly refuted, and furthermore that the dialogue ends without any positive notion of what knowledge truly is.<sup>108</sup> Other commentators find a positive outcome implicit in the dialogue and argue for a way out of its final ἀπορία, or at the very least for the ἀπορία as a positive and necessary result of philosophical inquiry.<sup>109</sup> This chapter will take a third line, arguing that the solution to the problem of defining λόγος and thereby knowledge is

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106 *Sophist*, 260d.

107 *Theaetetus*, 201e ff.

108 Desjardins has fortunately compiled a lengthy list of said scholars (Desjardins 1990, 8-13; 202-203, §14 and §23).

109 Desjardins 1990, 158-167; Fine 2003, 248-51; Haring 1982.

implicit in the *Theaetetus* and completed in its sequel, the *Sophist*.<sup>110</sup> A discussion of this completion will take place in the penultimate chapter of this thesis. This chapter, then, will be confined to an investigation of the final definition of knowledge in the *Theaetetus*, assuming as a model of λόγος the geometrical demonstration at the start of the dialogue. In this way, we shall see how the final definitions of knowledge and λόγος fit this model and so offer true accounts of them; as well, we shall see the deficiencies of these definitions which necessitate the discussion between being and non-being in the *Sophist*.

### 3.2: Dream Theory (201e-202c)

Let us begin with Socrates' "dream for a dream" which provides the final definition of knowledge as he recounts it to Theaetetus. He begins by describing the elements of a λόγος as follows:

I used to suppose that I heard from others that the primary elements, as it were, of which we and everything else are composed, do not have a λόγος. For each one in and of itself [αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτό] is only able to be named, and cannot be referenced in any other way, neither as it is, nor as it is not; for this would be to impose being or non-being on it, which should not be applied to it if one is to speak about it by itself. Moreover, not even "itself," "that," "each," "alone," "this" nor anything else of the sort, though many, ought to be added. For these names are prevalent terms applied to all things, being other than those things to which they are added. If, on the other hand, it were possible to explain [λέγειν] an element and it had an appropriate [οἰκείος] λόγος, it must be explained apart from everything else.<sup>111</sup>

In Chapter 1, we saw that Theaetetus and the younger Socrates defined δυνάμεις using a λόγος which pertains to a class of elements by which both the class and each individual element can be known. The λόγος itself, we recall, contains principles of sameness and difference—the absolute existence of the object being defined and its existence relative to

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110 Dorter, for example, suggests that the *Sophist* continues certain lines of discussion in the *Theaetetus* (Dorter 1994, 115-116). As well, Cornford argues in his commentary that Plato purposely left out any direct discussion of the forms from the *Theaetetus* in order to demonstrate their necessity in yielding true knowledge, leaving any investigation of their essences for the *Sophist* (Cornford 1935, 6 ff.). Cornford does, however, belong to the camp of scholarship which denies that the theory of knowledge at the end of the *Theaetetus* was Plato's own (Cornford 1935, 143).

111 *Theaetetus*, 201e1-202a9.

the elements which comprise it, having a 'greater' mode of being in this way. Here, however, the discussion is dissecting λόγος into its constituent elements in order to investigate them prior to their combination. Thus the sameness perceived within an individual element is a perception of its discrete nature among the class of elements, whereas its difference measures it against the other elements. This difference, in other words, is arithmetical rather than geometrical; a given number is understood as greater or lesser with respect to its relative quantity, not its relative dimension (i.e. between a number represented as a one-dimensional line segment and a two-dimensional area). In the case of Theaetetus' geometry, these principles thus allow for the generation of the general class of whole number and the disclosure of a multiplicity of parts beyond the mere apprehension of the infinite continuum of greater and lesser magnitude.

The first of two issues needs to be addressed at this point: whose dream is Socrates retelling to Theaetetus? Most scholars seem to agree that this theory is one held by Antisthenes, a pupil of Socrates who, some seem to think, maintained something of an intellectual rivalry with Plato.<sup>112</sup> Assuming, then, that Plato does intend for his contemporary readers to connect the dream theory to Antisthenes, we must see how Antisthenes' own theory of λόγος serves to inform the reader of the difficulties inherent in this position.

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112 Sayre 1948, 242-43. For a brief discussion on the likelihood that Antisthenes is the intended source of the dream theory, see Cornford 1935, 143-44; Desjardins 1990, 8; and Burnyeat 1990, 164-168. The historiography of this passage in the *Theaetetus* is not of concern for this thesis, and so the scholarly precedent seems to provide enough justification to assume that Plato is indeed referencing Antisthenes' doctrines. McDowell, for instance, argues that a literary precedent exists within Plato's own writings, notably the *Euthydemus* and *Cratylus*, and so does not need to be placed elsewhere; but he nonetheless agrees that the author of the dream theory can just as easily be ascribed to Antisthenes (McDowell 1973, 234-37). Or perhaps it is as Burnyeat suggests, that Socrates "is not restating Antisthenes but making creative use of some Antisthenean materials ... [appropriating] other people's ideas for his own thinking and [formulating] the theory for himself" (Burnyeat 1990, 166). In any case, the assumption I am making here provides a useful backdrop for interpreting the final section of this dialogue, just as Doull demonstrates in his commentary that the Megarian school of thought does for the dialogue as a whole (Doull 1977, 9-10).

What we know of this position comes to us chiefly by way of Aristotle, who in his

*Metaphysics* states the following about it:

[Antisthenes] claimed that nothing could be described [λέγειν] except by the account proper to it [οἰκείος λόγος]—one predicate to one subject; from which the conclusion used to be drawn that there could be no contradiction, and almost that there could be no error.<sup>113</sup>

Furthermore:

[The followers of Antisthenes] said that the 'what' cannot be defined [ὀρίζειν] (for the definition [ὄρος] is a μάκρος λόγος) but of what *sort* a thing, e.g. silver, is, they thought it possible actually to explain, not saying what it is, but that it is like tin. Therefore one kind of substance can be defined and formulated [lit. there is a ὄρος and λόγος of it], i.e. the composite kind, whether it be perceptible or intelligible; but the primary parts of which this consists cannot be defined, since a definitory λόγος predicates something of something, and one part of the definition must play the part of matter and the other that of form.<sup>114</sup>

Aristotle here distinguishes between a defining λόγος and a predicating λόγος, a distinction which Antisthenes and his followers missed.<sup>115</sup> Only compounds admit of any rational explanation or λόγος, and each compound has its own unique or “appropriate” λόγος. It is for this reason Socrates and Theaetetus propose that knowledge is true opinion with a λόγος, for a true opinion of the compound's essence entails knowledge of its unique λόγος. As Burnyeat puts it, “a necessary condition for speaking of a thing is simultaneously a sufficient condition for describing it correctly.”<sup>116</sup> The silent λόγος which the soul establishes as its opinion,<sup>117</sup> if true, is communicated as the appropriate λόγος of the essential nature of the object it is investigating.

The dream theory states that a λόγος of a single element would be possible if and only if the *addition* of such prevalent terms can explain what the essential nature of the element is according to *both* its self-sameness *and* its difference from all other like elements,

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113 Aristotle, *Met.* D, 1024b32-34. Ross' translation with Greek inserted.

114 Aristotle, *Met.* H, 1043b23-32. Ross' translation with Greek inserted.

115 Grube 1950, 20. Burnyeat explains the same distinction in Aristotle (Burnyeat 1990, 164-69).

116 Burnyeat 1990, 169.

117 *Theaetetus*, 189e; cf. Chapter 1, pp. 25-26.

stating what this essence is and what it is not in and of itself “apart from everything else.”<sup>118</sup> Moreover, as the elements are all of the same class of object, each element must have its own “appropriate λόγος” using unique terms; otherwise, the essential nature of one element is indistinguishable from any other which uses the same terms in its definition. As Theaetetus demonstrates in his geometrical model, similarity and difference in elements can have meaning only in a correlative context through their mutual perception. The absolute value of a given number, for example, and its relative quantity are known through a mutual perception of both its sameness and difference among its own class of element. Its absolute quantity is meaningless without being measured against other numbers, and its relative quantity, greater or lesser, is meaningless without an absolute value.

The description of elements in the dream theory eliminates the possibility of a meaningful λόγος of individual elements, for what is known about the elements is based simply on the apprehension of sameness and difference, insofar as these qualities are understood to be common among elements of the same class. A λόγος which is the mere addition of elements can only identify the essence of the object on the same 'dimension', so to speak, as the elements themselves, whereas to define the element mathematically as Theaetetus does with δύναμις is to set this essence over and above that of its constituent elements: a geometrical δύναμις is an area represented by an oblong figure, and not a square figure, formed by the multiplication of two line segments. The λόγοι of both the square and the oblong figure remain completely distinct from one another despite there being no difference in the kind of element which comprises them, namely one-dimensional line segments. As J.A. Doull states in his commentary, “in 'is' or any other predicate, there is

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118 Thus Doull: “[Socrates] seeks to determine the relation of the many to this principle [viz. “the One or Good”] by definitions—that is, by stabilizing universally their 'being' and their 'not-being' or relation to one another” (Doull 1977, 11-12).

division and the possibility of negation, where the individuals [i.e. the elements] are supposed to be altogether undivided and without parts.”<sup>119</sup> Thus a λόγος formed through the addition of elements, as in stating, for example, that six is greater than four (rather than six is like four), “divides” the essence of six between its absolute and relative nature, namely 'six' in and of itself and 'greater than four'. Not only does such a statement divide something which is supposed to be indivisible, it also does nothing to determine the nature of the object “apart from everything else”—for it is in the nature of every number greater than four to be greater than four.<sup>120</sup> Thus it cannot be known or communicated *what* six is, only that it is *like* four (or any other number).

Thus the dream theory so far does well to establish that the elements in and of themselves (αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτό) admit of no λόγος. Elements have only a name because they are known in and of themselves solely through perception. As Socrates states above, not even being or non-being can be attributed to the elements as this would be to know them in a mode of existence (as they are, or as they are not) beyond perception—mathematically, as opposed to sensibly. Being and non-being, and indeed any other “prevalent” term, are, of course, perceived by the soul<sup>121</sup> as a mode of knowing over and above sensation, and therefore these qualities have a mode of existence beyond mere perceptions. Therefore, as Socrates states in relating the dream theory:

It is not in any way possible to speak of the primary elements with a λόγος; for there is [no other way] for them to exist except to be named, as all they have is a name. But the combination of elements, having formed a compound, are themselves complex, and so their names, having formed a compound, generate a λόγος.<sup>122</sup>

It is the combination of elements via multiplication rather than addition which allows one to

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119 Ibid, 41.

120 As Aristotle notes, Antisthenes' proposition that form and content exist in a one-to-one ratio is “simple-minded” (*Met.* D, 1024b33).

121 *Theaetetus*, 185d.

122 Ibid, 202a10-b5.

obtain knowledge of and define a certain object according to the demand of both the dialogue and the dream theory. Confined strictly to perceptions of base elements, however, the knowledge acquired in this way amounts to the same private, infallible, and incommunicable knowledge of objects within Heracleitean flux. Usually meaningful communication is impossible within flux due to the object of investigation perpetually becoming other than itself. Here, however, the incommunicability of the nature of any element is the result of the object being known in an absolute sense but without any possible recourse to its relative difference.

Judgments, however, can be formed upon perceptions: the dream theory states that combinations (συλλαβαί) are knowable, expressible, and have a mode of existence parallel to true opinion,<sup>123</sup> as Theaetetus, having some perception of the infinite continuum of number, judges that whole numbers are formed by multiplying either equal factors or unequal factors.

As Desjardins puts it:

...the emergent product is in important respects *both* the same as *and* different from its elements: the same as, in the sense that nothing has been added or subtracted from the elements (fabric is nothing but threads of warp and woof; words are nothing but letters; perceptions are nothing but swift motions, etc.), and yet different, in the sense that the product has in each case a 'power' that the elements do not (fabric can cover and clothe; words can mean; perceptions can be experienced phenomenally, etc.).<sup>124</sup>

As well, square and oblong figures are nothing but numbers represented by line segments, but as the product of two numbers these figures have the power to import rationality to something inherently irrational. An account of the process by which this “emergent product” is formed, by means of dividing the continuum into elements and combining symmetrical or fitting elements together, is presumably the core of a λόγος, the addition of which to the above true opinion reveals actual, objective knowledge according to the current definition of

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123 Ibid, 202b7-8.

124 Desjardins 1990, 91. Emphasis in original.



ἐπιστήμη. Thus Socrates concludes the dream theory:

Whenever someone acquires a true opinion about anything without a λόγος, his soul has truth about it, but not understanding [γίγνωσκεῖν]. For not being able to give and receive a λόγος of something is to be without knowledge [ἀνεπιστήμων] of it; but when he acquires in addition a λόγος, he can become all these things and be perfect [τέλειος] in knowledge.<sup>125</sup>

Socrates assigns Theaetetus' geometrical demonstration as a model of λόγος because it provides a singular definition of what a δύναμις is (and what a 'length' is by extension) which applies to the infinite number of possible manifestations of δυνάμεις, thereby 'perfecting' his knowledge of number by uniting under one term the infinite and the many.

What the dream theory does not address, and the objection which Socrates immediately brings against it, is the asymmetry in knowledge between an element and a compound, and thereby the impossibility to produce a λόγος for any element.<sup>126</sup> As described above, any knowledge by which a λόγος of something is constructed is knowledge of the principles of division and combination of elements within a distinct class of object. The dream theory, however, prefers to examine indivisible elements completely separated from everything else which, to be sure, truly eliminates the possibility of making any meaningful statement about a singular element. In her essay, "Knowledge and Logos in the Theaetetus," Fine argues along with Socrates against the claim that the elements are entirely unknowable. She proposes that Plato believes that a) knowledge must be based on knowledge, and b) knowledge is communicated as a λόγος.<sup>127</sup> In maintaining both propositions, Plato's position entails either an infinite regress or a complete circularity, a problem she admits to but offers no better solution for.<sup>128</sup> In other words, if knowledge both requires a λόγος and is based on knowledge, a true account of an object requires in turn a

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125 *Theaetetus*, 202b9-c6.

126 *Ibid*, 202d.

127 Fine 2003, 225.

128 "Plato commits himself to the view that accounts do not halt at any terminus; they continue on either linearly or circularly" (*Ibid*, 250).

true account of the objects in that account, and so on *ad infinitum*. However, if the elements are truly indivisible and there are a finite number of elements in any given class of objects, for example, the alphabet, knowledge based on knowledge eventually comes full circle, demanding an account of the original object of inquiry.<sup>129</sup> This “interrelation [sic] model of knowledge”<sup>130</sup>, that is, knowledge of the combination of fitting elements, is what Fine argues that Plato means by “knowledge based on knowledge.” It is an account not of each and every element in a λόγος, but of their mutual compatibility.

The λόγος of δύναμις in Theaetetus' geometrical demonstration supports Fine's argument for an interrelation model of knowledge insofar as they both propose knowledge of proper division and combination of elements. She avoids an infinite, linear regress by asserting, and rightly so, that knowledge of an object is confined to knowledge of that object's relationship to other similar objects in the same class so long as the number of objects being finite, such as the number of notes in a musical scale or the number of letters in the alphabet. The regress is circular, but can no longer be infinite, at least. Though I agree with Fine's conclusion that knowledge has to do with the mutual compatibility of elements within a given class of objects, I disagree that this interrelation model can be allowed to entail a circularity without end—for, as one commentator asks, “what criterion can be given to show that a circle of true beliefs is 'sufficiently comprehensive' [*à la* Fine]?”<sup>131</sup> Simply put, Fine's argument does not account for knowledge of a class of objects which contains an infinite number of objects, as is the case with the classes of lengths and δυνάμεις in Theaetetus' geometrical model. As his demonstration shows, there must be inherent in a λόγος a principle of such interrelation which is unique to that class of objects

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129 For example, if A is composed of B and C, B of D and E ... and Z of A and B, a λόγος of A entails a λόγος of A. Cf. Fine 2003, 250.

130 Ibid, 228.

131 Armstrong 1973, 156.

and runs through each and every instance of object in that class, *regardless* of the number of objects. The issue at hand is therefore to determine what support for interrelation on Theaetetus' model of λόγος is implicit in the remainder of this dialogue. Let us turn, then, to the next stage of the discussion between Socrates and Theaetetus.

### 3.3: The Elements (202d-206b)

According to Aristotle's report, the attempted proof of the asymmetry between knowledge of elements and compounds which results from the account of λόγος in the dream theory<sup>132</sup> can be attributed to the same source. If Plato is rejecting some or all of the dream theory, which we might infer based on the fact that the discussion thereafter ends aporetically, we can therefore expect that the investigation into the claim that compounds are knowable and elements unknowable will be similarly rejected in turn as well. Since this proof, explicated in terms of a linguistic paradigm, can be mapped against Theaetetus' geometrical model, a rejection of the proof has one of two consequences: either a) Socrates is retroactively rejecting Theaetetus' model by virtue of its equivalence to the linguistic model, in the same way that by overturning the Protagorean and Heracleitean positions Socrates also overturns Theaetetus' first definition of knowledge; or b) the linguistic model and dream theory are inherently flawed, and Theaetetus' model remains secure as a true demonstration of λόγος. The first result (a) naturally assumes that both models (geometrical and linguistic) are identical in their function, both concluding that the unknowability of elements entails the same result for compounds. This result is plainly not the case, and so the second result (b), that the linguistic model and the dream theory it endeavors to support

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<sup>132</sup> *Theaetetus*, 202e3-5.

are flawed,<sup>133</sup> must be Plato's intended direction. Moreover, Socrates discusses the common opinion that the elements are somehow *more* knowable than compounds, evidenced by the fact that children must learn to read individual letters before they can attempt to read entire words and sentences.<sup>134</sup> Once again, the linguistic model and the dream theory must be taken as insufficient accounts of λόγος.

As Socrates quite clearly maintains that the geometrical model is a correct and true account of λόγος, it therefore follows from the fact that neither the linguistic proof nor any of the three definitions of λόγος in this section of the *Theaetetus* can fully support the dream theory from which they follow, that Plato intends to justify the second result to the reader. As mentioned above, however, the proper approach in addressing the apparent failure of this dialogue to define knowledge and λόγος is not to dismiss outright the propositions which lead to a failure, but to determine what positive outcome these propositions have, if any. The dilemma we are currently faced with stems from the attempt to distinguish between the 'whole' (ὅλον) as the composition of parts and the 'sum' (πᾶν) as an entity greater than the parts. Upon the assumption that compounds admit of a λόγος but the constituent elements do not, Socrates and Theaetetus offer these two types of compound as the possible modes of combination available to the anonymous author of the dream theory.

The second of two issues here needs to be addressed: what exactly is the status of the elements, and by extension any compound? The dream theory proposes that a λόγος of any element could only be formed by addition and not proper mathematical combination, as the latter method can make use of common terms in order to produce any number of “appropriate” λόγοι. Thus, as mentioned above, knowledge of elements cannot be expressed

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133 Ibid, 205d-e.

134 Ibid, 206a-b.

with a definitional λόγος, but only with a predication which identifies one element with another element of a similar kind; tin is like silver, for example, and six is like four.

Aristotle enumerates two general classes of elements, sensible and intelligible, and states that Antisthenes applied his theory to either class. Given the arguments which precede this section of the *Theaetetus*, the elements here certainly appear to be sensible objects, or rather names which signify such objects according to the doctrines of Protagoras and Heraclitus. Indeed, as Socrates states, “the elements have no λόγος [ἄλογος] and are unknowable [ἄγνωστος], but are perceptible.”<sup>135</sup> Intelligible elements, namely the μεγίστα γένη, are then left for Theaetetus to investigate in the *Sophist* with the Eleatic Stranger despite the assertion of Parmenides and the Friends of the Forms that intelligible forms cannot be known.<sup>136</sup>

As discussed in the last chapter,<sup>137</sup> Protagoras does not recognize that non-additive generation is possible and so he forms his λόγος according to how Antisthenes says this must be done. Whereas Theaetetus 'multiplies' elements in order to form his mathematical λόγος, Protagoras simply adds them together to form a λόγος which expresses not the objective nature of the object being define, but rather his opinion of its nature as it appears to him. This mode of perception is “radically private” and so what each element is, and so too any compound, or what any given name refers to exists as such only for each particular observer. In this way, the Protagorean λόγος does not exist in any sort of objective theater. Thus the Protagorean measure doctrine, situated as it is within Heraclitean flux, satisfies

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135 Ibid, 202b6-7. As Desjardins notes, perception is “radically private. [...] 'False perception' is therefore, in terms of the [*kompsoteros*] theory, impossible. [...] It follows that any perception that actually occurs must to that extent be infallibly 'true' for the subject that helps to generate it (160c7)” (Desjardins 1990, 84).

136 *Parmenides*, 133b ff; cf. *Sophist*, 248d-e. That is, if a form is a compound, it must be a compound of intelligible elements. If the elements are unknowable as per the dream theory, then the compound is equally unknowable according to the forthcoming paradox.

137 Chapter 1, pp. 31-32.

both of Antisthenes' demands: one, that only one appropriate definitional λόγος exists for any given compound; and two, that a λόγος of an element, if one could exist, must disclose the unique nature of that element apart from all the rest. What one person says is true is true only for himself, and so the communication in a λόγος of what he knows retains a meaning distinct from any other, even if the words are the same.

Under the linguistic model, then, the dream theorist's proof that compounds are rational entities and elements are irrational is demonstrated with a simple analogy: letters of the alphabet are unknowable elements and syllables (and therefore by extension words, sentences, and arguments) are knowable compounds. Letters are simple and cannot be reduced any further, just as no geometrical object exists on a dimension 'lesser' than a one-dimensional line segment. Indeed, it is no trouble for Theaetetus to give a λόγος of the first syllable of Socrates' name, 'Σω', as the combination of sigma and omega;<sup>138</sup> similarly, he has very little difficulty in his geometrical demonstration determining the equal or unequal factors of any given length or δύναμις. When considered in and of themselves, however, the letters sigma and omega yield absolutely no meaningful knowledge. They admit of no λόγος because, as Theaetetus explains, “the sigma is among the voiceless letters, no more than a sound, like the hissing of the tongue; [...] and even the most distinct letters, the seven vowels, have a voice only, but no λόγος whatsoever.”<sup>139</sup> In his geometrical demonstration, Theaetetus divides the infinite continuum of magnitude into a multitude of constituent elements (numbers), and then creates two distinct classes of number, namely rational and irrational roots, based on the respective equality or inequality of their factors. So too, we see, can the continuum of sound be divided into its elements, namely letters, which are then

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138 *Theaetetus*, 203a8.

139 *Ibid*, 203b.

assigned to one of two distinct classes of letter, namely consonants and vowels. Just as two numbers, when represented by proportional one-dimensional line segments, can be combined to form a two-dimensional figure, so too, it should follow, can two (or more) irrational letters be combined into a rational syllable or word.<sup>140</sup>

The designation of compounds as either a 'whole' or a 'sum' presents two horns of a dilemma. First, the essential nature of a whole becomes identical to that of a sum;<sup>141</sup> and second, neither compound is able to demonstrate knowability through a λόγος due to its essential nature.<sup>142</sup> As Dorter suggests, Plato intentionally introduces here the same argument which Parmenides uses against his theory of the forms: if the forms are each a whole, the whole form is in each object which participates in it and therefore separated from itself; or, if the forms are each a sum, they are no longer a self-contained unity.<sup>143</sup> The dilemma in the *Theaetetus* results from the inability of the dream theorist to give an account of λόγος which establishes it as *both* a complete entity composed of parts, “for that from which anything is lacking can be neither a whole nor a sum,”<sup>144</sup> and an entity distinct from its parts. Once again, the dream theory falls short of its mark by isolating the term it wishes to define apart from everything else. The solution to the dilemma, Dorter rightly thinks, lies in “establishing that a whole is *correlated* to a sum, so that one can speak of the parts of the sum in *relation* to the whole, but not as parts *of* the whole.”<sup>145</sup> In other words, whereas the

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140 Cf. Desjardins 1990, 80.

141 *Theaetetus*, 205a7-8.

142 Ibid, 205d-e.

143 Dorter 1994, 27-28; *Parmenides* 131b-c.

144 *Theaetetus*, 205a.

145 Dorter 1994, 111. He agrees with Fine's conclusion insofar as knowledge concerns the interrelation of elements and is possible when one knows the proper relation between all the elements of one class or “system.” He continues in this way, stating, “Even to the extent that a syllable can be analyzed unproblematically into elements, the sum of the elements is not the same as the syllable unless they are properly united with regard to sequence, relative duration, emphasis, and so on. Thus, although in one sense we can speak of the syllable as the sum of its constituent letters, in another sense it is a pre-given whole to which we must look, as a paradigm, *in order to* put the right elements together in the right way. Wholeness implies an *organization* of the parts, whereas a sum is a simple aggregation.” Emphasis in

dream theory only allows for this negative result, namely that λόγος can be *either* a whole *or* a sum but concludes by the logic of this linguistic proof that it is *neither* a whole *nor* a sum, Theaetetus and Socrates instead imply, as Dorter and others suggest, that the dianoetic λόγος they are looking for is properly defined as a new “emergent product” which is *both* a whole *and* a sum, being at one and the same time the same as its constituent elements (ὅλον) and different from them (πᾶν).<sup>146</sup> As we shall see in the next section, this implication is brought out in the forthcoming definitions of λόγος, the second of which undertakes to define λόγος as a whole, and the third as a sum.

Having offered this indirect proof against the dream theory, Socrates now offers a direct proof, albeit one based on common experience.<sup>147</sup> The dream theory states, as we know, that elements are unknowable and admit of no λόγος, and compounds are knowable, having a λόγος. In direct contrast to this position, Socrates suggests that the elements are somehow *more* knowable than compounds. As he explains to Theaetetus, the ability to read begins with a prior ability to distinguish individual letters apart from the rest in order to understand their meaning when combined, just as the ability to play an instrument begins with a prior understanding of individual notes in a musical scale such that the nature of a longer, more complex composition can be understood.<sup>148</sup> In other words, an understanding of each element in and of itself (αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτό ἕκαστος<sup>149</sup>) allows one to gain knowledge of the entire “family of elements,” with which one has a “much clearer knowledge than [with] the compound, and a more important knowledge for the perfect [τέλεος] acquisition of each

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original. He calls Fine's conclusion unfortunate, however, insofar as it entails Meno's paradox; that is, that the whole system cannot be known simply by enumerating the parts, but the parts cannot be known in any case without prior knowledge of the whole (Dorter 1994, 112 §53).

146 Cf. §124 above.

147 Though earlier he makes the same appeal to common experience in order to demonstrate the existence of false opinion (*Theaetetus*, 177e-179d).

148 Ibid, 206a-b.

149 Ibid, 206a7. Cf. §111 above.



branch of learning.”<sup>150</sup> This proposition makes practical sense if the class of elements in question is small, such as the letters of the alphabet. The Protagorean position could certainly offer a λόγος of each distinct element, but it too fails when the class of elements is infinite in number, as is the case with whole numbers. In order for Protagoras to gain a perfect knowledge of number, he would have to perceive and identify for himself the nature of each and every number. As discussed above, knowledge of this type is derived from the apprehension of common sameness and difference among elements via their absolute and relative existence within their appropriate infinite continuum and the distinction Aristotle makes between a definitional λόγος and a predicative λόγος. Any number has an absolute value perceived as such, and at the same time it exists relative to other numbers and can be predicated as such: any number is greater than every lesser quantity, and lesser than every greater quantity. Thus Socrates says that knowledge of sensible elements is “much clearer,” as the physical appearance of a simple body such as a letter is easier to interpret than a complex one, such as a name, which one must learn to spell.<sup>151</sup>

The dream theory, then, is tentatively accepted for its proposition, explored in the remainder of the dialogue, that knowledge is true opinion with a λόγος. The dream theory is rejected, however, and its defense via the linguistic paradigm overturned due to their inability to account for anything other than the fact that λόγος is necessary for the acquisition of knowledge and is a compound formed from elements. Theaetetus' geometrical model gives an organic and logical order by which one arrives at a λόγος as the definition of something: the infinite continuum is apprehended, divided into a multiplicity of elements (and then sorted into appropriate classes) which are then combined by virtue of a mutual

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<sup>150</sup> Ibid, 206b. Cf. §125 above.

<sup>151</sup> Here Socrates also foreshadows the discussion of the *Sophist*, in which the greatest kinds are the *most* clear due to their superlative universality.

symmetry or commensurability in order to produce a new, singular emergent entity. The dream theory simply posits that this entity, the final product of a very involved ontological and epistemological process, does exist and can be produced through this process. It assumes that the prior apprehension and division have already taken place; as a consequence, these assumptions remain no more than implicit in the theory and can only be explicated in a backwards order. As the dream theory and its supporting argument fail on all sides to give an adequate definition of λόγος, Socrates and Theaetetus therefore endeavor next to formulate this account themselves.

#### 3.4: λόγος in the *Theaetetus* (206c-210b)

The claim that only compounds are knowable has now been thoroughly abandoned. Socrates mentions casually that even more evidence could be brought against the claim that elements are unknowable,<sup>152</sup> but he brings that particular discussion to a close so that he and Theaetetus can return to the main issue: “What is it to say that perfect knowledge arises through the attachment of true opinion with a λόγος?”<sup>153</sup> The Protagorean position demonstrates what opinion looks like if the elements which form this entity are themselves sensible objects, and so the λόγος thus formed is a statement of how an object is perceived for the observer within the realm of becoming. True opinion, when identified with true knowledge, is thus identified with the sort of λόγος Socrates and Theaetetus are looking for. It is the soul, not the senses, which arrives at a definition of the object by interpreting its essential qualities. As Doull states, true opinion

...determines what is thus known as both identical and divided. The judgment is a combination of the identity and the difference of the terms: through the difference of contraries something is

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152 Ibid, 206c1-2.

153 Ibid, 206c3-5.

completely mediated and identical with itself in its otherness or 'not-being'.<sup>154</sup>

Sameness and difference now become united in the sort of mathematical λόγος Socrates and Theaetetus have been looking for from the start. This opinion and the knowledge contained within it, however, remain completely silent, and so the third definition of ἐπιστήμη is introduced.<sup>155</sup> True opinion, identified as a silent λόγος which each person keeps to himself, is expressed openly with the addition of a λόγος the purpose of which is to connect the internal, subjective unity of the true opinion to an external, objective unity.

With the definition of knowledge as it is, the question, then, of what λόγος is raises some difficulties. As P. T. Geach proposes, the correct predication of a given term, X, in answering the question what X is, demonstrates the ability to give a “general criterion for a thing's being X.”<sup>156</sup> Antisthenes proposes something similar, namely that the correct predication of an object to its essential nature entails the ability to correct define the object with λόγος; thus it follows for him that there is no contradiction and no falsehood as the only statement about an object is its “appropriate λόγος.”<sup>157</sup> Theaetetus' geometrical demonstration shows that λόγος is indeed an account or explanation of this “general criterion,” such that δύναμις is defined as a whole number having unequal factors. As a consequence of this notion of λόγος, however, the definition of λόγος itself appears to be tautological: λόγος is [an account of the general criterion by which] λόγος [is λόγος]. The result is no better for knowledge, the general criterion for which is then 'true opinion with a λόγος'; in other words, knowledge is true opinion with an account [of knowledge being true opinion with a λόγος].

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154 Doull 1977, 34.

155 Thus Doull again: “The truth of opinion is thus found to be merely inward and without reality” (Ibid, 39).

Cf. Chapter 1, pp. 14-15.

156 Geach 1972, 33-34. Burnyeat also discusses this proposition and its consequences for Socratic inquiry (Burnyeat 1977, 382-83).

157 Burnyeat 1990, 166.

The solution to these problems is thankfully rather simple at first. When returning to the discussion of what knowledge is, Socrates asks Theaetetus specifically what they want the term λόγος to signify (σημαίνειν), and thereby what it means (λέγειν).<sup>158</sup> Either what λόγος is in and of itself is not their concern at this point, or what they take λόγος to be in and of itself will be informed by the status of what it signifies. The above tautologies are therefore incorrect, as defining λόγος does not entail an account of its own general criterion for being λόγος, nor does the definition of knowledge entail true opinion with an account by which knowledge is true opinion with a λόγος, as if λόγος were acting as some principle independent of the true opinion. After all, knowledge here is defined as true opinion with (μετά) a λόγος, not, say, true opinion *and* a λόγος. Thus the investigation which ends this dialogue is not of λόγος *qua* being, but λόγος *qua* meaning as this meaning is understood and communicated. As Socrates then suggests, λόγος can mean one of three things which, when coupled with a true opinion, yields true, universal knowledge. In her commentary on the *Theaetetus*, Desjardins suggests that these three meanings directly correspond to the three phases of constructing a λόγος: apprehension of an infinite continuum; division of the continuum into a multiplicity of elements; and combination of commensurate elements into a singular entity.<sup>159</sup> It is largely by building upon this understanding that I will continue my own elaboration of these meanings.

The first meaning of λόγος is no more than the vocalization of thought (διανοία), which Socrates almost immediately rejects on the grounds that this meaning is indistinguishable from true opinion.<sup>160</sup> On a closer examination, we can see how the description of this process is parallel to the first step in the construction of a λόγος. He tells

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158 *Theaetetus*, 206c7-8.

159 Desjardins 1990, 143.

160 *Theaetetus*, 206e.

Theaetetus that this process is just like “creating an image of the opinion in the stream [of ὀνόματα and ῥήματα] flowing through the mouth, as in a mirror or water.”<sup>161</sup> Whereas before in the dream theory the continuum of sound was divided into letters, classified as either a consonant or a vowel, here Socrates posits a continuum of sound which he divides into words, classified as either nouns or verbs, ὀνόματα or ῥήματα, which are then, supposedly, combined to form a coherent sentence reflecting one's thoughts.

The explicit mention of διανοία as that which is vocalized has an important bearing on the rest of the dialogue. Earlier we saw Socrates define διανοία and opinion as follows:

[διανοία is] a λόγος which the soul goes through in full, itself by itself, about whatever it might investigate. [...] And whenever [the soul] makes a decision [ὀρίζειν], whether this is done slowly or in a quick rush, and when there is no doubt about what it says, we establish this as its opinion. So I say that forming an opinion [δοξάζειν] is speaking, and opinion [δόξα] itself is a communicated λόγος, not aloud to someone else, but in silence with oneself.<sup>162</sup>

With this explanation, the reader is presented with the terms for understanding the relation between the 'internal' and 'external' unities mentioned above: opinion, forming an opinion, and both a communicated and a silent λόγος. To help with balancing these terms I will discuss them as dianoetic and linguistic entities. By 'dianoetic' I mean those things which remain in the soul and in thought, and by 'linguistic' the vocalization of a dianoetic entity. The act of forming an opinion is then the process by which one proceeds through the steps in forming a λόγος. The opinion itself, the first element in this definition of knowledge, is a dianoetic or 'internal' λόγος which defines the object of investigation. This λόγος is then communicated openly through the combination of nouns and verbs, providing the second element in the definition. The intended meaning of the silent opinion is then the linguistic

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161 Ibid, 206d. Socrates states that ὀνόματα and ῥήματα, words and names, are the objects by which a dianoetic thought is vocalized. In the *Sophist*, the Eleatic Stranger identifies these terms, the elements of a dianoetic λόγος, as nouns and verbs (262a-e). The significance of classifying these terms as nouns and verbs will be suggested shortly and discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

162 *Theaetetus*, 189e-190a.

form of a dianoetic λόγος,<sup>163</sup> which is available to be tested for truth or falsity.

In the first chapter I suggested somewhat contrary to Desjardins that λόγος is more rightly considered as an entity formed by any mode of knowing, and that the mode of knowing informs the parallel mode of being which the λόγος itself has. Accordingly, in the above quotation no distinction is made between opinion and λόγος, whether dianoetic or linguistic; indeed, Socrates sees fit to identify them.<sup>164</sup> The problem inherent with this first definition of λόγος does not rest within this explanation of διανοοία, but rather within the current meaning of λόγος. In its linguistic form as the vocalization of thought it is tautologically related to a correct or right linguistic opinion,<sup>165</sup> collapsing any distinction between the two. As a result, any distinction between a correct dianoetic opinion and λόγος collapses along with this definition of knowledge.

This meaning of λόγος therefore establishes the continuum or “stream” containing its elements, but it is unable to explain the process of reasoning (ἀναλόγισμα) through which a λόγος is constructed via division and combination. In other words, under the first meaning of λόγος in the final section of this dialogue, Theaetetus could shorten his geometrical demonstration considerably by stating simply that there are rational and irrational square roots. His opinion would be correct but without anyone knowing how it is correct, just like when a judge correctly decides the verdict of a court case without having seen the events first hand, thereby having no account or λόγος of them.<sup>166</sup>

The most immediate goal of the second meaning of λόγος clearly must be to distinguish between the meanings of opinion and λόγος. Explaining λόγος as the

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163 Cf. 186c, where the soul is said to reason (ἀναλόγισμα) about the things it perceives through the senses, upon which it forms opinions.

164 ὥστ' τὸ δοξάζειν λέγειν καλῶ (*Theaetetus*, 190a4-5).

165 Ibid, 206e1-2.

166 Ibid, 201b-c.

enumeration of the elements of a compound is a noble attempt to accomplish this task, and to some extent it is successful, but nonetheless fails as an adequate account of the meaning of λόγος. Indeed, Socrates and Theaetetus immediately make a clear distinction between true opinion, as opposed to a correct opinion or what is correctly an opinion, and λόγος. This distinction reintroduces what Aristotle considers to be the difference between a definition and a predication. The former is the identification between the object of investigation and its essential nature, what knowledge has been said to be from the start. Thus a false opinion, and so here a false λόγος, is an incorrect identification of this kind. For example, if a circle were defined as a three-sided figure, or anything other than its own essential nature.<sup>167</sup> A *correct* opinion, however, is simply a true predication of the object with something accidental to it, each object having a multitude of possible predications.

Thus Socrates states:

Someone might think that we are ridiculous if, for instance, we were asked about your name [ὄνομα] and responded according to its syllables, correctly forming an opinion [δοξάζειν] and expressing what we mean [λέγειν], but supposing that we are grammarians, both having and meaning [λέγειν] in grammatical terms the λόγος of the name 'Theaetetus'. For it is not possible for someone to give a knowledgeable meaning [ἐπιστεμόνως οὐδέν λέγειν] until he lists each of the elements with a true opinion.<sup>168</sup>

A true opinion, here taken to be a part of true knowledge, identifies the object of investigation with something static and unchanging in order to avoid the destruction of meaningful language under Heraclitean flux. So whether a discussion is done silently with oneself or out loud with one or more interlocutors, the very possibility of discussion rests upon an agreement of the nature of any given object, whether essential or accidental, and so too the names which signify what these natures are understood to be. A true opinion here moves beyond mere appearance, corresponding to what the object is in and of itself. True

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167 Aristotle, *Met.* D, 1024b28-30.

168 *Theaetetus*, 207a-b.

knowledge then requires one more step, combining the true opinion with an account of the general criterion by which the name contains the essential meaning of the object. Thus it is *correct* for Socrates to judge that the name 'Theaetetus' is a collection of syllables, as if he heard the name spoken aloud and perceived that it is a collection of syllables, just as Hesiod judges that 'wagon' is a collection of wood pieces,<sup>169</sup> and just as Theaetetus could have judged that 'magnitude' is a collection of rational and irrational numbers. Predication, however, is not definition, and so any attempt to define an object according to the class or type of element which comprises it does not express the essential meaning or general criterion of the object. The name 'Theaetetus' is indeed a collection of syllables, but so is every other name, even if that collection is of only one element (that is, a monosyllabic name), just as any other wooden structure, such as a ship or a Trojan horse, is also a collection of wood pieces.

Under the second definition of *λόγος*, then, opinion must be contrasted with a type of technical knowledge. An opinion, Socrates says, is communicated by relating the elements in terms of the whole (the name 'Theaetetus' as a collection of syllables, for example), whereas actual knowledge (a definitional *λόγος*, rather than a predicative one) communicates an object's "essential nature" (*αὐτῆς τὴν οὐσίαν*) by relating the whole in terms of its elements.<sup>170</sup> In other words, the essential meaning of an object is expressed by listing off the particular elements which make that object what it is, such as wheels, axle, body, rims, yoke, and anything else in the case of a wagon, or the particular syllables out of all of them which comprise Theaetetus' name.<sup>171</sup> Whoever is able to give a full enumeration of an object's elements, as Socrates says, "has become an expert [*τεχνικός*] instead of just an

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169 Ibid, 207a.

170 Ibid, 207c.

171 Ibid, 207a7.



opinion-maker [δοξαστικός] and knowledgeable [επιστημόνως] with respect to [the object's] οὐσία.”<sup>172</sup> Altogether, this process can be mapped against the above definition of διανοία as follows: after perceiving the name 'Theaetetus', whether in speech or writing, Socrates the δοξαστικός arrives at a dianoetic opinion of it, defining the name by what meaning it has as a whole entity, namely a collection of syllables. If Socrates has a technical knowledge of grammar, however, he can reason about the object, which under this definition of λόγος entails no more than the division of the infinite continuum of sound into recognizable elements, i.e. the individual syllables which form Theaetetus' name. The reason why the first definition of λόγος fails is now abundantly clear: under that definition, the essential nature of an object was assumed to be contained or implicit in any true judgment about the object as it exists as a whole entity, as if mere implication is a sufficient criterion for knowledge. Under the current definition of λόγος, knowledge is evident if and only if the essential meaning is made explicit through this process of enumerating the elements.

In this case, however, technical knowledge is entirely accidental and not at all an indicator of true knowledge or wisdom. Coupled with the dream theory, for Socrates mentions the possibility of other proofs against it, the enumeration of elements leads to other problems: if knowledge is true opinion with a λόγος and there is an asymmetry in λόγος between elements and compounds, there is also an asymmetry in knowledge between elements and compounds;<sup>173</sup> therefore, if knowledge is based on knowledge and communicated as a λόγος,<sup>174</sup> stating that Theaetetus' name is comprised of the syllabic elements THE-AE-TE-TUS demands an additional λόγος of each syllable, demanding in

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172 Ibid, 207c. This technical knowledge of grammar thus confirms Geach's position (above) that correct predication demonstrates an *ability* to give a “general criterion” of a thing being what it is. Compare the use of τεχνικός and δοξαστικός here with the σοφός and σοφιστικός at *Sophist*, 268b.

173 *Theaetetus*, 202b, where the elements are classified as ἄγνωστα and ἄλογα; also see Fine 2003, 228-29.

174 Fine 2003, 225.

turn a λόγος of each individual letter. Maintaining that λόγος is the enumeration of elements proves *contra* the dream theory that elements are knowable and logical, but as was shown above this knowledge is private and only true for the particular observer. Maintaining the opposite, that elements are unknowable and without a λόγος, is in direct opposition to Fine's original proposition that Platonic knowledge is based on knowledge, or Geach's suggestion that this type of knowledge is based on the ability to define an object according to the general criterion by which it is what it is. Moreover, this latter position reintroduces the dilemma addressed earlier.<sup>175</sup> So much for the dream theory.

To that end, this definition of λόγος can be reduced to nothing more than true opinion, differing from the first definition only insofar as its practice entails a more complex process of forming an opinion. The name of the object being defined (as opposed to the meaning behind it) is arrived at through the collection of elements under a common term: for example, the name 'Theaetetus' as a collection of syllables, or any particular number as a collection (albeit a small one) of equal or unequal factors. This collection is done according to the power of the soul which forms an opinion as described in the direct proof against the doctrines of Protagoras and Heracleitus.<sup>176</sup> The act of enumerating the elements of any compound is thus nothing more than individually naming a series of simple objects, such as wheels, axle, body, rims, yoke in the case of Hesiod's wagon, or the individual syllables in Theaetetus' name. So defined, the true opinion of each element is only true for someone and not everyone; so predicated, the correct opinion does not yield true, essential knowledge.

The problem, as Socrates and Theaetetus discuss, is that the enumeration of elements yields no more than the additive collection of elements, as opposed to a *combination* of

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<sup>175</sup> pp. 56-57 above.

<sup>176</sup> *Theaetetus*, 185b-187a.

them, as it does not take into account the proper ordering of elements. To that end, then, the whole has no greater dimension than its elements, whereas a square or oblong figure from the geometrical model exists on a dimension greater than its elements. As mentioned earlier, the enumeration of elements is therefore eventually replaced with what Fine calls an “interrelation model of knowledge,”<sup>177</sup> which, she explains, is not just the power to combine fitting elements, such as how to properly spell 'Theaetetus' or 'Theodorus'. This model also includes “the ability to handle [a compound's] constituents in a variety of contexts.”<sup>178</sup> In other words, there has to be some principle by which the enumeration of elements takes place in order to differentiate between objects which contain the same elements, such as the words 'time' and 'mite'.<sup>179</sup> In this way, this definition of λόγος implies the necessity of a pre-given whole which exists in one's understanding logically prior to the actual combination of elements and, as Desjardins states, serves as a model against which the new entity can be tested for fitness (that is, testing for the *proper* combination of elements).<sup>180</sup> The second definition of λόγος succeeds insofar as it can define the whole, but ultimately fails as it only allows one to reach an understanding of a whole which has the same existent status or 'dimension' as its elements.<sup>181</sup>

The third and final meaning of λόγος discussed in the *Theaetetus*, far from trying to overcome this disjunction between the whole and its parts, instead attempts to define an object solely according to its unique differentia. As Socrates explains, this final proposition states that an understanding of the unique characteristic by which one object is different than

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177 Fine 2003, 241. The shortcomings I see in Fine's argument have been discussed already.

178 Ibid, 243. Cf. *Theaetetus*, 207d-e.

179 Assuming, of course, that the elements here are letters, not syllables.

180 Desjardins 1990, 141. Or as Dorter states, “according to the theory of forms [sic], as well, the essential character of a thing precedes it as a paradigm, rather than following upon it as a consequence” (Dorter 1994, 111).

181 Cf. pp. 47-48 above.

every other object yields a λόγος as the general criterion of it being what it is. For example, the sun can be defined as the brightest heavenly body which orbits the earth;<sup>182</sup> similarly, any square figure in Theaetetus' geometrical demonstration has one unique number as its equal factors.<sup>183</sup> In this way, λόγος becomes separate from true opinion as it is now divorced from any notion of commonality of elements, such as a name being a collection of syllables, which is true of every name but does nothing to distinguish one name from any other.<sup>184</sup>

Thus the third and final definition of λόγος endeavors to examine this entity as a sum, rather than a whole as in the previous definition. As well, the discussion evokes the dilemma between these two entities briefly examined in the previous section of this chapter, to which we will return shortly. For now, we see here that λόγος is understood as a new, singular entity, namely the combination of fitting elements rather than a simple collection of them, parallel to the third and final step in the formation of a λόγος. As with the second definition, this one fails as well due to its exclusivity; that is, Socrates and Theaetetus do not consider this entity as being the result of the full process in constructing a λόγος, taking no account of a prior division of elements. The sun is a fair enough example of a unique entity as it is clearly the brightest object in the sky, but when they try to define an object whose physical features appear in close proximity to similar objects, the definition fails. It is absurd to try and define Theaetetus according to his snub nose and bug eyes as this representation is equally true of Socrates and anyone else with similar features,<sup>185</sup> but it is equally absurd to assume therefore that the inability of Socrates to relate some perceptible difference between Theaetetus and himself or another lookalike means that he does not know

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182 *Theaetetus*, 208c-d. Of course, the failure of this meaning of λόγος has nothing to do with Plato's apparent conception of a geocentric universe.

183 That is, nine is the only square with three as its factors, sixteen with four, etc.

184 *Ibid.*, 208d.

185 *Ibid.*, 143e and 209c.

Theaetetus apart from someone else, as Theodorus can plainly differentiate between the two at the beginning of the dialogue.

As Antisthenes does not distinguish between a correct and a true λόγος, this definition agrees with his assertion that there is only one λόγος of any given object, but this λόγος must be equally as unique as one which would define an element and therefore cannot rely on “prevalent terms.” The elements are still sensible objects, and so it follows that the compounds are sensible as well, as the above examples show. Theaetetus and the sun are still not being defined mathematically, only by way of addition. There is no difference between adding the perception of snub-nosedness or bug-eyedness to whatever perception one has of Theaetetus than to that of Socrates, and so there is no practical way to arrive at a distinct definition for each person. As stated above, there is no account here of the division of a continuum into elements, whereas in Theaetetus' geometrical model the division of magnitude into whole numbers and number into rational and irrational numbers allows him to create a λόγος for both square and oblong figures using the exact same kind of elements, i.e. line segments, or even the same quantities in any particular example.

At face value, the proposed solution to this problem, that an understanding of Theaetetus' unique differentia is acquired through a sort of “memorial intimation” similar to an imprint on the wax block model,<sup>186</sup> does nothing to overcome the difficulties of this definition of λόγος. For one thing, if a thing's distinctiveness is simply an opinion of it, such that Socrates judges the impression of this young man on his own wax block and assigns it the name 'Theaetetus' (indeed, the first two definitions of λόγος define opinion precisely as the attachment of a unique name to a particular object), then the third definition of λόγος is

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186 Using the participle ἐνσημηναμένος at *Theaetetus*, 209c7; cf. 191d6, using the same participle.

absurd, stating that knowledge is true opinion with (another) opinion.<sup>187</sup> On the other hand, the wax block model assumes an ability to distinguish one imprint from another, which is to say that it assumes knowledge of the idea of difference. In this way, the final definition of λόγος ends in a circularity: knowledge is defined as true opinion with knowledge of difference.<sup>188</sup> Moreover, recalling the wax block model in the acquisition of a thing's unique differentia confuses the second and third definitions of λόγος. The wax block model accounts for a unique perception of a whole through its parts, such as the features which distinguish Theaetetus from Theodorus, but without any notion of combination, just as the second definition demands an enumeration of each and every element as a collection, but not a combination. The aviary image, on the other hand, like the third definition, accounts for an understanding of the combination of elements as a sum or entity distinct from the parts, such as twelve as the sum of five and seven, or Theaetetus as an entirely unique entity based on his looks, but without any recourse to a prior method of division.<sup>189</sup>

### 3.5: A Positive Ending

A deeper conspectus of the three definitions of λόγος can propose a way out of the difficulties in which Socrates and Theaetetus now find themselves. First, let us consider how the definition of the sun compares to the mathematical paradigm. The sun is clearly definable as the brightest heavenly object; so too is clay easily definable as the mixture of earth and water.<sup>190</sup> This λόγος of clay is also considered briefly as paradigmatic in that it gives a universal definition which can be spread out into various species, for instance, the potter's clay and the brickmaker's clay, just as the λόγος Theaetetus gives of δύναμις applies

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187 Ibid, 209d-e.

188 Ibid, 210a.

189 See Desjardins 1990, 120.

190 *Theaetetus*, 147c.

to each and every instance of δύναμις in the infinite plurality of number. The sun, however, is not defined as a genus like clay or δύναμις; rather, it is one particular object in the species of heavenly objects, a proper mathematical λόγος of which is therefore assumed. As Dorter states, “We have all the information necessary to conclude that the sun is the brightest heavenly object, even if the unification of the information into that description has never explicitly occurred to us.”<sup>191</sup> What, then, does this definition contain, implicitly or explicitly, which can be considered true knowledge?

No mention of the sun in any Platonic dialogue should be given only a literal analysis. Considered as a metaphor for the Good, its mention here allows for two different perspectives beyond just what Socrates discusses in this section of the dialogue. As discussed above, the sort of λόγος which the *Theaetetus* demands is a statement which contains principles of *both* sameness *and* difference, such that the object is defined as it is the same as itself and other than all other things. Perhaps the sun, too, can be considered in this way. In its absolute existence as a unique entity, it is the brightest object in the sky and the singular source of light during the day which illuminates all objects equally at once. In its relative existence, it is other than all the things it illuminates. As analogous to the Good, it is 'greater' than all the things which participate in it, as a sum is more than its parts. At the same time, however, the Good provides the measure of goodness for all other things, and so as a whole it can be analyzed into its constituent parts, all of which are good to a certain degree. The sun is then not just a sum or a whole, but a product which is both but can only be considered as one or the other at any given time. Similarly, clay is not just a whole composed of earth and water nor just a new material completely distinct from both, both a sum and a whole depending on how one understands what 'clay' is: as a whole, it is nothing

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<sup>191</sup> Dorter 1994, 118.

other than the mixture of earth and water, but as a sum or a new entity it has a unique power which earth and water cannot have on their own.<sup>192</sup>

The description of Theaetetus, far from communicating a dianoetic λόγος of some unique characteristic, is instead nothing more than Socrates' opinion of him. All three attempts to define λόγος, then, cannot distinguish it from the silent opinion which the soul forms. The intention of this final definition of λόγος is the same as what Antisthenes proposes, namely to communicate the singular, proprietary λόγος of a given object. This definition of Theaetetus may even suggest a plurality of elements, namely people, but there is nothing in Socrates' description of Theaetetus which differentiates him from every other person and so the argument again invokes the Aristotelean distinction between definition and predication. This λόγος of Theaetetus, then, is equivalent to what Antisthenes suggests would be the definition of an element: it is the mere addition, rather than the multiplication of terms related to the object being defined. No doubt Socrates would be able to identify Theaetetus apart from anyone else, but not with the ability to explain how he can actually pick him out. For his attempt to give a unique λόγος of Theaetetus is anything but; his account of him as “a man with a snub nose and protruding eyes” is based entirely on sensory input and so remains common to anyone with those same perceived qualities.<sup>193</sup>

We can thus solve the dilemma of what a λόγος is if we consider λόγος as not just *either* the enumeration of elements (whole) *or* an account of unique differentia (sum), but rather an account of *both* enumeration *and* unique differentia.<sup>194</sup> Once again, a consideration of the mathematical paradigm illustrates and predicts this conclusion. The first definition, we know, makes explicit the infinite continuum by establishing an understanding of the

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192 Cf. §124 above.

193 Cf. *Theaetetus*, 208d.

194 Desjardins 1990, 159-160.



essential nature of this continuum. Theodorus draws examples of δυνάμεις for Theaetetus and the younger Socrates, from which they apprehend two things: first, explicitly that the number of δυνάμεις is infinite; and second, entailing from the first, that there is an infinite continuum of magnitude which contains all instances of both δυνάμεις and lengths, those terms in between, both of which having the 'foot' as their basic unit of measurement. Though the continuum exists logically prior to these numbers, apprehension of it is temporally posterior to the perception of any particular number, just as an understanding of the essential qualities of any object proceeds from the process of reasoning about its accidental qualities.<sup>195</sup>

The point of the geometrical demonstration is to give a λόγος of δύναμις, and after this threefold process of apprehension, division, and combination, the λόγος is apparent: δύναμις is a number whose factors are unequal which in their representation as lines produce an oblong figure when multiplied together. The resultant two-dimensional figure is comprised of nothing more than its one-dimensional line segments; that is, it is a whole entity comprised of certain parts or elements, but through their combination the figure has the power to bring rationality to an otherwise irrational number. The figure becomes a unique entity, or a sum, over and above the lines which produce it. This λόγος is taken to be true because it follows the same guidelines, having both a universal and a particular application: it is both a general statement about every instance of the infinite number of δυνάμεις and a formula which can be applied to every instance of δύναμις. In other words, the λόγος itself is both a unique entity over and above the object it defines and at the same time nothing more than its own constituent parts, namely a principle by which the enumeration of elements can be performed and a principle of the unique differentia by which

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<sup>195</sup> Theaetetus, 184c ff.

the elements are not simply collected, but combined in a certain order.

If this is the intended conclusion to the dialogue, one obvious but very important question arises: why are Socrates and Theaetetus satisfied with an account of knowledge which they are unable to explain?<sup>196</sup> On its own, the *Theaetetus* very much appears to end negatively, suggesting that this definition of knowledge is incorrect, or that the correct definition cannot be reached by them. If, on the other hand, Plato had some greater design in mind when writing this dialogue, this apparent negative ending is in fact very positive as it thus provides the basis for the solutions to the problems of the last definition of knowledge. No doubt there are still some issues to be resolved by the end of the dialogue in either case. What information are Socrates and Theaetetus missing that does not allow them to bring the overall conclusion to fruition? In other words, why can they not define Theaetetus as a unique entity like the sun?

Following this interpretation of the *Theaetetus* so far, one might expect that, if the discussion were to continue, Theaetetus would propose next that knowledge is properly the combination of true opinion and λόγος. Such a definition would presumably establish ἐπιστήμη as the same sort of unique entity, having as its elements nothing other than true opinion and a λόγος while maintaining a power over and above these things on their own.<sup>197</sup> Desjardins attributes much of the negative ending of this dialogue to the fact that Theaetetus fails to suggest the proper, mathematical combination of the elements of ἐπιστήμη. He does not suggest that knowledge is the multiplication of true opinion and λόγος, but simply the

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196 Ibid, 202c-d.

197 Cf. Desjardins 1990, 165, where she defines ἐπιστήμη as this entity as follows: “as a complex operation, the elements of which ... consist of *both* judgements in the realm of practical structuring [δόξα] *and* logoi [sic; διανοία] in the realm of theoretical structuring, [ἐπιστήμη] may on the one hand be analyzed into those practical and theoretical elements; on the other, as radically emergent, it is characterized by the power to provide infallible or nonhypothetical guidance to right judgment and action in the realm of practice, and infallible or nonhypothetical principles for true *dianoia* and logos [sic] in the realm of theory.” Emphasis hers.

addition (μετά) of these things.<sup>198</sup> However, if my own approach is fair, namely that λόγος is not an entity unique to διανοσία but occurs at all levels of knowing, the final definition of knowledge merely serves to distinguish between an internal and external, or silent and communicated λόγος. Without the latter, the true opinion which overturns the Protagorean position remains true only for the person who conceives it. Thus even the proper combination of these elements does nothing to promote a new kind of knowing or way of being known as the elements are effectively the same type of object. That is, their combination does not yield true knowledge just as the combination of only verbs or only nouns does not create a meaningful sentence.<sup>199</sup>

Knowledge could be the sort of entity described above if the elements which comprise it are similar but different, just as vowels and consonants are both letters but different kinds of letters, or as nouns and verbs are both words but function differently in a sentence. Knowledge, then, if it really is an entity comprised of true opinion and λόγος, is more specifically the combination of a λόγος which accounts for the enumeration of elements and a λόγος which accounts for a unique differentia, whereas a dianoetic λόγος remains one or the other, depending on one's perspective. A true, epistemic understanding of an object's essential nature is therefore the simultaneous apprehension of *both* principles working in conjunction with one another.

To conclude this chapter, I want to outline briefly the argument in the *Sophist* which leads to a fuller understanding of the principles discussed here. Most important is the shift from investigating elements which are sensible bodies to ones which are themselves the intellectual principles behind the process of constructing a λόγος and communicating what

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198 Ibid, 162-63.

199 *Sophist*, 262a-c.

one knows. With these principles established, the process by which a true mathematical λόγος is produced can be examined more fully, thereby giving the reader a greater idea of the true nature of ἐπιστήμη. Of course, the point remains to explicate mathematical knowledge, for the investigation into ἐπιστήμη proper ends with the *Theaetetus*. Moreover, the *Sophist* investigates its eponymous character, allowing the reader to see not just what a true, mathematical λόγος is and why, but also what a false λόγος is. Falsity, the Eleatic Stranger says, pervades even this level of knowing;<sup>200</sup> so too does Aristotle count false λόγος among those entities which define an object's essence. The ability to recognize the sophist's pseudo-λόγος is of obvious ethical concern for Plato as so many of his dialogues illustrate Socrates contending against it in defining moral forms. To be sure, the *Theaetetus* and the *Sophist* take place at the time of Socrates' own historical trial; and so in line with the historical context of these two dialogues Plato endeavors to surpass three theoretical λόγοι concerning either the sensible realm of becoming or the intelligible realm of being posited by three wise men, Protagoras, Heraclitus, and Parmenides. Socrates, having contended with Protagoras in the past, matches his own soul to that of Theaetetus via his maieutic art, and so is able to bring Theaetetus beyond the first two positions. As sometimes happens, however, he must pass off his student to someone who is a more appropriate match, and so the Eleatic Stranger works with Theaetetus to commit his parricide against Parmenides.

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200 Ibid, 263d-264b.

## Chapter 4

### 4.1: A Question of Theology

As the discussion in the *Theaetetus* comes to a close for the day, Socrates mentions that he must stop by the Athenian law court to address the indictment which Meletus has brought against him. If the title and object of discussion of the next dialogue do not make it obvious enough, the historical theme which is present at all times in these dialogues is the dignity of philosophy against the rise of sophistry in fifth-century Athens. Contrary to the philosopher, the sophist maintains the Protagorean maxim that man, and not god, is the measure of all things, and in doing so gives man a kind of creative control which is otherwise reserved for the divine; within the sophistical school of thought, being, truth, and knowledge as such remain divorced from any objective ideal. The philosophical position which the *Theaetetus* introduces is therefore also theological, namely that “one ought [...] to become like a god as much as is possible; for godliness is to become just [δικαίος] and holy [ὅσιος] with wisdom [φρόνησις].”<sup>201</sup> This position is perhaps best summed up by Plato in Book IV of his *Laws*:

In our view it is God who is preeminently the “measure of all things,” much more than any “man,” as they say. So if you want to recommend yourself to someone of this character, you must do your level best to make your own character reflect his.<sup>202</sup>

As Socrates tells us in the *Protagoras*, becoming like a god is difficult at best; being a god, on the other hand, is simply impossible for any mortal. A human paragon of virtue and wisdom, whether this person be a Pericles, a Solon, or even a Socrates, is still overshadowed by the perfected state of these ideas as they exist in the divine.

The discussion in this chapter will not focus on an historical analysis of philosophy and sophistry in ancient Athens, though this thesis will eventually investigate each position

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201 *Theaetetus*, 176a10-b3.

202 *Laws*, 716c. Saunders' translation.

in light of the forthcoming argument. Rather, an attempt will be made to systematize certain aspects of Plato's ontology and epistemology in some of his later dialogues with respect to this idea of becoming "like a god." More than just logical treatises on the nature of knowledge and being, the *Theaetetus* and the *Sophist* play an important role in elucidating Platonic theology and ethics. The two passages in these dialogues in which the divine is mentioned explicitly are very short and unreferenced elsewhere in the texts by any of the interlocutors. Indeed, the second 'passage', if it can even be called that, is no more than the first of many divisions of the productive art in the seventh and final definition of the sophist. The first passage, contained in Socrates' digression on philosophy, does not seem to fare much better as something which is, in the words of one commentator, "philosophically quite pointless."<sup>203</sup> Another commentator says that this passage serves as little more than a footnote or appendix in order to reference other dialogues which treat Plato's religiosity in much greater detail.<sup>204</sup> Given the dramatic context of both dialogues introduced above, it is possible to understand how someone might say that the digression on philosophy serves little or no other purpose than to give a retrospective vindication of Socrates against the charges brought before the jury in the *Apology*. As well, there is no doubt that this digression contains implicit references to other texts such as the *Euthyphro*, *Phaedrus*, *Republic*, and *Symposium*, and that these dialogues and others can help to unpack Plato's thought here. We will see, however, that far from being philosophically unimportant and fruitless on its own, the relatively brief comments on both the nature of the divine and the human response to it give a very unique and meaningful contribution to Plato's discussion of this relationship especially as it is found in his late corpus.

Implicit in *Theaetetus*' geometrical demonstration is the assumption of a given

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203 Ryle 1966, 158.

204 McDowell 1973, 174.

infinite continuum of stuff out of which elements are formed and combined. Once Theaetetus gives his first definition of knowledge and the investigation into what knowledge is begins, Socrates does not explain the nature of the infinite continuum of perception, but simply takes it as given as the indefinite relativity between active and passive motions.<sup>205</sup> Similarly, their discussion on the knowability of letters and syllables assumes an infinite continuum of sound as the endless relativity between voiced and unvoiced sounds.<sup>206</sup> At all times, the process of constructing λόγος in order to define any object must begin with the assumption of a given infinite. In her commentary on the *Theaetetus*, Desjardins explains it this way:

To talk of atoms, or elements, or even elementary particles is, for the *kompsoeroi*, to talk of a world already measured out into discrete entities, a world already structured by thought and theory. As starting point, therefore, what is required is that we try to conceptualize a state prior to, or at least independent of, organizing intelligence [...]: for the mind to apprehend is already to organize, and so in that very act to change what it apprehends.<sup>207</sup>

In speaking of mind here she means human intelligence which, in apprehending the infinite, apprehends it as 'infinite', an indefinite extension of stuff existing in this sort of relative state. In other words, the existence of the infinite in and of itself as a material principle is logically prior to any apprehension which Theaetetus and Socrates have of it, and so any attempt on their part to conceptualize it necessarily takes place within human reason and on human terms. Its essential nature is beyond their ability to communicate, and so they rely on words and names to signify it, if it is even mentioned at all.

It is not entirely correct to say, however, as Desjardins does, that the infinite continuum is “inherently mindless.”<sup>208</sup> It is something given by nature, and so, if knowledge can be truly objective, it indicates at all times the presence of the divine. Theaetetus and the

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205 *Theaetetus*, 156a.

206 Ibid, 203b. Cf. *Philebus*, 24a where this infinite continuum is explicitly mentioned.

207 Desjardins 1990, 34.

208 Ibid, 34.

Eleatic Stranger state this rather explicitly when gearing up for the seventh and final definition of the sophist: nature, they say, either “generates itself from some self-acting cause without a productive intelligence [ἀνευ διανοίας φύσεως],” or “is generated with divine λόγος and ἐπιστήμη.”<sup>209</sup> Thus they make a division between human and divine production, assuming that “what is called [λεγόμενον] 'natural' is made by a divine τέχνη, and what is put together by humans from these things [is made] by a human τέχνη, and accordingly there are two kinds of productive arts, one human, the other divine.”<sup>210</sup> The issue at hand, therefore, is this: if the demand of these dialogues, as proposed in Chapter 1, is to discover a rational or mathematical λόγος as the first step to identifying true objectivity, what is Plato's understanding of divine λόγος at this level and divine ἐπιστήμη? In other words, what is the nature of the divine mind which accounts for the kind of epistemology Plato proposes in the *Theaetetus* and *Sophist*, and what does it mean, then, for a philosopher to become like a god?

#### 4.2: Divine λόγος (i)

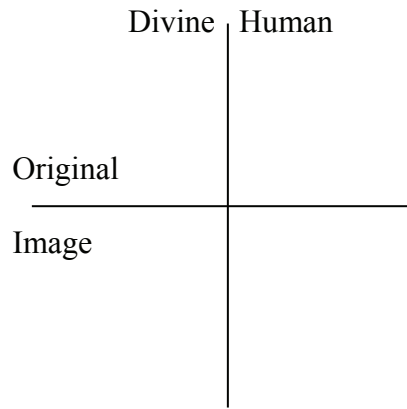
Let us begin with a retroactive analysis, starting with the seventh definition of the *Sophist* and treating the philosophical digression later. The main point of this definition is to establish what sort of existence a sophistical λόγος must have. Here, however, the discussion will follow a different path, ignoring the bulk of this definition until a later chapter. The concerns here are the first two divisions of the productive art. First the Eleatic Stranger and Theaetetus divide ποιητική 'vertically' between divine and human production, and then 'horizontally' between the production of original things and images of those things:

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209 *Sophist*, 265c.

210 *Ibid*, 265e.





What falls on the side of a divine original contains, they say:

...every living creature and every plant which grows out of the earth from seeds and roots, and every soulless body, soluble and insoluble, which forms in the earth, things which we say come into being through divine workmanship [δημιουργεῖν], not having existence prior to this.<sup>211</sup>

Understood sensibly, the divine original is thus the whole realm of material becoming, or “what is called φύσις.” Accordingly, the side of production of human original things contains everything that is “put together by humans from [φύσις] [...] all the works of our productive activity, what we call the art of making real things [ἀντουργική].”<sup>212</sup> This parallel structure between the objects of sensation at the divine and human levels reflects the relationship between divine causation and human activity at the level of sense perception. On the side of the divine we find the ontological principles of formal and material causation within the sensible world, and on the side of the human we find an epistemology which interprets the effects of these principles.

Formally, φύσις can be understood as the principle which governs the finite unity of the sensible world in the manner suggested at the end of the last chapter. That is, in and of itself φύσις exists simultaneously as both a unique sum over and above its parts and a whole comprised of nothing other than its parts. Materially, it is understood as the principle which governs the infinite continuum of sense perception, the “given” flux between active and

<sup>211</sup> Ibid, 265c.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid, 265e-266d.

passive motions which in and of itself exists prior to and independent of any human “organizing intelligence.” The union of these two principles, form and matter, accounts for the plurality of natural objects, or more accurately the principles of what one might call 'natural' elements, namely “fire, water, and their kin, out of which things in the natural world are begotten.”<sup>213</sup> This subtle mention of such elements by the Eleatic Stranger provides the last ingredient in order to account for divine creative activity, and so too the corresponding modes of human apprehension of these principles and an understanding of the world which they govern. For it is out of endless flux that the elements of sensation are derived and then combined: the eye becomes a seeing eye, and the object being perceived has some quality attributed to it, as described at the outset of the *Theaetetus* when Socrates launches into his bizarre reconstruction of the “mysteries” of sense perception.<sup>214</sup> Theaetetus' first two definitions of knowledge as a) nothing other than perception and b) true opinion are then really nothing other than a) the immediate and infallible sensible apprehension of some conceptual unity and the given infinite and b) judgments made about these things. The human art of making visible real things, then, has to do with constructing not just the sorts of things which the Eleatic Stranger mentions, such as a house, but also perceptions and beliefs about the visible world.

The nature of this parallel structure becomes more diverse if we examine divine and human images. The former, it is said, contains:

...the appearances in dreams, and those that arise by day and are said to be spontaneous [αὐτοφύης]—a shadow when a dark object interrupts the firelight, or when twofold light, from the objects themselves and from outside, meets on smooth and bright surfaces and causes upon our senses and effect the reverse of our ordinary sight, thus producing an image.<sup>215</sup>

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213 Ibid, 266b.

214 *Theaetetus*, 156a ff.

215 *Sophist*, 266c. Fowler's translation. See Cornford 1935, 327 for an explanation of how this description fits with 5<sup>th</sup> century Greek ophthalmology.

Accordingly, the human art of image-making (εἰδωλοποιική) has to do with the production of either kind of image as defined earlier in the *Sophist*, which are called here “a sort of man-made dream fashioned for those who are awake.”<sup>216</sup> One kind of human-made image is a 'likeness', which matches the original in length, width, and depth as well as colour and other such qualities so that regardless of one's perspective the image conforms to true and beautiful proportions;<sup>217</sup> it is 'like' the original. The other kind of image is a 'semblance', such as a painting of the original object, which follows the same proportions but from only one perspective,<sup>218</sup> and so it is a mere appearance of truth and beauty. Thus the diagram above can be filled out as follows:

	Divine	Human
	φύσις	αὐτουργική
Original		
Image		
	αὐτοφυῆ	εἰδωλοποιική

As the ultimate goal of the dialogue is to define what a human image is at this level and what person with what τέχνη creates this image, the divisions in this definition continue from the side of human images, leaving behind the divine. Logically speaking, however, it would be impossible to say much more about any divine image. Such images appear “spontaneously” as the natural effect of what is given.<sup>219</sup> We know from the *Republic* that shadows can be very much like things which are more real than themselves, whereas reflections in a mirror appear to be what they are reflections of, but from a limited perspective. Thus while there is

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216 *Sophist*, 266c.

217 *Ibid*, 235d-e. See Cornford 1935, 197-199 for a discussion on what constitutes a likeness, esp. 197 §1.

218 *Sophist*, 236b-c.

219 *Sophist*, 266b10-11.

nothing to suggest that divine images cannot also be divided into likenesses and semblances, the nature of a divine image differs significantly from that of a human image. There is a divine “ordering intelligence” behind the presence of divine images only indirectly or passively, whereas the parallel human condition is defined by its activity in creating an image of something, either with or without knowledge (εἰδέναί) of that which it imitates.<sup>220</sup>

As suggested in Chapter 1, this diagram can also be interpreted as it relates to the invisible world of intelligible being. In this way, we see a radical shift from the argument of the *Theaetetus*, which has its ending still rooted in the sensible world of Protagorean private relativism and Antisthenean materialism.<sup>221</sup> Even a casual reader of Plato will observe that the argument of the *Theaetetus* only touches on part of the basic cosmological outline discussed above. Relegated strictly to the world of sensible becoming, no combination of the elements derived therein can effectively communicate any objective nature. As suggested in the introduction to this thesis, Plato does not intend to reject outright the positions of Protagoras and Heracleitus, but rather to incorporate these positions in an overall understanding of the universe. In moving beyond these positions and the realm of becoming he is taking the reader outside of the Cave in order to get a glimpse of true reality.

In the *Sophist*, then, the discussion turns to the ontological principles of formal and material causation of the realm of the forms, and the corresponding human epistemology which can interpret their effects. Formally, the divine real in this case thus corresponds to a principle which governs the unity of all intelligible being, and materially, it must then correspond to a principle which governs an infinite continuum of intellectual perception, the given flux between active and passive being. In turn, the union of these principles unfolds

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220 Ibid, 267b. A closer examination of divine and human wisdom in this system will come shortly.

221 Doull 1977, 43.

the plurality of the elements of pure being, and so it is out of this flux any object attains its true, objective existence (what a thing is said to be, rather than what it is becoming, or what it is only for someone) as the elements of being are combined to identify an object's objective, necessary essence.

In this way, the divine real ought to contain the answers to some of the questions posed earlier. At this level we should find what the Stranger calls divine ἐπιστήμη, a perfect knowledge and operation of the necessary, essential nature of the universe. It encompasses and unites both the being and otherness of the invisible world of the forms in a singular entity, which is then reflected in its physical instantiation as the ontological and teleological principle of φύσις which governs the realm of sensible becoming. It follows, then, that the divine images of these principles similarly arise spontaneously as the natural effects of what is given at this level, and so it is these images which Socrates and Theaetetus begin to investigate in their search for objective knowledge, and which Theaetetus will continue to investigate with the Eleatic Stranger once they return to the question of what λόγος really is.

#### 4.3: Divine λόγος (ii)

To try and address these questions directly, this section will suggest a possible, though admittedly tenuous, way to interpret the relationship between divine ἐπιστήμη and λόγος. As stated above, the Eleatic Stranger's casual mention of natural elements is the one hint in the seventh definition of any kind of divine activity which can be interpreted using the same geometrical model which Theaetetus lays down. On that note, however, the discussion here begins to diverge from that of the *Sophist*, which continues the bifurcation in order to finally snare its eponymous character. To continue this investigation into divine activity, we must therefore depart from the *Sophist* for the time being.

As the discussion here is immersed in the elements of being, the best dialogue which suits the present investigation is, naturally, the *Timaeus* and its treatment of the δημιουργός, an entity whose presence is also mentioned in the *Sophist*, albeit only in passing.<sup>222</sup> As Plato writes in the *Timaeus*, “everything which is becoming [τὸ γιγνόμενον] necessarily comes into being [γίγνεσθαι] by some sort of cause.”<sup>223</sup> The physical instantiation of the elements in question give rise to the entire realm of sensible becoming, and as such are reflections of the intelligible παραδείγματα with which the δημιουργός does his work in creating the universe.<sup>224</sup> Thus, “having come to be, then, in this way, the cosmos has been constructed in a way comprehensible by λόγος and φρόνησις and is self-identical,” and so “it is in every way necessary that the cosmos be an image [εἰκῶν] of something.”<sup>225</sup> Of course, this parallel existence between the sensible and intelligible world and the transition from an investigation of the former to the latter is not at all surprising as it appears again and again throughout Plato's work. Even the *Theaetetus*, as we have seen, begins its investigation into knowledge with strict sense perception in the world of material becoming and hints at the necessary presence of intelligible forms in completing this investigation.<sup>226</sup>

What, then, is the nature of the visible world such that it demonstrates the nature of the model after which it is created? We know that λόγος contains a principle not just of the combination of elements, but of the *proper* combination of elements. A particular δύναμις cannot be created by just any two factors, nor can a word have its letters in just any order if it is to communicate anything meaningful. Moreover, the mathematical or dianoetic understanding with which Theaetetus carries out his demonstration establishes fixed,

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222 *Sophist*, 265c4.

223 *Timaeus*, 28a.

224 *Ibid*, 28c7-8.

225 *Ibid*, 29a-b.

226 *Theaetetus*, 185a ff.

objective knowledge of the object of investigation through the identification of the unique essence of the object over and above the elements which comprise it. As discussed in the last chapter, this objectivity is a result of the productive method of constructing λόγος as opposed to the Protagorean method which is merely additive, resulting in subjective knowledge.<sup>227</sup>

In Theaetetus' geometrical demonstration, two factors are combined according to their mutual compatibility in creating a square or oblong figure, and so the test of their compatibility is that they correctly identify whatever essence they are meant to signify. In the case of letters, for example, the elements of a word correctly spell the name of the object being identified. As well, λόγος allows one to view the object with a 'greater' mode of perception; that is, dianoetically rather than sensibly. An example of this transition from a lower mode of perception to a higher takes place in the *Theaetetus*. Given three dice of quantities four, six, and twelve, the six dice is said to be more than four and less than twelve without itself actually changing.<sup>228</sup> When Socrates asks if “something can become greater or more in a way other than being increased,” and so contrariwise smaller or less in a way other than being decreased, Theaetetus answers both “no” and “yes” depending on the terms on which this question is approached. In algebraic or additive terms, the answer is simple: six cannot become more without something being added to it, nor can it become less without something being taken away. Thus he and Socrates posit three rules:

first, nothing could ever become more or less in size or number, should it remain equal to itself...  
second, that to which nothing is added nor subtracted could either increase or decrease, but is always equal...  
and third, what did not exist before could not exist later without having come to be and the process of generation.<sup>229</sup>

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227 Chapter 2, pp. 47-49.

228 *Theaetetus*, 154c ff. Cf. Chapter 1, pp. 31-32.

229 Ibid, 155a-b.

As Desjardins points out, however, “[Theaetetus] knows that non-additive generation does in fact occur: in particular, two-dimensional figures are generated from the one-dimensional lines.”<sup>230</sup> In other words, six can become greater in geometrical or multiplicative terms under Theaetetus' own mathematical paradigm. For example, as a δύναμις—that is, as a square root—six is incommensurable with the unit of the foot. As the area of an oblong figure, however, the number six becomes 'greater' in the sense that it is now understood dianoetically instead of sensibly, and accordingly has a rational mode of existence rather than irrational. Thus six becomes greater without anything being added to it and remains equal to itself, overturning the first two rules. As Desjardins puts it, six “*both* remains the same *and* becomes different, while *neither* remaining equal to itself *nor* undergoing addition.”<sup>231</sup>

A similar discussion takes place in the *Timaeus*. There, as in the *Theaetetus*, the relation of elements or factors is described in terms of a geometrical proportion which is meant to signify the nature of the object being investigated.<sup>232</sup> The process by which the elements are related to each other proceeds on slightly different terms, however: in creating a two-dimensional figure (ἐπίπεδον) akin to Theaetetus' δυνάμεις, “having no depth, one middle term would suffice to bind together [συνδέειν] itself and its companions.”<sup>233</sup> In other words, this third term is what allows for and creates any geometrical proportion. Luckily, there is a universal, mathematical ratio composed of all three terms which governs the relationship between these terms, just as the λόγος of δύναμις identifies what δύναμις is in

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230 Desjardins 1990, 91-92 and 181-92.

231 Ibid, 93. Emphasis in original.

232 As Aristotle states, “it is in geometrical proportion that it follows that the whole is to the whole as either part is to the corresponding part” (*Nic. Eth.* 5.3, 1131b12-15). Ross' translation. It should be noted that Plato's Divided Line operates as a geometrical proportion: εἰκασία : πίστις :: διανοία : ἐπιστήμη; and similarly δόξα [εἰκασία + πίστις] : νοήσις [διανοία + ἐπιστήμη].

233 *Timaeus*, 32b.



and of itself and governs any particular instance of δύναμις. This formula is such that:

[a] as the first term is to [the middle term], so is [the middle term] to the last term,—and again, conversely, [b] as the last term is to the middle, so is the middle to the first,— then [c] the middle term becomes in turn the first and the last, while the first and last become in turn middle terms, and the necessary consequence will be that all terms are interchangeable.<sup>234</sup>

In his commentary on the *Timaeus*, Cornford provides a simple example of the relationship between these terms. Taking 2, 4, and 8, we see:

[a] 2 : 4 :: 4 : 8;  
[b] 8 : 4 :: 4 : 2;  
[c] 4 : 2 :: 8 : 4 or 4 : 8 :: 2 : 4<sup>235</sup>

Citing another commentator, Cornford also supplies the universal formula which in fact governs ἐπίπεδα.<sup>236</sup>

Whereas Theaetetus' geometrical model is concerned with two-dimensional bodies and their inherent greater knowability over one-dimensional bodies, the *Timaeus* has its focus on the realm of φύσις, which is not one- or two- but three-dimensional.<sup>237</sup> With a two-dimensional figure one middle term is needed to unite the first and last (the “outermost”) terms or elements, but, as *Timaeus* explains, in creating a solid or a three-dimensional figure, *two* middle terms are needed to unite the outermost terms. In the realm of φύσις, these outermost terms are earth and fire: earth, without which nothing in this realm is solid,<sup>238</sup> is the heaviest elements, being “the most immobile” and having “the most stable base;”<sup>239</sup> fire, without which nothing in this realm is visible,<sup>240</sup> is the lightest element, being the “most

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234 Ibid, 32a. Bury's translation.

235 Cornford 1937, 45.

236 Ibid, 47. See also Bury 1929, 58 §2. The formula is  $a^2 : ab :: ab : b^2$ . Thus any square figure, having the same factors, can be reduced to a 1:1 ratio. Any oblong figure, on the other hand, maintains a unique ratio which can be reorganized according to the directions at *Timaeus*, 32a (above). For example, an oblong figure with the factors 3 and 4 yields: [a] 9 : 12 :: 12 : 16; [b] 16 : 12 :: 12 : 9; [c] 12 : 9 :: 16 : 9 or 12 : 16 :: 9 : 12.

237 Presumably, the two-dimensional plane figures (the δυνάμεις, having square roots) in Theaetetus' model are in turn combined to form “solids” or three-dimensional bodies—cubes, in other words, having cube roots (*Theaetetus*, 148b1-2).

238 *Timaeus*, 31b.

239 Ibid, 55e.

240 Ibid, 31b.

mobile.”<sup>241</sup> Thus in organizing these elements the δημιουργός had to insert air and water as the two middle terms to create a λόγος which governs solids: “air being to water as fire to air, and water being to earth as air to water.”<sup>242</sup>

A problem occurs. The entire 'body' of the physical realm is a certain proportion of the elements to each other, and similarly any particular body has its own particular proportion of the same elements. The instantiation of the universal ratio in a particular, sensible body must be fixed to account for any kind of objective knowledge. This fixity is a problem, however, because it does not allow for any kind of becoming within the sensible realm. For one object to become other than itself, the proportion between its elements must change. At best, then, any given object, including the realm of φύσις as a whole, comes into being in a temporal sense, achieves some material end dictated by a strict ratio of elements found in the idea of the object, if there is one, and thereafter remains static in maintaining this ratio.

Given that the realm of becoming as a whole is an image of some higher principle, there must be some way in which Plato allows sensible objects to maintain some sort of stability which is analogous to the motionless principles which govern them. I want to suggest that, given the universal formulae which appear in the *Timaeus*, the above interpretation of the dice model in the *Theaetetus* demonstrates how one can view any such proportion of elements with a greater mode of perception, allowing this stability to occur within objects of sensation. It cannot be that within the sensible realm the elements somehow remain the same throughout the process of becoming or generation, for in the process of becoming the elements themselves transform into other elements.<sup>243</sup> For the same

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241 Ibid, 56a.

242 Ibid, 32b. The corresponding algebraic formula is given as  $p^3 : p^2q :: p^2q : pq^2 :: pq^2 : q^3$  (Cornford 1937, 47).

243 *Timaeus*, 56d-e.

reason, nor can it be the case that the quantity of each element in a combination remains the same throughout the process of becoming, for such stability halts this very process. Nonetheless, there must be an entity analogous to a quantity in the dice model which can become 'greater' through an understanding of it at progressively higher levels of knowing and corresponding modes of being. At the level of *διανοία* one apprehends the object with respect to its essential or necessary qualities as they are identified in a mathematical *λόγος*. The fact that clay, for example, is the mixture of earth and water remains true independently of any change which a particular sample of clay, earth, or water might undergo. However, names attached to objects which are known strictly at the level of belief under the extreme version of Heraclitean flux are completely meaningless, as neither the name nor the object have any stable existence.<sup>244</sup>

Using the formula which governs the ratio of elements in a three-dimensional body, Plato establishes a *λόγος* which explains the combination of elements not just in objects within the realm of becoming, but also the realm of becoming itself. Thus the investigation into divine *λόγος* and the principles with which this *λόγος* is created will take this realm as a whole as that which becomes 'greater' as it is understood at higher modes of knowing and corresponding modes of being. This issue is in fact addressed very early on in the *Timaeus*, as it is asked, “Concerning the universe, after which *παραδείγματα* did the creator construct it?”<sup>245</sup> In other words, *Timaeus* asks, which eternal, self-same *ἀρχή*, or *ἀρχαί* if there are several,<sup>246</sup> does the *δημιουργός* use as a model to create the realm of becoming? This realm as a whole is the “fairest” of them all and so by analogy this *ἀρχή* is the fairest of its kind and clearly what this investigation of the *Timaeus* will need to address.

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244 *Theaetetus*, 181d ff.

245 *Timaeus*, 28c.

246 *Ibid*, 48c3.

The *Theaetetus* and the *Sophist* take up an investigation into the nature of knowledge and being respectively, and likewise in the *Timaeus* the ultimate concern is the discovery of a first principle or primary cause of things rather than just a secondary best method of investigation or “likely story” about the nature of the universe. In the *Timaeus*, there is the exact same imperative as these other late dialogues, namely to investigate the “true nature” of things, in this case the combination of the elements as they exist as both a sum and a whole prior to any physical instantiation. Thus the ontological principles which govern the nature of the finite unit, the infinite continuum, and the plurality of elements prior to any physical instantiation are themselves the ἀρχαί of the realm of being after which the realm of becoming is modeled.<sup>247</sup> The realm of becoming as a whole constitutes the complete quantity of each element positioned in a strict ratio with the others as determined by these natures.<sup>248</sup> In order to uncover the nature of these principles, the discussion must turn to the divine entity which presides over them and activates them with divine ἐπιστήμη and τέχνη.

#### 4.4: Divine νοῦς

In general, this particular undertaking will be deficient. It is an attempt to illustrate the nature of an entity in Plato's philosophy and cosmology which he knows must exist by necessity but so far can only be reached indirectly. The object which exists as the divine real has already been discussed; what matters now is to uncover the intelligence which creates that object. In creating λόγος, we know that one must have an idea of the nature of the

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<sup>247</sup> Ibid, 48b-c.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid, 32c. Interestingly, the nature of each element in and of itself is communicated in geometrical terms, not unlike Theaetetus' mathematical paradigm. Some assumed continuum of physical stuff is divided into two kinds of right-angled triangles, isosceles and scalene; Theaetetus, we recall, divides the continuum of magnitude into rational and irrational numbers, represented by proportional line segments which he then combines into square or oblong figures. These triangles are then combined to form four specific three-dimensional shapes as physical models for the four primary elements (53c-56c).

object being defined prior to the actual process of definition: one must know what a word is before endeavoring to spell it. Divine νοῦς is the mind which contains the idea of the cosmos itself, and so this νοῦς is what determines the nature of the finite unit, the infinite continuum, and the plurality of elements derived therein. By looking at an image of the effect of the necessary operation of these principles, their nature can be understood in a way which meets the general demand of this whole investigation.

Time and time again the reader or interlocutor is presented with an image or metaphor of τὸ ἀγαθόν as that which the divine has in mind, and that to which it organizes things. Perhaps the most famous instance is, of course, its presence as the sun in the *Republic*; in the *Phaedrus*, it is envisioned as the outermost sphere of a cosmic hierarchy which can be glimpsed only momentarily by the most keen philosophers who ascend to that level of understanding; and in the *Phaedo*, this principle is so blinding that Socrates is forced to embark on his Second Voyage. What Heidegger says in his commentary on the *Sophist* thus rings very true as well:

The beings treated in the dialogue are the theme of a speaking, and specifically of a speaking, διαλέγεσθαι, which makes the beings become visible as uncovered [...] specifically the θεωρεῖν of σοφία, which has the sense of making beings visible in their ἀρχαί, i.e., from that which a being always already is in its Being. That is, it makes visible the ὄν ἀληθινόν or the ἀληθές of the ὄν.<sup>249</sup>

As with Timaeus, Socrates and the Eleatic Stranger can only submit a “likely story,” an εἰκός μύθος, as to what divine νοῦς is and what it does. Thus an attempt must be made to sufficiently explain what divine νοῦς must be in order to account for the existence of the cosmos, that is, both the realm of intelligible being and the realm of sensible becoming, as they are taken to exist. If this undertaking can be achieved, the sketch of it should work as a likely enough story for the purposes of this investigation.

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249 Heidegger 1997, 134.

There is an undeniable parallel between the discussion of this topic as it appears here in the *Timaeus* and earlier in the *Phaedo*. In the latter dialogue, Socrates states the following:

...νοῦς in arranging things arranges everything and establishes each thing as it is best for it to be. So if anyone wishes to find the cause of the generation or destruction or existence of a particular thing, he must find out what sort of existence, or passive state of any kind, or activity, is best for it.<sup>250</sup>

So in embarking on his Second Voyage, Socrates does not seek to know the ἀρχή of all things in and of itself, but to deduce the nature of this cause through an investigation of its effects. Similarly, in the *Timaeus* we are told that this same νοῦς has some effect on how things exist by necessity so that what is organized by necessity becomes reorganized in a better way by νοῦς such that all things exist as it is best for them to be.<sup>251</sup> Thus there is a two-fold answer to Timaeus' question from before, as to what ἀρχή the δημιουργός used as a model in constructing the universe, or ἀρχαί if there are actually more than one. The realm of being as a whole and its reflection in the totality of φύσις is governed by the activity of divine νοῦς, a singular, overriding ἀρχή; but in giving his account of the activity of this principle Timaeus must explicate a plurality of ἀρχαί as the logical effects or images of what divine νοῦς does according to what it is. As he puts it, finding divine νοῦς in the first place is hard enough, but talking about it with other people is impossible.<sup>252</sup> That is, the discovery of divine νοῦς, that it exists, does not come easily to anybody but is nonetheless possible to discover; but, having discovered it, using any kind of language to explain what it is in and of itself is impossible. Timaeus, accordingly, begins by stating that his own account is only a likely one.<sup>253</sup> Similarly, in the *Phaedo* Socrates says that the discovery of this principle was

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250 *Phaedo*, 99c.

251 *Timaeus*, 48a.

252 *Ibid*, 28c.

253 *Ibid*, 29d.

a defining moment in his life, but it is not something he can define in turn.

Either account is εἰκόσ at best, for in order to discuss the necessity behind any creation one must use human speech which is inherently complex. As Cornford puts it, “An 'account' must be of the same order as its objects.”<sup>254</sup> A consistent account of the realm of becoming is impossible under the Heraclitean flux governing it; but neither can a sufficient account be given of the simple nature of the principle after which this realm is modeled. In this light, Timaeus enumerates the three principles demanded at the end of the previous section: the Father, the finite unit or “source from which” the universe comes into being; the Mother, the recipient of this source and that in which the universe comes into being; and their Offspring, a principle unto itself which dictates the nature of the plurality of things which come into existence and are combined to form bodies according to the ratio given above.<sup>255</sup> From the perspective of the divine itself, these principles are but images of its own activity, just as a shadow necessarily follows any illuminated object. From a human perspective, however, through which Heidegger says mathematical speaking discloses invisible truths, these principles are objective standards which exist due to a logical necessity over and above the perpetual flux of the sensible realm.<sup>256</sup> For the same reason, the discussion in this chapter must once again return to the safety and familiarity of Theaetetus' mathematical paradigm.

The method by which Theaetetus is able to construct a λόγος of δύναμις in his

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254 Cornford 1937, 29.

255 Cf. §237 above. In creating the realm of becoming itself, the divine mind placed the entire quantity of the elements in the recipient according to this strict ratio. This ratio remains absolute despite the constant flux of particular sensible objects; that is, when one part of water breaks up into air and fire, another part of air will become fire, fire becomes air, and air becomes water again (*Timaeus*, 56d-e), maintaining this absolute ratio.

256 “Because the Being of man is determined as ζῶον λόγον ἔχον, because man speaks, and discourses about the things he sees, pure perceiving is always a discussing. Pure νοεῖν is carried out as θιγεῖν. The νοεῖν carried out within a being that has λόγος is a διανοεῖν ... It must be kept in mind that lo/gon is intrinsic to the Being of man and that at first and for the most part discernment is carried out in λόγος: discerning is νοεῖν μετὰ λόγου” (Heidegger 1997, 123).

geometrical model has been dealt with sufficiently. Under consideration now are the principles enumerated above as they are found to govern this model: the position Theaetetus himself takes as knowing the essential nature of the object being defined (the νοῦς or singular ἀρχή behind this construction as the intellectual space in which λόγος is created) which in turn contains the principles, ἀρχαί, of apprehension of the finite unit and infinite continuum, the division of the continuum by the union of these two entities, and combination of the elements thus produced.

At the most basic level, apprehension of the continuum is an understanding of an entity which has no definite quantity of any kind. Like the recipient in the *Timaeus*, the continuum of magnitude is invisible and unshaped,<sup>257</sup> existing in itself as nothing more than the principle of relativity between greater and lesser quantities. In being devoid of any defining characteristic, this continuum is therefore wholly receptive (πανδεχής)<sup>258</sup> of the unit appropriate to quantity (the foot, ποδιαῖος)<sup>259</sup> and so 'contains' every number in its potency.

By way of analogy, we see that the Father of the *Timaeus* is the limiting principle, the unit, or that in which all things find their unity, which adds or unites himself with the Mother, i.e. the principle of the unlimited, infinite continuum of sensible and intellectual matter, namely the perpetual flux between active and passive motions as the fundamental basis of the realm of becoming, and active and passive οὐσία as the basis of the realm of being:

...for from its own proper quality [the recipient] never departs at all; for while it is always receiving things, nowhere and in no wise does it assume any shape similar to any of the things that enter into it. For it is laid down by nature as a molding-stuff for everything, being moved and marked by the entering figures, and because of them it appears different at different times.<sup>260</sup>

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257 Ibid, 51a.

258 Ibid, 51a.

259 *Theaetetus*, 147d.

260 Ibid, 50b-c. Bury's translation. Cf. *Theaetetus*, 156a; Desjardins 1990, 47-49.



The Father adds himself not by force, but by persuasion, ensuring that the universe is created with the good in mind, leading it to be the best it can be in wanting to be as such.<sup>261</sup> In doing so, this divine mind establishes a certain order to what is otherwise inherently disordered, just as Theaetetus divides the continuum of magnitude into a series of distinct whole numbers and brings rationality to those numbers whose square roots are irrational.<sup>262</sup> In this way the necessity involved in the perpetual flux of the infinite continuum is allowed to persist beneath every sort of noetic organization. Magnitudes of lines and figures still exist relative to each other as greater or lesser, but the whole continuum can now ordered according to a rational principle in the creation of mathematical objects.

In this way, the principle of the infinite continuum is the principle of otherness from the finite unit, which in turn is the principle of total sameness. The union of the limit to the unlimited is the first attempt by  $\nu\hat{\omega}\varsigma$  to understand an entity which is otherwise completely irrational, as mentioned above, insofar as it exists at a distance from and is other than what is rational. This union discloses a plurality of objects which at the most basic level are only known in their relative difference and separation from each other within the flux in which they are first apprehended. As the Eleatic Stranger states:

...the nature of the other exists and is distributed in small bits throughout all existing things in their relations to one another, and we have ventured to say that each part of the other which is contrasted with being, really is exactly not-being.<sup>263</sup>

Each distinct element is indeed distinct in retaining an absolute existence, but this absolute existence does not necessarily entail knowledge of otherness from all other like elements.

Thus  $\nu\hat{\omega}\varsigma$  endeavors to bring order and rationality to these objects by collecting them within an abstract, universal idea. The distance between being and otherness is closed as

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261 *Timaeus*, 48a.

262 *Ibid*, 30a.

263 *Sophist*, 258d-e. Fowler's translation.

knowledge of what a thing is begins to entail more and more what is other than itself until there is a perfected state of knowledge in which being and otherness are unified in a complete understanding of the object of investigation.

This notion, however, that the union between the Father and the Mother takes place through persuasion rather than by force or compulsion raises an important question: why *not* by force? The recipient is “wholly receptive” and so likened to an ointment which can become or 'receive' any particular scent, or a clay-like material which can become any particular shape.<sup>264</sup> In and of itself, however, this recipient has no inherent quality which dictates how it might act; it can only passively receive the form of whatever is added to it, and so in receiving divine νοῦς it receives the sum total of the elements of the cosmos, and thereby is witnessed as the physical instantiation of these elements; that is, the entire realm of φύσις. In other words, there does not appear to be any suggestion that the recipient has some sort of mind which desires order and rationality as its final end. Indeed, Aristotle weighs precisely this criticism against Plato's cosmological vision, namely that there is no account of a final cause which the recipient actually desires to achieve and so moves itself toward its end.<sup>265</sup>

Though it may not occur in the *Timaeus*, the attribution of a νοῦς inherent in the recipient can be found in the forthcoming discussion on the nature of human inquiry, specifically the human soul as directing and defining the nature of inquiry. For now, we at least see that there are two possible modes of inquiry into the same subject matter. As Aristotle says, λόγος can be found either deductively, starting from what is known to us and leading to first principles, or inductively, starting from first principles which are knowable in

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264 *Timaeus*, 50e.

265 Aristotle, *Met. A*, 991b1-9. Cf. *Phys.* 1.9, 191b: “[The Platonists] allow that a thing may come to be without qualification from non-being,” and *Phys.* 4.8, 215a: “Either, then, nothing has a natural locomotion, or else there is no void [i.e. the recipient].” Hardie and Gaye's translation.

themselves and leading to what is known to us.<sup>266</sup> The former mode of inquiry begins for us in the immediacy of the sensible world as it is present to us. Stability is slowly brought into this realm as opinions are established, being based on the essences of objects as perceived by the soul. An essential quality of any object in terms of the form or idea of it is given meaningful content as a mathematical ratio, proportion, or harmony between the object's constituent elements. On the other hand, one could, under certain conditions, take the latter course of inquiry and begin with the ἀρχαί of any λόγος, invisible principles which are more knowable than the visible objects they govern. The first mode of inquiry is in accordance with, for example, Desjardins' account of λόγος as itself an emergent entity over and above opinion and belief in the realm of becoming, harmonizing Socrates' statement in the *Theaetetus*, that the elements of material becoming exist as a higher level of being than their compounds,<sup>267</sup> with the Stranger's statement that there is an idea behind any kind of creation, in this case the instantiation of the formal elements in the physical universe. The second mode of inquiry begins with a perfected state, or the highest possible participation in the good itself, and follows the effects of this state as they come to be known.

#### 4.5: Becoming Like A God

This chapter opened with the idea of a perfected state of human knowledge and existence and the question, what does it mean for a philosopher to become “like a god?” After Socrates explains the general character and worth of the philosopher as one who leads other to investigate universal rather than particular goods, Theodorus remarks, “Socrates, if by what you say you could persuade everyone else as you do me, there would be more peace

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<sup>266</sup> Aristotle, *Nic. Eth.* 1.4, 1095a30-1095b9.

<sup>267</sup> *Theaetetus*, 206b.

and fewer evils [τὰ κακά] for humans.”<sup>268</sup> Socrates replies simply that evil things cannot disappear outright as something must, by necessity, always be opposed to the good. Taken on its own, one can see how this passage might be interpreted as “philosophically quite pointless” for it seems to contradict the general movement of Platonic philosophy as it has developed thus far. If the good is, to use Aristotelean terms, the formal and final cause of all things, the existence of anything directly opposed to the good should be impossible. The *Protagoras*, for example, shows that everything exists with a greater or lesser degree of participation in the good. In Socrates' digression on philosophy, however, there are explicit objects, such as impiety and injustice, which are agreed to be types of evil in the world, but these sorts of things cannot be simply the complete absence of piety and justice in a person. How, then, does Plato justify his explicit allowance of the existence of evil, as it is clearly away from this principle that the philosopher moves in becoming like a god?

In the *Theaetetus*, Socrates' account of himself as a spiritual midwife runs parallel to Theaetetus' geometrical model. In practicing her art, Socrates says, the midwife divides the population of a city between men and women—the elements of a political continuum, presumably using the 'person' as the unit just as Theaetetus uses the 'foot' as the unit in dividing the continuum of magnitude.<sup>269</sup> From this point, the midwife does not unite just any two people, but a specific man with a specific woman in a fitting or proper combination in order to produce “the best possible children.”<sup>270</sup> What Socrates himself does is similar but different. He divides the populace between teachers and students—in other words, between people whose souls are full of knowledge and people who, like the recipient, are empty,

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268 Ibid, 176a.

269 Of course, this continuum is by no means actually infinite. The analogy holds, however, insofar as the population remains completely indiscriminate in the first place, just like the continuum of sound, for example, before it is broken down into its constituent elements.

270 Ibid, 149d.

“unshaped” in opinion, but nonetheless “intelligible” (νοητός) as a certain entity which can receive the lessons of a teacher and so become knowledgeable.<sup>271</sup> In any case, Socrates says that eventually he has to pass off his students to a more appropriate teacher, either because the student does not have the capacity to receive his special brand of teaching, or because the student begins to exceed the limit of Socrates' capacity to teach, as is the case with Theaetetus in the end. Socratic ἔλεγχος is inherently negative as it seeks to rid one of the notion that one knows what one does not actually know, whereas the Eleatic Stranger, and presumably certain others, employs a positive method of teaching which fills the empty, unshaped vessel with real, substantive knowledge.

The process by which a student receives and is filled with knowledge thus emerges as the basis on which someone can approach divinity. The δημιουργός is not a jealous being, and so in ordering things to be as good as possible, creating order out of disorder and reason out of the irrational,<sup>272</sup> he is in fact persuading every object to be as much like him as it can. Becoming godlike, therefore, is to be filled with the greatest possible amount of true knowledge. Thus the recipient is decidedly not wholly opposite the good or νοῦς, as there cannot exist a principle of evil as second measure in addition to the good; nor do good and evil exist as relative opposites, thereby establishing a moral continuum. Rather, it is correct, I think, to posit the recipient as the ἀρχή of otherness from the good. Sensible particulars cannot exist without an underlying flux and so are less like the divine than intelligible forms which admit of no change. As per the Divided Line of the *Republic*, each mode of knowing, in its correspondence to the mode of being of the object known, is informative of the degree of goodness any person possesses, and vice versa, as the mode of being is equally

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271 Cf. *Timaeus*, 51a.

272 Ibid, 30a.

informative on the side of the object.

The process of being filled with knowledge and becoming like a god is not done simply through persuasion, however. Strictly speaking, the product of the union between the Mother and Father of the *Timaeus* is the realm of becoming, which is then reflective of eternal principles which govern it. Divine νοῦς persuades the unformed recipient to become like itself; as a unity or sum (τὸ πᾶν), it is an entity over and above its constituent parts, modeled after νοῦς itself; as a whole consisting of parts, it is the total instantiation of the elements which comprise the natural realm, modeled after the elements as they exist prior to any combination. νοῦς thus has knowledge of the elements in this prior state and it is with their essences in mind that it persuades the recipient, causing the recipient to match the invisible essences in the manifestation of the visible realm of becoming. Perception of just this realm as it undergoes perpetual flux yields knowledge which is subjective and truth which is accidental: “so whenever someone acquires true opinion about anything without λόγος, his soul acquires the truth about it, but does not understand it [γίγνωσκεῖν]; for whoever cannot give and receive λόγος about something is without knowledge [ἀνεπιστήμων].”<sup>273</sup> νοῦς, which operates on this knowledge, is in the soul; so too is οὐσία as a mode of being and object of investigation.<sup>274</sup> So in persuading his student, the teacher does not fill him with knowledge of objects as they exist in and of themselves beyond the realm of becoming. Rather, the act of persuasion properly aligns the senses with the soul in a subordinate role in order that the soul may investigate the essential qualities of any object. This alignment is precisely what I want to suggest that Socrates does with Theaetetus so that they can search for true knowledge beyond what is immediately perceptible to them.<sup>275</sup>

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273 *Theaetetus*, 202b-c.

274 *Sophist*, 250b.

275 *Theaetetus*, 184c ff.

As we know, a mode of knowing, and so too a mode of being, beyond the realm of becoming depends on a mathematical λόγος which is constructed in order to define the object of investigation. For while true opinion is informative of the operation of persuasion without λόγος, νοῦς is informative of teaching with true λόγος,<sup>276</sup> and the attainment of λόγος is a necessary condition for perfect knowledge of the object of investigation.<sup>277</sup> The δημιουργός saw fit to construct the soul with νοῦς just as the body is constructed with soul,<sup>278</sup> such that every living creature with a soul has the capacity to approach the divine to a certain degree. For if the philosopher takes up justice *qua* justice, for example, as the object of investigation and constructs a λόγος of it, he does not just gain perfect knowledge of what justice is in and of itself, but he himself becomes just.<sup>279</sup> As Socrates states, “So a philosopher, by associating himself with what is divine and orderly, becomes orderly and divine so far as is possible for a human being.”<sup>280</sup> The use of the sun as a metaphor for the good could not be more apt: as the Eleatic Stranger says, in attaining divinity to this degree the philosopher becomes difficult to see “on account of the brilliant light of the place; for the eyes of the soul of the multitude are not strong enough to endure the sight of the divine.”<sup>281</sup> This upward trend toward the divine and the good is manifested in a more and more complete unification between being and otherness within the individual, as the mode of knowing which has justice *qua* justice as its object is beyond any measure of truth and falsity. The philosopher does not become justice itself, of course, just as the eye does not become sight;<sup>282</sup> but in becoming just due to his greater and greater knowledge of what

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276 *Timaeus*, 51e.

277 *Theaetetus*, 202c.

278 *Timaeus*, 30b.

279 See Sedley 2004, 74-81 for a larger discussion of this idea.

280 *Republic*, 500c-d. Translation from Sedley 2004, 77.

281 *Sophist*, 254a. Fowler's translation.

282 *Theaetetus*, 156e.

justice is he transcends all particular instances of it. The sophist, on the other hand, in retreating to the comfort he finds in non-being becomes equally hard to discern on account of the darkness of this place. Being and otherness are at the greatest distance from each other. As things become knowable only in their relative difference the possibility of collection within an abstract idea becomes impossible, and so the sophist himself becomes a universal measure of both being and non-being in stating what any particular thing is or is not for himself.<sup>283</sup>

#### 4.6: The Guidance of Philosophy

This slow progression toward some perfected state of being through the acquisition of knowledge is readily apparent in these dialogues and in Plato's philosophy in general. Sensible instances of forms are merely approximate to their respective ideals and therefore are lacking in perfecting to the degree to which they deviate from the form which has its source in divine νοῦς. The δημιουργός models the universe after certain παραδείγματα which it has in mind, just as any artisan or expert has in mind an idea of the completed product prior to fashioning it. The presence and indeed the very necessity of this divine mind is missed or misunderstood by some. In the *Theaetetus*, for instance, some people are content enough to ask if a certain king has great wealth or happiness, but the philosopher seeks to know the nature or universal idea of happiness itself and how one might attain it under any circumstance.<sup>284</sup> Moreover, in becoming like a god the philosopher necessarily seeks to understand the nature of justice and piety<sup>285</sup> and so become these things himself.

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283 Cf. Doull 1977, 10-15. As he states here, "Socrates knows the relation of 'being' and 'not-being' not as a Protagorean subject but as the objective identity which is called the One or Good. He seeks to determine the relation of the many to this principle by definitions—that is, by stabilizing universally their 'being' and their 'not-being' or relation to one another (Doull 1977, 11-12).

284 *Theaetetus*, 175c ff.

285 Ibid, 176b.



Here and elsewhere we see explicit references to the fact that for Plato there is a direct correspondence between modes of being and modes of knowing. The soul which perceives the sensible world *through* the senses, rather than intuiting the intelligible world *by* the senses,<sup>286</sup> thinks that what it sees exists in the highest state of being, ignorant to the fact that these physical things are mere images of yet higher principles. Like the prisoner at the bottom of the Cave, someone in this state (thinking that one knows what one does not know, in the present context that an image constitutes true reality) must be forcibly removed from it so that he may apprehend the real world which is illuminated by the sun, not a fire which can only reveal the analogous sensible world of which it itself is a part.<sup>287</sup> Similarly, the philosopher must force his student to confront a self-contradiction in his own thought so that he may acquire a greater and truer knowledge.<sup>288</sup> Upon exiting the cave, however, the former prisoner is blinded by the light of the sun, and like Theaetetus or any number of Socrates' interlocutors there follows a period of aporetic wandering.

Without the forceful hand of his benevolent guide, the prisoner cannot summon enough strength to move himself past the comforting glow and warmth of his own fire. To his good fortune, like Theaetetus he has a life-line in the person who initiated this ascent out of and beyond his unconscious ignorance. Ignorance, however, comes in two difference forms; or rather, there are two distinct kinds of teaching, each curing a certain form of ignorance appropriate to it. In the sixth definition of the sophist, the art of teaching (διδασκαλική<sup>289</sup>) is divided between the two kinds of teaching: the first, παιδεία, cures stupidity, ἀμαθία, or the notion that one knows what one does not know; and the other kind of teaching, δημιουργική, cures an unnamed aberration in the soul. The sixth definition

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286 Ibid, 184c.

287 *Republic*, 515c ff.

288 *Sophist*, 230b ff.

289 Ibid, 228b. Cf. *Timaeus* 51e3.

focuses on the nature of catharsis as bringing about this self-contradiction between what is known and what is not known, and so in separating the two methods δημιουργική is not only left unexplored, but unassociated with any particular object.<sup>290</sup>

A catharsis has a negative effect, subtracting ignorance from the soul or disease from the body rather than adding knowledge or health. In this sixth taxonomy, δημιουργική too is categorized as affecting a kind of catharsis. But what sort of ignorance does the δημιουργικός remove in his student's soul? One of the final remarks in the *Sophist* is that the name from which σοφιστικός is derived is indicative of the very nature of the sophist as imitating the expert (σοφός) who has real knowledge. If this sort of identification can be used to relate the δημιουργικός to the δημιουργός, we find that this purgative catharsis is anything but. The δημιουργός fills the empty receptacle with the formal elements of the cosmos, persuading this irrational void to become ordered and rational. How, then, can it be said that the teacher fills his student with anything via catharsis?

In educating his student, the teacher shows him how to properly position himself with respect to any object of investigation such that the soul can look through and interpret sensational experience and acquire knowledge of the object's essential nature. Like Theaetetus, he shows the student how non-additive generation is possible.<sup>291</sup> The kind of ignorance which is the object of δημιουργική is left unnamed because it has nothing to do with the present discussion in the *Sophist*, but more than this we see that it is left unnamed because it literally has no name. This ignorance is, I want to suggest, the soul's state of being ἀγνοία (as opposed to ἀμαθία), an empty receptacle which is without knowledge of anything. Socratic ἔλεγχος can bring the soul to this empty state by removing one piece of

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290 *Sophist*, 229c.

291 Cf. p. 212 above.

ignorance at a time, such as a false identification between an object and its essence, to the point of knowing simply that one does not know. But it cannot add anything. The 'removal' of ignorance which the δημιουργικός (and the Eleatic Stranger too, for all intents and purposes) endeavors to affect is performed by the very act of adding knowledge. The entire cosmic receptacle is moved by the divine mind, and the soul *in toto* is moved to view the world with a greater mode of knowing.

This latter kind of ignorance must have substance and existence of some sort in order that it may be removed from the soul, like a tumor in the body, or a bird of false knowledge in the spiritual aviary which is caught and removed. For in affecting a catharsis on his student's soul a teacher cannot remove something which is not already there. The end of the *Theaetetus* may be negative and aporetic in its attempt to define ἐπιστήμη, but the dialogue has great success in demonstrating the existence of false opinion. The first kind of ignorance discussed in the sixth definition is the acquisition of false or incorrect knowledge concerning the true nature of something; for example, that man is the measure of all things, or that non-being in no way exists. In educating his student (that is, with παιδεία) the teacher seeks to purge this kind of ignorance from his student's soul in order to create a greater proportion of knowledge to ignorance. This kind of ignorance occurs when the soul directs itself toward truth, but its understanding, they say, "passes beside the mark"<sup>292</sup> and so acquires not truth but falsity. Thus the unnamed kind of ignorance which is cured by δημιουργική can be known in its formal opposition to the good. The good or divine νοῦς contains everything in itself, whereas this ignorance, like the receptacle, is the complete absence of any determinate form.

How, then, does a teacher actually affect a catharsis? After the διδάσκαλος persuades

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292 *Sophist*, 228d. Fowler's translation.

his student to approach οὐσία as the object of investigation via νοῦς in the soul rather than *genesis* via αἴσθησις, what tool does he employ in order to teach the student to actively use νοῦς? The art of teaching is divided a second time in the sixth definition, this time between two different methods the teacher can use in practicing his art, depending on whether the student is willing to learn or not. The former method, concerning a willing student, is admonition, or νουθετητική;<sup>293</sup> the latter method, of forcing an unwilling student into a self-contradiction in order to remove a false opinion, is then defined at the end of this taxonomy as Socratic ἔλεγχος.<sup>294</sup> What concerns the discussion here is not the method *per se*, but the way in which it is said that either method is employed—that is, “in λόγος.”<sup>295</sup>

Let us return briefly to a question asked earlier, namely why the union of the Father and Mother of the *Timaeus* occurs through persuasion rather than by force. Without some sort of mind inherent in the recipient, it does not seem to follow that this union can happen other than by force or compulsion as there is nothing to suggest that the nature of the recipient is anything other than the passive accommodation of the cosmic elements in order to provide a principle of the “that in which” generation occurs. If, however, this unification is considered in the present pedagogical context of a teacher 'filling' his student with knowledge, there is necessarily a soul within the receptacle which desires to know,<sup>296</sup> thus accounting for not just the persuasive nature of this experience, but also the possibility of a forceful aspect of education which nonetheless persists.

Belief (πίστις), we recall, remains entirely subjective, for it is an identification between the object and a quality which depends on the particular perspective which the observer has of the object. For this reason, Protagoras, whose knowledge is firmly rooted in

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293 Ibid, 230a.

294 Ibid, 230b ff.

295 Ibid, 229e1 .

296 Aristotle, *Met. A*, 980a22.

belief and opinion, sees no possible or necessary recourse to the truth of an opinion.

Socrates finally levels the Protagorean position, that man is the measure of all things, by asserting that the ability of a so-called expert to judge a future state of being demonstrates without a doubt the existence of false opinion. In other words, the expert has knowledge which he acquires through νοῦς about the object as it is, or about the object's οὐσία, which is true independent of anyone's particular relation to the object being judged.

Although he professes to know nothing, Socrates admits that he at least knows how to utilize his peculiar brand of midwifery. At the very least, he is able to test someone's claim to knowledge and reveal if any particular identification between form and matter is true or if it is merely a “wind-egg.” As discussed earlier, an idea of a completed identification between the object and its essence is a necessary precondition to the actual process of defining the object with λόγος. Thereafter, the division of a completed λόγος into its constituent elements will reveal whether or not their combination produces an entity which correctly links the object to its essence. In the *Sophist*, the Eleatic Stranger proposes two λόγοι in order to demonstrate this difference: the λόγος “Theaetetus sits” is plainly true, whereas the λόγος “Theaetetus flies” is false. Testing the latter λόγος shows that the terms 'Theaetetus' and 'flies' do not fit together, just as objects of sight and objects of sound do not fit together.<sup>297</sup> In this way, the student who posits a false λόγος is brought to a self-contradiction in his understanding of the connection between the object and its essence. In other words, he realizes that he has failed to correctly unite the being and otherness of the object according to an objective measure<sup>298</sup> in which they have their complete unity, and so his account is equally meaningless to everyone.

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297 Cf. *Theaetetus*, 185a.

298 *Laws*, 716c.

Accordingly, as the sophist is his own measure of this unity, for him there is no possible recourse to the fitness of elements, for this would be to divide an indivisible element.<sup>299</sup> Indeed, Protagoras makes no claim to the truth or falsity of anyone's opinion, but only which one is better or worse. On the one hand, then, the philosopher's method is necessarily negative or even destructive prior to any positive education he may be able to engender within his student; and what the student learns he then knows in the Platonic sense of the word. On the other hand, through his method of persuasion the sophist makes a wholesale replacement of the worse idea with his own; and so long as this idea is believed, it is true. In this way, the skilled sophist imitates not only the Socratic character, who, knowing nothing himself, can only remove false knowledge from the soul, but also the character of the Eleatic Stranger who has real knowledge and so can make a positive addition to what one knows (or believes, as the case may be). Moreover, the sophist usurps the role of the divine insofar as he becomes the source of wisdom and any useful knowledge. He himself becomes the universal measure in which being and otherness are fully united, as it is up to him to determine what a thing is and what it is not, or what it can and cannot do.

This distinction between Socratic knowledge-for-everyone and Protagorean knowledge-for-someone demonstrates and resolves the tension inherent in the unification of the principles of the *Timaeus*. In visible terms, the union of the Father and Mother discloses the physical universe and the realm of becoming in which the sophist operates. The process of coming to know at this level divides the infinite relativity between active and passive motion<sup>300</sup> in order to produce the plurality of sensible elements which are combined to form

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299 That is, in order to test the fitness of the elements in a λόγος, one must divide the λόγος into its constituent elements which we see Theaetetus and the Stranger do. However, because the sophist constructs his λόγος through the addition of elements rather than multiplication, there is no 'two-dimensional' entity to be divided in this way. The λόγος does not exist over and above the elements, but is on par with them in its οὐσία. Cf. Chapter 2, pp. 44-48.

300 *Theaetetus*, 156a ff.

δόξα. Accordingly, the sophist can only direct his student to some final end through persuasion such that the student willingly accepts this alteration in his thought. Moreover, the student arrives at the sophistical academy with the preconceived notion that the sophist is more abundant in knowledge than himself and so arrives there expecting to learn anything.

As before,<sup>301</sup> this model can also be interpreted as it applies to the realm of invisible, intelligible being. Here, the union of the Father and Mother discloses the metaphysical universe as the realm in which the philosopher operates. Coming to know at this level is to divide the infinite relativity between active and passive οὐσία, the nature of which will be discussed in the following chapter, in order to produce the plurality of intelligible elements which combine to form νοήσις. Knowledge at this level is tested for its objectivity, and so the philosopher can only instruct his student by forcing him to recognize the sort of self-contradiction in thought discussed above. Whereas sophistical persuasion is gentle due to its application on a willing student who actively seeks out this teacher, philosophical compulsion can be painful as the assumption of an objective understanding can develop into obstinacy of thought and thereby a general discomfort when one is confronted with one's own blindness to true reality. Thus this sort of person can and does become “displeased with what he himself says” as he “appears to be no better than a child;”<sup>302</sup> he “becomes angry with himself”<sup>303</sup> such as when a doctor might explain certain simple preventative measures which would have avoided some disease; or in the worst-case scenario, due to the repetition of this experience this person loses all comfort in knowledge and discussion and so becomes a μισόλογος and a μισάνθρωπος, finding his end in “continual quarrels and by hating everybody and thinking that there is nothing sound in anyone at all.”<sup>304</sup>

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301 Page 84 above.

302 *Theaetetus*, 176b.

303 *Sophist*, 230b-c.

304 *Phaedo*, 89e. Fowler's translation.

There is no doubt, though, that it would be incorrect to suggest that Theaetetus is like this sort of individual who is reluctant to change his point of view. Rather, he is among the most willing participants of any Platonic dialogue and thus in stark contrast to Theodorus who initially refuses to participate in the discussion and later worries that they are “running [his] friend Protagoras too hard” in finding fault with his position.<sup>305</sup> Theaetetus is more than willing to relinquish his notions of what knowledge is given sufficient evidence, and so it is with a newly emptied soul thanks to the force of Socratic inquiry that the positive addition of knowledge can begin anew with the Eleatic Stranger.

The objective of the next chapter is then to demonstrate precisely how the Eleatic Stranger is able to take Theaetetus through a positive analysis of the elements of intelligible being such that the λόγος formed thereafter is truly mathematical or dianoetic. The aporetic ending of the Theaetetus is positive insofar as it demonstrates what this type of λόγος must needs be, and so we must see how the changeover from Socrates one day to the Eleatic Stranger the next provides the proper arena in which the three definitions of λόγος can be properly united into a singular, unique entity.

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305 *Theaetetus*, 171c.



## Chapter 5

### 5.1: Introduction to the *Sophist*

Chapter 2 concluded by suggesting that the argument of the *Sophist* can solve the problems inherent in the final section of the *Theaetetus* in which Socrates and Theaetetus discuss the proposal that ἐπιστήμη is true opinion with an accompanying λόγος. The three definitions of λόγος which they offer are shown to be practical examples of the three stages of the construction of λόγος: the vocalization of a thought, the enumeration of elements, and the identification of a unique differentia correspond to the apprehension of the infinite continuum, its division into elements, and the combination of these elements to form a new, emergent product. Their proposal ultimately fails, however, because the three attempts to define λόγος are insufficient when considered independently. λόγος is properly all three of these definitions working in conjunction with each other, as seen in Theaetetus' λόγος of δύναμις via his geometrical model. Thus it is the job of this chapter to illustrate the approach to this issue which the *Sophist* introduces and to demonstrate how this approach overcomes the issues inherent in the argument of the previous dialogue in order to find out at last what λόγος really is and what its role is in the acquisition of true knowledge.

There is no doubt that Plato maintains the conviction of his earlier doctrine that the mind which is restricted to the sensible realm on the lower half of the Divided Line will not be able to gather true knowledge. The mere addition of elements which takes place in Antisthenes' and Protagoras' positions, as opposed to the multiplication of elements in Theaetetus', is not able to account for the greater knowability inherent in any investigation. In his demonstration, however, Theaetetus shows how to give a rational explanation to an irrational object, namely the area of a square as opposed to the length of a line. The *Sophist*, insofar as it can be seen to apply the lesson in Theaetetus' demonstration, accounts for the

transition to a greater mode of knowing as the context of the investigation shifts from looking at an object's visible nature to its invisible nature, or from understanding the material nature of reality with the senses to understanding the formal nature of reality with the soul through the senses.<sup>306</sup>

One of the questions of this dialogue is then of separation. At the end of the *Sophist*, the Stranger offers the λόγοι, “Theaetetus sits” and “Theaetetus flies.”<sup>307</sup> As they appear at the end of the lengthy discussion on the combination and separation of formal elements, I take these λόγοι to be true and false examples of what results from Theaetetus' process of reasoning he displays in his geometrical model. With him the Eleatic Stranger applies this method to the realm of the forms using the μέγιστα γένη themselves as elements of formal being, having uncovered them from within an appropriate infinite continuum. Plato must therefore maintain the same distinction between invisible formal essences and visible sensible objects, but must redefine the terms in which these beings can be understood in order to overcome the problems of separation as discussed in the *Parmenides*. Specifically, this revised approach targets rest (στάσις) and motion (κίνησις) as these terms signal the realms of being and becoming respectively. The goal of this chapter is thus to show how the Stranger's λόγοι demonstrate the combination of rest and motion with the other μέγιστα γένη, or the combination of the universal form with a particular object which is otherwise said to participate in it.

In his geometrical model, we recall, Theaetetus starts by assuming an infinite continuum of magnitude, being in and of itself nothing other than the relativity between greater and lesser quantities. By imposing the unit or finite measure appropriate to

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306 Cf. *Theaetetus*, 184c ff.

307 *Sophist*, 263a.

magnitude, namely the “foot,” on the infinite continuum, he divides it into a plurality of elements (that is, whole numbers). It is at this point that, as in the *Timaeus*, reason “persuades” the perpetual relativity between greater and lesser quantities which necessarily underlies these elements, bringing what is inherently irrational to a state of being rational. That is, Theaetetus is able to classify whole numbers as either rational or irrational squares, and so by combining certain elements, he is able to give a rational explanation via λόγος to any and every irrational number. For instance, the square root of a number such as seven is asymmetrical with the unit of the foot but can be represented as the area of that square; that is, the one-dimensional line segments proportional in length to the quantity of the factors of the square root can be combined into a two-dimensional figure, proportional in area to the quantity of the product of those factors. Any δύναμις, in other words, has the capacity to be brought to a higher mode of existence by a higher mode of knowing.

The *Sophist* provides the means to solve the problems at the end of the *Theaetetus* partly by reconfiguring the approach to the investigation of elements. The elements in question are no longer of the material structure of reality, but rather its formal, essential nature. In this regard, the *Sophist* takes a similar approach to the *Timaeus* in addressing the nature of the elements in question. The elements in the *Sophist*, the μέγιστα γένη, are not identifiable independently from one another and so they cannot be defined positively or negatively without reference to another element: motion exists, and to say that motion is selfsame is to say that motion is not rest, or is different from rest. Similarly, the investigation into the elements in the *Timaeus* is undertaken in regard to their essential unity prior to any instantiation of them in the material universe.<sup>308</sup> Otherwise, the investigation in

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308 Cf. *Timaeus* 48b: “We must gain a view of the real nature [φύσις αὐτή] of fire and water, air and earth, as it was before the birth [γένησις] of Heaven, and the properties they had before that time.” Bury's translation with Greek substituted.

either dialogue would have to abandon λόγος as a meaningful communication of essence, as the ἄλογα elements would be left with a name only.<sup>309</sup>

The other part of the solution which the *Sophist* offers lies in the explicit identification of οὐσία as a mark (ὄρον) of δύναμις, or the ability of an object either to act or be acted upon, or both as the case may be.<sup>310</sup> As Cornford states in his commentary, “the Platonic *dynamis* can be defined as the property or quality which reveals the nature of a thing.”<sup>311</sup> For example, he says, the active power of the eye reveals its nature as a seeing thing, and the passive power of something to be seen reveals its nature as having such-and-such a quality or quantity.<sup>312</sup> He continues, “The *dynamis* makes it possible to give each thing a name conforming to its peculiar constitution, and places things in separate groups. In a word, it is at once a principle of knowledge and a principle of diversity.”<sup>313</sup> That is, in the terms of the approach I am taking to this dialogue, δύναμις allows for the identification of an object as it is known according to its “particular constitution” as an object of εἰκασία, πίστις, διανοία, or ἐπιστήμη.

For Plato, true mastery of an art necessitates knowledge of the objects appropriate to that art at the level of ἐπιστήμη. As Socrates states, “Whoever is ignorant [ἀγνοεῖν] of ἐπιστήμη does not understand [συνιέναι] cobblery, nor any other art.”<sup>314</sup> This statement suggests that in order to practice an art, one does not necessarily need to know the answer to the question “What is ἐπιστήμη?”, but one must know the objects of one's art as they exist *qua* ἐπιστήμη. That is, one must know these objects generally or universally, beyond the

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309 Looking forward to those people who think that only self-identity (e.g. 'man is man') is possible (*Sophist*, 251b-c). Cf. *Theaetetus*, 202a-b.

310 *Sophist*, 247e and 248c.

311 Cornford 1935, 236. Here he is paraphrasing a work by Dr. J. Souilhé (Cornford 1935, 235 §1).

312 *Theaetetus*, 156a ff. Cf. Chapter 3, pp. 81-82.

313 Cornford 1935, 237.

314 *Theaetetus*, 147b.

narrowed scope of a particular practice. Moreover, Socrates here foreshadows Theaetetus' geometrical demonstration, stating that the understanding one gains from having this sort of knowledge is an understanding of the combination (literally the “bringing together”) of the elements which then constitute the objects appropriate to any art. Thus Socrates continues, “The answer to the question, 'What is episteme?' is ridiculous whenever one gives the name of some art. . . . In the question about clay, the common and simple response would be that it is earth mixed with water, never mind who uses it.”<sup>315</sup> The prior knowledge of the total unity of these elements thus allows the expert to disclose in λόγος the essence of such an object, and afterward employ it in his profession. As the assault on sophistry in these dialogues is explicitly concerned with the possibility of false discourse, the Eleatic Stranger demonstrates in the end how λόγοι which communicate one's opinions and beliefs are qualified as either true or false. He shows too, however, that διανοία is not infallible as it also admits of truth and falsity, or sound and unsound arguments.<sup>316</sup> Here, though, ἐπιστήμη is left out, suggesting that knowledge at this level is beyond the distinction between true and false.

The other question of this dialogue therefore concerns the operation of the soul. The soul, we recall, has νοῦς in it thanks to the δημιουργός, and it is νοῦς which has a conception of the unity between an object's being and non-being prior to the formulation of a definition of it.<sup>317</sup> Properly formulated, this definition stemming from the operation of νοῦς is true λόγος, but as just discussed, the possibility of arriving at a false λόγος also exists. As stated above as well, the mastery of an art requires the operation of the soul or νοῦς through knowledge *qua* ἐπιστήμη of the objects appropriate to that art. Accordingly, the art of dialectic confers the “greatest” kind of ἐπιστήμη on the philosopher through its mastery,

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315 Ibid, 147b-c.

316 *Sophist*, 264a-d.

317 *Timaeus*, 30b. Cf. Chapter 3, pp. 102-105.

having as its appropriate objects the μέγιστα γένη themselves.<sup>318</sup>

In this way, the Eleatic Stranger establishes the art of dialectic as a model for other arts in its approach to understanding the μέγιστα γένη through λόγος in the method Theaetetus lays out. As a model, the art of dialectic does not reestablish or redefine the principles of constructing λόγος, but rather demonstrates the principles of these principles. In his model Theaetetus gives a practical application of the principles of apprehension, division, and combination, but the Stranger here gives the theoretical basis behind those principles, showing what needs to be true of them in order for them to be what they are. The Stranger states that dialectic is required if someone intends to show the nature of these elements in terms of their division and combination, and it is explicitly “through λόγος” (διὰ τῶν λόγων)<sup>319</sup> that this nature is demonstrated. The mark of an object's existence is thus nothing more than the apprehension by νοῦς that the object has the capacity to act or be acted upon, whereas λόγος communicates through νοῦς *what* the object is in terms of its capacity either to act or be acted upon, and *why* it acts in this way.<sup>320</sup>

## 5.2: The Elements and the Finite

In the *Theaetetus*, Socrates tests the Protagorean and Heracleitean positions to determine their worth in yielding true knowledge. In the *Sophist*, the Eleatic Stranger performs the same sort of test on two competing schools of thought, albeit without explicit reference to any particular philosopher other than Parmenides. This struggle is the so-called γιγαντομαχία between the materialist philosophers, i.e. the “giants” who “maintain stoutly that that alone exists which can be touched and handled,”<sup>321</sup> and the idealist philosophers, i.e.

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318 *Sophist*, 253b-c.

319 *Ibid*, 253b11 .

320 Cf. Introduction, pp. 5-6.

321 *Sophist*, 246a. Fowler's translation.

the “gods” or “friends of the forms.”<sup>322</sup> Theaetetus and the Stranger have a mutual understanding that neither position is entirely correct, but at the same time that neither position is entirely incorrect. Both schools of philosophy have some grasp of the truth, but like Apollo and the Erinyes of Aeschylus' *Eumenides*, neither side can reconcile itself with its opponent's claim to truth. The respective premise of each position (the materialists, that only visible objects have real existence, and the idealists, that only invisible objects have real existence) restricts these people to a particular perspective of a total, universal truth which Theaetetus and the Stranger are trying to understand. At the heart of this tragic opposition, both for Plato and for the poets, is the conflict between knowing and not knowing. In the *Eumenides*, Athena is able to come up with a solution which recognizes the claims of both Apollo and the Erinyes despite their inherent opposition. So too does Socrates overcome the dilemma of the *Meno* by introducing the doctrine of ἀνάμνησις which proposes that objects of investigation are both known and not known at the same time.<sup>323</sup> Similarly, the Stranger and Theaetetus work together to find a way in which he can unite the positions of the gods and the giants.

The basic point of contention between the materialists and the idealists hinges on their respective definitions of οὐσία as either what is in motion or what is at rest respectively.<sup>324</sup> The materialists hold that οὐσία is identical with physical matter, a sort of “moving generation,”<sup>325</sup> and that even the soul is corporeal and so occupies a physical space inside the body.<sup>326</sup> Some of them are willing to agree that moral forms such as justice and

322 Ibid, 248a.

323 Meno appears to draw his argument (*Meno*, 80d-e) from the dichotomy attributed to Gorgias (Curd 1996, 99-102). Either being and knowing are the same, and so everything (the Parmenidean One) is known; or being and knowing are not the same, and so nothing is known. Under the doctrine of ἀνάμνησις, then, being and knowing are both the same and different insofar as the immortal soul both knows everything and learns what it knows (*Meno*, 81b-e).

324 Cf. Dorter 1994, 142, wherein he calls them the “champions of motion and the champions of rest.”

325 *Sophist*, 246c1-2.

326 Ibid, 246e.

injustice must exist despite the fact that they have no perceptible body.<sup>327</sup> For this reason, they suggest that forms exist as they are said to have the ability to become present (παραγίγνεσθαι) or absent (ἀπογίγνεσθαι) in a soul with respect to their relative opposite,<sup>328</sup> and so the soul exists in this way as it has the ability to 'receive' one form or another into itself. For the benefit of these materialists who are willing to admit that intangible or incorporeal things must exist, the Stranger suggests δύναμις as a “mark” of their conception of οὐσία.<sup>329</sup> In this way, the Stranger supplies them with an answer to his own demand of them, namely that they state what is common to both corporeal and incorporeal objects if they maintain that both come into being (γεγονός).<sup>330</sup> For the materialists, then, the forms retain a strange existence as being incorporeal yet in motion as they are subject to generation and destruction, just like any physical object they can see and touch.

The idealists, however, find this conception of οὐσία quite controversial as they agree with Plato, Theaetetus, and the Eleatic Stranger that there is a clear divide between being and becoming. The idealists accept δύναμις as a mark of existence in objects which inhabit the realm of sensible becoming, but they reject the notion that the essence of intelligible beings can be understood in the same way. They conceive of the forms as motionless entities as their notion of οὐσία is not subject to the activity and passivity which identifies generation and destruction in the realm of becoming.<sup>331</sup> This divide between being and becoming recalls one of Parmenides' criticism of Plato's theory of forms: if the realm of ideas does not have active and passive δύναμις as a mark of its essence, the forms themselves cannot be

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327 Ibid, 247b-d.

328 Ibid, 247a. Just as in the *Phaedo*, for instance, wherein Socrates proposes that under the doctrine of such participation one form will retreat or be destroyed by the presence of its contrary (102d-e).

329 *Sophist*, 247e.

330 Ibid, 247d2.

331 Ibid, 248c.



known, for being known is a passive capacity,<sup>332</sup> and so human knowing is completely cut off from this realm. The idealists, however, remove the knowledge of the forms which Parmenides attributes to the divine. For knowing is the activity of a living and therefore moving soul and mind, and the idea of an entity with these attributes which is nonetheless motionless is completely contrary to reason.<sup>333</sup>

As the Stranger states earlier in the dialogue, the inability of someone to define the common thread running through multiple definitions of the same object does not demonstrate a problem with the object's ability to be known, but with the investigator's ability to know the object he seeks to understand.<sup>334</sup> To solve this dilemma between the materialists and idealists he proposes a conception of οὐσία which is a unity of both (the realm of) rest and (the realm of) motion together.<sup>335</sup> Rest and motion themselves are thus taken as elements which comprise the compound οὐσία, providing the Stranger and Theaetetus with a λόγος of οὐσία “suitable enough”<sup>336</sup> to reconcile the materialists with the idealists. This proposition is difficult for Theaetetus to swallow but somehow less shocking to him than the conclusions which the Stranger has just shown the materialists and idealists reach on their own, respectively that there can be no non-physical part of the universe, or that the universe is completely static and admitting of no change whatsoever.<sup>337</sup>

Presumably, then, the forms can be known and therefore moved while maintaining a stable unity, and sensible particulars can remain in perpetual flux while participating in some universal, unchanging ideal. This proposition is not without certain initial difficulties. In the first place, though a compound is nothing other than its elements, it maintains an existence

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332 Ibid, 248d-e.

333 Ibid, 249a-b.

334 Ibid, 232a.

335 Ibid, 249d.

336 Ibid, 249d6-7 .

337 Ibid, 248e-249c.

which is separate from its elements regardless of whether or not the λόγος of the compound is considered as a whole or a sum.<sup>338</sup> Desjardins defines this compound as “a radically novel product which is analyzable into, but not reducible to, its constitutive elements.”<sup>339</sup>

Referencing this same section of the *Sophist*, she then concludes with her conception of οὐσία as it matches her formulation of this entity:

...[ousia] in this comprehensive sense may be analyzed into “all that is in motion” in the world of becoming and “all that is at rest” in the world of being (cf. *Soph.* 249c10-d4). On the other hand, as radically emergent, [ousia] in this ultimate sense (as the *Sophist* is shortly to make explicit) “is not simply motion and rest both together but something else different from both ... outside both these dimensions” (*Soph.* 250c3-d3). Accordingly, we attribute to the objects of knowledge properties which no mere adding up of concrete and/or abstract elements could ever claim, and therefore reality in this ultimate sense is not reducible to those elements.<sup>340</sup>

As a whole made up of parts, οὐσία is heterogeneous. For example, the elements of a brick of clay are said to be both earth and water and so to divide clay is to divide it into its constituent elements. Considered as a sum, clay is neither earth nor water but a substance with its own unique nature, just as a word has its own unique meaning and does not convey the meaning of each consonant and vowel which comprises it. So too with οὐσία:

“According to its own nature,” the Stranger says, “οὐσία is neither at rest nor in motion.”<sup>341</sup>

From this perspective οὐσία is homogeneous, making division impossible. For if one were actually to 'divide' it, each portion would consist equally of its elements in their combination; for a potter does not divide a large brick of clay into earth and water, but into two smaller bricks which have the same proportion of earth and water.

At this point in the dialogue, however, it is impossible to attribute existence to anything unless it is either at rest or in motion, and so it is “most impossible,” Theaetetus says,<sup>342</sup> that οὐσία has a nature which is neither at rest nor in motion (not reducible to rest

338 Cf. Chapter 2, pp. 75-76.

339 Desjardins 1990, 43.

340 Ibid, 166.

341 *Sophist*, 250c.

342 Ibid, 250d.

and motion) or both (analyzable into them). To avoid rejecting this account outright due to this impossibility, it may help to consider what the finite unit must be and how it is added to the yet unnamed infinite continuum. The δημιουργός, we recall, has an analogous understanding of the total unity of the elements of the cosmos and so constructs the intelligible universe and its reflection in φύσις with these eternal, selfsame παραδείγματα in mind. So too must the grammarian, for example, construct a word with a παράδειγμα of the word itself in mind. As Desjardins puts it, “...in order for there ever to be letters (a 'many') rather than mere sounds in a sea of sound (an 'infinite'), there has to be in the mind in the first place some idea of a word (a 'one').”<sup>343</sup> In other words, the unit, apprehended *qua* ἐπιστήμη, is known as it exists simultaneously as the heterogeneous whole and the homogeneous sum described above, or as the enumeration of its elements and according to its unique differentia as suggested in the conclusion to Chapter 2. The Stranger locates his new conception of οὐσία explicitly in the soul,<sup>344</sup> and so it is human νοῦς which operates through the soul and apprehends *qua* ἐπιστήμη that οὐσία is the combination of rest and motion.<sup>345</sup> The dianoetic communication of this entity then identifies it either as a sum or a whole in relation to its parts, into which it can be analyzed, but not reduced, and so the addition of the finite unit to the infinite continuum produces a plurality of simple elements, rather than an aggregate of complex compounds like itself.

Thus despite Theaetetus' objections, the general class of elements which results from this unit being united with the still unnamed infinite continuum appears to be, simply enough, a plurality of existent elements in which those at rest or in motion are distinguished from each other. Or to look at it another way, rest and motion emerge as the principles

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343 Desjardins 1990, 74.

344 *Sophist*, 250b.

345 Cf. pp. 117-18 above.

which govern any class of element. For example, the plurality of numbers which results from the foot being added to the continuum of magnitude is distinguished between rational and irrational, and the plurality of letters is distinguished between vowels and consonants. Vowels, or “voiced” letters, have no inherent stop to them and so 'move' or are in motion, one might say; whereas consonants, which are “voiceless” and in some cases “noiseless,” have or come to a stop and so 'rest' or are at rest.<sup>346</sup> Similarly, a rational square root is commensurate with the foot because the process of dividing it into its factors or elements stops or comes to rest at whole numbers, whereas an irrational δύναμις is incommensurate with the foot because this division is in continual motion, never reaching an end.<sup>347</sup>

Theaetetus' objection still stands, however: rest and motion in and of themselves cannot combine with each other. For them to do so halts motion and moves rest, which the Stranger repeats is the greatest impossibility.<sup>348</sup> Clearly rest and motion still exist and so participate in οὐσία, just as vowels and consonants both 'participate' in a fully-formed word, and so the Stranger and Theaetetus arrive at their next conclusion about these principles which thankfully is itself easy to grasp, to say nothing yet of its implications: some of these principles can combine according to their ability, δύναμις, to do so, whereas others cannot.<sup>349</sup> The Stranger's analogy using letters of the alphabet,<sup>350</sup> namely that some letters cannot combine with each other, some can, and that they can all combine with vowels, foreshadows the next section of the dialogue in which he and Theaetetus employ the art of dialectic in order to discuss the nature of the μεγίστα γένη. Just as the bifurcation of the angler is used as

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346 *Theaetetus*, 203b.

347 As mentioned in Chapter 1, p. 14, this idea of irrational square roots had already been proved by Pythagoras.

348 *Sophist*, 252d.

349 *Ibid*, 251d and 252e.

350 *Ibid*, 253a. Perhaps it should be noted that this analogy proceeds on different terms than the previous assignment of vowels and consonants to motion and rest respectively. Here, the Stranger is considering the entire alphabet indiscriminately. He does not even mention consonants, let alone suggest that they signal objects at rest.

a model for finding the sophist, here they use the alphabet, “well-known and small, but no less possessing of λόγος,”<sup>351</sup> as a model for their approach to identifying and predicating the μέγιστα γένη as epistemological principles.

### 5.3: The Art of Dialectic and the Infinite

The discussion in the *Sophist* must still determine two things: one, if, as determined in the previous section, the apprehension which νοῦς or the soul has of οὐσία is the principle of λόγος as the combination of elements, what emerges as the principle of the infinite continuum; and two, how can it be shown that rest and motion are not mutually exclusive? The continuum appropriate to quantity has long since emerged as the perpetual relativity between greater and lesser magnitude, just as all musical notes exist as relatively higher or lower in pitch, and letters as voiced or unvoiced. There must be something which is then appropriate to all existent things, whether they be intelligible forms or sensible particulars, out of which the addition of the unit discloses rest and motion as the two classes of elements.

We recall that the expert has prior knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) of the total inter-relational unity of the elements which combine to form the objects appropriate to his art, and so too does he have a prior understanding (διανοία, συνιέναι) of the object whose essence he wishes to disclose in λόγος prior to the process of constructing this λόγος, just as the grammarian has a word in mind before actually spelling it. The art of dialectic explicitly takes the μέγιστα γένη as its appropriate elements, and so its mastery is universal. It allows one to define the ontological and epistemological principles which allow any particular expert to have knowledge of this unity and understand the objects belonging to his own field. Therefore, if we, along with Theaetetus and the Eleatic Stranger are to determine the

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351 Ibid, 218e.

principle of the infinite continuum, as well as how motion and rest can combine with each other, the discussion must utilize this art as it is presented in this dialogue as it allows one to explicate the nature of the *μεγίστα γένη*.

The art of dialectic explains the nature of the *μεγίστα γένη* in a series of *λόγοι* composed of the *μεγίστα γένη* themselves as elements, further defining the principles which govern Plato's later epistemology. Any given *λόγος* only has meaning if its elements are fitting or have the ability to combine. As discussed above, some letters of the alphabet, the Stranger says, can fit together while others cannot; literally, they are either harmonious (*ἀρμόττειν*, *συναρμόζειν*) or disharmonious (*ἀνάρμοστος*).<sup>352</sup> The full explanation of the art of dialectic then appears in the *Sophist* as follows:

Since we have agreed that the kinds [*γένη*] are able to mix with one another in the same way, is it not necessary to proceed with some *ἐπιστήμη* through *λόγος* [*διὰ τῶν λόγων*] if someone intends to show correctly which of the kinds harmonize [*συμφωνεῖν*] with which, and which do not admit [of any]? And moreover, if there are certain kinds [existing] in all of them, holding them together so that they are able [*δυνατά*] to mingle [*συμμίγνυσθαι*], and again when they separate [*διαίρεσις*], if there is another cause of separation [running] through the whole?<sup>353</sup>

Once again, the language of *δύναμις* appears. In the case of letters and the *μεγίστα γένη*, and indeed any other type of element, each element has the capacity or incapacity to combine or not combine with certain other elements. This potential for combination is then put forth as a predication in terms of participation. That is, rest and motion are not identified as *οὐσία*, but as being or participating in *οὐσία*. Moreover, rest and motion themselves are said not to participate in each other for obvious reasons already mentioned.<sup>354</sup>

In a certain sense, this application of the art of dialectic is an indirect reply to and retroactive disapproval of Antisthenes' position as Socrates presents it in the *Theaetetus*. We remember that the problem with this position, as Aristotle points out, is that it does not

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352 Ibid, 253a

353 Ibid, 253b-c.

354 Ibid, 254d.

differentiate between a λόγος which predicates something of the object of investigation and a λόγος which defines the object. Thus a λόγος of an element cannot be given within the realm of δόξα, as this mode of knowing can only add elements together and thus do nothing to explain the unique nature of any element. Under νόησις, specifically διανοία, the distinction between definition and predication allows one to give a predicative λόγος of an element such as rest or motion, namely that they are in οὐσία but not in each other, keeping this λόγος separate from one which would attempt to define the element.

The problem which dialectic addresses is simply how one is able to speak about things in a meaningful way beyond self-predication; i.e. that rest and motion are, or are the same as themselves. So far we are able to say positively that rest and motion are in οὐσία and negatively that rest and motion are not in each other, but any sort of negation in saying what a thing is not presents a serious philosophical problem. According to Parmenides, it cannot be said that being is not, or that non-being is.<sup>355</sup> The conception Parmenides has of “that which is not” is what the Eleatic Stranger refers to as “absolute non-being,” or τὸ μηδαμῶς ὄν.<sup>356</sup> With this conception of non-being, any statement of what a thing is not is entirely meaningless as it identifies the object with absolute non-being. For this reason, the Stranger distinguishes between absolute non-being and non-being, or τὸ μὴ ὄν, which is a positive statement of difference or otherness. This new conception of non-being thus neatly solves this problem, namely how statements such as “motion is not rest” and “rest is not motion” do not necessarily negate the existence of either rest or motion. By identifying each element with τὸ μὴ ὄν instead of τὸ μηδαμῶς ὄν, they are identified simply with what is other than or different from themselves. Thus Theaetetus and the Stranger disclose the fifth and

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<sup>355</sup> Ibid, 237a and 258d.

<sup>356</sup> Ibid, 237b9.

final of the μέγιστα γένη treated in this dialogue, as otherness or difference is a necessary epistemological principle of understanding and so communication beyond mere tautologies. Non-being identifies, as the Stranger states, “not something opposite being, but only something different,” and so “the particle 'not' indicates something different from the words to which it is prefixed,”<sup>357</sup> thus allowing these entities to be related to each other in a meaningful way despite the use of a negation.

The discussion of this new conception of non-being as otherness as discussed in the previous chapter lends a hand to the current investigation. The recipient of the *Timaeus* is taken to be the principle of otherness from the unity of the cosmic elements grasped by divine νοῦς, and so despite its complete emptiness the recipient is nonetheless intelligible. Here the same principle acts as what is other than the complete unity of the ontological elements of human knowing as grasped by human νοῦς. Thus otherness emerges as the principle of the infinite continuum, for “it is by necessity that non-being exists in relation to motion and every other γένη. For it is in relation to all of them that the nature of otherness functions by making each one other than οὐσία, and therefore non-being.”<sup>358</sup> To paraphrase using Theaetetus' geometrical model, it is by necessity that magnitude exists in relation to every number, for it is in this relation that magnitude functions by making each number other than the foot, and therefore not the foot. Thus “with respect to each class [εἶδος] of object, οὐσία is a plurality, whereas non-being is infinite.”<sup>359</sup> That is, the addition of the finite unit to the infinite continuum discloses a plurality of elements, all of which exist and are real things. The infinite, however, has no absolute existence as it can only be known in a

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357 Ibid, 257b-c.

358 Ibid, 256d-e.

359 Ibid, 256e. Moreover, since οὐσία is an entity over and above its elements, it is other than all the elements which it itself is not, and so it itself is one (ἐν μὲν αὐτό ἕστί) while the elements are not unlimited in number (ἀριθμὸν...οὐκ) in the sense of not being infinite, but plural (257a).



relative context; as the Stranger puts it, “the other is always relative to another.”<sup>360</sup> Just as the recipient of the *Timaeus* is knowable by virtue of its emptiness, non-being is thereby knowable by virtue of its total relativity.

#### 5.4: λόγος in the *Sophist*

The λόγοι of the μέγιστα γένη can now be newly summarized as such: οὐσία, sameness, and otherness can combine with and so be predicated of anything, for both sameness and otherness themselves exist, and any existent object is said 'to be' in either an absolute (same) or a relative (other) sense.<sup>361</sup> Rest and motion, though they both participate in οὐσία, and sameness, cannot in any way combine with each other as they would cease to exist as such, and so they must both participate in otherness as well.<sup>362</sup> That is, rest and motion both are, are self-same, and other than what they are not. The natures of rest and motion still present a problem, however. The compound entity one is to define with λόγος has been up to this point assumed for the sake of argument to be a combination of rest and motion, but so far these two elements have remained mutually exclusive. At best, they can be related to each other precisely through this exclusion as rest is said to be other than motion, and motion other than rest.

Thus the natures of rest and motion are still very problematic. Taken as they are to represent the principles of intelligible being and sensible becoming respectively, this question is, again, one of participation versus separation. The art of dialectic allows one to understand how and why rest and motion participate in and so are not separate from οὐσία,

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360 Ibid, 255d.

361 The one exception, of course, is otherness, which as just discussed does not participate in absolute existence as well as relative existence. For then there would be two 'others', the absolute other being other than the relative.

362 This discussion takes place at *Sophist*, 254d-255e.

but it has not shown explicitly how and why, by necessity, they participate in each other through combination and so do not remain completely separate from each other. Otherwise, how could Theaetetus, for example, form a two-dimensional figure without the ability to multiply one-dimensional lines, or a grammarian form words without combining vowels and consonants?

Plato writes in his Seventh Epistle that there are five things which concern knowledge of any existent object. The object itself is listed as the fifth and knowledge of the object the fourth; the three remaining things are necessary conditions for knowledge: one, the name, τό ὄνομα, which signifies the object being defined; two, the λόγος which, echoing the discussion in the *Sophist* to come, defines the essence of the object by combining ὀνόματα and ῥήματα; and three, the εἶδωλον of the object which one draws or points out in order to demonstrate that one has knowledge of the object.<sup>363</sup> Knowledge, the fourth, he says resides with νοῦς in the soul; and so if we take οὐσία as the object of investigation (the fifth item) we can supply the other three requirements: one, the *definiendum*, οὐσία; two, its λόγος as the combination of rest and motion;<sup>364</sup> and three, what I take to be the verbal communication of the name in conjunction with its λόγος as the object itself is known *qua* ἐπιστήμη in the soul.<sup>365</sup>

As mentioned earlier, what results from the combination of rest and motion is that the

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363 *Epistles*, 342a-e.

364 The identification between ὀνόματα and rest and ῥήματα and motion will follow shortly.

365 Plato here defines εἶδωλον as something which is destroyed after its creation, and so a written account, which he criticizes for its inability to change, is not likely to be the sort of image he includes in this list. A verbal statement, on the other hand, could be the sort of thing he has in mind as its stability is dependent on one's memory of it being said; and so taking forgetfulness into account, speaking does not have the same fixity as writing. In either case, a major tenet of the *Theaetetus* is the capacity of λόγος to be tested for truth and falsity, including Protagoras', which he wrote down in his work, *Truth*, and Plato's own, either as the account which Eucleides recorded or the dialogue which Plato himself wrote. Moreover, identifying this εἶδωλον as a verbal statement positions these three items in a direct correspondence with the three definitions of λόγος from the *Theaetetus*, only in a backwards order: its unique differentia; an account of the enumeration of elements; and a verbal statement of the two in conjunction.

formal, unchanging idea participates in motion while the sensible, motive particular participates in rest by virtue of their being known in this relation to each other.<sup>366</sup> The two elements are not identified with each other, but predicated of one another, allowing each element to maintain both its absolute existence and its otherness from what it is not. For rest and motion are other than οὐσία, but nevertheless participate in it. This distinction between predication and identification or definition is of obvious importance for Plato here. Having distinguished between the two senses of non-being the Eleatic Stranger successfully upholds both conceptions of it and so avoids his patricide against Parmenides. He then presents two consequences of a legitimate, albeit sophistical, objection to the doctrine which has arisen from the classification of non-being among objects which exist. The objection stems from the same mistake which Antisthenes makes in failing to notice the difference between a predicative λόγος and a definitional λόγος, supposing that the two are the same. They do not recognize that something can participate in οὐσία while remaining other than οὐσία, and so they suppose that it follows from the λόγος, “rest is not being,” that rest is itself non-being.<sup>367</sup> So too they think with any other object which exists: being as such also participates in difference and so is other than anything which exists; anything which exists, therefore, is non-being.

Other objections come from certain people who have “just begun to lay hold upon the problem of οὐσία”<sup>368</sup> and fail to see the distinction between non-being as a statement of what is other than and what is opposite. These people claim that, by virtue of the doctrine of non-being just introduced by the Stranger, opposites are now identical with each other: rest is not being; therefore rest is not what it is; therefore rest is motion. So too with any other

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366 Page 123 above

367 *Sophist*, 259a.

368 *Ibid*, 259d. Fowler's translation with Greek substituted.

quality: sameness is otherness; bigness is smallness; likeness is unlikeness; and so on.<sup>369</sup>

Everything becomes identical to its opposite, and so the class of objects at rest cannot be distinguished from the objects in motion and vice versa.

The discussion has not yet made explicit how they can combine with each other, and so these people dealing with οὐσία for the first time suggest that things be kept totally separate, just as others maintain that only tautological predication is possible.<sup>370</sup> As the Stranger states, however:

The total separation of each thing from everything else is the obliteration of every λόγος. For λόγος has come into being for us through the weaving together of ideas with one another. [...] Our object was to establish λόγος as one of our kinds [γένη] of being. For if we were deprived of this, we should be deprived of philosophy, which would be the greatest calamity.<sup>371</sup>

Having in mind the λόγοι which appear near the end of the *Sophist*, “Theaetetus sits” and “Theaetetus flies,” it is clear that the issue here is how language itself can convey meaningful, objective knowledge of what one knows, regardless if one's knowledge concerns a sensible or intelligible object. The art of dialectic has sufficiently provided λόγοι which predicate the elements of this knowledge, and so there is a shift here to definitional λόγος, itself an existent entity comprised of rest and motion as it identifies these elements in the entity it is attached to.

The solution which philosophical discourse provides rests upon how dialectic demonstrates that all five of the μέγιστα γένη are shown to operate in these two λόγοι put forward by the Stranger. Both sameness and otherness permeate all things, we recall, including each other. This fact is part of the problem described above: some people are told that otherness is the same [as itself] and sameness is different [than others], leading them to conclude that sameness and otherness are identical with each other. We know well, however,

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369 Ibid, 259c-d.

370 Ibid, 251b-c.

371 Ibid, 259e-260d.

along with Theaetetus and the Eleatic Stranger, that sameness is the principle of absolute self-identity and otherness the principle of relative comparison.<sup>372</sup> Included in these principles is not just that, in the case of whole numbers, each number is greater or lesser than another while remaining equal to itself, but also that a number which represents the area of a figure is 'greater' than a number which represents the length of a line by virtue of being two-dimensional rather than one-dimensional. If, then, two numbers can be multiplied together in order to produce this latter conception of a 'greater' entity, how is it that the statements “Man learns” and “Theaetetus sits” possibly demonstrate a way in which rest and motion are 'multiplied' or combined in order to produce an analogous λόγος?

The answer to this question runs parallel to the final section of the *Theaetetus*, namely in part of what follows from the suggestion that ἐπιστήμη is true opinion with a λόγος. According to the dream theory, the elements as they exist in and of themselves can have only a name (ὄνομα), and the combination (συμπλοκή) of ὀνόματα is the essence or οὐσία of λόγος. The Stranger now picks up the discussion of ὀνόματα as a class of a certain kind of element, just as they determined that vowels and consonants represent the two classes of letters.<sup>373</sup> Half of the equation is missing, however; there is no second class of element to be combined with ὀνόματα in order to produce a λόγος. As the Stranger himself says, no amount of names strung together will produce any meaning,<sup>374</sup> just as a word cannot be made with only vowels or consonants. Building upon the suggestion that a mark of οὐσία is δύναμις Theaetetus and the Eleatic Stranger introduce a new class of element which conveys the essence, so to speak, of a certain δύναμις: ῥήματα, or verbs, which signify an action or πράξις, whereas ὀνόματα signify the object performing an action.<sup>375</sup> If he and

372 Ibid, 255c. Cf. pp. 127-129 above.

373 *Sophist*, 261d, looking back to 253a-c.

374 Ibid, 262b.

375 Ibid, 262a.

Theaetetus can demonstrate how and why one combines the ὀνόματα 'man' and 'Theaetetus' with the respective ῥήματα 'learns' and 'sits', they will be able to understand how and why it is in the nature of rest and motion to combine in meaningful discourse.

Each and every λόγος, the Stranger says, needs a subject which the ὄνομα signifies regardless of whether or not the λόγος itself is actually true.<sup>376</sup> That is, a subject is necessary regardless of whether or not the elements are fitting or not, so long as the combination includes each kind of element. The ῥήμα, on the other hand, explains what the subject is, is becoming, has become, or is to be<sup>377</sup> according to the nature of the subject. In other words, the ῥήμα conveys a δύναμις of the object of investigation and so it signals or 'marks' the οὐσία of its motion or becoming in terms of a capacity to act or be acted upon. The ὄνομα, therefore, signals the subject in a state of rest as the name persists in one's understanding of it: the λόγος "Theaetetus flies" is obviously false, but there is no doubt as to who the subject of that sentence is, nor that it is the same subject as the other λόγος, "Theaetetus sits."

What, then, is the relationship between ὀνόματα and ῥήματα, subject and action, such that the elements 'Theaetetus' and 'sits' are fitting whereas 'Theaetetus' and 'flies' are not? Theaetetus is the subject in both cases and the respective verbs signify two different marks of his essence, namely the capacity to sit and the incapacity to fly. The first statement obviously demonstrates a true, fitting, and harmonious relation between the two kinds of elements whereas the other is a false, unfit, and disharmonious relation between the same kinds of elements. Here the Eleatic Stranger neatly reintroduces Socrates' final proof for the existence of false opinion in the *Theaetetus*, for if two people make these statements about Theaetetus simultaneously one plainly knows something about Theaetetus' nature whereas

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376 Ibid, 262e-263b. The practical nature of truth and falsity will be discussed in the next chapter. Here the discussion is only concerned with the theory concerning truth and falsity as fitting or unfitting elements.

377 Ibid, 262d.

the other is quite ignorant of it, as what happens when the layperson and the expert happen to share conflicting opinions about the same object.<sup>378</sup>

The question still to be answered, however, is how the Stranger or anyone else knows that it is in Theaetetus' nature to sit, but not to fly? In other words, simply recognizing that one λόγος is true and the other false does not reveal *why* this is the case. He correctly apprehends the true and false marks of Theaetetus' own essence, but with what knowledge does he communicate this essence διὰ τῶν λόγων? Perhaps the answer is simply that the Stranger knows that Theaetetus is sitting and not flying because he is at this moment perceiving Theaetetus as sitting but not flying. Specifically, he says that a true λόγος states about the subject “things which are how [the subject] is,”<sup>379</sup> and so a false λόγος incorrectly makes this identification, stating facts about the subject which are contrary to or 'other than' what it is. Indeed, the Stranger does not say that Theaetetus *cannot* or *does not* fly, just that, right now, he is not doing so.

Until this point any model λόγος has been expressed with a certain formula: object X is a combination of elements A and B; but here the λόγος is simply the elements spoken in combination with each other. We know from Plato's Seventh Epistle, however, that the ὄνομα can be not only an element in this combination, but also what signifies the object of investigation. Thus the ὄνομα plays a dual role as signifying both the *definiendum*, namely the object as it is grasped by human νοῦς, and an element in the definitional λόγος. Hence the λόγος “Theaetetus sits” can be faithfully reformulated as, “[An idea of] Theaetetus is the combination of [the name] Theaetetus and [his capacity] to sit.” The elements, 'Theaetetus' and 'sits' are fitting or harmonious with each other. They can combine, in other words,

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378 *Theaetetus*, 178a-179d; *Sophist*, 263b-c. Cf. Cornford 1935, 310-13.

379 τὰ ὄντα ὡς ἔστι. *Sophist*, 263b.

whereas some elements cannot, as Theaetetus and the Stranger have already demonstrated. Furthermore, as discussed above there must be some prior conception of a completed idea prior to the actual construction of any λόγος; for example, the grammarian must have an idea of a completed word before actually spelling it. Thus there is also a harmony between the five criteria of knowledge which Plato lists in his Seventh Epistle: the Stranger's knowledge *qua* ἐπιστήμη of Theaetetus is correctly identified with the combination or “bringing together” of certain elements which he discloses in λόγος.<sup>380</sup> To reuse another oft-mentioned example, the grammarian, by analogy, understands his art *qua* ἐπιστήμη and so can communicate in λόγος his dianoetic understanding (his συνιέναι) of the objects of his art, namely letters which combine to form words, and words which combine to form sentences.

How, then, is the Stranger supposed have a noetic understanding of what Theaetetus is prior to actually seeing Theaetetus? It is a sensible mind which understands Theaetetus “how he is” sensibly; that is, how he exists within becoming. Thus at this level the λόγος “Theaetetus flies” is plainly false because it does not correspond to sensible reality. More specifically, if the statement “Theaetetus sits” expresses what Theaetetus is according to the mode of knowing through which he is being perceived and the Stranger is perceiving Theaetetus sensibly, the false λόγος is as such because it does not correspond to the Stranger's own particular grasp of sensible reality. The positions which argue against the existence of falsity as discussed in Chapter 2 reemerge: Protagoras, for whom every λόγος which expresses one's opinion is true, and who would then no doubt state that “Theaetetus sits” is simply the better λόγος; and Antisthenes, for whom otherness is akin to absolute non-being, and so false speech is logically impossible as the false identification is other than the object's essence.

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380 Cf. pp. 117-18 above.



The answer to this problem comes by way of the *Timaeus*. The δημιουργός, we recall, grasps in νοῦς the total unity of the elements of the universe, which are then disclosed in a certain relation or ratio to each other. Considered intelligibly, this ratio can be explained using a certain arithmetical formula.<sup>381</sup> Considered sensibly, this total unity accounts for the complete physical instantiation of the elements, and this relation between elements accounts for the particular ratio of them within sensible bodies. That is to say, the principles of formal being can be apprehended as objects of thought in and of themselves and through objects of sensation. Likewise, the human communication of these principles can occur in sensation or the intellect, their εἶδωλα being either something like a painting<sup>382</sup> or the verbal communication of a λόγος,<sup>383</sup> depending on how the object of investigation is being perceived.

Thus the object whose οὐσία (its unity between rest and motion) the Stranger has in mind is not Theaetetus himself, but 'man' or 'human' in general. His knowledge of Theaetetus is not of him sitting rather than flying, but of his capacity as a human to act. Similarly, in his digression in the *Theaetetus* Socrates states that the point of a philosophical inquiry is not to ask whether any particular person is happy or wealthy, but rather what happiness and wealth are in and of themselves, and how each person is fitted to seek them according to his ability to be happy or wealthy.<sup>384</sup> The elements 'human' and 'sitting' fit and so combine to form not just a true λόγος, but a true λόγος which makes no reference to any particular, sensible object. The Stranger's λόγοι are therefore true and false statements

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381 Cf. Chapter 3, pp. 88-90.

382 *Sophist*, 266c; *Republic*, 597d-e.

383 Cf. p. 132 above.

384 *Theaetetus*, 175c. Of course, the discussion in the *Sophist* is not concerned, as Socrates is, with the moral implications of this type of inquiry—that a person can be happy or unhappy, wealthy or poor, and so happiness and wealth ought to be pursued and their opposites avoided as their inherent nature is good and bad respectively.

regarding the physical instantiation of his noetic grasp of the human. With the false λόγος, Cornford remarks that Plato “has deliberately chosen a statement which is not only false now but could not be true at any time, since Theaetetus can never fly.”<sup>385</sup> Likewise, the λόγος “Theaetetus sits” can be seen as not only true now, but true at any time because the δύναμις to sit is a mark of Theaetetus' essence *qua* human, remaining true independent of sensible becoming.

This interpretation disqualifies the progressive translation of this λόγος, “Theaetetus is sitting.” With his senses the Stranger can indeed perceive Theaetetus in this way and attribute such a quality to him. This attribution, however, is accidental to Theaetetus' participation in the universal form of the human, depending only on his position within the realm of becoming. That is, from an empirical standpoint one can only give an account of what Theaetetus is or is doing according to how he appears to the observer. With the soul *through* the senses, however, one can perceive Theaetetus and attribute to him necessary qualities according to his participation in the form of the human, just as Socrates explains this operation to Theaetetus in order that he may perceive the essential qualities of an object rather than what is simply accidental.<sup>386</sup> If Theaetetus is a person, it is necessary that he have the capacity to sit, but his being a person is not a sufficient condition for him to be sitting.

### 5.5: Bearing on the *Theaetetus*

How, then, does the argument of the *Sophist* provide the missing pieces to that of the *Theaetetus*? Why do Socrates and Theaetetus fail to properly recognize what λόγος is in and of itself, and what sort of solution to this problem does the Stranger provide them the next

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385 Cornford 1935, 313.

386 *Theaetetus*, 184c. As Socrates says, truth can only be attained if one discovers οὐσία first (186c).

day? If Plato intentionally positions these two dialogues to be read in conjunction, the limitations of the argument in the *Theaetetus* must be made on purpose. Indeed, Socrates' rejection of the dream theory at the end of the dialogue suggests that Plato is consciously positioning Socrates within a framework which he knows to be insufficient, an awareness which the reader or interlocutor is forced to recognize simultaneously with Theaetetus. As discussed in Chapter 2, his contention with the dream theory, attributing it to Antisthenes, concerns the failure to distinguish between definition and predication and the insistence that λόγος is proprietary and unique to the object of investigation. As a λόγος formed within the realm of sensation can only add elements together, an account of the unique nature of any element is therefore impossible.

Situated in this way within δόξα, the final definition Theaetetus gives of knowledge reflects this insufficiency on the part of sense experience in its capacity to yield objective truth. The definition itself is expressed as the addition (μετό) of certain elements rather than their multiplication. Despite its inevitable failure, this definition is at least informative of its own deficiency. Moreover, λόγος itself is likewise unable to be defined due to its status as an element within this definition. That is, Plato does not here allow Socrates and Theaetetus the wherewithal to consider λόγος (or ἐπιστήμη, for that matter) as a unique entity, itself the proper combination of other elements. They can only give predicative accounts of λόγος, having not the knowledge with which they can otherwise consider these accounts as themselves the elements, so to speak, of a true, dianoetic account of λόγος. Similarly, the respective positions of the gods and giants in the *Sophist* are at odds with each other until the Eleatic Stranger is able to propose a solution to their dilemma, one which does not reject both accounts of οὐσία, but combines them as each account becomes an element in the final definition of οὐσία.

In turn, this new conception of οὐσία as the combination of rest and motion provides the principles of the process by which any λόγος is constructed. Can it then offer a proper account of λόγος itself? Or rather, can it provide a fuller picture using the accounts of λόγος we have already been given in the *Theaetetus*? Indeed, in a certain way the second and third accounts of λόγος correspond to motion and rest respectively, but the restriction of either account to only motion or rest results in their inherent difficulties. The unique characteristic must remain entirely static; otherwise, the term ἥλιος, for example, will not always refer to the brightest object in the sky, nor 'Theaetetus' to the same person. Without recourse to their elements, however, knowledge of their difference from other similar objects remains undisclosed; there is no account as to *why* they are unique in any way. The mere enumeration of elements without recourse to such an entity, on the other hand, remains in a sort of fluidity: if, as discussed in Chapter 2, knowledge is based on knowledge, a λόγος which is the enumeration of elements demands in turn a λόγος of each element;<sup>387</sup> however, the solution to this regress which Fine suggests, namely that this account is of the proper relation of the elements to each other, ends in an unfortunate circularity and is not sufficient for a class of element which is infinite in number.<sup>388</sup> Working in conjunction with each other, the static account halts any regress or circularity in the motive account, which in turn satisfies the condition that the static account contain knowledge of difference, such as the distinction one makes between square and oblong figures simply by recourse to their respective elements.

In an earlier footnote I suggested that the first three items in Plato's catalogue of knowledge from his Seventh Epistle run parallel to the three definitions of λόγος in the

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387 Chapter 2, pp. 65-67.

388 Ibid, pp. 50-51.

*Theaetetus*: the ὄνομα, λόγος, and εἶδωλον of the Seventh Epistle correspond respectively to the accounts of λόγος as disclosing the object's unique differentia, as the enumeration of elements, and as the verbal communication of a thought.<sup>389</sup> Working in conjunction with the discussion of the *Sophist* we know also that the ὄνομα plays a dual role as signaling the object of investigation and an element in any given combination; hence “Theaetetus sits” is simply a condensed version of how an object is typically identified with its elements (for example, clay is earth and water) which avoids unnecessary repetition. Like anything else, λόγος is the combination of rest and motion as signaled by an ὄνομα and a ῥήμα, and so the proper λόγος of λόγος indeed appears to be the verbal communication of the second and third accounts of λόγος. It is an entity comprised of nothing other than its elements and is divisible into them, while maintaining its own unique nature over and above them as they work in conjunction with each other.

Knowledge itself thus emerges as what was suggested earlier.<sup>390</sup> It is the immortal soul's noetic apprehension of the object as it exists prior to its division into its constituent parts. As such, the soul's knowledge of things is pre-given and common to everyone. It makes sense, then, that the aviary image in the *Theaetetus* is said to be empty at birth. Assuming that this dialogue purposely leaves out any inclusion of the forms in its argument, this account of the soul is one in which the forms and any preexisting knowledge about them is absent. Furthermore, as the soul perceives things as they are in and of themselves, its knowledge is beyond any distinction between truth and falsity. This distinction only comes when one endeavors to speak about and thereby learn or recollect what one knows.

It is within human discourse, then, that the combination and separation of rest and

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389 Cf. p. 131, §58 above.

390 Chapter 2, pp. 75-76.

motion, and indeed the forms themselves, actually occurs. With the Stranger's proposal of non-being as otherness, both the combination and separation of the elements can be accounted for using positive and negative statements about them in the form of predicative λόγοι, or hypothetical propositions which disclose the actual epistemological principles behind the process of one's learning about the forms. Moreover, by upholding the Parmenidean conception of non-being as absolute unreality, the Stranger preserves the law of non-contradiction, such that any statement about a compound entity in the form of a definitional λόγος can be qualified as either true or false according to the fitness or symmetry of the elements. Thus as McDowell suggests, what is missing from the *Theaetetus* is an answer to the question, "Why?"<sup>391</sup> The λόγος "Theaetetus flies," for example, is not false because its elements cannot combine, but because they should not combine. That is, this statement does not undermine any of the principles established by dialectic, but rather the inherent nature of both elements.

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<sup>391</sup> McDowell 1973, 228-31 and 257-58.

## Chapter 6

### 6.1: Plato's Hypothesis

In Plato's middle dialogues, the philosophical method of inquiry is one of hypothesis. In the *Phaedo*, Socrates explains to Simias, Cebes, and the others present precisely how and why he began what he calls his “second voyage.” Having found that knowledge which is derived strictly from the realm of sensible becoming remains dark and obscure due to its distance from its ontological source, and similarly that a closer and closer proximity to this source becomes impossible due to its brilliance, Socrates begins to employ his 'second best' method in order to disclose the mathematical or dianoetic knowledge which garners so much attention from the *Theaetetus* and *Sophist*. In the *Republic*, this space is explicitly the level of διανοία on the Divided Line in which Socrates says “the mind uses the originals of the visible order in their turn as images, and has to base its inquiries on assumptions and proceed from them not to a first principle but to a conclusion.”<sup>392</sup> As he continues to explain, this knowledge remains dependent on still higher principles which exist at the level of νόησις; but in order to proceed to a principle which involves no assumption, διανοία assumes that its hypotheses are in fact principles of this sort.<sup>393</sup> Accordingly, Socrates' second-best method is above all a recourse to λόγος with which, as was discovered in the last chapter, the soul communicates in a meaningful way what it knows implicitly about an object's true nature or οὐσία which is otherwise blinding to behold.<sup>394</sup>

As if to anticipate *Theaetetus*' involvement in the late dialogues, the interlocutors in

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392 *Republic*, 510b. Lee's translation. The conclusion is an end, τελευτή, whereas the first principle is a beginning, ἀρχή.

393 *Ibid*, 511c.

394 *Phaedo*, 99d-100a. Here Socrates states his method as such: “I assume in each case a λόγος which I take to be strongest, and whatever I find agrees with it I establish as being true, whether it concerns a cause or the essence of anything whatsoever, and what disagrees with it I establish as false.” In line with the section of *Republic* quoted above, Socrates makes it clear in the *Phaedo* that the mathematical cannot be explained in and of itself mathematically, notably at 96e-97b.

the *Republic* agree that this activity happens in geometry and similar sciences<sup>395</sup> in which the τεχνικός puts forward an assumption which is self-evident and “obvious to everyone.”<sup>396</sup> It is because of this openness and objectivity of the hypothesis that a disharmonious conclusion is rejected, rather than allowing such a conclusion to force a change in the hypothesis itself. Against the criticisms Parmenides levies against his theory of the forms in his youth, Socrates asserts at the end of his life that beauty and goodness and other such forms exist,<sup>397</sup> and that objects engage in a metaphorical participation in them.<sup>398</sup> In this way, Socrates is able to demonstrate the immortality of the human soul by showing that if one assumes the existence of the soul, one must conclude that it is in the soul's nature to avoid the destruction which otherwise affects every other living thing.

Plato reapplies this same method to a certain extent in his late dialogues: it was shown in the last chapter that if [one assumes that] Theaetetus exists, he must by nature have the capacity to sit, and likewise not have the capacity to fly. In communicating the οὐσία of Theaetetus or human beings generally, it is correct to say that Theaetetus sits and that his soul is immortal, and incorrect to say that he flies and that his soul is mortal. In either case, one avoids the inevitable misfortune which Socrates says he encountered in his youth in trying to understand an object's οὐσία in and of itself. Instead, this method serves its own purpose in leading one to discover how anything exists *qua* οὐσία: the immortality of the soul depends on the prior and eternal existence of the forms, the nature of which the soul

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395 *Republic*, 511b.

396 *Ibid*, 510c.

397 *Phaedo*, 100b.

398 *Ibid*, 100c ff. Dorter, for example, argues that the problem Socrates encounters in his discussion with Zeno and Parmenides is that he lacks the sophistication to properly discuss his theory of forms. To this end, he states, “the Socratic wisdom of the *Republic* is more like the goal at which the *Parmenides* aims, than a rejected ideal from which it flees; but I do not think we are given any reason to expect that wisdom to be able to purge its concepts of metaphor and analogy” (Dorter 1994, 30-31 §16). Similarly, I find that the *Parmenides* serves in part to introduce the limitations which Socrates finds in his youth and perfects in his old age, using certain late dialogues to take initiates through this same process.



apprehends intuitively and thereafter recollects by virtue of its very immortality.

Altogether, the discussion of the *Theaetetus* and *Sophist* has not been concerned so much with any object's inherent value or goodness regarding the moral forms as with the epistemological approach to understanding and communicating the nature of any such form. As is the case with the middle dialogues, however, this approach and understanding is not mutually exclusive from knowledge of goodness itself. Understanding the nature of an object is to understand its relation to the good, and so in the *Theaetetus* Plato includes a short digression on the nature of philosophy in acquiring knowledge which includes knowledge of goodness, as well as happiness and piety.<sup>399</sup> This digression is no doubt meant in part to cause the reader to recall certain of Plato's middle dialogues;<sup>400</sup> and so, having already investigated the epistemological process which accounts for *what* anyone knows and *how* Plato thinks things are known, it is largely with respect to the depiction of the philosopher in this section of the *Theaetetus* that this chapter will endeavor to explicate the philosophical approach to the value of knowledge and discourse; that is, what is *worth* knowing, and why. The sophist, on the other hand, is said to be like the philosopher as a “wolf is like a dog,” and he is ultimately defined as an imitator of one who knows.<sup>401</sup>

For Plato, λόγος is what allows one to speak about the physical world of becoming according to the relationship of stable, ontological principles or the forms, in other words, in which sensible objects participate as the soul perceives them through the senses. This final chapter will be devoted to an analysis of the respective approaches which the philosopher and the sophist take to formulating λόγος, using Plato's theory of knowledge discussed so far as a lens through which their methods can be compared and contrasted. This chapter, then,

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399 The digression runs from 172d-177d.

400 Cf. Chapter 3, pp. 78-79.

401 *Sophist*, 231a; 267d-268c.

will investigate secondly the nature and method of sophistry as it is described in these dialogues by considering this art in its relation and proximity to philosophy. In contrast to Socrates' philosophical digression, special attention will be given to the defense he himself gives of Protagoras and his profession, assuming that in this description of how Protagoras employs his art Plato intends to give a legitimate picture of the historical figure and his doctrine. Given the dramatic context of these dialogues, this must be an especially poignant topic for both Plato and his readership.

As both the philosopher and the sophist are said to construct and employ λόγος, an analysis of the sophist's likeness to the philosopher must account for a difference not in the process by which λόγος is formed, but in the respective end to which each thinker is directed. That is, the tripartite process of apprehension, division, and combination which this thesis is otherwise devoted to analyzing remains the same for both thinkers, as briefly discussed in Chapter 2.<sup>402</sup> Rather, the difference in method is informed by the knowledge or lack thereof as well as the intent with which the philosopher and the sophist are said to utilize their respective arts. The sophist too proposes a hypothesis to which one's beliefs either conform or not, but whereas the philosopher aspires to become like a god, the sophist instead usurps the role of the divine and the good in asserting that man, not god, is the measure of all things, and moreover that it is the sophist, not any divine mind, which has a certain wisdom with which he directs things to be at their best.<sup>403</sup> For the sophist, the unhypothetical principle which Socrates grasps indirectly with his second-best method is no longer hidden by its own brilliance; or rather, there is no imperative to search for this principle, for, man being the measure, it is nothing other than each person's understanding of

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402 The difference in method noted in that chapter concerns the philosopher and sophist's respective modes of combination. Relegated strictly to the realm of sensation, the sophist is only capable of adding elements, whereas the philosopher 'multiplies' them, as it were.

403 Cf. *Phaedo*, 97c-98b; *Timaeus*, 29e-30b; *Theaetetus*, 166d-167b.

the principle of οὐσία extending from the soul's given apprehension of this principle. Thus for the sophist there is no recourse to the truth or falsity of any statement as the communication of one's understanding of this principle is always in harmony with the principle itself.

## 6.2: The Philosopher

The initial distinction which Socrates makes between the philosopher and the sophist concerns the general goal of their respective modes of inquiry in the context of the Athenian law court. This distinction has its root in either thinker's free time (σχολή) or lack thereof. The sophist, Socrates says, is ἄσχολος,<sup>404</sup> having a limited amount of time in which he can present his argument in the courtroom. He becomes slave to the water clock, and his ability to win an argument with fancy rhetoric results in the sort of ignorance through which the Eleatic Stranger says every misstep in διανοία happens.<sup>405</sup> The sophist believes that he has become “clever and wise”<sup>406</sup> due to his skill in court, but his desire to win an argument and gain a reputation for himself blinds him to any concern for an objective truth and greater good beyond his own directive.<sup>407</sup> In other words, he thinks that he knows something, when in fact he knows nothing. Philosophers, on the other hand, “do not worry if they speak at length or briefly, but only that they hit upon οὐσία.”<sup>408</sup> λόγος, Theodorus says, is servant to the philosopher, not his master, and so depends on the philosopher for its proper completion rather than imposing an outside limitation on him. For this reason, Socrates says, a real

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404 *Theaetetus*, 172e1.

405 *Sophist*, 229c.

406 *Theaetetus*, 173b.

407 Socrates here does not mention any regard the sophist has for his reputation, but as we see in the *Protagoras* it is no doubt of great importance.

408 *Theaetetus*, 172d. He asks Theaetetus not much later, “Is it possible [for someone] to hit upon truth, for whom there is no [knowledge] of οὐσία?” (186c).

philosopher never even enters a law court and indeed remains ignorant of its very location. Moreover, he is not even aware that he does not know these things for he does not reside in the city in thought, but in body only.<sup>409</sup> For this reason the philosopher is seen as a fool in the eyes of the general public.

Why does Plato characterize the so-called “leaders” of philosophy in such a disparaging way in the eyes of their fellow citizens if, as he says in the *Republic*, the philosopher is required to descend back into the cave and free the prisoners there, reinstating his mind within the city walls in order to govern his fellow citizens?<sup>410</sup> The fact remains that Socrates spends much of his time conversing with his fellow citizens in the agora, and furthermore that he abides by the rules of the court, ending the first day's conversation in order that he may respond to Meletus' indictment against him. Indeed, however one identifies Socrates here, either as a leading philosopher or follower thereof, his decision to play by the rules of the Athenian court system is what leads to his condemnation and eventual execution. He even blames his failure to persuade the jury of his innocence on the limited amount of time he has to defend himself.<sup>411</sup> He maintains that he never intentionally harmed anyone, but, as λόγος now has mastery over him, his opinion that he is innocent is at odds with the general opinion that he is guilty. This picture of Socrates is an ironic but depressing parody of his own criticism against Protagoras in the *Theaetetus*: on the one hand, common experience shows that in a time of crisis the general public is more than willing to forgive any difference in opinion and defer to an expert whose opinions are better informed than its own;<sup>412</sup> on the other hand, however, in lieu of such an expert one ought to

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409 Ibid, 173c-e. The word for “thought” here is διανοία.

410 *Republic*, 520b-d.

411 *Apology*, 37a-b.

412 *Theaetetus*, 170a-b.

admit that his opinion is mistaken if everyone around him disagrees with him.<sup>413</sup>

Sedley points out that Socrates' god-given position as a spiritual midwife is above all meant to keep his thoughts politicized, and that he therefore resembles the philosopher who re-enters the cave more than one who remains outside it.<sup>414</sup> For this reason, Sedley argues that Plato purposely focuses his description of philosophy on just its leaders in order to exclude not only its inferior practitioners but also Socrates himself, whom he says cannot be fully identified as a leader of philosophical inquiry. He points out a prior distinction in Plato's thought between those people who are given a philosophical education by the ideal city in the *Republic*, being raised to meet the obligation of governing it, and those people who free themselves of the limits of a less than ideal city by their own means and so have no obligation to return to it<sup>415</sup> and face potential death.<sup>416</sup> This type of leader of philosophical inquiry thus represents a model or ideal, a fully depoliticized entity who is able to reach the end of philosophy itself: becoming like a god as much as possible, which Socrates says here is to become just (δίκαιος) and holy (ὅσιος) with wisdom (μετὰ φρονήσεως).<sup>417</sup> Similarly, in *Republic* VII, this level of intellectual contemplation is indeed said to be contemplation of divine life, rather than human or civic life, in which the mind is able to look at the sun “as it is in itself” and so achieve a vision of the good itself.<sup>418</sup>

This ideal form of philosophizing is the primary focus of the digression, and so too will it be the focus of the current discussion. λόγος is inherently connected to the

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413 Ibid, 170d.

414 Sedley 2004, 67.

415 Ibid, 67-68. Sedley references the above passage in *Republic* VII (520b-d) wherein Socrates states, “...philosophers born in other states can reasonably refuse to take part in the hard work of politics; for society produces them quite involuntarily and unintentionally, and it is only just that anything that grows upon its own should feel it has nothing to repay for an upbringing which it owes to no one.” Lee's translation.

416 Sedley 2004, 65; *Republic*, 517a.

417 *Theaetetus*, 176a-b. Cf. Sedley 2004, 68.

418 *Republic*, 516b-519d.

communication of one's thoughts, and so in the introduction to this chapter I suggested that the philosopher and the sophist engage in a certain mode of discourse in order to instruct someone using the respective λόγοι which they formulate. What makes the philosopher and sophist unique among others who engages in this mode of instruction is that their goal is to disclose knowledge of goodness *qua* goodness, whereas other experts disclose knowledge of specific goods, such as the doctor with his regard for goodness of the body. So while the conflict here is between the sophist and the *repoliticized* philosopher, it is a view to the depoliticized philosopher prior to his return to the cave and the city which will better uncover what Plato take the method of philosophy itself to be, and thereafter what sophistry is said to resemble “as a wolf resembles a dog.”<sup>419</sup> For the life of pure, intellectual contemplation allows one to grasp the idea of absolute justice and righteousness and leave behind human affairs, such as opinions about these ideas or the way to the court or agora where particular cases of justice are discussed. Sedley puts it this way:

The obvious exaggerated diagnosis serves to make the philosopher the polar opposite of those self-styled worldly experts whom Socrates in the *Apology* describes himself as having interrogated: on questions of real ethical importance they had proved not only to be ignorant on the matters in hand but, even worse, to be ignorant of their very ignorance. The [depoliticized] philosopher, it turns out, treats mundane matters in exactly the way that non-philosophers treat the true concerns of philosophy. By making the philosopher the mirror image of worldly 'experts', Socrates has already embarked on what by the end of the Digression will be his demarcation of two contrasting realms inhabited by them, the one realm inherently mortal, the other divine.<sup>420</sup>

As stated above, it is in the ideal or perfected state of contemplation in which the philosopher attains divine wisdom. In this state the philosopher is said to leave the city behind, with respect to which he knows absolutely nothing; but the digression's focus on divine justice in addition to holiness and wisdom suggests that having attained this ideal the

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419 Or one might look at it this way: the power of the sophist lies in his ability to persuade others and so his status as an expert and usurpation of a divine measure can only occur within the political sphere. The ideal philosopher, on the other hand, is defined by his intellectual existence beyond the city limits.

420 Sedley 2004, 66-67.

philosopher might nonetheless return to the city as the repoliticized figure discussed in *Republic* VII,<sup>421</sup> the one whose practice I suggest is in conflict with that of the sophist.

In his commentary, Burnyeat suggests that the digression's purpose is to engender a serious consideration in the reader's mind about what things it is important, indeed most important, to know.<sup>422</sup> For Plato, he says, philosophy *par excellence* is apolitical, and so the important things to know here do not include knowing or knowledge itself, nor how one can effectively communicate what one knows, but how one can attain the life one ought to live. Indeed, as Burnyeat points out, Socrates does not say as he does in the *Phaedo* and *Republic* that things within the realm of sensation and opinion, such as whether or not a king is happy or wealthy, cannot be known, but that they are simply not worth knowing.<sup>423</sup> Consider the Eleatic Stranger's λόγος, "Theaetetus sits." If this λόγος were informed by sensation, the identification of Theaetetus with the capacity to sit is entirely dependent on the Stranger's perception of Theaetetus at this very moment; for if Theaetetus were to stand or lie down, the λόγος would be rendered false. A sensible identification, in other words, is accidental to what Theaetetus himself is. We recall from the conclusion of the previous chapter, however, that the same λόγος informed by intellect instead identifies Theaetetus with something which he is naturally and necessarily capable of doing by virtue of being human. So too is a king's wealth subject to time and circumstance (and his happiness too, for that matter, if Socrates is suggesting that a king's wealth is a necessary condition for his happiness) since the essential nature of a human being, even a king, does not include something which can be easily lost. The point of philosophy, Socrates says, is to determine what human happiness and misery are in and of themselves, and what method (τρόπος) is available to human kind

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421 Ibid, 68.

422 Burnyeat 1990, 36.

423 Ibid, 36-37; *Theaetetus*, 173c-175e.

such that one may obtain the former and flee from the latter according to one's inherent, natural ability to do so.<sup>424</sup>

As Socrates continues the digression, we find that the things one ought to know are, not so surprisingly, moral virtues such as justice and piety, as well as happiness; and it is ignorance of these things which leads to injustice, impiety, and misery. The soul may have a prior apprehension of these things, but so long as this apprehension remains latent one must nonetheless acquire knowledge of them, be it through recollection or instruction. Before achieving this ideal state of philosophical contemplation in which one becomes just, pious, and happy,<sup>425</sup> the human being exists in a state of tension between knowing and not knowing, happiness and unhappiness, or doing just or unjust acts. Each person is not just fitted to obtain virtue and flee from vice, but also obtain vice and by doing so distance oneself from virtue. Thus human happiness and virtue in general are not dependent on some external means, but each person's own inherent ability to know and thereby gain them. As Socrates states, it is wrong to think that the reason for pursuing virtue is to appear good instead of bad. Instead, as the divine is “in no way unjust, but in fact what is most just,” the pursuit of virtue is done for the sake of becoming as near to the divine as possible.<sup>426</sup> Philosophy is rather self-serving in this way, as a true love of wisdom, properly explored, can lead only to this one end.

Regarding the distance which the philosopher places between himself and the city, Burnyeat posits a question for the reader to consider. He asks, “Is Plato's suggestion here that the philosopher would not be interested in considering examples *in the course of* the search for an adequate definition [of any moral form]?”<sup>427</sup> This question follows from

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424 *Theaetetus*, 173c.

425 Ibid, 176a-c. Cf. Sedley 2004, 75; Chapter 3, pp. 104-05.

426 *Theaetetus*, 176b-c.

427 Burnyeat 1990, 39. Emphasis in original.



another one: namely, by identifying philosophy as an inquiry into happiness and justice in and of themselves, does Plato's reference to his theory of forms count them as abstract, transcendent entities understood in λόγος only through deductive reasoning (having a prior apprehension or intuition about them), or as paradigms of which particular instances are noticed (a just or unjust act as opposed to justice or injustice themselves)? On my reading of these dialogues, the answer I suggest is simply: it depends. If someone, like Socrates, is born and raised in a city which does not educate its citizens to become philosopher rulers, there is no strong imperative for the philosopher to return to the city and depart from his immediate apprehension of the forms as they exist in this transcendent state.

However, if someone is raised in Plato's ideal republic and molded into the philosopher king, or, like Socrates, has a strong desire to educate the public at large, he must descend back into the cave, returning to the city and its law courts.<sup>428</sup> He must enter the civic space in which truth depends only on one's belief in it, and one's worth is determined by the ability to persuade others to adopt an opinion different than their own. The philosopher must demonstrate to these people that, like matters of benefit or advantage, moral values such as justice and piety are objective and should not remain culturally relative.<sup>429</sup> The philosopher, in other words, “is a theorist, a generalizer, and a spectator of the whole,”<sup>430</sup> making an account of global human morality, not just that of the people with whom he lives in one particular city. As Sedley puts it:

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428 Of course, Socrates himself does not know the forms. His role as a human gadfly and spiritual midwife is to make his fellow citizens come to the same realization as himself: that he knows that he does not know. He may not know what happiness is, but he knows enough not to confuse happiness with misery.

429 *Theaetetus*, 171e-172. Cf. Sedley 2004, 64-65; Burnyeat 1990, 31-33. As Socrates puts it, matters pertaining to how things appear to each person remain true for the individual, as per Protagoras' measure doctrine. But pertaining to matters of health and disease or justice and injustice, just as in times of crisis (170a-b), laypeople defer to the judgment of an expert in these areas. As Socrates argues immediately after the digression, the test of expertise and true knowledge is the ability to predict a future state of events. This sort of expert is the measure, not any layperson who is “without knowledge” (ἀνεπιστήμων – 179b). Cf. Dorter 1990, 89-90.

430 Robinson 1950, 9.

One important merit which Platonic Forms share with Socratic god is clearly their absoluteness. Localized instances and types of justice are unavoidably relativized to the perspective of the city, coloured by local conditions, laws, customs, judging subjects, and a host of other factors, and for this same reason are inevitably compresent with some degree of injustice; whereas Justice itself, defined by Plato as a certain harmonious relation of parts (*Republic IV*), is, like any Form, above such relativities. In the *Theaetetus* Digression Socrates' god represents a justice similarly free of relativities. Unlike the justice manifested in civic institutions, Socrates here calls god 'absolutely in no way whatsoever unjust'.<sup>431</sup>

A just or pious act is identified as such not simply because one person or group of people believes it to be so, but because the act truly conforms to the idea of justice or piety. As discussed above, having achieved the ideal state of contemplation the philosopher acquires knowledge of these ideas in and of themselves; but more than this, he himself *becomes* just and pious. By re-politicizing himself, the philosopher is thus able to set any particular instance of these and other moral virtues against an objective measure which he himself embodies.<sup>432</sup> Of course, we must avoid identifying the philosopher as a measure equal to the divine. Rather, the pursuit and perfection of philosophy transforms him into a measure analogous to the divine.

### 6.3: The Sophist

Let us now turn to the sophist and look into his approach to knowledge, goodness, and the divine. Once this point has been settled, we will then be sufficiently prepared to entertain an investigation into the dichotomy between the sophist and the philosophical character he is meant to imitate. The nature of the philosopher has just been discussed as he is represented in Socrates' digression in the *Theaetetus*; similarly, we will next look into the nature of the sophist as he is represented by Protagoras in Socrates' defense of him just prior to his digression. Indeed, it is not until the end of the discussion between the Eleatic

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<sup>431</sup> Sedley 2004, 77-78.

<sup>432</sup> Perhaps foreshadowing the doctrine of the mean (μέτρον) in the *Statesman*.

Stranger and Theaetetus that their investigation finally allows them to uncover what the sophist is; namely, a person who imitates the opinions of others through ignorance, not knowledge, of that which he imitates.

Socrates and Theaetetus decide very early that the first definition of knowledge which Theaetetus gives is intrinsically linked to both Protagoras' measure doctrine, "man is the measure of all things, of the things that are, as they are, and of the things that are not, as they are not," and the Heracleitean maxim, "all is in motion." The connection of these three theses does not necessarily represent a doctrine which either Plato or Socrates supports. As Fine argues, "Plato is not propounding his own views about knowledge and perception; rather, he is asking what Theaetetus, and then Protagoras, are committed to, and how they are best supported."<sup>433</sup> Simply put, she proposes rightly that "Plato argues that Theaetetus' definition of knowledge as perception commits him to a Protagorean epistemology which, in turn, commits him to a Heracleitean ontology."<sup>434</sup> In this way, the theory of knowledge which Theaetetus and Socrates consider in this part of the dialogue, and which governs Protagoras' position as well, is that knowledge is the perception of an object as it exists solely within the realm of becoming. Furthermore, according to this theory motion is the principle of existence and rest the principle of non-existence,<sup>435</sup> and therefore no object of investigation has any discernible inherent qualities. For, as Socrates says, assigning any quality or attribute a place within the object halts the motion of the quality, thereby taking it out of the realm of becoming and existence altogether.<sup>436</sup>

In other words, Protagoras would disagree with the conclusion of the *Sophist* as discussed in the previous chapter, namely that Theaetetus necessarily has the capacity to sit

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433 Fine 2003, 136.

434 Ibid, 135. Cf. Burnyeat 1990, 7-10.

435 *Theaetetus*, 153a.

436 Ibid, 153d-e.

independently of anyone's observation of him sitting, and he would especially disagree that the meaning of the statement "Theaetetus sits" is derived from the principles of rest as well as motion, to say nothing of their combination. Rather, Protagoras argues, the identification of Theaetetus, or human beings generally, with any *dynamis* depends wholly on the unique perspective of each individual observer. One example which Socrates uses in the *Theaetetus* better demonstrates this point: one person might say that the wind is or appears to be cold, while another person might say that it is warm.<sup>437</sup> Indeed, under this theory of knowledge neither these nor any other quality can be inherent in the wind for two reasons. First and simply, the law of non-contradiction would be violated if the same wind were both warm and cold. By placing the perception of any quality in an intermediate space between the observer and the object itself, knowledge for Protagoras becomes radically private, being true, as he himself says, only for each individual person. As Fine puts it:

In the context of the measure doctrine, to say how things *appear* to me is to say how I *believe* things *are* for me ... So Protagoras claims that if I believe the wind is cold, then it is true for me that the wind is cold ... [and] that if it is true for me that the wind is cold, then I believe that it is.<sup>438</sup>

Thus the law of non-contradiction remains intact. It is true that the wind is both warm and cold as these two perceptions remains mutually exclusive, as their qualification as being true depends on the separate belief of each individual observer and nothing to do with the wind itself. Following on this logic, the second reason why qualities cannot be inherent in the object is because there can be no such thing as false opinion within the Protagorean measure. If the wind is essentially warm, the belief that it is cold, or anything other than warm, must

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437 Ibid, 152b.

438 Fine 2003, 133-34. The measure doctrine is therefore a biconditional, she says, for "it claims that p is true for A if and only if A believes p." This transition from identifying sensation (αἴσθησις) and appearance (φαιντασία) at the start of the dialogue with belief (δόξα) in Protagoras' position is necessary in order for there to be opinions about non-sensible things such as justice and falsity. That is, this identification is not a choice scholars make in interpreting this dialogue, but one which Protagoras himself must maintain. Cf. Burnyeat 1990, 21.

be false; but whatever is believed is necessarily true for the believer and so, Protagoras says, “it is impossible to believe [δοξάσαι] what is not.”<sup>439</sup>

Accordingly, in order to defend his position and justify his own profession, Protagoras maintains that man is indeed the measure of the truth of all things. Maintaining this doctrine depends on a distinction which Protagoras makes between wisdom (σοφία) and knowledge (ἐπιστήμη). Socrates collapses this distinction twice: first with Theaetetus at the beginning of the dialogue, and again with Theodorus when he demonstrates after his digression on philosophy that the layperson, who Protagoras agrees is not wise, is also not knowledgeable.<sup>440</sup> For Protagoras, however, everyone has indiscriminate access to knowledge insofar as each individual person, whether a layperson or an expert, is a measure of what exists (is true) and what does not exist (is false) for himself; but wisdom, he argues, is precisely this unique ability of the expert to affect a so-called change in one's “condition of soul” and make a good thing appear to someone instead of a bad thing.<sup>441</sup>

Like the philosopher, the sophist here is concerned with ethical value. Protagoras has no qualms with the perception of qualities such as hot or cold, and instead focuses on things which are obviously good and bad, demonstrating his points specifically with objective notions of health and disease. As Dorter states, “understanding (wisdom) exists in addition to perceptual knowledge, but it is of a pragmatic rather than factual nature. It does not tell us what exists but only what is desirable and how to achieve it.”<sup>442</sup> Accordingly, Protagoras draws a parallel between the doctor, who causes a change in the condition of soul of his patient so that he may have a healthy belief rather than an unhealthy one, and the orator, who

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439 *Theaetetus*, 167a. In other words, Protagoras maintains the same distinction as Parmenides between being and non-being.

440 *Ibid.*, 145e and 179b.

441 *Ibid.*, 166d-167a. The entire defense occurs at 166a-168c.

442 Dorter 1994, 83.

causes the same sort of change in the body politic from the belief that a bad thing, presumably a law or custom, is just (δίκαιος) and beneficial (χρηστός) to a belief in a good thing of the same sort.<sup>443</sup> This latter change, from a bad law to a good one, or on a larger scale from a state of injustice to justice, is precisely the sort of opinion which Socrates argues the repoliticized philosopher endeavors to fix. For this alteration in the frame of mind of the city does nothing to objectify a moral form such as justice, but merely relativizes it according to the belief of a particular city. In this way the orator upholds the Protagorean measure doctrine, as this change of soul does not demonstrate the difference between a truly and falsely just law; that is, between a law which correctly or incorrectly conforms to an external, universal idea of justice. Instead, the orator simply convinces or persuades the citizens of a city that one law, custom, or practice is better and therefore more just than a different one.

Even though Protagoras himself does not do so, we ought to consider more closely how wisdom is supposed to differ from knowledge such that with wisdom the expert is able to live up to his name and produce the sort of change he is hired to make. In his commentary, Burnyeat enumerates two formulae which he rightly argues Protagoras must accept in order to maintain his measure doctrine: one, a condition of soul is better for someone than a worse condition if and only if this person believes that the better condition is such; and two, the instructor is an expert for the student if and only if the student believes that the teacher has caused a change to a better condition of soul.<sup>444</sup> Each person being his own measure of truth, the expert does not add knowledge to or remove ignorance from the soul of his student, but merely alters what is true and false for him according to the above

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443 *Theaetetus*, 167b-c. Socrates employs the same language at 172a, only replacing χρηστός with συμφέροντος.

444 Burnyeat 1990, 24.

formulae; nor, however, does this alteration in his belief make the student wise like the expert himself. For as Protagoras states:

Neither [the sick nor the healthy person] ought to be made wiser [σοφώτερος]—for that is impossible—nor should it be said that the sick man is ignorant because he forms ignorant opinions, nor the healthy man wise because [his opinions] are different; but a change must be made to the latter, for it is better to have that condition.<sup>445</sup>

The question is, then, wherein does the special wisdom of the expert lie? Burnyeat's conclusion is that the expert only exists for the people who believe him to be as such. Could the answer to this question really be that simple? After all, until he learned better Hippocrates was prepared to pay a handsome sum of money to study under Protagoras despite not knowing precisely what Protagoras did, or more precisely, what sophistry really is.<sup>446</sup> All he knew was that the general public believes that Protagoras has wisdom worth paying to know.

Looking forward to the seventh definition of the sophist in the *Sophist*, I wish to make a more generous suggestion than Burnyeat provides as to what Plato takes the expert and the sophist to be. From Protagoras' defense, we know that the wisdom of the expert resides in his special ability to demonstrate a difference in the good and bad things pertaining to his particular profession: health and disease for the doctor, justice and injustice for the orator, and so on. As mentioned above, the expert does not apprehend what goodness and badness are in and of themselves, but only with respect to his profession. That is, depending on the particular circumstances he knows what is good or bad for one body or another and makes the appropriate change from a bad condition to a good one. For instance, the doctor knows that olive oil is bad for plants and animals, but very beneficial for humans.<sup>447</sup> As well as in the *Protagoras*, according to the doctrine of perception under

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445 *Theaetetus*, 166e-167a.

446 *Protagoras*, 310c ff.

447 *Ibid*, 334a-c.

which the discussion of sophistry takes place in the *Theaetetus*, the olive oil is value-neutral, being in itself neither good nor bad. Nonetheless, the doctor must have an idea of what goodness and badness are for each different body in order to qualify the oil either way. He is, in other words, the imitator in the seventh definition who has a “scientific knowledge” (μετ’ ἐπιστήμης ἱστορική)<sup>448</sup> of that which he imitates: not the valueless object which depends on its function in a certain context to be known in this respect, but his knowledge via νοῦς of relative goodness and badness which he communicates to the patient via λόγος.<sup>449</sup> His patient, however, being a layperson, does not have this special wisdom of goodness and badness, and nor does the doctor endeavor to school him on these subjects. The patient’s understanding of goodness and badness remains within the subjective particularity of what things he might suppose, but does not know as the expert does, are good and bad for himself. Indeed, with such knowledge the patient would not need to see the expert in the first place.

At the end of the *Sophist*, the Eleatic Stranger concludes with Theaetetus that the sophist (σοφιστικός) is an imitator of the expert (σοφός), this relation being informed by the similarity of their very names.<sup>450</sup> In identifying the sophist here as a likeness of the expert Theaetetus and the Stranger having in mind a previous conclusion concerning the nature of the sophist, namely that his special art of disputation (literally, the art of anti-logic<sup>451</sup>) gives him the ability to argue about anything. As it is plainly impossible for anyone to know and thereby dispute everything, the sophist does not actually possess knowledge of anything save for his own unique art. He does not have knowledge of goodness and badness in any respect, but, as per the seventh definition, merely knows how to create an image of λόγος

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448 *Sophist*, 267e1.

449 That is, a dianoetic λόγος is the image of one’s knowledge *qua* ἐπιστήμη. Cf. Chapter 3, pp. 83-85; Chapter 4, pp. 117-18.

450 *Sophist*, 268b.

451 *Ibid*, 232e3.



and persuade his student to adopt it. For Plato, there is at least then some merit to the expert's function, even if his knowledge is applied to the relative conditions and particular circumstances of the physical realm of becoming. The sophist, however, has about as much value, ethical or otherwise, as physical objects do for himself; and worse yet, his own maxim that man is the measure prevents him from understanding the fact that he does not know what he thinks he knows, instead causing him to believe that he, like the philosopher, is a measure akin to the divine.<sup>452</sup>

#### 6.4: ἔλεγχος

In concluding this chapter, I would like to take a brief look at the respective intents of the repoliticized philosopher and the sophist in formulating λόγος within their own areas of expertise, demonstrating the nature of each λόγος as a tool for instruction. Although the sophist does have the capacity to effect a legitimately good change in someone, he does not understand why the change itself might be truly for the better. For, as Socrates says, a judge who correctly decides a court case without having witnessed the events in question first hand does not have true knowledge,<sup>453</sup> even though his opinion nonetheless corresponds to true, objective reality. The sophist can be allowed to maintain some amount of dignity insofar as he might happen to alter his student's disposition to what is certainly more favourable, but the betterment of his student is superficial and accidental.

The purpose of the following consideration of Plato's view on philosophy and sophistry in the *Theaetetus* and *Sophist* is not just to show that the philosopher exceeds the

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452 Another point of what seems to be intended irony lies in the Greek word ἀμετρία, which Plato uses for “disproportion” in the sixth definition; i.e. the disproportion between knowledge and ignorance which the sophist does not believe can exist, being himself the most imbalanced on the side of ignorance in large part due to this very belief.

453 *Theaetetus*, 201b-c.

limits of the sophist. Having in mind that Socrates and Theaetetus do in fact surpass Protagoras, the purpose here is also to demonstrate the dangerous similarity between the two schools which the Eleatic Stranger points out several times in the latter dialogue, and the fact that, as Socrates' own trial attests, sophistry can and does supersede even philosophy. Certainly each one of Plato's dialogues can be interpreted in a number of different ways, and no doubt this group of late dialogues is meant in part to be a cautionary tale against the power of the sophist against which Socrates must later contend in the Athenian court. Indeed, the observed similarity between the philosopher and the sophist is so great that Theaetetus and the Eleatic Stranger tentatively agree that even the sophist practices Socratic ἔλεγχος.<sup>454</sup> As the Stranger describes it, this ἔλεγχος purges the soul of something it thinks it knows but in fact does not know. It forces one to confront a self-contradiction in thought, thereby curing a disproportion between knowledge and ignorance in the soul. As a method of instruction, ἔλεγχος explicitly concerns λόγος,<sup>455</sup> and so it is practiced only on a student who has come to some sort of conclusion about whatever object is being investigated, and has made what he thinks is the correct identification between the object and its essence. That is, as Socrates explains in the *Phaedo*, a hypothesis is assumed and the subsequent cross-questioning determines what is and what is not in accordance with it.

In his defense of sophistry Protagoras speaks rather philosophically, demanding that Socrates and the others be fair in their consideration of his position instead of resorting to the spurious arguments which force this defense to occur in the first place. Ironically, he echoes Socrates' account of μισολογία and μισαντηρωπία from the *Phaedo*, which he says occur “from having a zealous trust in a person without a τέχνη, and thinking that this person is in

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454 *Sophist*, 230e-231a. On the identification of Socrates as practicing this ἔλεγχος, see Cornford 1935, 177-183, and Dorter 1994, 131.

455 *Sophist*, 229e1-2.

every way true, sound, and credible, but after a short time finding out that he is worthless, unsound, otherwise false.”<sup>456</sup> Likewise, Protagoras demands that Socrates have a “gracious mind” toward their argument so that he will earnestly point out any errors in the opposing doctrine and force the interlocutor to turn to a love of philosophy rather than a hatred of it and dialectic.<sup>457</sup> The point of Protagoras' demand is, as Cornford says, “to understand what the opponent really means” rather than relying on captious counterpoints which serve no real or meaningful purpose.<sup>458</sup>

One point on which both Protagoras and Socrates can agree is that any abuse of the proximity in meaning between words and names (ὀνόματα and ῥήματα, the elements in any linguistic λόγος) is entirely against the point of any search for truth or knowledge. In the initial stage of examining Theaetetus' proposal that knowledge is perception, and so by extension the Protagorean measure doctrine as well, Socrates is able to force Theaetetus into a logical absurdity based on “the mere similarity of ὀνόματα” which he says anti-logicians make, not real philosophers.<sup>459</sup> The words or elements, in this instance 'sight' and 'perception', are so close in apparent meaning when identified with knowledge that Theaetetus ignores the distinction between identification and association or likeness. He agrees that sight *is* perception, rather than, say, a *mode of* perception, and that because something which is remembered (presupposing perceptual knowledge) is not seen it is therefore neither perceived nor known. When the same object is seen with the eyes and then remembered with the mind, the observer both sees and does not see the object, and so both knows and does not know it in the same instant. This type of contradiction is precisely what spurs Protagoras to come to the defense of his position. He quickly demonstrates that it was

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456 *Phaedo*, 89d.

457 *Theaetetus*, 167e-168b.

458 Cornford 1935, 68.

459 *Theaetetus*, 164c.

Theaetetus, not himself, who was refuted, making a distinction between sense-objects and memory-objects as two different types of perception. Accordingly, at the end of his defense Protagoras makes this appeal to the greater worth of a philosophical debate, imploring Socrates to give his doctrine a fair shake and argue “not, as before, from the synthesis of ὀνόματα and ῥήματα, which most people drag in all sorts of directions whenever they happen upon them in this way, pulling one another into an ἀπορία.”<sup>460</sup> Just prior to this defense Socrates criticizes the ἀντιλογικός with whom the sophist is later identified, and so the defense itself and its appeal to philosophy proceed on terms which are decidedly not anti-logical. Plato clearly wants to entertain the sort of serious, philosophical engagement with sophistry we find in other dialogues such as the *Protagoras* and *Gorgias*, not the comic display we see elsewhere, such as in the *Euthydemus*.

As suggested in the introduction to this chapter, the point of difference between the philosopher and the sophist is not to be found in the tripartite process as the means by which λόγος is formed in order that they may provide a hypothesis; rather, the crucial distinction is found in the content of the respective ends they attain in using this process. The philosophical method is intimately tied to the art of dialectic and the process of combining and separating elements, which Cornford rightly says are directed toward an analysis of the relationships between forms themselves.<sup>461</sup> These relationships are explained, the Stranger

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460 Ibid, 168b-c.

461 Cornford 1935, 12 and 268-73. He states specifically, “The goal of Dialectic is not to establish propositions ascribing a predicate to all the individuals in a class. The objective is the definition of an indivisible species—a Form—by genus and specific differences. What we define is not 'all men' but the unique Form 'Man'” (Cornford 1935, 269). Consider what the Stranger says to Theaetetus at the outset of their investigation into the nature of the sophist: “Right now you and I have only the name in common; but each of us might have our own idea of the thing we are referencing with the name. But in every instance there must always be an agreement about the thing itself διὰ λόγων rather than just the name without λόγος” (218c). At that point in the discussion, both Theaetetus and the Eleatic Stranger might have each proposed a hypothesis as to what they take the sophist to be; that is, through the combination of the elements which they take to constitute the nature of the sophist according to their respective ideas of him. Of course they do not actually make these proposals, but nonetheless they agree that there is a universal idea of the sophist the definition of which will encompass or incorporate any particular proposal. It is this universal idea which

says, using the art of dialectic which concerns:

...the division of things by γένη and the avoidance of the belief that the same εἶδος is another, or another the same ... [having] a clear perception of one form [ἰδέα] extending entirely through many individuals each of which lies apart, and of many forms differing from one another but included in one greater form, and again of one form evolved by the union of many wholes, and of many forms entirely apart and separate.<sup>462</sup>

It was shown in the previous chapter how the μέγιστα γένη combine or remain separate from each other, and subsequently how the form or idea of 'man' can and does combine with the idea of sitting. The Stranger, however, does not need to mention the fact that 'man' and 'sitting' can combine, and instead states simply that Theaetetus himself sits. The method of combination and separation thus divides a universal idea into its constituent elements order to define its essence through the combination of these elements in λόγος. The elements themselves are in turn more knowable than the compound which they define due to their greater generality.<sup>463</sup> One's knowledge of the elements allows one to determine whether or not the elements in a particular λόγος are 'fitting' or harmonious: 'Theaetetus' and 'sitting' plainly are, whereas 'Theaetetus' and 'flying' clearly do not fit together.<sup>464</sup>

By insisting that man is the measure of all things, the sophist usurps both the role of the divine as the ontological source of goodness and its analogous entity found in the depoliticized philosopher. Of course, the sophist himself is necessarily a political being and

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they then divide or separate in several different taxonomies in order to try and disclose the unique essence belonging to it. For, as they discuss later, the inability to locate and define the common principle which runs throughout a multitude of particular instances of an idea does not suggest a problem with the idea to be defined, but with the person trying to define it (232a).

462 Ibid, 253d. Fowler's translation with Greek substituted.

463 Cf. *Theaetetus*, 206b: "The γένος of the elements admit of a much clearer understanding [γνώσις] than the compounds which is more superior in perfecting one's possession of each science." As this discussion concerns one's ability to define a form or idea using other forms, I am making a distinction between considering a form as a dianoetic compound (the definiendum) and as an element (the definiens). I specify a 'dianoetic' compound in order to maintain the form's simplicity as it is known by νοῦς to exist as both rest and motion yet neither of these things in and of itself.

464 For a more detailed analysis of what constitutes the fitness of elements, see Desjardins 1990, 72-74. She lists six criteria, some of which have been discussed in this thesis to a certain degree. My consideration here enlists two criteria: one, that there is a likeness among elements, such as both being objects of sight or objects of sound; and two, that like elements have an inherent power or δύναμις to combine with each other.

so cannot carry on outside of the city walls. By situating himself as the source of goodness, the sophist usurps this role by eliminating any possibility that this source exists beyond the city, and therefore removes the need of the philosophical type to move beyond it. According to Burnyeat, the sophist can maintain the position simply by persuading his student that it is the case, that the student ought to abandon whatever hypothesis he himself proposes and adopt his teacher's instead. This task should not be difficult if the sophist is indeed the embodiment of the Platonic unhypothetical first principle, situation himself as the ultimate arbiter of truth in any matter whatsoever. In actual fact, though, the only claim to knowledge or wisdom which the sophist can make is that, as the ἀντιλογικός, he knows how to dispute and alter the truth of any hypothesis or λόγος. That is, he cannot wield the power of combination and division in order to arrive at a truth which exists over and above the interlocutors.<sup>465</sup> Instead, he makes a substitution of one element with another as he sees fit. If, Protagoras says, something bad appears and so exists for someone, the sophist has the ability to make something good appear and exist for him, entitling him to payment for services rendered. The content of such a λόγος is entirely empty beyond the particular belief of its truth and goodness held by the sophist himself and his student.

If the sophist is like the philosopher as a “wolf is like a dog,” what sort of catharsis does he then perform on his student by persuading him that one opinion is better than another? It cannot be said that the sophist alters a disproportion in the soul between knowledge and ignorance if each person's knowledge is absolute and ignorance does not exist. As we know from Protagoras' defense, the sophist rather makes his student *wiser* by causing him to have good thoughts instead of bad ones, curing a disproportion between

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465 In another sense it is impossible for the sophist to combine and divide the elements of a λόγος because, as discussed in Chapter 2, a λόγος formed at the level of opinion is not constructed through the 'multiplication' of elements, but addition, and therefore separated, as it were, through subtraction rather than division.

wisdom and stupidity. As suggested in Chapter 3,<sup>466</sup> the real expert, such as the γυμναστής, affects a catharsis by properly aligning his athlete's faculties with respect to the object appropriate to his profession; in this case, the body.<sup>467</sup> Curing an analogous disproportion in the soul not only removes ignorance, but simultaneously positions the student to gain knowledge of the truth of the matter at hand, thereby allowing him to understand not just *that* he was ignorant of something, but also *why* he was ignorant of it. It is certainly possible that the substitution which the sophist makes in his student's thought will in fact create an objectively true opinion for the student, but arriving at a true opinion in this way happens despite any actual knowledge or ignorance with respect to the object of investigation, and it occurs regardless of the intent of the sophist. In other words, both the sophist and the student are ignorant of objectivity itself and so are completely unaware as to how, and more importantly *why*, any such opinion does in fact conform to objective reality.<sup>468</sup> Instead, he simply persuades his student that it would be better to believe that a glass of wine, for example, is sweet rather than bitter based on their agreement of the meanings of the words 'sweet' and 'bitter'. At best, then, the student is made wiser only insofar as he believes it to be the case without actually knowing it; but otherwise, the sophist can only increase the imbalance between knowledge and ignorance as he might cause his student to believe that a glass of wine is sweet when in actual fact the wine has spoiled, or that the wisest Athenian ought to be executed.

The greatest evil Socrates faces is the fact that so many of his fellow citizens suppose that they know what they do not know, an error which the Stranger says is graver than any

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466 Chapter 3, pp. 106-108.

467 As Protagoras mentions the physician in his defense it might make more sense to follow suit here.

However, as my reading here has in mind the sixth definition of sophistry, it is better to use the gymnast than the doctor. For the doctor cures a disease (νόσος) or discord (στάσις) in the body, whereas the gymnast cures a deformity (αἰσχος) or disproportion (ἀμετρία). See *Sophist*, 228a; cf. 229a.

468 McDowell 1973, 228-31; 257-58.

other and the cause of every mistake.<sup>469</sup> Regarding sophistry, he says rather ironically that this form of ignorance concerns an “empty conceit of wisdom” (μάταια δοξασοφία).<sup>470</sup> In actually purging ignorance from the soul, Socratic ἐλεγχος demonstrates that certain elements are not fitting, or not sufficiently fitting, as is the case with Theaetetus' three definitions of knowledge. In other words, this true form of refutation discovers and removes the sort of contentless opinion formed by the sophist. As discussed above, this catharsis properly positions the student with respect to the object of investigation such that he can then receive a 'positive' education—that is, the addition of actual knowledge, having its end in the divine mind beyond the particularity of the sensible world. Of course, in having no recourse to knowledge himself, Socrates cannot take this next step and provide his student, in this case Theaetetus, with a fitting combination of elements. Instead, he turns Theaetetus over to the Eleatic Stranger who continues the lesson the next day. The acquisition of true knowledge, of recombining and recollecting in this way the “many forms” which differ from one another but are included in one “greater form,” to paraphrase the Stranger's words above, is the philosophical process by which one can eventually attain a vision of Plato's unhypothetical first principle and become like a god.

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<sup>469</sup> *Sophist*, 229c. Specifically, he says that these mistakes occur within διανοία.

<sup>470</sup> *Ibid*, 231b.



## Chapter 7: Conclusion

In his middle dialogues, Plato introduces to the reader the key facets of his own philosophical doctrine: one, the forms maintain a separate existence from the realm of sensible becoming; two, sensible objects are related to the intelligible forms on which their existence depends through their participation in the forms; and three, the soul is immortal and therefore has knowledge of the forms which it does not learn but recollects. In his *Parmenides*, Plato launches an attack on the first two areas of his own doctrine, the shortcomings of which he is no doubt self-conscious. Any scholar of Plato is thus presented with a very broad but very important question: in this and other late dialogues, is Plato bringing the reader to reject his earlier doctrine as he himself has, opting for a more sound position; or is his return to the theory of forms rather an attempt to strengthen the position he takes in his middle dialogues?

The argument of the *Theaetetus* and *Sophist*, as I take it, is very much in favour of the second view. In the latter of these two dialogues, Plato thoroughly demonstrates the nature of the necessary interrelation between the forms in order to overcome Eleatic monism,<sup>471</sup> something which a young Socrates says would be an extraordinary thing for anyone to show.

<sup>472</sup> Using a λόγος from the *Sophist*, such as “Man learns,”<sup>473</sup> or the Stranger's proposition that οὐσία is properly the combination of rest and motion, this interrelation can be observed in two ways: one, in which the forms are understood as simple entities and so are epistemological elements in a λόγος; and the other, in which the forms are communicated as complex entities, being defined as the combination of other forms. The first case

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<sup>471</sup> As Cornford states, “The study of Forms in the *Sophist* will clear up the perplexities and paradoxes based by the Eleatics and their successors on the too rigid Parmenidean conceptions of Unity and Being, Plurality and Not-being” (Cornford 1935, 12).

<sup>472</sup> *Parmenides*, 129e.

<sup>473</sup> *Sophist*, 262c.

specifically is concerned with the trouble Socrates has in his youth, namely that it is no easy task to show how opposed ideas such as rest and motion can be combined and separated. The second case provides retroactive support of Socrates' proof for the immortality of the soul which he proposes in the *Phaedo*. As shown over the course of this thesis, the soul, having νοῦς in it, is what knows the object of investigation as a unique entity. Taking the soul itself as the object of investigation, we can formulate a Socratic hypothesis about it as the Eleatic Stranger might: the soul is a combination of the form of soul and its capacity to resist death.

As the *Theaetetus* shows, the soul's recollection of knowledge can and does begin through immediate sense perception as one moves out of Plato's Cave, as it were. By looking at a sensible object, the soul can come to grasp the necessary, ontological principles (i.e. the μεγίστα γένη) of its existence and that of any other object. But the issue in these late dialogues is not entirely as Cornford sees it, namely to lead the reader to recognize the “separate existence” of the forms which he takes to be the sole object of concern in the *Sophist*, having left behind the *Theaetetus* and its concern with sensible particulars.<sup>474</sup> Of great importance for Plato is not just what one knows, but how one knows it and how one can talk about it in meaningful discourse. By upholding his doctrine of participation, Plato shows in the *Sophist* how speaking about the realm of sensation is not necessarily restricted to opinion. This speaking rather occurs within a prior ontological framework which governs the relationship of objects in the world of sensible becoming equally as much as objects in the world of intelligible being. The statement “Theaetetus sits” is the 'visible' manifestation of the invisible or intelligible idea that a human being can sit, having this invisible relation as the necessary condition for its own inherent meaning.

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474 Cornford 1935, 5.

The *Theaetetus* begins with this 'greater' mode of perception as it occurs in Theaetetus' geometrical demonstration, investigating and interpreting an object not according to its accidental qualities, but those which are necessary, existing as a combination in each object according to the object's own unique nature or φύσις. In and of themselves, however, the forms must be simple entities, not complex; and indeed they are apprehended or known by the soul qua ἐπιστήμη as such. Nonetheless, any effort to speak about what the forms are relies upon dianoetic λόγος as the best tool for communicating human knowledge, and this mode of speech is necessarily restricted to defining objects, be they universal forms or sensible particulars, as the multiplicative (as opposed to additive) combination of elements. Heidegger presents this interpretation rather well as follows:

Thus ἀλεθεύειν shows itself most immediately in λέγειν. Λέγειν (“to speak”) is what most basically constitutes human [οὐσία]. In speaking, [οὐσία] expresses itself—by speaking about something, about the world. This λέγειν was for the Greeks so preponderant and such an everyday affair that they acquired their definition of man in relation to, and on the basis of, this phenomenon and thereby determined man as ζῶον λόγον ἔχον.<sup>475</sup>

As Plato sees it, it is human nature to interpret the world διὰ τῶν λόγων as we understand ourselves as λόγοι, as the products of such a combination which occupy the space our own διανοία provides for this understanding. According to his cosmology in the *Timaeus*, everything is composed of certain combinations of the elements air, earth, fire, and water. As well, in the *Philebus*, Socrates and Protarchus determine the perfect human life is an entity composed of wisdom and pleasure while remaining neither of these things in and of itself;<sup>476</sup> and moreover, things find their perfection in the degree to which they participate in the good, itself understood as the tripartite combination of beauty, proportion, and truth.<sup>477</sup>

In the last chapter, I suggested an interpretation of Plato's philosophical position

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475 Heidegger 1997, 12.

476 *Philebus*, 60d-61a.

477 *Ibid*, 65a.

which further maintains the possibility that his later thought is meant to uphold and reaffirm his middle thought rather than reject it. The method of hypothesis from his middle period is intrinsically related to combination and division, his new approach to defining the essence of an object. So much of the discussion of the *Sophist* is devoted to the process of combination and division, using it to explore seven separate taxonomies of sophist himself. The entire method is circular: one posits a hypothesis in λόγος through the combination of elements; divides the elements to determine their fitness; and recombines the elements in order to identify the universal essence of the object of investigation, uniting the particular instances of it under one objective heading in the form of a new hypothesis or λόγος. The dialogues themselves demonstrate this process with respect to 'internal' and 'external' hypotheses. Internally, each of Theaetetus' hypotheses concerning the nature of knowledge is deconstructed in turn in order to make way for what supersedes it; so too are the hypotheses of the materialists and idealists, resulting in their unification or collection under a more universal λόγος; in the *Statesman*, the Eleatic Stranger and a younger Socrates determine that the statesman himself is a weaver as opposed to a shepherd, and furthermore, like the gods and giants of the *Sophist*, their hypotheses concerning separate virtues are eventually united and reconciled with each other.<sup>478</sup> Externally, the interlocutors of the *Theaetetus* and *Sophist* work to overcome the maxims of Heracleitus, Protagoras, and Parmenides, successfully demonstrating the limits of knowledge within the sensible world and the existence of non-being.

The continuity between the *Theaetetus* and the *Sophist* is halted briefly due to one day coming to an end. This break appears to symbolize the transition from Theaetetus' discussion with Socrates about the realm of becoming to his discussion with the Eleatic

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478 Dorter 1994, 228-29.

Stranger about the realm of being: the second follows naturally from the first, but the difference in content is heavily emphasized as Socrates himself remains almost entirely silent on the second day. The discussion in the *Statesman* between the Stranger and the younger Socrates, however, does not occur on a third day, but the same as that of the *Sophist*,<sup>479</sup> indicating a continuation of the previous dialogue in its position relative to the *Theaetetus*. Indeed, the identification of the statesman as a weaver directly correlates to the three-fold process of apprehension, division, and combination first explicated in *Theaetetus*' geometrical paradigm. In the *Statesman*, we find that the methodology inherent in the geometrical model is identical to that of the art of weaving, which is then reinterpreted within the political sphere. *Theaetetus* identifies the infinite continuum of magnitude out of which he discloses a plurality of fitting elements (individual numbers and their corresponding representations as specific lengths), which he then combines in order to produce a single entity, being nothing other than its constituent elements but maintaining a power over and above them individually. The weaver identifies the 'infinite' mass of wool out of which he discloses a plurality of warp and woof threads, which he then combines in order to produce a new product which is nothing other than the original wool but maintains some unique power or use.<sup>480</sup> Finally, the statesman identifies the 'infinite' population of his fellow citizens out of which he discloses a plurality of fitting elements (citizens who are naturally aggressive or stubborn), which he then combines in order to produce a new class of citizen, one created from nothing other than the original population but who is uniquely predisposed to justice, wisdom, and self-restraint.<sup>481</sup>

Theaetetus begins in sensation and the practical life and attempts to climb his way

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479 *Statesman*, 258a.

480 *Ibid*, 283a.

481 *Ibid*, 309a-e. Cf. Desjardins 1990, 67-68.

out of Plato's cave; whereas the statesman has his origin placed already outside of the cave and re-enters it.<sup>482</sup> The focus of this thesis is the epistemological and ontological basis for λόγος as a mode of human knowledge and communication, and so is designed to follow the transition Theaetetus himself makes from within the cave to without, from identifying the perpetual flux of the sensible world to identifying its inherent, ordered stability. The scope of this theory, however, extends beyond the limits of the *Theaetetus* and *Sophist*, and indeed the *Statesman* as well. It represents more than just an upward ascent according to the logic of the *Republic*, one designed in part to write off what exists at the lower end of the spectrum of human knowledge. Rather, the theory explored in this thesis is meant to show how, for Plato, true human wisdom is attained by the synthesis of the invisible with the visible, of the intelligible world with the sensible, and the meaningful communication thereof. So while it must be left to a much larger project to explore how this theory might be more fully developed in other late dialogues, this smaller endeavor can at least end having established the basis on which this theory will thus advance.

For Plato, the hope is, of course, that through this sort of continual philosophical investigation one might attain a view of the good itself, or the sun as it exists in and of itself, to borrow language from the *Republic*. In the *Republic*, Plato also expresses a certain moral imperative of the philosopher to return to the city or re-enter the cave once he has achieved this state of divine transcendence. As suggested in the last chapter, the depoliticized philosopher is an entity analogous to the divine, having knowledge of absolute goodness. Thus in the *Statesman* it seems to be the repoliticized philosopher who establishes himself as the measure of goodness in the city, being able to determine the objective moral value of any

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482 For the doctrine of the mean cannot exist without other arts, nor they without it (284d). Cf. Dorter 1994, 235.

word or deed.<sup>483</sup> Moreover, the philosopher-as-statesman can establish a system of laws which properly governs the city. As the Eleatic Stranger discusses it with Socrates, the problem with any conventional system is that the laws are both fixed and without true objectivity. In short:

The law could never, by determining exactly what is noblest and most just for one and all, enjoin upon them that which is best; for the differences of men and of actions and the fact that nothing, I may say, in human life is ever at rest, forbid any science whatsoever to promulgate any simple rule for everything and for all time ... but we see that law aims at pretty nearly this very thing, like a stubborn and ignorant man who allows no one to do anything contrary to his command, or even to ask a question, not even if something new occurs to someone, which is better than the λόγος he has himself ordained.<sup>484</sup>

The statesman, by having knowledge of the good, has knowledge of the correct degree of goodness one must maintain in any given situation. He is able to import absolute value into the perpetually shifting sphere of political or social opinion; or, conversely, he can elevate one's opinion to a level closer to the divine, making it “greater” than before.<sup>485</sup>

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483 Ibid, 204.

484 *Statesman*, 294b-c. Fowler's translation with Greek inserted.

485 *Statesman*, 275c. The sophist, on the other hand, whom the Stranger calls the greatest charlatan and imitator (291c, 303c), can be identified as being entirely without measure (ἄμετρία) due to being so wildly disproportionate between ignorance and knowledge (*Sophist*, 228a-229e).

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The texts used are as follows. All English translations in this thesis are my own using the Oxford Classical Texts editions, except where otherwise indicated. Certain Greek words which are pertinent to the discussion at hand and/or have a variety of possible meanings have been inserted in addition to, but not in place of the English in order to provide a sustained, unambiguous reading. (For example, *μετά* is always rendered as “in addition to” rather than simply “with.”)

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