CHAPTER 18

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THE *SOPHIST* ON STATEMENTS, PREDICATION, AND FALSEHOOD

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AMONG several striking features of Plato's late dialogue, the *Sophist*, two stand out. First, it divides clearly into two very different parts. In the Outer Part, the main speaker, a nameless visitor from Elea in Italy (hereafter ES, for Eleatic Stranger) embarks on a discourse ostensibly designed to say what is a sophist. Using the so-called Method of Division, the ES offers no fewer than seven accounts of what the sophist is. Interrupting the seventh attempt, the Middle Part provides a striking contrast. There the ES undertakes a lengthy discussion—sparked by problems arising from defining a sophist as a maker of images and purveyor of false beliefs—which, for most readers, is of far greater philosophical interest and value.[1] Though such an ostensible "digression" is not unprecedented in Plato—one may think of the central books of the *Republic*—the disparity between the two parts is arresting.[2]

A second striking feature is the markedly didactic approach. At the start, Socrates asks the ES (217A) to tell the inquirers what the people of Elea think about

1. N. Notomi, *The Unity of Plato's Sophist* [*Unity*] (Cambridge, 1999), from whom I take the labels Outer Part and Middle Part, ch. 1 usefully compares other Platonic "digressions" with that of the "Middle Part."

2. It is especially hard to envisage how the work was received by anyone who was introduced to it at a reading, unaware of the surprise in store halfway through the work and of the different degree of difficulty and abstractness of the Middle Part.

the issue in hand—namely, the relation between sophist, statesman, and philosopher: Are they three different kinds, or two, or just one? This approach is not the more usual "Let's discuss this matter together." The ES opts to present his material via question and answer with the intelligent Theaetetus but makes it clear that this is just a presentational device, not a true open-ended investigation.[3] Plato has something he wants to convey.

Both features highlight some of the key enigmas of the dialogue: What is the relation between the Outer and Middle Parts? How seriously are we to take the Outer Part, and is there a genuine, and successful, attempt to say what the sophist is? The fact that the ES offers seven alternative definitions, each purporting to be of *the sophist* (and not, as we might expect, of different types of sophist) gives us pause, as does the quirkiness of the "definitions," not least the final one.[4] On my unorthodox reading, we are not intended to regard any of the definitions as correct, especially since the search has assumed something that Plato cannot have accepted: that sophistry is an expertise, a *technē* (denied at *Gorgias* 464D).[5] Nonetheless, Plato ensures that we learn plenty from the dialogue about the many differences between sophistry and philosophy, but also that we note their common ground, especially their shared interest in puzzles, *aporiai*.[6] This will be a theme of the subsequent discussion.

This essay focuses on two key problems discussed and solved in the Middle Part: the Late-learners' problem (the denial of predication), and the problem of false statement. I look at how each is, in a way, a problem about correct speaking; how each gave rise to serious philosophical difficulty, as well as being a source of eristic troublemaking; and how the ES offers a definitive solution to both. As I said above, the *Sophist* displays an unusually didactic approach: Plato makes it clear that he has important matter to impart, and he does so with a firm hand, especially on the two issues I've selected.

1. Lead-in to the Middle Part and Synopsis

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3. From 217c–e. At D8, ES regrets he will not have a genuine exchange with Socrates. Cf. M. Frede, "The Literary Form of the Sophist" ["Literary Form"], in *Form and Argument in Late Plato,* ed. C. Gill and M. M. McCabe (Oxford, 1996), 138–39.

4. Resumé of first six at 231c–e; cf. 265a. Seventh "definition" at 268c ff: ES: "An imitator, of the contradiction-making sort of the dissembling part of conceit-imitation, of the semblance-making kind of image-making, who's marked off in the human (not the divine) portion of production a magic-trickery with arguments—if someone says such is the lineage and blood of the one who really is a sophist, then I think they'll be speaking the very truth."

5. L. Brown, "Definition and Division in the *Sophist*," in *Ancient Theories of Definition*, ed. D. Charles (Oxford, forthcoming).

6. For different views, see C. C. W. Taylor, "Socrates the Sophist," in *Remembering Socrates*, ed. L. Judson and V. Karasmanis (Oxford, 2004), 157–68; Notomi, *Unity*.

Defining the sophist as a maker of images and falsehoods leads us—so the ES pro-claims—into matters full of long-standing problems: "How one should express oneself in saying or judging that there really are falsehoods, without getting caught up in contradiction by such an utterance: that's extremely difficult, Theaetetus."[7] The puzzle is not (contra Notomi, *Unity*, 193) "Do falsehood and appearance really exist?" but "How should we express ourselves when saying they do, since to do so involves postulating that not being is?"[8] The ES then develops an exquisite series of *aporiai* about the expression "what is not/not being."[9] He goes on to lard his remarks with pointers to "uttering things correctly," "correct speaking," and so forth and ironically exclaims: "Don't look to me for correct speaking (*orthologia*) about what is not."[10]

The Middle Part proceeds by developing a wealth of problems, then system-atically solving them.

  (i) Problems about not being or what is not (237D–241C)
      Resolve: to show that what is not is in some respect, and what is is not in a way (241D–242A)
 (ii) Problems about being (242B–251A)
      Upshot: we're in as much difficulty about what is as we are about what is not (250E).
(iii) A new problem: the Late-learners' prohibition on saying that one thing is many things (251A–C)
(iv) "Partial mixing" must be the correct one of three possible theories, since we can rule out "no-mixing" (Late-learners) and "total mixing" (251D–253B)
      Greatest Kinds: a four-point program laid out (254b–d2)
 (v) Five "Greatest Kinds" selected and proofs offered that they are five (i.e., points 1 and 2 of the four-point program) (254d–255e)
(vi) Points 3 and 4: the Communion of Kinds—investigation of how change combines with the other four kinds; demonstration that change is and is not being; and that being is, in a way, not being (255e–257a)
(vii) Negation, negative expressions, not being and the parts of difference (257b–258e)
      Upshot: we have shown that, and what, not being is (258e–259e)

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7. From 236e4. I reject the emendation ad loc in the 1995 Oxford Classical Text, *Platonis Opera I*, ed. E. A. Duke, W. F. Hicken, W. S. M. Nicoll, D. B. Robinson, and J. C. G. Strachan (Oxford, 1995). Cf. Frede, "Literary Form," 143–44.

8. This alludes to the locution "say/judge what is not" "for make a false statement/judgment." See below, sec. 3.5.

9. On these *aporiai*, see especially G. E. L. Owen, "Plato on Not-Being," in *Plato 1*, ed. G. Fine (Oxford, 1999), 431–38. In (i), the term *mē on* can't be applied to anything without contradiction; in (ii), nothing that is—such as number—can be applied to it, so that ascribing either the number one (by the appellation *to mē on*, "what *is* not") or plurality (by the label *ta mē onta*, "things that *are* not") involves self-contradiction; in (iii), even the charge that "not being is inexpressible, unsayable and so forth" itself falls foul of the prohibition on treating it as something that is.

10. From 239a8, 239b4, 239b9; cf. 239d1.

> *Remaining tasks: to show what statement is and that falsity in statement, judgment, and "appearing" is possible* (260a–261b)

(viii) What statement (*logos*) is; the difference between "names" and "verbs" and between naming and saying (261c–262e)

(ix) True and false statements (262e–263d)

(x) False judgment and false "appearing" (263d–264b)

2. THE LATE-LEARNERS' PROBLEM AND ITS SOLUTION IN THE DEMONSTRATION OF COMMUNION OF KINDS

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2.1. The Late-learners' problem: summary and rival diagnoses

In these stretches, Plato unveils a problem at (iii), and solves it, after setting up a considerable apparatus, at (vi). He does so using some complex analyses, and this is where the issue of speaking correctly comes in—or, rather, of understanding correctly what has been said. He will tell us that we must not be disturbed by certain ways of speaking, when we say, of two kinds K and L, that "K is L and K is not L," and we will accept this once we recognize the different ways in which each conjunct is said (256a10–b4). So the ES promises a disambiguation, but what is it? A long-standing debate concerns whether his diagnosis of the problem and his solution turn crucially on pinpointing different meanings or uses of "is" (or rather, Greek *esti*).[11]

There are two major schools of interpretation, those I'll call "optimists" and "pessimists." The optimists, who include Ackrill, Vlastos, and others, argue as follows.[12] The puzzle that Plato attributes to certain unnamed people, who are rudely labeled "Late-learners" (*Soph* 251–52), depends on the refusal by these awkward thinkers to recognize that in sentences of the form "A is B," "is" can have two meanings or uses: that of identity (is the same as) and that of the copula, the "is" of predication. Plato (according to the optimists) diagnoses their difficulty as the

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11. The debate is often conducted in terms of different *meanings* of "is," following Frege. M. Frede, "Plato's Sophist on False Statements" ["False"], in *Cambridge Companion to Plato*, ed. R. Kraut (Cambridge, 1990), 397–424, argues for a weaker claim, that Plato distinguishes *uses* but not *meanings* of "is," since different meanings would correspond to different forms, while Plato recognizes only one form of being. For the purposes of this essay, I do not distinguish between the two claims but treat them as interchangeable. Frede's position was developed first in *Prädikation und Existenzaussage* (Göttingen, 1967).

12. J. L. Ackrill, "Plato and the Copula: *Sophist* 251–59" ["Copula"], in *Plato 1: Metaphysics and Epistemology*, ed. G. Vlastos (Garden City, N.Y., 1971), 210–22; G. Vlastos, "An Ambiguity in the *Sophist*" ["Ambiguity"], *Platonic Studies* (Princeton, N.J., 1981), 288 n.44; J. van Eck, "Plato's Logical Insights: *Sophist* 254d–257a" ["Insights"], *Ancient Philosophy* 20/1 (2000), 71–74.

failure to recognize the two uses of "is," and later (at vi) displays the two uses, by the device of different paraphrases for "is" or *esti*. Triumph! Plato anticipated the great Gottlob Frege. The pessimists accept this distinction between different uses of "is" and agree that it is *needed* to dissolve the difficulty of the Late-learners. But they sorrowfully declare that the passage where Ackrill and others find Plato making this key discovery can't be read in that way; that, alas, Plato did not solve the problem correctly: did not discover the distinction between the two meanings of "is."[13] The optimists and the pessimists share a common premise: if Plato distinguished these two meanings or uses of "is," then he made an important discovery; and if he didn't, he missed making that same discovery. But this assumption is the one I'm going to challenge.

I accept that Plato does not distinguish these two meanings or uses of "is." But (unlike the pessimists), I'll show that he solved the problem in a *perfectly adequate* way, by distinguishing what I'll call "identity sentences" from predications. Indeed, following other writers, I dissent from the tradition (deriving from Frege's "On Concept and Object") of accepting a special "is" of identity. [14] My reading credits Plato with a successful solution to the "Late-learners' problem," one that does not appeal to the rather dubious distinction between the meanings of "is." Our task is to examine the texts and to give as faithful an interpretation as we can; it will be a bonus if, as a result, we can vindicate Plato's so-called logical insights.

At 251a5–6, the Stranger turns to the problem of how we call the same thing by many names (*pollois onomasi tauton touto . . . prosagoreuomen*) and describes the views of the so-called *opsimatheis*, Late-learners.[15]

> Str. Well, when we speak of a man we name him lots of things as well, applying colors and shapes and sizes and vices and virtues to him, and in these and thousands of other ways we say that he is not only a man but also good and many other things. And so with everything else: though we assume that each thing is one, by the same way of speaking [*logos*] we speak of it as many and with many names.

> Tht. What you say is true.

> Str. This habit of ours seems to have provided a feast for the young and some old folk who've taken to studying late in life. For anyone can weigh in with the quick objection that it is impossible for what is many to be one and for what is one to be many, and they just love not allowing you to call a man good, but only the good good and

13. Pessimists include D. Bostock, "Plato on 'Is-Not' (*Sophist* 254–9)" ["Is-Not"], *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 2 (1984), 89–119; J. Gosling, *Plato* (London, 1973), ch. 13.

14. For arguments against isolating an "is" of identity, see F. Sommers, "Do We Need Identity?" *Journal of Philosophy* (1969),499–504; M. Lockwood, "On Predicating Proper Names" ["Predicating"], *Philosophical Review* (1975), 471–498 (who also argues for the interpretation of *Sophist* 255e–256e, which I favor); C. Kahn, *The Verb "Be" in Ancient Greek* (Dordrecht, 1973),e.g.at 372, 400; and B. Mates, "Identity and Predication in Plato," *Phronesis* 24/3 (1979), 211–29. Cf. the discussion in F. A. Lewis, "Did Plato Discover the Estin of Identity?" ["Did Plato"], *California Studies in Classical Antiquity* 8 (1975), 113–42.

15. For discussion of who the Late-learners represent, see F. M. Cornford, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge* [*Theory*] (repr. London, 1960), 254.

> the man a man. I dare say, Theaetetus, that you often meet people who are keen on that sort of line. Some of them are getting on in years, and their intellectual bankruptcy makes them marvel at that sort of thing and suppose that in this they have made an exceptionally clever discovery.

So this is their position: (i) they object to calling one thing many and with many names (251b3); (ii) they don't allow you to *legein agathon anthrōpon* (251b8–c1) (either "to call a man good" or "to say the man is good"; and (added later) (iii) they don't allow you to call anything something different, since they don't accept that anything has communion with the attribute of another thing (252b9–10, paraphrase).

Presumably they forbid both using a compound description "good man" and saying "the man is good." And presumably this is because they assume that the only function of a word is to name, so they rule out both "good man" and "the man is good" as "making one many" (by naming two things, man and good). They refuse to accept that it is harmless and indeed useful to speak of something "as many and with many names": that is, to apply a number of attributes, as in one of the above locutions.

So much for what the Late-learners don't allow. What do they allow? Here there is a controversy. On some interpretations Plato tells us that they don't allow any sentences at all, but only names or namings.[16] I disagree. I think we are told that the Late-learners do allow some sentences, provided that in whatever you utter you don't "make one thing many"; provided you only call a thing itself, not something else. A sentence may be permitted in which you say that a thing is itself, if the many names it uses are for the same thing. "You must only say a thing is itself, you mustn't say it is something else" (cf. 252b9–10).

"They only allow you to say to say 'the man is a man' but not 'the man is good.'" Must this be read as charging them with a failure to understand "is," with not allowing an "is" of predication, in a sentence such as "the man is good"? Not necessarily. It may just be that they make a mistake about the whole locution—in particular, about the role of what comes after the "is." The Late-learners assume that its role is to name the very same thing as the subject term names. On the same ground they would reject the appellation "good man," with the thought that, since both words are names, and are not synonymous, then two things, not one, would be named by that expression. They do not accept predication, what Plato will later call *methexis*. And it is to answer them that the following sections are written, in which the sharing or *koinōnia* of kinds is described. On this point Ackrill—in my view—is quite correct; but not when he reads Plato as identifying the mistake made by the Late-learners in terms of a mistake about "is."

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16. J. M. E. Moravcsik, "Being and Meaning in the *Sophist*," *Acta Philosophica Fennica* 14 (1962), 57–59; Gosling, *Plato*, 219–20.

Confirmation of my diagnosis comes from a later source, the account of the views of the Megarian Stilpo in Plutarch's *Adversus Colotem*.[17] Stilpo apparently, like the Late-learners, rejected statements like "the man is good" but also statements like "the horse runs." In other words, *even sentences without "is" were rejected*, presumably because the second term did not name the same thing as the first term. Stilpo's difficulty, then, does not concern the role of "is." Rather, it is a refusal to accept that parts of *logoi* are used not to name but to predicate, or to attribute, something to the subject.

To sum up: the Late-learners allow only identity sentences, and their mistake is the mistake of not understanding predication, or "sharing in."[18] Some earlier arguments in the dialogue had gone wrong because they treated predicates like names and so treated predicative sentences as identity sentences.[19] Plato's task is to explain the notion of predication, of sharing in, in order to show that the following is possible: K is L (because it shares in L), and K is not L (because K is different from L). *A thing can be what it also is not*: this is what the following section is designed to show, in answer to the mistaken view of the Late-learners. As I have argued, we don't have to construe the problem as a problem about meanings of "is" but, rather, as a problem about types of sentence: identity sentences versus predications. And so to credit Plato with logical insight, we don't have to read his solution as distinguishing different meanings of *esti*—which is a good thing, because he doesn't do so, as we shall see.

2.2. The "Communion of Kinds" as offering the solution to the Late-learners problem

We fast-forward through the Middle Part, omitting sections (iv) and (v) in which—inter alia—the ES introduces the notion that dialectic involves investigating the relations of kinds, and draws an analogy between letters of the alphabet and kinds, such that some kinds operate in the way vowels do, enabling the joining of letters while being themselves one type of letter. We omit also the first two points of the four-point program, the introduction of the five so-called Greatest Kinds—*kinēsis* (change), *stasis* (stability), being, same, and different—and the intriguing proofs of their distinctness from one another. We resume where the ES promises to fulfill the remaining points: (3) to see what power of combination they have with one another (4) in order to get hold of *to on* (being) and *to mē on* (not being) and to show that it is safe to say that *to mē on* really is *mē on* (not being really is not being).

17. Quoted in N. Denyer, *Language, Truth and Falsehood* [*Language*] (Cambridge, 1991), 34–35.

18. I discuss below (sec. 2.4) Frede's alternative view that the key distinction is between the uses of "is" in self-predications (which the Late-learners allow) and in other-predications (which they forbid).

19. Those at 243d–244b and 250a8–d3. These arguments are designed to be parallel and to be fallacious: the second ends in a contradiction, and the reader is clearly invited to discern what has gone wrong, then to connect it with the Late-learners' *aporia*.

The "Communion of Kinds" (255e–256e): Plato's "four quartets"

It is vital to the understanding of Plato's aims in this section to see how systematically the passage is organized, as many earlier commentators have shown. The kinds are taken *kath'hen*, one by one. One is chosen, change, and its interrelations with each of the other four kinds are examined in turn. I call these groups of sentences the "four quartets" because in a typical group there are four distinguishable propositions linking change with the other kind under discussion.

Group 1: Change and stability

	1a	Change is different from stability	(255e10)
So	1b	Change is not stability	(e14)
But	1c	Change is	(256a1)
because	1d	Change shares in being	(a1)

Group 2: Change and the same

	2a	Change is different from the same	(256a3)
So	2b	Change is not the same	(a5)
But	2c	Change is the same	(a7)
because	2d	Change shares in the same	(a7,b1)

Group 3: Change and different

	3a	Change is different from different	(256C5)
So	3b	Change is not different	(c8)
But	3c	Change is different	(c8)

[because Change shares in different not in text]

Group 4: Change and being

	4a	Change is different from being	(d5)
So	4b	Change is not being	(d8)
But	4c	Change is being	(d8–9)
because	4d	Change shares in being	(d9)

It is clear that Groups 2, 3, and 4 have the same pattern, viz:

a   K is different from L

So	b	K is not L (*denial of identity between K and L, since it follows from a*)
But	c	K is L (*L is predicated of K, as shown by paraphrase at d*)
Because	d	K shares in L

Because Group 2 is the first to exemplify this pattern, Plato treats it at length, taking pains to explain why the apparent contradiction between 2b and 2c is not a real one. He explains that 2b asserts what 2a asserts, and thus does not contradict 2c, which is equivalent to 2d. The same point is made more briefly for Group 3, and at greater length in Group 4, the target of the exercise. The apparent contradiction between the b and c sentences is made possible because the names of the three kinds concerned—same, different, and being—can function both as abstract nouns (as required in b) and as adjectives (as required in c). I return to this point later.

We have noticed a pattern common to the later three groups.[20] What is Plato up to in this carefully worked passage? What are his aims and achievements?

Common ground to all interpretations

Plato aims to give a careful account of the connections between the sample kind change and the four other kinds, in turn; and to do so by offering analyses, in terms of "sharing in" (*metechein* and similar expressions), of key sentences expressing these connections, sentences which take the form "K is L" or "K is not L" where K stands for change and L for one of the other kinds, in order. He does this to show why conjunctions of the form "K is not L and K is L" are not, despite appearances, contradictory, and why each conjunct can be true, when properly construed.

In particular, he aims to show that "change is not being and change is being" is not a contradiction, that both conjuncts are true and thus to vindicate the status of not being. This is Group 4, the one it was all building up to.

Accepted by most but not all (Michael Frede has a different view)

Plato uses the device of analysis in terms of *metechein* (sharing in) to distinguish statements of identity from predications. More precisely, he shows that "K is not L and K is L" can be true provided that "K is not L" denies that the kind K is the kind L—that is, denies the identity of K and L—while "K is L" is a predication or attribution of L to K (in other words, says that K shares in L). I call this the "minimal interpretation" of the section.

Now the important question: how does Plato hope to achieve this?

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20. Group 1 is different at 1c, since the ES has insisted that change cannot in any way share in stability: 252d2–11, 255ab, esp. a11–b1. The text at 256b6–8 considers the counterfactual "if change were to share in stability in some way," clearly implying that this is impossible, despite our expectation that change, as a form, must be stable.

The optimists' view: distinguishing meanings or uses of esti

The crucial lines are 256a10–b4. In these lines Plato makes the ES explain why the two previous claims, 2b and 2c (change is not the same and change is the same) must both be admitted.

> Str.   Change, then, is both the same and not the same—we must agree and not dispute it. For when we said [it was] the same and not the same, we were not speaking in a similar way, but when [we say it is] the same, we say that because of its sharing in the same in relation to itself, but when [we say it is] not the same, that, by contrast, is because of its communion with the different, through which it is separated from the same and isn't it but different, so that once again it's rightly said to be not the same.

Note, "we were not speaking in a similar way" (*ou . . . homoiōs eirēkamen*): The optimists argue that this draws attention to an ambiguity, and we may agree. They argue further that the ambiguity in question must be that of the verb "is," since they hold, in the Frege tradition, that this is the correct account. But a major problem is that in these key lines Plato does not draw attention to the word *esti*; worse, he actually omits it in the crucial sentence. We must indeed supply it, but still, if he had really been signaling an ambiguity in *esti*, surely he would not have omitted it at the vital moment.[21]

   The optimists have a reply here. Even if Plato omitted it, he must still have located the ambiguity in the *esti*. They argue as follows. Consider the three pairs of contradictory propositions (2b+c, 3b+c, and 4b+c). The *esti* is the only constituent common to these pairs that could account for the ambiguity in each quartet.[22] Now I agree that we should look for an account of these lines that can also serve as an explanation of the other groups as well, since Plato evidently constructed the passage carefully and means his account of Group 2 to serve also for the two later groups.[23] But optimists are wrong to claim that the only element common to all three that could explain the ambiguity is the verb *esti*. The three pairs share the same *form*, and the ambiguity may be due to that, not to the occurrence of a given *word* ("is") used in two ways.

2.3. Plato's solution: what ambiguity is he pointing out?

21. Defending the "optimist" line, van Eck, "Insights," 71–74, argues that Plato does "distinguish a non-predicative sense of 'is' at 256b3–4," albeit using *gegone* rather than *esti*. We may agree that *gegone* here means "is, as a result of," and that in *gegonen ouk ekeino all' heteron* (isn't it but something different) the "isn't it" denies identity between change and *tauton*. But it doesn't follow that Plato is distinguishing a nonpredicative sense of "is."

22. Vlastos, "Ambiguity," 291 n.46.

23. For this reason, we may reject a different interpretation (Gosling, *Plato*, 218–19) by which the solution is to add different completions to "the same" in the two conjuncts. Such a reading, though possible for Group 2, will not allow an equivalent solution for Groups 3 and 4, which Plato clearly intends.

There are two alternative solutions that I prefer to the claim that Plato locates the ambiguity in "is."[24]

Solution 1

Solution 1 locates the ambiguity in what follows the *esti*. In other words, Plato points to a difference in "the same" between 2b "Change is not the same" and 2c "Change is the same," as suggested by Owen.[25] And it is quite correct that the words "the same" play these different roles in the two sentences! Even those who accept two meanings or uses of *esti* must agree that there are *also* two meanings or uses of *tauton*. To say change is not *tauton* is to say it is not the kind, sameness. And the same goes for 3b (change is not the kind different) and 4b (change is not the kind being). It may be helpful to compare the uses of the word "blue" in the following sentences:

> s1 The sky is blue. ("Blue" used as an adjective, to attribute blueness to the sky)
> s2 The color of the sky is blue. ("Blue" used to designate the color, blue)

The crucial item is the word or phrase that follows *esti*; that is, in Group 2, *tauton* (the same).

Now if Plato were being accurate, he should write *to tauton* "the the same" in 2b, to show that the phrase is being used as an abstract noun to refer to the kind sameness. And he should write *to heteron* in 3b, and *to on* in 4b. It is only because he doesn't do so that he is able to produce apparent contradictions. If he had written, at 4b, "change is not *to on*," that evidently does not contradict *Kinēsis estin on,* which means "change is a being (is a thing that is)." One reason he does not use these forms is that Greek, where possible, avoids the definite article after the verb "to be," so Plato felt free to leave it out—in order to achieve his apparent contradictions.[26] To repeat, the word *tauton* plays two different roles, adjectival in 2c (change is *tauton*) but as an abstract noun in 2b (change is not *tauton*). Should we not give Plato credit for pointing out this difference of role, when he offers the elucidation in the key lines 256A10–B5? After all, he does seem to lay the emphasis on *tauton* in the crucial sentence.

To support this interpretation, I make one philosophical point and one appeal to the text. The philosophical point, hinted at above, is that we must admit that there is a dual use of the words "the same," whether or not we accept, with Frege and others, a dual use of the word "is." Usually a different form of the word will be used where the sentence is an identity sentence; for instance, we will say "change is different" (adjective) but "it is not difference" (abstract noun). But where there is

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24. For a number of suggestions about what Plato's solution is, see Lewis, "Did Plato." His preferred solution (134–36) has Plato invoking a special sense of *not* found in 2b, *change is not tauton,* and also in 3b and 4b.

25. Owen, "Not Being," 258 n.63; Lockwood, "Predicating," 479 n.12.

26. This point about Greek usage (cf. Lewis, "Did Plato") answers Bostock's objection ("Is-Not," 93).

the same form (as in the pair "the sky is blue" and "the color of the sky is blue"), we have to assume a different function (once as an adjective, once naming the color blue).

The textual point in support of this interpretation is drawn from some curious lines that follow Group 2.

> Str.   And if this very thing, change, were to participate in any way in stability, it would not be at all odd to call it stable (*stasimon*).

> Tht.   Very true, if we are to agree that some of the kinds are willing to mix with one another and others are not. (256b6–10)

These lines have puzzled commentators. Why are they here? Is something missing (as, e.g., Cornford believed)?[27] At any rate, ES is evidently not asserting that change does share in a way in stability. Rather, the sentence is a counterfactual: if change were to share in any way in *stasis*, it would not be odd to call it *stasimon* (or, to say it is *stasimon*, stable). Now, we know that change doesn't share in *stasis*, for it has been emphasized several times (cf. n.20). Why does the Stranger revert to it? If I am right that he has just pointed out the different roles for *tauton* in 2b and 2c, then perhaps he is underlining the adjectival role of *tauton*, where "is *tauton*" means "shares in *tauton*," by displaying the parallel with "shares in *stasis*" which becomes "is *stasimon*." This–drawing attention to the adjectival form, *stasimon*, as parallel to the adjectival function in 2c, 3c, and 4c—would partly explain this otherwise out-of-place remark.

Objection to my proposal and reply

It has been objected that "the names *tauton*, *heteron* and *on* cannot vary in sense within any of the three sentences, for . . . the meaning is fixed unambiguously by Plato's assumption that each name refers to the identical Form within both of the apparently contradictory conjuncts."[28] Reply: Not so, and here is an argument to show it. Suppose Plato had chosen to pursue the Communion of Kinds with the assertions that 5a being is different from stability, so 5b being is not stability, but 5c being is stable. There's no danger here of an apparent contradiction, but still Plato could analyze 5b and 5c on the lines of 2b and 2c, analyzing 5c as being shares in stability. No one would claim that the sole function of "stable" (Greek *stasimon*) in our imaginary 5c is to refer to the form or kind stability, though that is part of its function. Its evidently adjectival form would make it obvious that its role was different from that of "stability" in 5b. And presumably Plato could have made this point about "the same" as used as an adjective in 2c, despite Vlastos's claims.

Solution 2: more modest

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27. Cornford, *Theory*, proposed a lacuna after 256b7.

28. Vlastos, "Ambiguity," 291 n.46. Bostock, a "pessimist," uses the same argument ("Is-Not," 97).

Perhaps we are wrong to think that Plato identifies one element as the locus of ambiguity. Just because he offers a paraphrase does not mean we must attach each element of the paraphrase to an element of the original sentence. Perhaps instead he simply notes, quite correctly, and shows by means of paraphrase, that in each pair one sentence functions to deny identity between change and the other kind (Change is not the kind being), while the second sentence predicates that kind of change (Change is a being). This would be a holistic solution, rather than an atomistic one. If we seek the correct account of why the pairs of sentences are not contradictory, in spite of appearances, this may be the safest answer. The ambiguity depends on the whole sentence forms, not on any one element. If that is all Plato wishes to convey on the matter, then it is perfectly adequate, in my view.

2.4. Different uses of "is": an alternative interpretation

One further line of interpretation remains to be discussed, that of Michael Frede. I label his line "superoptimist" since he too holds that Plato *is* adverting to a crucial distinction in uses of "is"/*esti*, but, unlike the optimists, he holds that this single distinction is the only one needed to solve all the problems in the *Sophist*. (Optimists such as Ackrill, however, hold that at other points Plato is also distinguishing the existential "is.") The key distinction, for Frede, is the one between the use of "is" to say what a thing *is in itself* or *by itself*, and the use of "is" to say what a thing *is by standing in the appropriate relation to something else*.[29] He illustrates the distinction with reference to two uses of "is white." Socrates is white by standing *in a relation to a color* (i.e., second use of "is"). The color white, however, is white *by being this feature*, not by having it (i.e., first, "in itself" use of "is"). Like the optimists, Frede takes his favored distinction to be the key to both the Late-learners' problem and the Communion of Kinds passage. The Late-learners—on his view—allow only "in itself" predications and disallow the second kind, the kind we use when we say "Socrates is white."

A full discussion of Frede's rich position is beyond the scope of this essay.[30] In brief, I find his account of the Late-learners' position highly plausible, equally plausible with the account I favor, according which Late-learners allow (in effect) identity statements but disallow predications. Each interpretation is compatible with the prohibition on calling anything something different. Frede's view would prefer, as the Late-learners' slogan, "you can say what a thing is by itself, but not what it is in some other way," while the identity view would imagine the slogan "you can say a thing is itself, but not anything else." Each fits what we are told about the Late-learners' theory.

29. Frede, "False," 400.

30. In L. Brown, "Being in the Sophist: A Syntactical Enquiry," in *Plato 1*, ed. G. Fine (Oxford, 1999), 474–76, I discuss Frede's claim that this distinction features in the proof of the nonidentity of different and being at 255cD. At 470–71, I outline the interpretation for which 2.3 above gives a fuller argument.

However, we want to find Plato demonstrating in the Communion of Kinds section just the distinction that the Late-learners refused to accept, and here—in this later passage—I find Frede's interpretation less plausible. Why? Consider the opening lines of Group 1 above—1a, change is different from stability; 1b, change is not stability. This pattern is repeated, for the first two sentences of the next three groups: K is different from L, so K is not L. We must surely expect to interpret 2b, *Change is not the same*, 3b, *Change is not different*, and 4b, *Change is not being* along the lines of 1b. But 1b surely is a denial of identity. Frede's interpretation wants 2b, 3b, and 4b to be read as denials of "in itself predication," not as denials of identity.[31] Thus 2b is to be understood as "Change is not, in itself, the same," and so on for the remainder. But the equivalent reading of 1b cannot succeed. If Plato had wanted 1b to be a denial of "in itself predication," then he would have written "Change is not by its own nature at rest" (cf. 250c6–7, where the point is made that being, by its own nature, is neither moving nor at rest). Since I find it impossible to read the negative claims in the four quartets in any other way than as denials of identity, I cannot accept Frede's reading.

To conclude this discussion of Plato's treatment of the Late-learners problem, I raise and reply to two questions. First: "The so-called problem of the Late-learners is so silly that we can't imagine anyone being seriously bothered by it. Did Plato really need to go to such lengths to refute so absurd a view?" In reply, I endorse Ackrill's claim: the thesis was put forward not only by elderly jokers but also by serious thinkers who felt themselves obliged to maintain it for what seemed to them compelling theoretical reasons.[32] We have already seen (sec. 2.1), that it was also maintained by the Megarian thinker Stilpo. And, as Denyer has shown, variants on it have appealed to philosophers such as Bradley, who worried about saying that a lump of sugar is sweet and white and hard: "A thing is not any of its qualities, if you take that quality by itself; if 'sweet' were the same as 'simply sweet,' the thing would clearly not be sweet. And again, insofar as the sugar is sweet it is not white or hard; for these properties are all distinct." And so on.[33] One or both of the following may prompt the thesis: a metaphysical view about what the world ultimately consists in, or a view of language that sees naming as the only function of bits of language. Bizarre though it may seem to us, we cannot dismiss it as a mere sophism unworthy of serious attention from Plato.

The second question asks why, when the Late-learners' puzzle concerns statements about particulars such as "the man is tall and handsome," the solution in the Communion of Kinds section concerns statements about kinds. The answer, I think, is this. In each case (a predication about a particular and one about a kind) we have, in effect, a claim that one thing is many things, and that it *is* what it also *is*

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31. Frede, "False," 422: his chief reason for denying that in this section sentences of the form "X is not Y" are nonidentity sentences is that 263b11–12, which seems to refer back to 256e6–7, must concern denials of predication, not denials of identity. Hence his wish to read this section as also featuring denials of (in-itself) predication. But in my view, this solution to what is a real problem comes at too high a price.

32. Ackrill, "Copula," 215.

33. F. H. Bradley, *Appearance and Reality*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1932), 16, quoted in Denyer, *Language*, 44.

not. Now the claim that particulars, such as Socrates, are many things isn't so troubling for Platonic metaphysics. But the claim, of a Form or kind, that it must be many things, and must be what it also is not, needed more defense. *Republic* V had claimed that Forms always are, and in no way are not. But in the Communion of Kinds section, the ES shows not just the difference between identity statements and predications in general but how even Forms or kinds can be spoken of in both these ways. The upshot (in Group 4) is the demonstration that a kind such as change both is a being and is not being (i.e., it shares in being even though it is not the Form being). Thus, we have the first place in which the Resolve is fulfilled (see synopsis in sec. 2): showing that what is not being [i.e., is not the kind being] nonetheless is in a way [i.e., it is a being, and thus lots of other things besides]. In other words, we have been shown not only what the Late-learners denied—how it is legitimate and true to say that one thing is many things, and is what it also is not—but also how a kind (other than being) can be a being and yet not be being itself. Understanding just what is being said in these apparently contradictory locutions is the key to resolving them.

3. THE ACCOUNT OF FALSE STATEMENT

Once again we fast-forward, omitting discussion of the most puzzling section (vii) of the dialogue. I say a little about it later; for now we note that it concludes with the declaration that the inquirers have found what the form of not being is.[34] But that, we are told, is not the end of the inquiry. By means of a carefully placed series of signposts (from 260b onward) the ES stresses that fulfilling the Resolve is not enough for demonstrating the possibility of false statement.[35] He emphasizes that showing that kinds mix was necessary but not sufficient to solve all their problems and, in particular, was insufficient to solve the problem of falsehood. To do that, they must also investigate what statement and judgment (*logos* and *doxa*) are, to see if they can be false (to see if "not being can mix with them" (260b10–c4)). Theaetetus repeats the point (261AB), and it's made a third time by the ES (261c). Plato was evidently concerned that the reader should see that a fresh topic has been broached and that they are moving to a new discussion.

By almost universal agreement, the section in which the ES explains what a *logos* is and how there can be false ones is one of the most successful and important of the whole dialogue. Though the account is well known, I here outline it once

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34. "Having demonstrated what the nature of the different is, and that it's parcelled out over all the things that are, set against each other, we've dared to say that the part of it set against the being of each thing—that very thing really is not being" (258d).

35. "Statement" is the best translation for *logos* in this section. It has a range of meanings that include reason, speech, and definition.

again, discuss how it should be understood (3.2–3.4), then ask what is most valuable in the account (3.5).[36]

3.1. The account of what a statement is

The key to understanding how a *logos* can be false lies in first understanding what a *logos* is. Here Plato proceeds with the utmost care. He scripts a scene in which Theaetetus first misunderstands (261d7) and leaps to a wrong conclusion. This allows the ES, in correcting him (262b2), to emphasize the novelty of his new point, which is this. With words as well as with kinds, "partial mixing" is the order of the day, if statements are to eventuate. But the ES informs Theaetetus that the "partial mixing" of words he is about to expound must not be confused with the "partial mixing" of kinds discussed in the four-point program. Words (*onomata*) come in two varieties: names and verbs (*onomata* and *rhēmata*: thus *onoma* has both a general and a more specific meaning). Not any concatenation of words makes a *logos*; rather, a *logos* must combine a name with a verb, where "verb" is the designation used of actions and "name" is the designation used of the doers of those actions.[37] Neither a string of verbs (such as "walks runs sleeps") nor a string of names (such as "lion deer horse") makes a *logos*. A *logos* is special kind of interweaving; someone who interweaves a verb with a name doesn't only name but succeeds in saying something. (262d2–6).[38]

Plato here makes a crucial point. Saying something—what the utterer of a statement does—is different from merely naming. To achieve this "saying something" a *logos* needs two parts with different functions: "one part whose function is to name, refer to, identify a subject, and another part by means of which we say something, state something, predicate something of or about the subject."[39] As

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36. My account owes much to that of Michael Frede, "False," sec. III, though I dissent from his understanding of one major issue: how to understand the reference to what is different in the paraphrase the ES offers of what it is for a statement to be false. See also Crivelli, chapter 9 in this volume.

37. "An expression we apply to actions we call a verb" (262a2). The word order, together with the use of *legein* rather than *kalein*, indicate that this is not intended as a strict definition of *rhēma*. Cf. M. Hoekstra and F. Scheppers, "*Onoma, rhēma* et *logos* dans le *Cratyle* et le *Sophiste* de Platon," *L'Antiquité Classique* (2003), 69, who insist, plausibly, that the major point of the passage is not the new assignation of familiar words for words (*onoma, rhēma*) to distinct roles but the recognition that a special kind of fitting together (*harmottein*) is involved in any *logos*.

38. Interweaving, *plegma*; cf. *sumplekōn* (weaving together) at 262d4.

39. Frede, "False," 413–14.

Frede's terminology shows, we may think of the distinction in a variety of ways. Perhaps the key idea is the distinction between the part of the statement used to refer to the subject (the *onoma*, name, or subject-expression) and the part used to predicate something of the subject.[40] Also with Frede, we can agree that if Plato intends to distinguish word classes, his point that each *logos* has a noun and a verb picks out only a subclass of statements, whereas he seems to want to characterize simple statements more generally "and really is looking for syntactical categories."[41] With the distinction between naming and saying, and with the recognition that a statement is essentially structured, as a special weaving together of parts with different functions, certain puzzles found in earlier dialogues—notably *Euthydemus*—denying the possibility of false statement or judgment and of contradiction are finally put to rest.[42] What the puzzles had in common was that they treated a *logos* as an unstructured whole; many of them portrayed saying and/or judging like naming, using a "scandalous analogy" (Burnyeat) between judging and touching.

3.2. The account of true and false statements

After stressing that a *logos* is special kind of structured whole, only one of whose parts has the function of referring to the thing it is about, the ES can at once get Theaetetus to agree that both "Theaetetus sits" and "Theaetetus flies" are, by the above account, statements.[43] Then he proceeds smartly to explain the truth of the one and the falsity of the other. He does so twice over, in what I shall call the two "Final Formulae for Falsehood," the first (which has been much discussed) at 263b4–11, and the second (relatively neglected) at 263d1–4.

> First Final Formula for Falsehood. (A) The true one says of things that are about you that they are; while (B) the false one says different things from the

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40. I cannot agree with D. Sedley, *Plato's Cratylus* (Cambridge, 2003), that in all this *Cratylus* prefigures *Sophist*. Sedley claims Plato in *Cratylus* uses the terms *onoma* and *rhēma* to focus on "the two linguistic acts . . . of naming and predication" and that Socrates shows "awareness that *onomata* and *rhēmata* are functionally disparate items within the statement." Denyer, *Language,* 148–50, correctly remarks that in *Cratylus* (as elsewhere in Plato outside this stretch of *Sophist*) *rhēma* typically means phrase, group of words, as opposed to *onoma*, a single word. Contra Sedley, *Crat* 399ab and 399b7, and 421d–e are best explained in this way. Cf. *Sophist* 257b6–c2 (before the official demarcation and identification of *onoma* and *rhēma*): in support of Denyer, note that at 257b6 *mē mega* (not large) is called a *rhēma*, but at c6 the ES speaks of the *onomata* which follow the "not" in expressions such as "not large."

41. Frede, "False," 413.

42. Frede, "False," 413–17, and M. Burnyeat, "Plato on How Not to Speak about Not-Being" ["How Not To"] in *Le Style de la pensée*, ed. M. Canto and P. Pellegrin (Paris, 2002), 40–65. Burnyeat holds that in the earlier works Plato hints at the vital distinction between the subject of a *logos* and what's said about it, but concedes that prior to *Sophist* there is no "hint of the grammatical or syntactic distinction drawn there between the part of an assertoric sentence that refers to the subject and the part that ascribes to that subject a predicate such as flying or sitting" (45).

43. "Plato quite pointedly lets the Eleatic Stranger settle the question of reference for the sample statements discussed before he lets him go on to consider their truth or falsehood." Frede, "False," 418.

things that are; that is, (C) it says, of things that are not, that they are. In a problematic sequel the ES continues, in a highly elliptical manner: (D) (but it says) things that are, but are different (from what is) about you.[44]

To understand all this, we must first eliminate the plural forms, a stylistic device loved by Plato but highly confusing to the reader. The chief warrant for doing so is this: the sample true *logos* "Theaetetus sits," which plainly says one thing about Theaetetus, is described as saying *ta onta*, things that are.[45] Replacing plurals with singulars, and leaving to one side for now a host of problems with this stretch, I recast (A) and (C) in what follows, but postpone discussion of the controversial (B) and (D) until later.[46]

The true one (A) says, of something that is concerning you (viz., sitting) that it is. The false one (C) says, of something that is not (viz., flying) that it is. (Probably we must understand "concerning you" here, too.) In other words, the false one is false because it says, concerning Theaetetus, that what is not (viz., flying) is concerning him. Now, if we confine our attention pro tem to (A) and (C), we recognize how elegantly they dispose of the idea that a false statement simply "says what is not" where this is supposed to be like (the impossible) touching what is not. Plato has distinguished "saying something about something" from "naming." Each statement names Theaetetus, each is about (*peri*) him—that is, is about something that is, and thereby secures its reference—and each says something about him. Plato can now say, without fear, that the false one says, about Theaetetus, what is not, but says that it is concerning him. Even confining ourselves to (A) and (C), we find a fully satisfactory account of true and false statements, at least if we confine ourselves to simple assertions.[47]

44. For a full discussion, including a proof that *hōs estin* at 263b4 must be translated "that they are," not "as they are," see D. Keyt, "Plato on Falsity" ["Falsity"], in *Exegesis and Argument*, ed. E. Lee, A. Mourelatos, and R. Rorty (Assen, 1973), 287–91. D. Sedley, *The Midwife of Platonism* (Oxford, 2004), 133 n.19, proposes a reassignment of speakers in the problematic lines B9–11.

45. Further support for replacing plurals with singulars comes at 263d1–4, where the statement "Theaetetus flies" is said to be "a synthesis of verbs and names" when it is plainly a synthesis of one verb and one name. This licenses us to rewrite the entire sentence replacing plurals with singulars, as discussed below.

46. Those who favor the so-called Oxford interpretation, discussed below, cannot agree that the use of the plurals is merely a stylistic device, for they invoke the plural in (B) 263b7 to indicate that it is correct to import a universal quantifier into the translation. Thus: "Plato could have said in 263b3–4 that the true statement says of something that is that it is. But he wants to get a reference to the whole class of things that are, relative to a given subject, into the characterization of the true statement, as this will be needed to get an adequate characterization of the false statement. This corresponds to the need for a universal quantifier in a proper characterization, first of the use of '... is not ...' along Plato's lines, and then of falsehood, a need several commentators have rightly insisted on" (Frede "False," 420). I dispute this line of argument below.

47. Contra Frede ("False," 418), I agree with J. McDowell, "Falsehood and Not-Being in Plato's *Sophist*" ["Falsehood"], in *Language and Logos*, ed. M. Schofield and M. Nussbaum (Cambridge, 1982),133 n.35, that, as they stand, the Formulae cover only true and false *affirmative* statements. Nonetheless, it is clear how they can be adapted for *negative* truths and falsehoods.

3.3. How to understand "different" in the Formulae for Falsehood? Three readings

Now we turn to (B) and (D).

> (B) The false one says different things from the things that are. (263 B7)

We have seen this is used as equivalent to "saying things that are not." And I argued above that we may and should replace plurals by singulars, giving

> (B^s) The false one says something different from what is.

How should this be understood? One difficulty is immediately evident; I label it the "Problem." Suppose Theaetetus is sitting, and suppose I state, "Theaetetus is talking." Then I have said about Theaetetus something that is different from something that is about him—viz., sitting. But of course he may be talking as well as sitting, in which case my statement is true. But (B) was supposed to characterize a false statement. So, on the simplest interpretation, it is a non-starter.

Two main readings of (B) have gained support, each of which avoids the Problem. Following Keyt, we call them the "Oxford interpretation" and the "incompatibility interpretation."[48] However, I reject them both and defend a less popular, but increasingly supported, reading, as the correct one.

> *Reading 1, the Oxford interpretation*. The false *logos*, "Theaetetus flies," says, about Theaetetus, something that is different from everything that is about him. On this reading the Problem is solved. "Theaetetus is talking" will indeed be false if talking differs from everything which is about him (i.e., which is true of him).
>
> *Reading 2, the incompatibility interpretation*. The false *logos*, "Theaetetus flies," says, about Theaetetus, something that is *incompatible with* what is about him. This too solves the Problem. If I ascribe an attribute incompatible with what is about Theaetetus, I must indeed be making a false statement about him. While talking is merely different from sitting, flying is—or was before the invention of the airplane—incompatible with sitting.

But while both of these solve the Problem, neither of them can easily be extracted from what Plato wrote. The Oxford interpretation faces the objection that there is no good reason to supply, in (B) and (D), that universal quantifier—the "every"—which is so crucial.[49] An even more serious obstacle is the wording of the Second Formula for Falsehood, at 263d1–4, which is rarely discussed.[50]

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48. Keyt, "Falsity," 294–95. He discusses four alternative readings in all, but not my preferred one, Reading 3. See also Crivelli, chapter 9 in this volume.

49. Cf. n.46. An appeal to the plural in *ta onta* "things that are" at B7 is illegitimate. In 263b4–5 we read: "The true one ('Theaetetus sits') says the things that are that they are about you." Since *ta onta* evidently refers to just one thing/verb, "sits," it must there be understood as "what is." We cannot, with the Oxford interpretation, suddenly read it to mean "everything that is" two lines later.

50. As noted in J. Szaif, *Platons Begriff der Wahrheit* [*Wahrheit*] (Munich, 1996), 492, with whose overall reading I am in considerable agreement.

There we are told that in the false statement, "concerning you, different things are said to be the same, and not beings are said to be beings." Once again we may substitute singulars: "something different is said to be the same, and something that is not is said to be something that is." Now the Oxford interpretation requires different supplements, as follows: in the false statement "something different [from everything that is] is said to be the same [as something that is]."[51] And this is impossibly awkward. My verdict on the Oxford interpretation is that, though it gives an adequate account of what it is for a statement to be false, it is not what Plato intended. It is hard to find in the wording of the First Final Formula, and impossible to read in the Second Final Formula for Falsehood at 263d1–4.

Reading 2, the incompatibility interpretation, also fails for textual reasons, though it has the great strength that the sample statements do indeed feature incompatibles, "sits" and "flies." Sitting and flying, as we noted, are not merely different but incompatible; they exclude each other. Many objections to the incompatibility interpretation have been made on philosophical grounds, and I discuss one of these below. The overwhelming difficulty, however, is not a philosophical one, but that it requires that Plato intend a change of meaning in *heteron*, which up to now has meant "different." Can it be that now, without warning, he uses it to mean "incompatible"? This must be avoided if possible. And we can avoid it with the third interpretation, which is a variant on the "incompatibility interpretation."

> Reading 3, the incompatibility range interpretation. Reading 3 allows us to preserve what is good in each of the above—that is, it allows us to keep *heteron* to mean "different," and it takes account of the fact that Plato's sample statements feature incompatible attributes.[52]

I introduce it with the help of an important but difficult text from earlier in the *Sophist* at 257b1–c3, where the ES explains the meaning of negative expressions. There he distinguishes between what is contrary (*enantion*) and what is "only different" (*heteron monon*), and in so doing, he introduces the idea of a range of incompatible attributes such that what is not F has one of the other attributes from the range in question (though not necessarily the contrary of F).

51. The need for a different supplement is concealed in the formulation of J. van Eck: "Things that are different from what is the case concerning him (viz. flying) are described as the same (as what is the case about him)" ("Falsity without Negative Predication" ["Falsity"], *Phronesis* 40/1 (1995), 40). But, as we saw, supporters of Reading 1, including van Eck, have to understand "what is" (or here: "what is the case") differently in the two supplements.

52. Compare M. Ferejohn, "Plato and Aristotle on Negative Predication and Semantic Fragmentation," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 71 (1989), 262 ff. To Ferejohn's list of adherents of this Reading (n.9), we may now add Szaif, *Wahrheit*, 487–99, esp. 491, and M.-L. Gill, "Method and Metaphysics in Plato's *Sophist* and *Statesman*", in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. E. N. Zalta (Winter 2005), available at http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2005/entries/plato-sophstate/.Crivelli (chapter 9 in this volume) labels my Reading 3 "quasi-incompatibility" (but opts for Reading 1 in his essay). Below I discuss twentieth-century versions of the same thesis.

(1) "Whenever we speak of not being, we don't speak of something contrary to being, but only different." "How so?" (2) "For example, when we say 'not big' do you think we signify small by that expression any more than equal?" "No." (3) "So when it is said that a negative signifies a contrary, we shan't agree, but we'll allow only this much—the prefixed word 'not' merely indicates something other[53] than the words following the negative, or rather, other than the things which the words uttered after the negative apply to."

The illustration in (2), where the ES is explaining what "not large" means, makes it clear that while "small" is the contrary of large, "equal" is "only different" (see (1)). Plato's point is this: if we think of A's size in relation to B, A may be not large, without being small (the contrary of large), since A may be equal in size to B; so when I say that A is not large, I am not saying that it is small (in relation to B).[54] Here we are introduced to the idea of a range of incompatible properties or attributes F, G, and H, such that what is not F is either G or H.[55] The range may have any number of members; we may think of colors, shapes, and so on. With this in mind, we can retain the translation "different" for *heteron* but recognize that an attribute different from F *taken from that range* will be incompatible with F. In support of this interpretation, think how laughable it would have been if in (2) the ES had chosen a random attribute different from large, and said (for instance), "When we say not big, do you think we signify small any more than yellow?" Being yellow does not rule out being large, so appealing to it in the explication of what "not large" means would be ridiculous.

Using the help offered by 257b–c, where, as I've shown, the account of "not large" invokes the idea of a range of incompatible properties when it labels "equal in size" merely *different* from "large," we can return to defend the incompatibility range interpretation of the Final Formulae for Falsehood, starting with the First Formula.

(B) The false one says different things from the things that are. (263b7)

I've argued that this is equivalent to

(Bˢ) The false one says something different from what is.

We have noticed that this section also features incompatibles, sitting and flying. So we may read (Bˢ) as follows: The false one says something different [from the relevant range of incompatible properties] from what is about you (because it says you are flying, which is a different one of the range of locomotive properties from the one that applies to you—namely, sitting). And we can now read the Second Formula (263D) in a far more natural way than the Oxford interpretation allowed.

Different things are said to be the same, and not beings are said to be beings.

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53. Literally: one of the others, *tōn allōn ti*.
54. Precisely what his positive account here is is a controversial issue that we needn't go into here.
55. I discuss below an objection to this account of negation.

Again I replace plurals by singulars, yielding

> Something different [from what is about you] is said to be the same [as what is about you].

Now we have the same supplement both times, avoiding the intolerable awkwardness required by the Oxford interpretation. Once again, the different thing, flying, is chosen from the range of incompatible locomotive attributes, so that if I attribute a different thing from what is, I am bound to say something false.[56]

In addition to these two strong indications that Plato has in mind a range of incompatible properties, one may also cite the account of "other-judging" in Theaetetus 189 B and following, where a similar idea may be at work.[57]

3.4. Objection to Reading 3, and reply

It may be objected that any account of falsehood which makes an essential reference to incompatibility (as both Readings 2 and 3 do) suffers from such a serious flaw that charity requires us to avoid attributing it to Plato. The flaw is this: such an account gives at best a sufficient, but not a necessary, condition for a false statement. (The same objection applies to the equivalent accounts of negation.) For example, the objector points out, it can be false that virtue is square (and true that virtue is not square) without it being the case that virtue is some shape other than square. In reply, I concede that the flaw is indeed serious. Must it have been so obvious to Plato that he could not have held the theory? No. Indeed, such a theory of negation continued to attract leading philosophers into the twentieth century.

It was maintained by J. Mabbott and G. Ryle, two of three contributors to an Aristotelian Society Symposium on Negation in 1929. Ryle wrote that "when a 'predicate' is denied of a 'subject,' that predicate must always be thought of as one member of a disjunctive set, some other member of which set (not necessarily specified) is asserted to be predicable of the subject."[58] Price, the third contributor, made the above objection, insisting that statements such as "virtue is not square" and "the soul is not a fire shovel" were both meaningful and true, in spite of resisting analysis in terms of a range of incompatible properties. And this objection is correct. But though the account which invokes a range of incompatible properties to explain negation and/or falsehood is indeed flawed, it was an attractive candidate, and, as we have seen, Plato's remarks about the meaning of "not large" at 257bC require it, while his Formulae for Falsehood are best explained by appeal to it—in particular, the comparatively neglected second formula at 263d.

56. Van Eck, "Falsity," 26–27, rejects the incompatibility range interpretation (which he numbers 4[i]) with the protest that the supposed restriction of "different" predicates to ones from a range of incompatible properties is "unannounced in the text" at 257b and at 263. But sentence (2), 257b6–7 comes close to announcing it, as I explain above.

57. Cf. P. Crivelli, "Allodoxia," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 80 (1998), 15–16; Szaif, *Wahrheit*, 495–96.

58. G. Ryle, "Negation," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* IX (suppl.) (1929), 86.

3.5. Which feature of the account of falsity is more important?

We have now established (by the defense of Reading 3) how Plato means us to understand the reference to the different, which glosses "not being" (*ta mē onta*) in the two Final Formulae for Falsehood. So we can return to take stock of Plato's achievement in this section. We have seen that the account of false statement contains two main elements: (a) the insistence that a *logos*, true or false, is about something and (b) a paraphrase glossing "not being" by "different." Discussions tend to focus on (b), partly because it is the harder to interpret but also because a focus on the problem of not being set the scene originally for the Middle Part. But I contend that (a) both is and is represented by Plato as the major contribution to the account of falsehood. To do so, I must counter the objection of John McDowell.[59] He argues that the Sophist's revelation of the subject-predicate structure of a *logos* is not the key to the solution of the problem of false statement. Rather, Plato clearly indicates that the salient error lay in a mistake about not being, and that the solution is to demolish the Eleatic mistake about negation.[60]

McDowell points out that in the section which develops puzzles about not being/what is not, there are two early definitions of falsehood. I label them "Def A" and "Def B."

> Def A. False saying/judging is saying/judging what is not. (240d9)
> Def B. False saying is (i) saying what is not is or (ii) saying what is is not. (240e–241a)

Def B is a double-barreled definition, of which the first part covers false positive statements such as "grass is red" and the second false negative statements such as "grass is not green."[61] McDowell refers to Def B as the disjunctive definition and to Def A as the definition that conveys "the crude position" about statements.[62] Now, as we have seen, the account of *logos* and of false and true *logos* at 260–63 is well fitted to dispose of the "crude picture" of statements and false statements. For once we insist that a *logos* says something about something, it is at once unproblematic how, having thereby got a grip on reality by that reference, it can go on to say something false about the thing in question.

Why does McDowell reject the familiar account, which sees 260–63 as putting to rest the crude picture by insisting on the need for a subject of a *logos*, as well as something said about the subject? His answer: this does not address the much

59. McDowell "Falsehood," esp. sec. 6.132–34.

60. Likewise, Sedley, *Midwife,* esp. 113–14, 134, holds that it is the account of not being in terms of difference which is the key advance of *Sophist,* rather than the analysis of a *logos* into *onoma* and *rhēma* which (as discussed in n. 40) he thinks is not a new discovery in *Sophist*.

61. The double-barreled definition can cover positive and negative existential statements and judgments, as well as predicative ones. But it should not be understood as confined to existentials.

62. McDowell, "Falsehood," 130. The label "crude" applies to the approach to statements found in *Euthydemus* 285–86 and 283e7–284c6, mentioned in sec. 3.1 above; crude because it leaves no room for a distinction between naming and saying—and hence none for false statement.

subtler Def B of falsehood (the one he labels the disjunctive characterization). Someone who claims to find the locution "is not" puzzling (as importing some contrary of being) will not back down when we add "about you."[63]

But this overlooks two salient features of the discussion of statement and of false statement. First, it is Def A which is prominent when the ES pointedly moves the discussion on to its final stage (260–64). At 260c3–4, he says, "because judging or saying things that are not—that's what falsehood in thought and statements is, surely," and at 260d1–2, he says that the sophist denied the existence of falsehood since "no one can judge or say what is not."[64] These prominent descriptions of false saying and judging set the stage for the final push. The more complex Def B does not get a further mention. Indeed, we may hazard that Plato considered that Def B is not, at bottom, problematic but a rather insightful definition of falsehood, provided, of course, that we add "about so-and-so. A solution to the "crude picture" is, contra McDowell, just what is needed, and it is what we get.[65]

McDowell also overlooks how strongly the account of falsehood emphasizes the need for a statement being about something. We saw how the ES stresses, à propos of his two sample *logoi*, that they are about Theaetetus. Furthermore, after his first pass at the account of true and false *logos*, 263b, discussed above, the ES reemphasizes, first, that the false one is a *logos*; second, that it is about something; and third, that it must be "yours"—that is, it must be of or about Theaetetus.[66] He then moves on to the Second Final Formula, whose first words are "about you." We can safely reject McDowell's analysis, then, and restore the view that Plato is concerned to combat the so-called crude picture, and that a crucial move in doing so is to insist that a *logos*, whether true or false, must be *about something*.

Now one might think, with McDowell, that the second feature of the account must be the more important, given the importance of not being/is not in the architecture of the Middle Part. But remember that the ES offered to vindicate not

63. "So it seems to him that when we try to capture the falsity of 'Theaetetus is in flight' by saying that it represents *in flight*, which *is not* (in relation to Theaetetus: given the mistake, the addition does not help) as being, we must be talking nonsense" (McDowell, "Falsehood," 133). Note the clause in parentheses.

64. McDowell, "Falsehood," 130 n.31, correctly queries Owen's claim that back in 237b7–e7, the puzzle (about *legein to mē on*) is "a version of the familiar paradox." But he overlooks 260c3–4 and d1–3, where the locution *legein to mē on* (or a variant) *is* used to designate false speaking.

65. A further objection to McDowell's reading, on which it is the complex Def B, not the simple Def A, which frames the problem about falsehood, is the following. On his reading, any occurrence of the phrase "is not" was held to be problematic, until the "Eleatic error" of interpreting this as "has the contrary of being" or as "utterly is not" is scotched (132). But in that case, even the equivalent formula for true negative statement implied at 240e1, "judging that what is not is not," would be suspect. But no such aspersions are cast against it.

66. The use of the "possessive" pronoun *sos* 263c7 (and *emos*, 263a6) has puzzled commentators, and some (including McDowell, "Falsehood," 130, and Frede, "False," 416) believe that this shows that Plato is invoking the "old" concept of a *logos* as belonging to someone, by "putting that person into words." Frede writes: "Given that the language of 'about' is perfectly clear, and given that the language in terms of possessive pronouns is neither ordinary nor natural, it is difficult not to see in it an allusion to the way of thinking about statements underlying the *antilogia* argument." But "your *logos*" can mean the *logos* which describes you, just as "your picture" is the one that depicts you: that is, we have an "objective" use of the pronoun, not a true possessive, so we need not find the usage puzzling. Cf. Szaif, *Wahrheit*, 464.

being, to clear away misunderstandings that made talk of it contradictory. It should not therefore be one of his aims to dispense with it entirely, and, indeed, the project of dispensing with "not," in an account either of negation or of falsehood, is bound to be a hopeless one, whose success is at best illusory.[67] Note further that in the neglected Second Formula for Falsehood, the ES is happy to use both "different" and "is not," when he describes a false statement as both "saying what is different is the same" and "saying what is not is." Note also, what I remarked above, that the entire Second Formula begins prominently with "about you." If we consider the whole passage in which statement and false statement are discussed, only a tiny portion of it—just a few lines—offer the paraphrases that dispense with "is not" and rephrase the account in terms of the different. Although I believe we can interpret Plato's intentions here, by appealing to what I have called the "incompatibility range interpretation," I do not think it is, for him, the chief lesson he wants to convey. The chief lesson is the one about the kind of interweaving a statement is, with functionally different parts: this is what allows something both to be unambiguously a *logos*, about someone, and to say something false (something that is not) about the subject.

Both in the section devoted to the Late-learners' problem and its solution, and in the discussion of falsehood, Plato is concerned to disclose the nature of statements, particularly predicative statements, and to stress that some parts of a *logos* have a function other than that of naming. Furthermore, for this very reason, a *logos* itself is neither a name nor a string of names. Plato's new account, in emphasizing that a *logos* is a special "weaving together" of terms with different roles, is of major importance. In their different ways, both sections I have discussed make these key points and thereby enable some old puzzles—ones that can be read both as eristic teasers and as revealing deeper philosophical problems—to be finally put to rest.[68]

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67. Critics of interpretations that invoke incompatibility often object that that notion, in turn, needs to be explicated with the help of negation and/or falsity. But the very same point can be made about interpretations that rely on the simple notion of the different, or nonidentical.

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