

Jacqueline Tusi

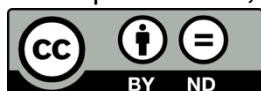
Sophistry and Eleaticism in Plato's Dialogues



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SOPHISTRY AND ELEATICISM IN PLATO'S DIALOGUES

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Introduction

The sophistic movement of the fifth century BCE marks a decisive turning point in the development of democracy in Ancient Greece. The stimulation of spiritual and political life through the intellectual and practical political activities of the sophists was no doubt of considerable consequence. Politicians no less than private individuals were carried away by the sophists' charms, reputation and the prestige that they gained throughout their engagement in political and private affairs. Over the course of time, however, the problem of evaluating the sophists' knowledge and ability became more and more significant. The problem found its expression in the question of what the definition of the sophist is. In numerous standard works, the sophists are either described as professional teachers, who demanded substantial sums for their services,¹ proponents of enlightenment and encyclopedists of Greece,² teachers of rhetoric³ or teachers of virtue (ἀρετή).⁴ Considering the fact that original writings of the sophists, with the exception of two speeches by Gorgias, have not survived, we are, for better or worse, largely dependent on Plato's accounts. That said, examining the nature of the sophist is, to a great extent, studying what Plato considers to be the nature of the sophist.

A proper understanding of Plato's evaluation of the sophists requires answering the question of what intellectual climate could possibly have enabled the rise of the sophists as a socio-political and philosophical movement.⁵ Note that scholars still do not agree whether the sophists were philosophers or whether they represented an independent cultural phenomenon. Zeller, for example, writes: "Das Verhältnis der Sophistik zur Philosophie ist kein eindeutiges."⁶ The famous anecdote about Protagoras' theory of society, which according to Aristoxenus was almost entirely copied by Plato in his *Republic* (*Republic*),⁷ can and should be disputed, but there is no doubt that Protagoras' practical activity as an itinerant teacher, drawing on his theoretical relativism, had an impact on Plato's own political thinking that led him to take different positions, culminating in the theory of the Good. Conversely, that the sophists had their predecessors, especially the Eleatic philosophers, is a well-known fact, since

¹ Grote 1859: pp. 352-356.

² See, for example, Nestle 1909 and Guthrie 1969.

³ Gomperz 1912.

⁴ Jaeger 1933.

⁵ On the interpretation of the sophistic movement as a *prohairesis tou biou* cf. the important analysis by Narcy 2008: pp. 115-135, and in particular his conclusion, p. 133: "La différence de mode de vie entre les maître itinérants qu'étaient les sophistes et les philosophes bientôt regroupés en écoles résidait donc, non pas dans le fait de χρηματίζειν ou non, mais dans le degré d'institutionnalisation du cadre de leur enseignement."

⁶ Zeller 1963: p. 1291.

⁷ DL III, 37 and 57.

it was Plato himself who initiated the search for the ultimate philosophical foundations of the sophists' intellectual program. At *Sophist* 236d9-237b2, for example, he signals the proximity between false speaking and Parmenides' notion of Non-Being.

One of the first scholars to identify the thematic link between sophistry and Eleaticism was Reinhardt. He comments on the connection between Gorgias and Parmenides, on the one hand,⁸ and that between Protagoras and the Eleatic δόξα, on the other.⁹ Another scholar, who not only sees a link between Eleatic thinkers (i.e. Parmenides, Melissos and Zeno) and the sophists, but also Plato's *Parmenides*, is Calogero.¹⁰ Reference is also made to Palmer,¹¹ who broaches the issue of the relationship between the sophists and Parmenides in Plato's Middle Period, in the *Parmenides* and *Sophist*. A further scholar is Casertano,¹² who focuses his attention on the historical Parmenides, Plato's *Parmenides* and the sophists, such as Gorgias and Protagoras. Common to Reinhardt, Calogero and Casertano is that they either restrict their study to individual representatives of the sophistical movement and/or ignore Plato's systematic account regarding the relationship between sophistry and Eleaticism. Therefore, I propose to fill this gap.

The topics of sophistry and Eleaticism permeate many Platonic writings (e.g. *Protagoras*, *Gorgias*, *Euthydemus*, *Hippias Major*, *Hippias Minor*, *Apology*, *Phaedrus*, *Republic*, *Sophist*, *Parmenides*, *Statesman*) and it would go beyond the scope of this study to include all of them. In attempting to assess the sophistical appropriation of Eleaticism from a Platonic perspective, choices must be made about which of the dialogues should be at the centre of our attention, choices that can be best justified systematically. In this study, I examine the relationship between sophistry and Eleaticism in seven of Plato's dialogues. The difficulties of identifying and explaining the different manifestations of the sophists will be addressed from the perspective of Plato's earlier dialogues that bear the name of a sophist (i.e. *Protagoras*, *Euthydemus*, *Gorgias*, *Hippias Minor*, *Hippias Major*). The justification for this choice is twofold. On the one hand, we will gain systematic and comprehensive insight into various embryonic forms of the sophistical appropriation of Eleaticism. On the other hand, the results obtained from this analysis will serve to provide a conceptual framework for the analysis of the definitions of the sophist in the *Sophist*. The seventh and last dialogue chosen is Plato's *Parmenides*, which is the main work for a study on Plato's appropriation of Zeno

⁸ Reinhardt 1916 (reprinted 2012): pp. 36 ff.

⁹ Reinhardt 1916 (reprinted 2012): pp. 242-244.

¹⁰ Calogero 1932.

¹¹ Palmer 1999.

¹² Casertano 2015.

and Parmenides' ἀντιλογική. The interpretation of Zeno's method of debate is given against the background of the *Phaedrus*. Parmenides' dialectical exercise and its implications will receive short, but precise shrift. A full analysis of the exercise would require a detailed examination of its own.

This study is divided into three main parts on the sophists in Plato's dialogues, the *Parmenides* and *Sophist*. The first part begins with the analysis of the *Protagoras*. How does Protagoras appropriate Parmenides' philosophy? My main focus lies on Protagoras' Great Speech. I attempt to show that, as well as how Protagoras creates an artistic illustration of a worldview that is the inverse of that of Parmenides. Against Parmenides' request to follow the way of truth, Protagoras invokes the charm of δόξα. I argue that this radical change of perspective is done in terms of both content and methodology. In the second chapter of the first part dedicated to the analysis of the *Euthydemus*, I focus on "the art of disputation" (ἡ ἐριστική) in order to show the irritating effects of eristic games. Euthydemus and Dionysodoros generate conflicting arguments, although they both insist that false speaking and contradiction is impossible. As I argue in detail, they insist that because an orator cannot make things that are not (i.e. false speech) into things that are (true speech), he must necessarily speak the truth. The reference to Parmenides's denial of Nonbeing as a basis for the eristic argumentation becomes here most evident. Plato's *Hippias Minor* is examined in the third chapter of the first part. In this dialogue, I follow how Hippias traces the origin of his moral reasoning in order to show that he offers no original theses, but rather relies on Homeric epics. Moreover, I point out that Hippias' fallacious line of reasoning regarding the distinction between the true and the false, can, to a certain extent, be compared with the instability of opinions of the mortals in Parmenides' poem. In the fourth chapter of Part I, I analyze the *Hippias Major*, despite doubts about the dialogue's authenticity. It again highlights Hippias' lack of philosophical acuity, as shown by his repeated failure to define beauty, and concludes with remarks on his rivalry with the ancients, including Parmenides, whom he criticizes for not taking part in public life. The fifth and last chapter is dedicated to the interpretation of Plato's *Gorgias*. In this connection, the question of whether Gorgias should be labelled as a sophist or as a rhetorician is raised. Because rhetoric and sophistry stand near to each other – Socrates counts them both as counterfeit arts – I argue that Gorgias does not deserve to be called a rhetorician rather than a sophist.

In the second part of the study, and following a short comment on the relationship between the sophists and Parmenides, I appraise the use of the method of ἀντιλογική by Zeno and Parmenides. By measuring the argument on similarity and dissimilarity, I first dedicate

my attention to Zeno's role in the *Phaedrus*. In testing the outcome of the *Phaedrus* for the further examination of the *Parmenides*, I evaluate two fundamental theses: 1) the ἀντιλογική is not committed to the truth and 2) the ἀντιλογική governs all speaking. I claim that both theses are also prevalent in the *Parmenides*, because Plato wants to show that the ἀντιλογική lies folded up inside Parmenidean philosophy. Consequently, the reason why Zeno applies his ἀντιλογική to all speaking is that he takes Parmenides' unity view to be the only truth. According to my interpretation of the *Parmenides*, deceptive rhetoric is justified, in the eyes of Zeno, because plurality of (visible) things is impossible. The evaluation of Parmenides' use of the ἀντιλογική is complicated by the fact that the latter refines Zeno's methodology: the introduction of new elements, such as the theory of Forms, the reference to negative statements, and the relative terms πρὸς αὐτό/αὐτά and πρὸς ἄλλο/ἄλλήλα pave the way to produce a greater series of contradiction. These include two types of contradictions: 1) positive consequences (having opposite properties) and 2) negative consequences (the lack of any properties whatsoever).

The third part engages in a close reading of the *Sophist*. My attention focuses on the study of the six *dihaireseis* of the sophist, relating them to the results obtained in the first part. I argue that the capacity to perceive structural similarities between different types of knowledge is the result of Plato's careful observation of the sophist's activities that he portrays in his earlier dialogues. Worries emerge about the failed definitions, however, because of the different manifestations of the sophist (i.e. hunter of young, merchant, retailer, seller of his own products, debater and purifier of false beliefs), which do not seem to be unifiable. Among all the possibilities, the Stranger set his focus on the sophist as a debater who denies that false speaking is possible. In order for the Stranger to attack the problem at the root, he must put Parmenides' notion of Nonbeing to the test. As I try to argue, the Stranger *indirectly* questions Parmenides' conception of Nonbeing by *directly* attacking his conception of Being. This leads to the elaboration of the doctrine of the *megista gene*. Only after having introduced Nonbeing as the Form of Difference introduced into the realm of Being, and only after having shown how falsehood is possible, can the Stranger develop the final definition of the sophist. I conclude my study on sophistry and Eleaticism, arguing that the final definition is not an aporetic, but rather an adequate definition of the sophist.

A short remark on the term "Eleaticism": My definition of Eleaticism here is deliberately general. It refers to different aspects, such as Zeno's method of the ἀντιλογική, as well as Parmenides' conceptions of Being, Nonbeing and δόξα.

PART I: THE SOPHISTS IN PLATO'S EARLIER DIALOGUES

1.1. The *Protagoras*

1.1.1. Introduction: seeds of a new paradigm

In this eponymous dialogue, Plato sketches a vivid and expressive profile of one of the most prominent and influential sophists, namely Protagoras.¹³ It quickly becomes clear that Protagoras' role as a professional sophist and legendary teacher goes hand in hand with his attempt to differentiate himself from other professional educators and to beat his competitors in the educational market. He does this, because he is keen to exercise significant influence over the city of Athens and its politicians, as well as over potential candidates for public office.¹⁴ When asked by Socrates to help fulfil Hippocrates' wish to become pre-eminent in public life (316c1), Protagoras begins by acknowledging that sophists are universally despised and must therefore be careful when making their educational services available. Nonetheless, he insists that despite the dangerous situation resulting from considerable jealousy, enmity and intrigue (316d1-2), he is not willing to conceal his profession as a "sophist" by adopting the guise of poetry, religion, gymnastics or music, as the men of ancient times did (316d-e). In explaining this stance, Protagoras emphasises that such evasive behaviour causes even more irritation, such that people take the sophist to be a "scoundrel" (πάνουργος, 317b3).¹⁵ For this reason, Protagoras prefers to openly admit that he is a sophist, whose task is to educate men

¹³ As has already been explained in the introduction, the question of whether or not Plato's portrayal of the sophists truly corresponds to the historical models will not be addressed here. References to other sources for the sophists will be mentioned only sporadically, to the extent that they help to clarify Plato's depictions of the sophists. It must, however, be noted that the distinction between a Platonic and a historical account of the sophists is difficult to establish with certainty, considering the scarcity of the original testimonies. More detailed information concerning the historical figure of Protagoras in the Platonic dialogue is, for example, presented by Schiappa 2003: pp. 146-148 and Schlick 2012: pp. 29-44.

¹⁴ The historical Protagoras studied legislative questions, which resulted in his writing the constitution for the Athenian colony of Thurii. In addition, Diogenes Laertius also cites Protagoras' book *On the Constitution* (Περὶ πολιτείας, DL 9.55).

¹⁵ Cf. also *Euthydemus* 300d7, where Socrates calls Ctesippus a scoundrel due to Ctesippus' quickly learning how to use eristic arguments, and *Gorgias* 499b-c, where Socrates once again calls Callicles a πάνουργος (499b9). In *Hippias Minor* 165e, Socrates and Hippias use the term πανουργία in order to describe people who are cunning and who do evil (κακουργοῦσιν, 365e8-9).

(317b4-5). Protagoras' distant attitude towards the older sophists should be compared with that of Hippias in the *Hippias Maior*, who argues that the men of old "were incapable and not competent" (ἀδύνατοι ἦσαν καὶ οὐχ ἱκανοὶ, *Hippias Maior* 281c9-d1)¹⁶ when it came to dealing with "public and private affairs" (τά τε κοινὰ καὶ τὰ ἴδια, *Hippias Maior* 281d1-2) and this, in turn, prevented them from making a fortune.

Whether the older sophists were unqualified teachers, or behaved in a totally unacceptable or even dangerous way, is a question that can be left unanswered, because Protagoras does not discuss this issue in detail. It is rather a different matter which interests him and which leads him to contradict his colleague Hippias,¹⁷ namely that of his teaching method. While Hippias expects his disciples to learn various "arts" (τέχναι), such as arithmetic, astronomy, geometry and music (318e2-3), Protagoras insists that such an education amounts to "mistreating the young" (λωβῶνται τοὺς νέους, 318d9). He himself will teach nothing of the sort, Protagoras firmly assures his listeners, since he limits his educational services to transmitting the knowledge called "good counsel" (εὐβουλία, 318e5), with respect both to one's own affairs and to public affairs. This education includes, moreover, the acquisition of both practical and rhetorical skills (319a2). Hence, Protagoras argues, the only knowledge that is truly beneficial for the Greek youth, and thus essential for their education, is not knowledge of arithmetic, astronomy, geometry, music or any other τέχνη, but rather εὐβουλία which is, in a sense, the expertise governing our private and public life.¹⁸ The elaboration of Protagoras' educational mission thus constitutes the core of his Great Speech at 320c8-328d2, which contains both a mythical story (*mythos*, 320c8-322d5) and a regular exposition (*logos*, 322d5-328d2).

Plato's motives for addressing the subject of Protagoras, along with his educational and rhetorical skills, his power of persuasion and, finally, his great charisma (311d-e)¹⁹ deserves further consideration. It is interesting to note that many scholars have broached the issue of the authenticity of the speech, agreeing that the myth, together with the subsequent exposition

¹⁶ Unless otherwise indicated, translations are my own.

¹⁷ Although Protagoras criticizes Hippias' method of teaching and draws a clear line between himself and his colleague, Hippias leaves it at that and does not get into an argument. This episode is only one of many indicators of Protagoras' unequivocal supremacy over his colleagues and of the high esteem in which he is held by Callias' guests.

¹⁸ Cf. also Coby 1987: p. 62, who explains that Protagoras is not actually opposed to the education given "by the tripartite authority of family, school, and law". What Protagoras has in mind when turning against the harsh teaching methods of his colleagues is that he "does not force students back to the arts from which they have fled" (Coby 1987: p. 64).

¹⁹ See also *Apology* 19e-20a, where Plato describes sophists such as Gorgias of Leontini, Prodicus of Ceos and Hippias of Elis as charismatic figures.

(*logos*) draws on works by the historical Protagoras, such as *On the Original Condition* (Περὶ τῆς ἐν ἀρχῇ καταστάσεως, DL 9.55).²⁰ However, the question of which ideas correspond exactly to Protagorean thinking and which do not, but were instead added by Plato, is notoriously difficult to answer, given the scarcity of the available sources referring to Protagoras' works.²¹ As regards the general content of the myth, the topic of the origin of society was a popular issue in the fifth century and the sophists expressed great interest in the development of human civilization.²² The mythological traditions of the Presocratic philosophers, like those of the poets, therefore provided the perfect foil for the sophists' alternative narratives.²³ In this respect, Plato's Protagoras is no exception. His myth of human origins ranks or rather competes with the most outstanding myths of the most renowned writers. Despite the high probability that the myth relies on the writings of the historical Protagoras, I do not want to primarily or exclusively address the question of its authenticity here, although this subject will not be entirely ignored either. Rather my aim is to advance a new understanding of the Great Speech, interpreting it as an artistic illustration of a philosophy and methodology that is the opposite of that of Parmenides. Such an approach is even more promising if we consider that most scholars tend to compare Protagoras either with Hesiod – given that Protagoras openly admits that he is competing with Hesiod, as well as with other, older poets (316d-e) – or with Socrates and Plato. Although a first reading of the Great Speech might not give the impression that Protagoras' *epideixis* is coined on the basis of Parmenidean thinking, we cannot entirely exclude the possibility that Plato's Protagoras (and maybe even the historical figure of Protagoras)²⁴ is grappling with the narrative tradition of old

²⁰ See, for example, Gomperz 1912: pp. 159-162, who points out that Plato did not completely invent the Great Speech, but rather relied on Protagoras' original works. Similarly Levi 1940: p. 297; Guthrie 1969: p. 64; Manuwald 1996: pp. 103-131 and 1999: p. 171 and 173 ff.; Morgan 2000: p. 136; Schiappa 2003: 180 ff. and Bonazzi 2009: pp. 470-471, n. 50. That the *Protagoras* myth should not be labelled as genuinely Protagorean is argued, for example, by Friedländer 1964: p. 378-379, n. 7 and pp. 378 f. A summary of other authors, who advocate for the inauthenticity of the Great Speech, is given by Schiappa 2003: p. 152, n. 30.

²¹ On this point, see Morgan 2000: pp. 132-154, who attempts to distinguish between a genuinely Protagorean use of the myth and a Platonic mythological practice.

²² Guthrie, 1969: p. 46 and Kahn 1981: pp. 92-108.

²³ In Morgan's account of the different use of myth, special attention is paid to the idea that the sophists' mythological narratives fall between those of philosophers and poets (2000: p. 11): "The sophists, intellectuals and teachers, occupy a position that mediates between what we consider the realm of philosophy and that of the poets and other public performers. They thus provide an opportunity to observe myth interacting with both areas. Their concerns with language, and their manipulations of myth to express these concerns place them in the philosophical camp, but they also display their expertise in a more freewheeling and extrovert manner, as befits the performs of public display orations." Cf. also p. 92: "As performers, and trainers of performers, who wish to manipulate the citizens of the polis, they (*scil.* the sophists) must capitalise upon the resources of myth." Cf. also Schiappa 2003: p. 158: "He [*scil.* the historic Protagoras] was clearly influenced by and to some extent constrained by the mythic-poetic tradition he inherited, but he also played a significant role in changing that tradition."

²⁴ See *On What Is* (Περὶ τοῦ ὄντος, DK 80 B2). The informant is Porphyry, who mentions that Protagoras argues against those who say that "what is is one" (ἐν τὸ ὄν). It is worth noting that Protagoras seems to oppose

Parmenides.²⁵ At least four indications speak in favour of this approach. First, Plato explicitly broaches the issue of the kinship between the sophistic mindset and Eleatic philosophy in the *Parmenides* and *Sophist*. In contrast, in his earlier dialogues that bear the name of a sophist, no clear clues can be found in support of such an interrelation (except in the *Euthydemus*). This is partly because a confrontation with Parmenides necessarily involves an engagement with ontological questions regarding the nature of reality and images that are largely absent from the ethical-political discussions in Plato's earlier writings. However, the *Sophist* teaches us that only a careful analysis of Plato's portrayals of the sophists ultimately contributes to a better understanding of Plato's explanation of the origin and development of sophistry, which is rooted in Eleatic philosophy.²⁶ In other words, from a Platonic perspective, as long as the foundations of sophistic thinking are not addressed, the sophist's definitions will inevitably lead our enquiries into an impasse again and again. In this light, it is the *Sophist* that suggests establishing a connection between sophistry and Eleaticism, whenever this is possible and promising.

Second, it is particularly interesting to note that, among all of the sophists, Protagoras is the only one to whom Plato gives the opportunity to tell a myth.²⁷ This observation merits some explanation. Bearing in mind that there are at least fourteen myths in the entire Corpus Platonicum²⁸ and that none of these are presented by a sophist,²⁹ even though we know that

Parmenides' ontological monism here, rather than his cosmology. It is, however, possible that Protagoras' epistemic relativism (expressed in the homo-mensura statement) drew on his criticism of monism, which went hand in hand with a re-evaluation of the Eleatic notion of δόξα. This is, at least, what Reinhardt (2012: p. 241-249) suggests in his study on *Parmenides und die Geschichte der griechischen Philosophie*. Reinhardt's interpretation deserves specific attention because he refrains from placing Protagoras in the Heraclitean camp, as this is usually done with reference to the flux theory in *Theaetetus* 179d-183c. Similarly De Corte, 1955: p. 55.

²⁵ In the case of the historical Protagoras, it is generally agreed that Protagoras opposes the doctrines of Parmenides. On this point, see for example Schiappa's "Analysis of the major fragments of Protagoras" (2003: pp. 87-153). Surprisingly, however, Schiappa does not consider the possibility that even Protagoras's Great Speech, which the author takes to be "authentically Protagorean" (p. 181 ff.), might be interpreted as an independent artistic reaction to Parmenides' philosophical poem. This interpretative step is all the more obvious given that Schiappa not only convincingly shows that the content of Protagoras' human-measure statement is a direct response to Parmenides (pp. 121-125), but maintains that the very same doctrine is also incorporated into the Great Speech (p. 181). In other words, if Protagoras' homo-mensura statement counts as a counterproposal to Parmenides' theory of truth, then it is no less important to consider and compare the broader narrative context of both of these theories.

²⁶ The question of whether the relationship between the different sophists and Eleatics has a historical background, is not the focus of this study. For further information on this issue, see, for example, the works of Reinhardt, *Parmenides und die Geschichte der griechischen Philosophie* (1916), Calogero, *Studi sull'eleatismo* (1932) and Casertano, "Da Parmenide di Elea al Parmenide di Platone" (2015).

²⁷ Here I refer to Manuwald, 2003: p. 44, who goes one step further, explaining that no other of Plato's philosophical opponents is given the opportunity to present a mythical story, except from Aristophanes in *Symposium* 189d-191c.

²⁸ Catalin Partenie, "Plato's Myths", 2018. On the Platonic use of myth, see Morgan 2000: pp. 155-289.

²⁹ Critias, whom Diels and Kranz (DK 88) place among the sophists, is a special case in this regard. He appears in several Platonic dialogues (the *Protagoras*, *Charmides*, *Timaeus* and *Critias*) and pronounces the story of Atlantis in *Timaeus* 21a-25d and the unfinished *Critias*. As Brisson convincingly argues (Brisson 2009: pp. 395-

they were storytellers,³⁰ we may well wonder why Protagoras alone is given a special role in this respect. Looking at other myths presented in the earlier dialogues on the sophists, we find that the myth in the *Gorgias* is not pronounced by Gorgias himself, but by Socrates. One might argue that this is not surprising, given that the content of the eschatological myth does not fit with Gorgias's rhetorical displays, but rather exemplifies Socratic-Platonic perspectives. But Plato could have written the *Gorgias* differently, including not only Socrates' story about the life after death, but also a myth that corresponds to Gorgias' rhetorical speeches, especially since he relies to a large extent on the *Encomium of Helen* and *Defence of Palamedes* for his portrayal of Gorgias.³¹ Instead, the dialogue begins *after* Gorgias has finished giving a public speech (447a3-6). A similar situation is found in the beginning of the *Hippias Minor*, where Socrates is invited to either praise or criticise the speech that Hippias has just made. While the content of Gorgias's speech is not commented upon in the *Gorgias*, we learn, at least, that, in *Hippias Minor* 363a-b, Hippias' *epideixis* concerned the subject of Homer. But although Hippias's belief that Achilles is wiser than Odysseus constitutes the bone of contention in the subsequent debate with Socrates, Plato refrains from reproducing Hippias' mythological account in its entirety. Finally, in *Hippias Major* 286a-b, Plato has Hippias say that he has recently presented a beautiful speech containing ethical advice for the youth based on the Homeric epics, which he will deliver for a second time in three days. The precise content of the discourse is left implicit and it is particularly telling that Socrates refers to this situation, explaining that Hippias will be given the opportunity to present the very same *epideixis* once again, "God willing" (ὅν θεὸς θέλῃ, 286c3).³² For Socrates has now learned that he must break with the usual rhetorical practices of praising or criticising the corresponding speeches if progress is to be made in doing philosophy.³³

If we admit that Socrates should be more sensitive to philosophical discourses than to sophistic *epideixeis*, why does the context of Plato's *Protagoras* constitute an exception in this

397), Critias should not be labelled as a sophist because he differs considerably from the sophists in many respects, for instance: Critias is not a foreigner, who travels from city to city for business purposes like the sophists; he originally comes from Athens and is rich, since he belongs to an aristocratic family – therefore, he has no need to sell his services; and, last but not least, Critias' political ambitions do not coincide with those of the sophists. While the former advocates for traditional aristocratic values, the latter put their knowledge and skills at the disposal of direct democracy. Cf. instead Schiappa, who places Critias among the sophists, though, admitting that the "lists of Sophists differ from source to source" (2003: p. 12).

³⁰ See, for example, Gorgias' *Encomium of Helen* and *Defense of Palamedes*, Prodicus' *Choice of Hercules* or Hippias' *Trojan Dialogue*. For further information about the sophists' mythological displays, see Morgan 2000: pp. 89-131.

³¹ On this point, cf. our reading of Plato's *Gorgias*.

³² See also *Protagoras* 347b3, where Hippias is prevented by Alcibiades from performing one of his *epideixeis*.

³³ See again my interpretation of Plato's *Hippias Major*.

respect? Put differently, why is Protagoras, but not Gorgias or Hippias, allowed to present a myth if a discussion of the sophistic myths seems to be an obstacle to imposing the practice of philosophy?³⁴ First of all, it is clear that Plato is not against the use of the myth altogether, as the numerous myths in his own writings show. His aim is rather to produce counterexamples to the sophists' appropriation of the ancient genre of myth, searching for deeper insights and wisdom into the structure on ethics. From a moral and ethical perspective, Hippias' *Trojan Dialogue*, as far as we can reconstruct it, and Gorgias' *Defence of Palamedes* and *Encomium of Helen* are of significant interest. And yet, the limited aim of delivering advice to young men in Hippias' *Trojan Dialogue*, and the "second-order consideration of the functioning of rhetoric within them [*scil.* Gorgias' *Defence of Palamedes* and *Encomium of Helen*]"³⁵ seem to be considered an impediment to Plato's own undertaking. In contrast, the Great Speech in the *Protagoras* represents a commendable exception, as it artfully combines, from a broader, more meaningful perspective, mythic-poetic elements with philosophical purpose. Given that Socrates himself says that Protagoras is the wisest man (σοφώτατος) alive (*Prot.* 309d1-2), Protagoras' leading role has already been approved even before he has had the chance to pronounce his Great Speech.³⁶ Plato, therefore, seems to present the Great Speech as exemplary³⁷ for Protagoras' outstanding literary and artistic works, through which the latter has won great admiration. That said, in presenting the whole speech, Plato is not only adding himself to the list of Protagoras' admirers,³⁸ but also establishing the "equal stature of Socrates and Protagoras".³⁹ It therefore comes as no surprise when Gagarin further concludes that "if we look at Socrates' interlocutors in other dialogues, not one (except perhaps Parmenides) has the stature of Protagoras."⁴⁰ While Plato's esteem for Parmenides emphasises the important role that Parmenides plays with respect to metaphysical and logical argumentation concerning

³⁴ Cf. also Gagarin 1969: p. 162: "Especially striking is the contrast between Protagoras and the other figures in the dialogue; no one else (except Socrates) is nearly so sympathetically treated. Consider, for instance, Prodicus and Hippias, whom one might expect to be about equal to Protagoras. They are presented, however, as quite ridiculous men – very learned, but with little, if anything, to add to the discussion. Aside from their speeches during the interlude, they say almost nothing. In contrast to these two Protagoras stands out strikingly."

³⁵ Morgan 2000: p. 106. Regarding Gorgias's theoretical foundation of rhetoric and *logos*, see Kerferd 1981: pp. 78-82.

³⁶ On this point, see the opening scene in *Protagoras* 314c-316a.

³⁷ Cf. Bonazzi, who speaks of "l'esempio di una declamazione sofistica" (2012: p. 42).

³⁸ Admittedly, however, Plato does adopt a much more critical attitude towards Protagoras in the *Theaetetus* and, in the *Sophist*, the different *dihaireseis* also cast the sophistic thinkers in a negative light. But Plato's *Protagoras* invites the reader to take seriously the idea that Plato's judgement about Protagoras is not entirely negative, as it leaves room for unexpectedly positive perspectives.

³⁹ Gagarin 1969: p. 162. Gagarin's interpretation of Plato's *Protagoras* is noteworthy, as he is one of the few interpreters who thinks that Plato's attitude towards the figure of Protagoras is essentially positive. Cf. also Bonazzi 2012: pp. 54-55.

⁴⁰ Gagarin 1969: p. 162.

the nature of reality and images, his admiration for Protagoras results from Protagoras being both a gifted storyteller and a major thinker.⁴¹ In the latter case, within the ethical-political context of the *Protagoras*, Plato seems especially to approve of Protagoras' doctrine of the teachability of virtue, even if he ensures that Socrates' counterarguments receive no less attention.⁴² Taking into account the idea of the teachability of ἀρετή is of crucial importance, not least because of its theoretical and practical implications for politics.⁴³

Third, regarding the beginning of Protagoras' myth, there is substantial evidence that Protagoras' story about the origins of society evokes Parmenides' cosmology. This claim can be supported by the observation that Protagoras uses the same elements as Parmenides does, namely earth and fire (γῆ καὶ πῦρ), to explain the creation of man.

Fourth, Plato portrays Protagoras as competing with older thinkers, who practiced their arts in the guise of poetry, religion, gymnastics and music (316d-e). Among the poets, Protagoras cites Homer, Hesiod and Simonides, but not Parmenides, although the latter too places himself within the mythic-poetic tradition. This observation is all the more important given that Protagoras' rationalism recalls the abstract thinking characteristic of the Presocratic philosophers, rather than the language of the divinely inspired poets.⁴⁴ Exemplary for Protagoras' self-delimitation from other thinkers is his use of the *mythos-logos* dichotomy. On the one hand, Plato's Protagoras distances himself from poetic writers and thinkers, by refraining from presenting his thoughts in the form of a poem and choosing instead the art of prose. On the other hand, Protagoras follows or, more precisely, competes with the philosophical tradition of the Presocratics, such as that of Parmenides,⁴⁵ who, relying on the power of *logos*, develops a rationalised instead of a traditional *mythos*.⁴⁶

⁴¹ Cf. Bonazzi (2012: p. 54), who suggests that Plato's main objective is "evidenziare la grande ambizione di Protagora, che non si era proposto soltanto di partecipare a dibattiti eruditi con altri sapienti, ma voleva piuttosto presentarsi come un erede della *paideia* greca, come uno dei grandi maestri, o meglio il grande maestro della Grecia, capace di dispensare un insegnamento che faceva tesoro della tradizione ma che si sapeva anche adattare ai bisogni dei nuovi tempi."

⁴² Gagarin 1969: p. 164.

⁴³ On the political dimension of the *Protagoras* myth, see Bonazzi 2012: pp. 46-49. Bonazzi divides the myth into two parts and explains that there is one state before and another state after the introduction of the *polis*, by means of which we can understand the real nature of the human being (p. 47).

⁴⁴ Schiappa 2003: p. 160.

⁴⁵ The fact that Parmenides' name is not mentioned explicitly in Plato's *Protagoras* is not evidence for him not being relevant to Protagoras' thinking. One could even suggest that it is precisely the absence of something that opens the door to new perspectives. Exemplary for this is the supposed rivalry between Plato and Democritus and the anecdote according to which Plato never mentions him in his writings (DL IX.40).

⁴⁶ Schiappa 2003: p. 161. Although Schiappa highlights the difference between Protagoras' and Parmenides' general uses of the *mythos-logos* dichotomy, he does not make the obvious next step of comparing Parmenides' poem with the *Protagoras* myth, in which the dichotomy comes into play.

These four themes – Plato’s close linking of sophistry and Eleaticism, Protagoras’ distinguished position as a storyteller and thinker comparable in stature to Parmenides, the evocation of Parmenides’ cosmology, and the Parmenidean and Protagorean uses of the *mythos-logos* dichotomy – brings us back to the suggestion that Plato’s Protagoras is contending with the narrative tradition of old Parmenides. Let us now see in more detail whether, and to what extent, this approach can shed new light on the appraisal of Protagoras’ Great Speech.

1.1.2. Protagoras’ Great Speech

1.1.2.1. *The case of the gods*

In his mythical story about the development of living beings, Protagoras presents his educational project as a refutation of Socrates’ claim that “virtue” (ἀρετή), or rather “civic science” (πολιτική τέχνη), is not teachable (319a-320c).⁴⁷ The story starts with the description of a “time” (χρόνος) in which there were gods, but no mortal beings. Surprisingly, perhaps, there is no further explanation of the nature of the gods, nor are there any hints about their origins, as for example in Hesiod’s *Theogony* (Θεογονία).⁴⁸ And yet the appearance of gods in their traditional areas of responsibility is mentioned on several occasions, with a few exceptions.⁴⁹ Such an account is also surprising if we bear in mind that the historical Protagoras claimed in his *On the Gods* (Περὶ θεῶν) that he could not say anything about the gods, neither whether they exist or not nor what nature they have, due to the obscurity of the matter and the brevity of human life⁵⁰ (DL 9.51).⁵¹ The absence of further explanation on Protagoras’ part for

⁴⁷ Later on, Socrates speaks about “political excellence” (πολιτικῆς ἀρετῆς, 322e2-323a1).

⁴⁸ See Coby 1987, p. 53: “Protagoras implies that the gods, although demiurges of mortal creatures, are not the highest authorities in the universe. As created beings themselves, they are subservient to destiny (*heimarmenē*), which ordains the time fit for the birth of each race.” Coby’s attempt to describe the world as being governed by destiny or fate and representing a higher authority might correspond to Protagoras’ position. Yet such an interpretation would require a far more elaborate theory of *heimarmenē*, which is simply missing in the present context.

⁴⁹ While the role of Hephaestus and Athena (321d1-e3) corresponds to a traditional view, the two brothers, Prometheus and Epimetheus, are attributed a function that is not further substantiated (320d3-6). As the son of Zeus and the Pleiad Maia, Hermes is portrayed as the emissary and messenger of his father Zeus (322c1-d5).

⁵⁰ Cf. e.g. Philostratus who in his *Vitae Sophistarum* 1.10.1 (Kayser 1871, p. 13) proclaims that Protagoras derived his illicit opinions about the gods from his Persian education.

⁵¹ Diogenes Laertius further records that *On the Gods* was the first work that Protagoras read in public (DL 9.54). More information about the content of *On the Gods* is given by Müller 1967: pp. 140-159. For general remarks

his agnosticism⁵² is all the more significant given that it does not seem to match with the myth that Plato puts into Protagoras' mouth.⁵³ However, contrary to the usual tendency to perceive an inconsistency between the position of Plato's Protagoras and that of the historical Protagoras,⁵⁴ the presence of gods in the myth is not in contradiction with the content of *On the Gods*. As our further analysis of the Great Speech will soon show, Plato's Protagoras avoids generating a communication between gods and humans outside the range of human experience by clearly distinguishing between two modes of speech: *mythos* and *logos*.

1.1.2.2. *The genesis and order of the world*

Regarding the narrative of the genesis and order of the world, the situation is similar to that of the gods. No further information is given on this subject. But this situation stands in stark contrast to the description of the evolution of living creatures, since, in the myth, Protagoras gives detailed information about how "mortal beings" (θνητὰ γένη, 320c8) were generated. One may well wonder, then, why Protagoras excludes a detailed study of the origin of the gods and the world from his narrative, while focusing his attention on living beings, especially human beings, in addition to adhering to his usual strategy of charming his audience with mythological stories. Although one could argue that the historical Protagoras had discussed the genesis of the world in his *On the Original Condition* (Περὶ τῆς ἐν ἀρχῇ καταστάσεως, DL 9.55), which was probably known to the readers of Plato's *Protagoras*,⁵⁵ it seems that Plato, in the *Protagoras*, wants to stress Protagoras' important insights into human nature in order to enrich the discussion about the teachability of virtue. Despite the plausibility of this interpretation, the combination of mythological narratives, on the one hand, with quasi-

on religion and the gods with respect to the sophistic movement, see, for example, Dietz 1976: pp. 127-142; Kerferd 1981: pp. 163-172 and Bonazzi 2019: pp. 111-24.

⁵² Concerning Protagoras' agnosticism see, for example, Plato's *Theaetetus* 162d-e. Compare also Guthrie 1969: pp. 234-235; De Romilly 1988: p. 260; Brisson 1997: p. 112; Schiappa 2003: p. 141-153 and Bonazzi 2019: p. 112-116, who, *inter alia*, questions Schiappa's interpretation that, for the historical Protagoras, humans' belief in gods have anthropological and social connotations. Regarding the relationship between agnosticism and atheism in Protagoras, see again Bonazzi 2019: p. 113-114. General information about religion in Greece are given by Decharme 1904 and Guthrie 1969: pp. 226-249.

⁵³ Schlick, for example, thinks that the appearance of gods in the *Protagoras* myth stands in "flagrant contradiction" (2012: p. 40) with the agnosticism of the historical Protagoras.

⁵⁴ The introduction of gods into the myth has led Friedländer to conclude that the *Protagoras* myth is not genuinely Protagorean (1964: pp. 378-379, n 7). See also Schlick 2012: pp. 40-44.

⁵⁵ Compare Taylor 1985, p. 78: "On the other hand, nothing in the dialogue indicates that Protagoras' story might be familiar to his audience [...]." However, Taylor adds a further reference to Plato's *Theaetetus* (166c-d esp. d1-2) to raise awareness about the possibility of the contrary being true.

scientific investigations, on the other, should not be completely overlooked, or even dismissed as simply an attention-grabbing *epideixis*.⁵⁶ For, if we admit that Protagoras' myth contains scientific parts which go beyond the required "good counsel" (εὐβουλία), the question then arises as to whether Protagoras was influenced by contemporary scientific knowledge⁵⁷ or rather by older traditions.

1.1.2.3. *The creation of living beings and Protagoras' theory of classical elements*

In order to identify a possible Parmenidean influence on Plato's Protagoras, let us return to the analysis of the content of the myth. Protagoras continues his mythological narrative by explaining that only when their "destined time to be created" (χρόνος εἰμαρμένος γενέσεως, 320d1-2)⁵⁸ had come did the gods bring the mortal creatures, namely animals and humans, into the world. The insertion of this intermediate step, which Plato may have construed as referring to Protagoras' work *On the Original Condition*, is significant because it entails a theory of classical elements in rudimentary form. Protagoras explains that "gods moulded their forms [*scil.* of mortals] within the earth, of a mixture of earth and fire, and of everything which is mingled with fire and earth" (τυποῦσιν αὐτὰ θεοὶ γῆς ἔνδον ἐκ γῆς καὶ πυρὸς μείζαντες καὶ τῶν ὅσα πυρὶ καὶ γῇ κεράννυται, 320d2-3). Once the creatures have been generated, Protagoras makes a specific mention of a movement "towards the light" (πρὸς φῶς, 320d4)⁵⁹ which the living beings must make in order to be further "equipped" (κοσμηῖσαι, 320d5) and to receive their proper "powers" (δυνάμεις, 320d5) from their divine benefactors Prometheus and Epimetheus. Even if the scientific elements of the myth add little to its central subject, namely the teachability of virtue, the mention of the elements "earth and fire" (γῆ καὶ πῦρ) and the reference to "light" (φῶς) should not be passed over without comment. The production of living

⁵⁶ Regarding Protagoras' particular form of expression including both mythical elements and scientific enquiries, I owe much to Manuwald's article, "Der Mythos im *Protagoras* und die Platonische Mythopoie": pp. 39-59. Among other things, I share his worry that Morgan's otherwise useful work *Myth and Philosophy from the Presocratics to Plato* (2000) does not take into account the so-called "scientific data" (the expression in quotation marks comes from Manuwald) found in Protagoras' myth (Manuwald 2003: pp. 45-46). However, given the convoluted construction of the mythological sections in the *Protagoras* and their semantic content, which can be interpreted in many ways, I argue that Protagoras does not simply recount myths in order to enhance his standing with his audience. For although this is a major motive, whose importance cannot be overstated, it is equally necessary to recognise Protagoras' combative nature, which manifests itself not only towards his contemporaries, but also towards his predecessors.

⁵⁷ Manuwald 2003, p. 46.

⁵⁸ Concerning "the destined day" (ἡ εἰμαρμένη ἡμέρα) for the creation of man cf. 321c6 ff.

⁵⁹ See also 321c6. A similar description of man's origin is given by Plato in *Republic* III, 414d ff. In Parmenides' poem, however, the term εἰς φάος (DK28 B1.10) appears in the context of the divine revelation of the Truth.

creatures recalls the second part of Parmenides' poem,⁶⁰ in which he presents his cosmology. Let us therefore take a closer look at some of the fragments of Parmenides' poem in order to give evidence for its influence on Protagoras' theory of elements. I will also mention other resources, such as Aristotle, Theophrastus, Diogenes Laertius and Simplicius.

1.1.2.4. *The evocation of Parmenides' cosmology*

If we turn our attention to the second part of the poem, in which Parmenides, through the mouth of the Goddess, presents the world of appearances, we find that the whole cosmos has a binary structure. The two elements are called the “aether fire of flame” (φλογὸς αἰθέριον πῦρ, DK28 B8.56)⁶¹ and “ignorant night” (νυκτ' ἄδαῃ, DK28 B8.59).⁶² Whereas the former is “light, thin, self-identical in every direction, but not identical with the other” (ἥπιον ὄν, μέγ' [ἄραιον] ἐλαφρόν, ἔωντῶι πάντοσε τούτον, τῶι δ' ἑτέρωι μὴ τούτον, DK28 B8.57-58), the latter is described as a “compact and heavy body” (πυκινὸν δέμας ἐμβριθές τε, DK28 B8.59). Parmenides describes them succinctly as “light and night” (φάος καὶ νύξ, DK28 B8). Protagoras calls these two principles “fire and earth”.

We may now take a closer look at some other extant testimonies concerning Parmenides' cosmology. In his critical engagement with his predecessors and their principles of nature in the *Physics*, Aristotle writes that “even Parmenides treats hot and cold as principles, calling them fire and earth” (καὶ γὰρ Παρμενίδης θερμὸν καὶ ψυχρὸν ἀρχὰς ποιεῖ, ταῦτα δὲ προσαγορεύει πῦρ καὶ γῆν, *Physics* A5, 188a20-23). The emphasis in this passage on Parmenides' theory of elements is not evidence for the existence of a theory of principles of a lower order of reality – for Parmenides says that statements about the visible world belongs to the opinions of mortals and fail to correspond to reality (DK28 B8.50ff.) – rather it suggests an effort to stress an important aspect of Aristotle's interpretation of the notion of ἀρχή with respect to his Eleatic predecessor Parmenides. However, Aristotle's text is of central

⁶⁰ To my knowledge, Friedländer was the first scholar to associate Protagoras' theory of elements (earth and fire) with Parmenidean physics: “Der Stoff, aus dem gebildet wird, heißt im *Protagoras* „Erde und Feuer und das aus Feuer und Erde Gemischte.” Diese alte, zuletzt parmenideische Physik empfängt im *Timaios* nur eine neue arithmetische Struktur” (1964: p. 187; see also p. 379, n. 8, with reference to Parmenides' πῦρ καὶ γῆ in Aristotle *De gen. et corr.* 330b13). I noticed this only after having finished my comparative analysis of Protagoras' and Parmenides' theory of elements.

⁶¹ Parmenides also speaks of the “unmixed fire” (πυρὸς ἀκρήτου, DK28 B12; Simpl. *In Phys.*, p. 39.14-16 [Laks & Most, 2016, p. 58]).

⁶² Parmenides sometimes uses the expression “invisible night” (νυκτὸς ἀφάντου, DK28 B9).

importance for establishing and deepening the connection between Protagoras' theory of the creation of living beings and Parmenides' cosmology. It is striking that precisely the same two elements "fire and earth" (πῦρ καὶ γῆ) that Protagoras mentions in his mythological tale are attributed by Aristotle to Parmenides' account of the generation of the visible world. This can hardly be a coincidence, since Aristotle also describes Parmenides' position in his *Metaphysics*, where he broaches the issue of knowledge of first principles: "Parmenides [...], posits again that the causes are two and the principles two, the hot and the cold, calling them fire and earth" (Παρμενίδης [...], δύο τὰς αἰτίας καὶ δύο τὰς ἀρχὰς πάλιν τίθησι, θερμὸν καὶ ψυχρόν, οἷον πῦρ καὶ γῆν λέγων, *Metaphysics* A5, 986b27-34). In the present context, we need not enter into a discussion of Aristotle's aetiological motives; our goal is merely to show once more that at least a pair of contrary principles constitute the visible world and its inhabitants.

According to Alexander of Aphrodisias' *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, evidence for Parmenides' theory of "fire and earth" can also be found in Theophrastus, who most probably relies on Aristotle. In his *On Physics*, Theophrastus declares expressly that "Parmenides supports the idea of two principles, namely fire and earth" (Παρμενίδης [...] ὑπολαμβάνων, [...] δύο [...] τὰς ἀρχὰς, πῦρ καὶ γῆν [...], Alex. *In Metaph.*, p. 31.7-14 [Laks & Most, 2016, p. 102-103]). Despite the fact that Alexander of Aphrodisias is an indirect source, the original statement can hardly have been clearer. It must also be kept in mind that the reason for which Theophrastus integrates the Parmenidean elements fire and earth into the presentation of the scientific theory of his predecessor is that he wants to explain Parmenides' account of the foundations of the genesis of visible things. Fire and earth are the ingredients out of which all the *phainomena* are made, including all living beings.

Diogenes Laertius also makes explicit statements about Parmenides' theory of the visible world and its structural foundations.⁶³ In the ninth book of his *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*, he reports that Parmenides posits "two fundamental principles, namely fire and earth" (δύο [...] στοιχεῖα, πῦρ καὶ γῆν), as fundamental factors for the creative process (DL 9.21). Even though he provides no further information about Parmenides' principles or the precise mechanics of the process of development, including its intermediary stages, the explicit reference to "fire and earth" is again unmistakable. Moreover, Diogenes Laertius affirms that the "generation of man was initially propelled by the sun" (γένεσίν τ' ἀνθρώπων ἐξ ἡλίου πρῶτον γενέσθαι, DL 9.22). That all life evolved from the earth with the help of the

⁶³ Here again, Aristotle is probably the source of this doxographical tradition.

sun's energy is a further hint that Protagoras' description of the movement from primeval slime towards the light may have been inspired by Parmenides' cosmological speculations.⁶⁴

Finally, it should be noted that, in his *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics*, Simplicius also mentions Parmenides' fundamental principles: "he makes hot and cold principles; but he identifies them as fire and earth" (θερμὸν καὶ ψυχρὸν ἀρχὰς ποιεῖ. ταῦτα δὲ προσαγορεύει πῦρ καὶ γῆν, Simpl. *In Phys.*, p. 179.31-33 [Laks & Most, 2016, p. 108]).⁶⁵ Simplicius' testimony is all the more credible, given that he is our main source for the fragments of Parmenides' poem.

1.1.2.5. Understanding the cult of the educator Protagoras

If we recall that the origins of society was a popular topic of discussion in the Greek culture and that the *Protagoras* myth draws on this already-developed tradition, it seems highly probable that Parmenidean thinking influenced the way in which Plato's Protagoras conceived of the origins of living things. Consequently, the aforementioned "scientific" elements enable us to further compare and assess the different intellectual frameworks – i.e. the sophistical system of belief, on the one hand, and Eleatic thought grounded in logic, on the other – in which they are incorporated.

Parmenides' chief purpose in his hexameter poem, which is divided into two parts, is to give an account of true reality. If he also insists on describing a second reality, which is, in itself, unreliable and deceitful, by conceptualising the origin of the world of appearances, this might appear superfluous. After all, why do we need cosmological speculations about a lower reality if there is only one path of truth? Some scholars have suggested that Parmenides' literary engagement corresponds to a broader traditional practice, within which both theogony and cosmology were introduced as important disciplines that contribute to explaining and defining reality as a whole.⁶⁶ That said, even if Parmenides complies with the established intellectual practices of his predecessors, by taking both theogony and cosmology into the account, the structural unity of his *On Nature* (Περὶ φύσεως) seems to be called into question by his own

⁶⁴ Interestingly, even in the case of Roman philosophers such as Macrobius we find traces of Parmenides' theory of elements (*In Somn.* 1.14.20) [Laks & Most, 2016, p. 82].

⁶⁵ Cf. also Aristotle's passages in *Physics* A5, 188a20-23.

⁶⁶ Kirk & Raven & Schofield 1995: p. 254: "The second half of the poem did not simply describe or analyse current opinions about the cosmos. It contained an elaborate and distinctive theogony and cosmology reminiscent in parts of Hesiod, in parts of Anaximander."

philosophical commitments. His antithesis between Being and Non-Being, between the visible and the intelligible world, when rigorously scrutinised, fails to provide a justification for the assumption that, besides the way of truth, there *is* a way of opinion too. And even if both ways are accepted in some form, why would it be necessary and valuable to acquire not only knowledge of the truth, but deceptive opinions as well?⁶⁷

By contrast, Protagoras' appeal to the form of knowledge called "good counsel" (ἐμβουλία), which stands at the centre of his educational project, should be understood as an opinion-forming process which includes both traditional myths *and* theoretical explanations. His Great Speech, within which the genesis of the human race receives particular emphasis, may therefore be interpreted as a consistent further development of the radical separation made by Parmenides between Being and Non-Being, on the one hand, and Truth and human opinions, on the other.⁶⁸ What speaks in favour of this interpretation?

Consider how first the gods, and then human beings, appear in the myth (320c-322d), as well as in the regular exposition (322d-328d). The gods create living beings out of fire and earth, and bring them to light. Two of these gods, Prometheus and Epimetheus, equip the living beings with further powers in order to ensure their survival and to protect them from destruction by wild animals.⁶⁹ Because Epimetheus proceeds clumsily and distributes all of the powers to the animals, leaving the humans "naked, barefooted, uncovered and unarmed" (γυμνόν τε καὶ ἀνυπόδητον καὶ ἄστρωτον καὶ ἄοπλον, 321c5-6) – hence his name "Afterthought" – Prometheus, or "Forethought",⁷⁰ must find a remedy for human defectiveness. He steals "wisdom in the arts together with fire" (τὴν ἔντεχνον σοφίαν σὺν πυρί, 321d1-2) from Hephaistos and Athena and gives them to the deficient human beings. The process of the emergence and differentiation of human beings comprises the most important part of the distribution of "political wisdom" (πολιτικὴ σοφία, 321d5)⁷¹ by the ruler Zeus. Humans cannot

⁶⁷ Further problems regarding the form and content of Parmenides' poem are discussed in the section 1.1.3. "The Question of the Right Method".

⁶⁸ Even though De Corte's reflections (1955: pp. 47-58) on the ideological bonding between Protagoras and Parmenides play a seminal role in the present study, it is important to point out that he does not explain what consequences can be drawn from this for the interpretation of Protagoras' myth in the *Protagoras*. By contrast, Morgan 2000: pp. 138-147 argues that the myth is constructed as an axiomatic basis for the discussion about the discourse of a social construct. She justifies this with an appeal to the claim that the function of the myth is to strengthen the role of social beliefs: all citizens have political skills and justice. While this interpretation is convincing, Morgan fails to describe which opposing model inspired Protagoras to believe that all people living in an organised society with political structures possess political expertise and justice.

⁶⁹ Regarding the poor living conditions in nature cf. Coby 1987, p. 67: "There is no justice in nature [...]."

⁷⁰ On the implications of Protagoras' account with respect to the function of the two figures of Prometheus and Epimetheus, cf. Morgan 2000: p. 150 (referring to Miller 1978: p. 24): "It is strange that Prometheus allowed his brother to distribute the faculties to the animals. Where was his forethought then?"

⁷¹ Later the term "political art" (πολιτικὴ τέχνη, 322b5) is used.

protect themselves from annihilation, so long as they do not possess political skills. Zeus therefore sends Hermes to the mortals to bring them the badly needed political art, which consists of a “sense of shame and justice” (αἰδῶ τε καὶ δίκην, 322c2).⁷² In the event that these two divine gifts are disregarded, Hermes is also asked to lay down a “law” (νόμος, 322d4)⁷³ that would make it possible to kill careless transgressors (320c8-322d5).⁷⁴ While Hermes must descend into the human world here, in order to deliver the divine goods to the humans, in Parmenides’ poem, by contrast, the situation is rather the opposite. Parmenides, or rather the “young man” (κοῦρος, DK28 B1.24), must ascend, following the way of divinity (DK28 B1.1-5) in order to grasp the truth (ἀληθεία).⁷⁵

The emphasis in this myth on Zeus’ special gift to humanity is, of course, no piece of realism. Rather it reflects an effort to stress an important aspect of the political craft, which in some sense represents a divine power.⁷⁶ Because of its divine character, the political art becomes an especially evocative symbol. Humans receive political skills as the result of a divine intervention or “cause” (αἰτία, 323a4), rather than exclusively through their own intellectual efforts. This is, after all, the reason why men are similar to the gods. Furthermore, “because of his kinship with deity” (διὰ τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ συγγένειαν, 322a4), a human being not only becomes a faithful “believer in gods” (θεοὺς ἐνόμισεν, 322a4), “but also tries to set up altars and images of the gods” (καὶ ἐπεχείρει βωμούς τε ἰδρύεσθαι καὶ ἀγάλματα θεῶν, 322a4-5). Yet, since the acquisition of political excellence is not simply a passive experience, but requires a specific form of active education – Protagoras calls it “good counsel” (εὐβουλία) –

⁷² A more precise definition of the two notions αἰδῶς and δίκη is given by Hubbard & Karnofsky 1982: pp. 95-97; Taylor 1985: pp. 85-86 and Ildefonse 1997: pp. 321-238. Particularly interesting here is the comparison with the creation myth in the *Timaeus*, where it is said that the mortals have never received a greater gift from the gods than the “*genos* of philosophy” (φιλοσοφίας γένος, 47b1). It is, therefore, possible that this passage is a response to the *Protagoras* myth, where Protagoras underlines the importance of the political art for human development and preservation, respectively. More precisely, Plato is not opposed to the idea that the political art is, in general, an indispensable good for human civilisation. As *Politeia* V and VI teach us, the practice of philosophy does not exclude, but, on the contrary, includes political activity. What he, however, rejects is Protagoras’ preference for the political form of democracy. On Protagoras’ attachment to democracy, see, for example, Winton 1974; Farrar 1988: p. 77: “Protagoras was, so far we know, the first democratic political theorist in the history of the world”; and Schiappa 2003: pp. 176-180 (concerning Protagoras and Periclean democracy).

⁷³ Protagoras’ account of the development of human society entails many intertextual allusions to Hesiod’s *Works and Days*. For the use of the term νόμος, see for example *Works and Days*, 274-280. As regards the comparison between Protagoras and Hesiod, see Ferrarin 2000: pp. 289-319; Deneen 2005: pp. 119-139; Bonazzi 2012: pp. 52-55 and Corey 2015: pp. 51-57.

⁷⁴ On the theory of punishment of the historical Protagoras, see, for example, Saunders 1981: pp. 129-141 and Schiappa 2003: pp. 182-183.

⁷⁵ Cf. also Morgan 2000: p. 77-78: “At the start of the proem [...], the *kouros* was travelling a path that was, in its origin, the path of mortal opinion (one which could carry any man); his superior intellect, however, transformed it into the path of truth [...]” Regarding the problem of identifying the place of the journey, see, for example, Mourelatos 1970: p. 15-16.

⁷⁶ Taylor even speaks of a “speculative account of how it [*scil.* political virtue] may be supposed to have developed in man” (1985: p. 81).

men are supposed to look for a good teacher. What makes this claim interesting here is that Protagoras invents a mythological narrative containing both traditional and novel⁷⁷ roles for the gods and subverts the devotion to the religious cults for his own educational purposes, giving the impression that, in addition to devotion to the gods, gratitude or even devotion to human teachers is of no less importance.⁷⁸ Let us, therefore, return to the following parts of the Great Speech and examine its vocabulary, in order to show in more detail how Protagoras' rhetorical strategies have the effect of persuading listeners of his own educational skills.

1.1.2.6. *How to evoke the role of a believer*

Protagoras evokes the role of the *believer* by constantly using the verbs οἶσθαι and ἡγεῖσθαι (“suppose”, “believe”). The first instance of οἶσθαι occurs when Protagoras draws consequences from his mythological speculations about the gods. In this passage, he claims that because of direct divine influences, “all the others, as well as the Athenians, [...], believe” (οἱ τε ἄλλοι καὶ Ἀθηναῖοι, [...], οἶονται, 322d6-8) that only experts should take part in deliberations concerning particular practical skills, whereas there must be great tolerance for giving political advice in relation to all men, since everyone partakes of political virtue (322d5-323a4). Immediately following this passage, Protagoras uses the verb ἡγεῖσθαι in order to deliver further “evidence” (τεκμήριον, 323a7) for men’s belief that everyone has a share in justice and the rest of political virtue (323a5-7). He argues that if someone pretended to be skilled in disciplines other than political virtue, for example, in flute-playing, without really being able to play the instrument in question, he would expose himself to public ridicule. However, this would not apply to a man who claims to be “just” (δίκαιος), whether truly or falsely. For even if someone wanted to admit his injustice,⁷⁹ in order “to tell the truth” (τάληθῃ λέγειν, 323b5) about himself, other people would call this behaviour “madness” (μανία,

⁷⁷ Concerning the invention of new elements in the Prometheus story, see, for example Miller’s observation, 1978: p. 23: “Protagoras is thus employing mythic figures whose reputations are already established. But the sophist modifies the traditional story in three important ways. Plato’s Protagoras first plays down the enmity between Zeus and Prometheus; then he has Prometheus and Epimetheus change roles; third, he expands the character of Epimetheus beyond earlier characterizations.”

⁷⁸ See again Miller 1978: p. 25: “The myth can capitalize on the feelings and images associated with the sacral figures of Olympian religion so as to confer a special appropriateness on common belief and practice regarding *arete*. [...] Protagoras’ teaching would build on current Athenian practice and further cultivate the divine *aidos* and *dike* (respect for others and justice).”

⁷⁹ The problem of how someone can call himself unjust in a society where everyone partakes of political virtue seems to represent an inconsistency in Protagoras’ account, as Taylor 1985: pp. 88-89, points out.

323b5). Protagoras thereby reinforces the idea that “everyone must at least maintain that he is just, whether truly or falsely” (φασιν πάντας δεῖν φάναι εἶναι δικαίους, ἐάντε ὧσιν ἐάντε μή, 323b5-6). He would be foolish, if he did not ascribe to himself justice or any other political virtue in a politically organised society (323a5-c2).

Thus, in addition to the positive disposition to believe in others’ political skills, men, according to Protagoras, “do not believe that [political excellence] is a natural gift or that it comes automatically” (οὐ φύσει ἡγοῦνται εἶναι οὐδ’ ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτομάτου, 323c5-6). Quite the contrary: “people indeed believe that virtue can be acquired” (οἱ γε ἄνθρωποι ἡγοῦνται παρασκευαστὸν εἶναι ἀρετήν, 324a5-6).⁸⁰ That political virtue is “teachable and acquired after careful preparation” (διδασκτόν τε καὶ ἐξ ἐπιμελείας παραγίγνεσθαι, 323c6-7)⁸¹ is again underlined by the persistent use of the verbs ἡγεῖσθαι (323c8, 323d7, 324c4, 324c7) and οἶεσθαι (323d5, 324c2). A few lines later, where the theory of criminal law, as a policy of deterrence, as well as a means of rehabilitating criminals, is discussed (323e3-324d1), Protagoras explicitly states that the necessary measures correspond to public “opinion” (δόξα, 324b7). Even cases where moral education fails and the sons of great politicians become bad citizens do not shake Protagoras’ faith in the teachability of virtue and the utility of the corresponding educational practices. He once again recites his mantra: “We must at least believe so, Socrates” (οἶεσθαί γε χρή, ὦ Σώκρατες, 325c4).

The tiresome evocations of the act of believing are repeated when Protagoras explains the cause of the occasional failures of moral education. In line with his assertion that people do not believe that virtue is a natural gift or that it is acquired automatically, Protagoras – true to his belief (οἶμαι, 327b2) in the usefulness of the ordinary man’s justice and virtue – affirms indirectly that it is not the sons of good flute-players who become good flute-players, but only the person who possesses “a nature most apt for flute-playing” (εὐφυνέστατος εἰς αὐλήσιν, 327b8). The same principle applies to the sons of good politicians: only the children equipped with the best natural capacities and a rigorous education will be able to become good politicians. Thus, Protagoras now supposes (οὕτως οἶου καὶ νῦν, 327c4-5) that even the “most unjust man” (ἀδικώτατος, 327c5) is “just” (δίκαιον, 327c6) and “an expert in this field” (δημιουργὸν τούτου τοῦ πράγματος, 327c7), when compared with men who live in a society without any suitable education or political institutions (327c4-d4).

⁸⁰ See also 328c4.

⁸¹ Cf. also Taylor 1985: p. 89: “Protagoras has so far attempted to show (a) what political expertise consists in and (b) that it is universally believed that everyone possesses it. He now attempts to show that there is also a universal belief that it is not a natural endowment, but a skill acquired through teaching.”

A particular point arising from previous considerations needs to be stressed, especially because it marks the end of Protagoras' long speech: namely, the importance of good education. Protagoras explains the meaning of a proper education in order to counter Socrates' doubts concerning the teachability of virtue. According to Protagoras, educational efforts are not, as one might suspect at first, a hopeless endeavour. On a basic level, and especially in a politically organised society, moral education can be found everywhere "because everyone is a teacher of virtue as far as he is able" (διότι πάντες διδάσκαλοί εἰσιν ἀρετῆς καθ' ὅσον δύνανται ἕκαστος, 327e1-2). Nonetheless, one is better off with a more experienced instructor,⁸² and Protagoras "believes" (οἶεται, 328b1) himself to be among the better teachers, able to make people fine and good (328b1-3). The position adopted in Protagoras' Great Speech is determined in relation to two objectives: first, it aims to counter Socrates' doubts about the teachability of virtue; second, it aims to reinforce the idea that young people should follow Protagoras' own advice in order to become good citizens, since he is a better educator than many others.⁸³

1.1.3. The question of the right method

In light of the results obtained so far, we are now in the position to address the third and final reason why the structural principles of the *Protagoras* myth can be compared with those of Parmenides' philosophical poem, when it comes to the use of the *mythos-logos* duality. To do so, we shall concentrate on the following two questions: 1) Why does Protagoras prioritise the mythological narrative over theoretical explanations? 2) Does this way of proceeding represent a transformation of or even a regression from Parmenidean methodology? As regards the first point, Protagoras begins his Great Speech by clarifying the central methodological problem, which involves deciding whether he should proceed by telling a "myth" (μῦθος), "as an old man towards younger men" (ὥς πρεσβύτερος νεωτέροις, 320c3),⁸⁴ or rather by means of an "exposition" (λόγος, 320c3). Paid by his audience to do as he pleases, Protagoras chooses the

⁸² Cf. also Plato's *Theaetetus* 166d-167d where Socrates engages in a fictional defence of Protagoras' philosophy to illustrate the homo-mensura statement and its profound philosophical implications regarding the question of how man can become a better measure of things. See also Taylor 1985: pp. 100-103, who argues against an attempt to reconcile the subjectivism presented in the *Protagoras* with the meta-ethical theory discussed in the *Theaetetus*.

⁸³ Similar arguments concerning the teachability of virtue can also be found in the *Dissoi Logoi* (*Contrasting Arguments*), ch. 6 "On whether wisdom and moral excellence are teachable" (Περὶ τῆς σοφίας καὶ τῆς ἀρετῆς, αἱ διδασκτόν), which is often attributed to Protagoras. For more information about Protagoras and the *Dissoi Logoi* cf. Robinson 2005: pp. 233-245; De Romilly 1988: pp. 113-118 and Taylor 1985: pp. 78-79.

⁸⁴ On this point, see also *Sophist* 242c8-9 and d4-7, where Socrates explains that Parmenides and the other Eleatics tell stories to their listeners as if they were children (παῖδες, 242c8) and *Gorgias* 527a5.

former, on the grounds that a *mythos* is “more agreeable” (χαριέστερον, 320c6-7) than a *logos*. The reader of the *Protagoras* receives no further information about this choice of methodology, but is rather invited to immediately turn his attention to the Great Speech. The answer to the question of why, for Protagoras, a myth is more pleasant than a theoretical speech can, therefore, only be answered retrospectively. The charming words contained in the myth are intended to have a positive effect on the potential community of believers. Thus, for Protagoras, the myth reflects the idea that only those who believe the mythological narrative can be persuaded of the teachability and the attainability of virtue (320c8-324d1). This pedagogical function is quite intentional, given that Protagoras specifically invents a myth with the aim of placing the development of humanity and the teachability of virtue at the centre. A further result of this approach concerns Protagoras’ personal ambitions: since human perfection is achieved not merely through divine gifts, but also through human education, Protagoras himself is keen to present a perfect image of one of the best educators, i.e. of himself. The hidden message informing Protagoras’ educational mission is, therefore, not difficult to discern: not only is the worship of the gods of paramount importance for the Greek youth, but also the expression of gratitude towards preeminent teachers, on account of their individual contribution to human perfection. Other deeper motives informing the Platonic Protagoras’ preference of *mythos* to *logos* are possibly derived from Parmenidean methodology. I shall address these possibilities after a quick examination of the Parmenidean use of the *mythos-logos* comparison.

The first, crucial point to notice is that Parmenides does not use the terms *mythos* and *logos* to refer to two different modes of speech, as is the case with Protagoras. On the contrary, μῦθος (DK28 B2.1 and B8.1) and λόγος (DK28 B1.15 and B8.50) exemplify one and the same way of speaking and thinking about all there is to know (DK28 B1.28-32 and B2). Both terms are, thus, used to illuminate the sole way of Truth (Ἀληθεία, DK28 B1.29), i.e. “Being” (ἔστιν, DK28 B2.3). Truth or Being is opposed to the “opinions of mortals in which no true belief resides” (βροτῶν δόξας, ταῖς οὐκ ἐν πίστις ἀληθείς, DK28 B1.30). The reason for which human opinions (δόξαι) inevitably result in intellectual failure is because they only reflect a “deceptive order of words” (κόσμος [...] ἐπέων ἀπατηλός, DK28 B8.53). In other words, mortals go wrong because they do not choose (κρίνειν)⁸⁵ the way of Truth or Being, leaving aside the way of Non-Being, but rather mix Being and Non-Being together and end up producing deceptive discourses. For the purposes of what follows, it is important to remember that it is the Goddess,

⁸⁵ κρίσις, DK28 B8.15 and κέρνεται, DK28 B8.16.

who explains the content of ἀληθεία and δόξα to the young man (κοῦρος) after the latter is put on the way of Truth by mythological characters (Justice, Fate, Necessity and the Daughters of the Sun).

A problem arising in Parmenides' philosophical poem is that the introduction of mythological personalities is not restricted to the account concerning δόξα, but also appears in the philosophical context of ἀληθεία. The omnipresence of the mythological characters seems, therefore, to contradict Parmenides' endeavour to assure the unity of the world of ἀληθεία and, consequently, to distinguish it from the manifold world of δόξα.⁸⁶ In addition to Mourelatos⁸⁷ and Mackenzie's⁸⁸ valuable insights about the problematic relationship between *Aletheia* and *Doxa*, Morgan further maintains that the main difficulty with Parmenides' use of mythological figures is that of language and communication.⁸⁹ The Goddess' speech about Being presupposes a dialectical context, which the "monolithic nature"⁹⁰ of *Aletheia* does not allow:

Parmenidean reality does not admit a dialectical context, nor does it admit a goddess, nor even the space for reference. Neither I, nor a mythological creature can stand 'here' and point to 'there', nor say that 'this' refers to 'that'. There is no room.⁹¹

Somewhat later she adds that

the account of the world given in the *Aletheia* is the best that language can do, but cannot be an exact account simply because it *is* an account. We know that the *Doxa* is false because we have the *Aletheia*. We know that the *Aletheia* is not the whole story because the frame has made us aware of this reported truth as a narrative construct by invoking a world of myth and poetic inspiration that does not cohere with the truth reported.⁹²

Once again, Parmenides does not play *mythos* and *logos* off against each other, but rather understands both manners of speech to represent a rationalistic and authoritative⁹³ transfer of knowledge. But precisely this equalisation is a crucial stumbling block on the road to philosophical progress: the mythical framework helps us to solve the problem of human deceitful way of thinking, but prevents us from constructing a coherent account of truth.

⁸⁶ Morgan 2000: p. 82.

⁸⁷ Mourelatos 1970: pp. 222-226.

⁸⁸ Mackenzie 1982: pp. 1-12. Other authors, who critically discuss the structural principles of Parmenides' philosophy and whom Morgan takes into account, are Mansfeld 1964, Austin 1986 and Couloubaritsis 1986.

⁸⁹ Morgan 2000: p. 84 ff.

⁹⁰ Morgan 2000: p. 82 (following Couloubaritsis).

⁹¹ Morgan 2000: p. 84.

⁹² Morgan 2000: p. 86.

⁹³ Adomenas 2006: p. 334.

Is Plato's Protagoras aware of these incoherencies and, if so, how does he deal with them? With this question, we come back to the previously suggested idea that, beside the need to keep his audience entertained, Protagoras' preference of *mythos* over *logos* may result from his wish to manipulate Parmenides' narrative art. In general, it is recognised from the beginning that Protagoras' prioritisation of one manner of speech over the other presupposes a clear distinction between the two.⁹⁴ Protagoras adheres to this distinction, by avoiding setting both parts of his Great Speech (*mythos* and *logos*) in a mythological framework: the mythical personalities (Prometheus, Epimetheus, Hephaestus, Athene, Zeus and his guards, and Hermes) are *present* in the mythical part (320c8-322d5),⁹⁵ but *absent* from the regular exposition (322d5-328d2). Consequently, Protagoras allows himself to construct a referential behaviour and language with the divine personalities exclusively within the mythical frame, and not within the rationalistic discourse. This strategy seems to fit perfectly with Protagoras' agnosticism: if it is not possible to know whether or not the gods exist, then he is not promising to create (seemingly) real dialogues *with* them, but only to tell mythical stories *about* them – Parmenides' transcendence of the limits of human experience is obviously called into question here.⁹⁶ That said, only when Protagoras concludes the mythical story about the origins of society (322d5) does he adopt a style of writing that is appropriate to a purely inter-human exchange: the dialogical and rationalised form of communication called *logos*. Protagoras does so by addressing his interlocutor Socrates personally (οὐτῷ δὲ, ὦ Σώκρατες [...], 322d5-6). In introducing a clear distinction between *mythos* and *logos*, Protagoras challenges the traditional status of poetic discourse as allowing gods and humans to interact with each other, and, accordingly, the usual practice of educating people. Moreover, in addition to *telling* mythical stories about the gods for the purposes of educational entertainment (320c2-7), Protagoras is particularly keen on *arguing* about ideas and approaches that fall within the realm of human experience.⁹⁷ This claim is backed up by the fact that the *logos* part (322d5-328d2) of his Great Speech is considerably longer than the *mythos* part (320c7-322d5).⁹⁸ Protagoras' preference

⁹⁴ See also Corey 2015: p. 47, who introduces a further subdivision within the *logos*: “(2) a set of arguments designed to convince the masses that virtue can be taught, and (3) a set of arguments designed to convince elite parents that virtue can be taught.”

⁹⁵ Prometheus (320d4, d6, 321c3, c8, d5, 322a1), Epimetheus (320d5, d6, 321b7, 322a1), Zeus (321a3, d5, d6, 322c1, c4, d2), Hephaestus (321d1, d8, e2), Athena (321d1, d8, e2), Zeus's guards (321d7) and Hermes (322c2, c4).

⁹⁶ For a comparison between Parmenides and the historical Protagoras, see Bonazzi 2019: p. 115.

⁹⁷ Cf. Schiappa 2003: pp. 56-58, who shows that the preference for *arguing* over *telling* is characteristic for the writings of the historic figure of Protagoras. Here, it seems that Plato's Protagoras too adheres to this practice.

⁹⁸ The question of where exactly Protagoras ends his myth and where he begins his regular exposition (*logos*) has caused some confusion. Kerferd, for example, argues, that although “the myth proper extends from 320c8 to 322d5”, the middle section 322d5-324d1 must be attributed to the mythical framework as well, because it is

for *mythos* over *logos* is, therefore, only one part of the truth. Recourse to a mythical story results from taking into consideration that not all of the Protagoras' listeners are able to follow purely logical arguments. Telling a myth is, therefore, appropriate for a mass audience that is moved by emotionally charged pictures of an imaginary world rather than by abstract reasoning.⁹⁹ In reality, Protagoras puts greater emphasis on the *logos* than on the *mythos*, albeit in a subtle way. For it is only within the framework of the *logos* that he creates an opportunity to consolidate his position as an outstanding teacher of the Greeks, making human beliefs (about the teachability of virtue) the sole ground for true knowledge.¹⁰⁰ In escaping the misleading Parmenidean equation of *mythos* and *logos*, and those problems related to language and communication, Protagoras is ultimately able to enrich the rationalistic tradition, though not without imposing a major new challenge for the Platonic conception of knowledge: the difficulty of evaluating the truth values of human opinions that are based on subjective experiences.¹⁰¹

1.1.4. Conclusion

The Great Speech that Plato puts into the mouth of Protagoras is an innovative piece of work and an ideal source for elaborating a comparison with the mythic-poetic tradition. Its particular significance can be attributed to the fact that, within Plato's earlier dialogues on the sophists, Protagoras plays an exceptional role. Not only is he portrayed by Plato in a far more positive

"regarded as an explanation and application of the myth" (Kerferd 1969: p. 42). The beginning of the *logos* part must, therefore, be found later, namely at 324d1, because in the passage 324d-328d, the "Logos is not a continuation of the myth", but "rather an alternative to it" (p. 44). Kerferd's line of reasoning is problematic, because it does not capture the essential difference between the myth and the exposition (*logos*). *Mythos*, in the form that it is used by Protagoras, differs from *logos* in that it allows referential behaviours between gods and humans, which the *logos* avoids. Furthermore, while the myth is presented in a *narrative manner*, the *logos* is characterised by the intellectual capacity for *argument*. If these additional factors are taken into account, the middle section 322d5-324d1 can no longer be considered as belonging to the myth despite the alignment of its content with the passage 320c7-322d5. For it contains neither mythical figures that interact with humans nor is it presented in narrative form, but rather because the passage presents *philosophical arguments*, rather than *mythical thoughts* about different ideas, it must be attributed to the *logos* (322d5-328d2).

⁹⁹ Corey 2015: p. 49.

¹⁰⁰ Protagoras' methodology should not, therefore, be interpreted as exemplifying an arbitrary procedure, as Friedländer critically remarks (1964: p. 187). The use of both *mythos* and *logos* is supported by traditional practices, which Protagoras intends to modify in order to deliver an alternative educational program.

¹⁰¹ Protagoras' theory of knowledge is critically discussed in the *Theaetetus*, but not in the *Protagoras*, where only Protagoras' rhetorical eloquence and thesis about the teachability of virtue stand in the foreground. The problem of how the Great Speech fits into the context of the *Protagoras* will not be further discussed. For more detailed information on this matter, see, for example, Gagarin 1969: pp. 133-164; Morgan 2000: pp. 132-153 and Corey 2015: pp. 39-67.

light than all of the other sophists, but, at the same time, Protagoras is the only sophist who has the honour of pronouncing a mythological discourse. Although Plato's Protagoras presents himself as competing with poets and other educators of the Greeks (316d-e), without referring to competitors such as the Presocratics, I have argued that he is, in fact, challenging the mythic-poetic language and thoughts of old Parmenides.

Protagoras' myth contrasts with the intelligible world of Parmenides, from which human beliefs about the world are excluded and in which knowledge or truth about Being is included. Where Parmenides speaks of the necessity of following the way of ἀλήθεια, Protagoras invokes the charm of δόξα. In other words, while Parmenides insists on passing from the many opinions of the mortals to the impersonal Being accessible through thinking, Protagoras imposes the idea of the personal and communal context of living beings and the corresponding epistemological capacities of belief. The absolute Parmenidean duality between Being and Non-Being, between the abstract world of thinking and the concrete sphere of political action, is abolished in Protagoras' myth, where human beings are placed at the centre of all thinking, believing and acting. Conversely, whereas Parmenides uses both *mythos* and *logos* in an authoritative way to underline the power of truth and the weakness of the opinions of mortals, Protagoras attributes greater importance to the mythological narrative, because of its pleasant effect on its audience. However, regarding Parmenides' dilemma of transmitting concepts that surpass the limits of human knowledge, Protagoras is cautious about overestimating the utility of the myth for entertainment purposes. At the end, the *logos* deserves more attention than the *mythos*, because it stimulates our ability to argue about ideas without thereby exceeding what humans can grasp. The imaginary world of the gods may well be addressed in a mythical framework, but it has no place within the human sphere of private and political activities.¹⁰²

The analysis of the mythological account of the teachability of virtue suggested that Protagoras' arguments express commonly accepted notions of moral education. However, the affirmation of everyone's devotion to instruction and to the examination of the capabilities of young people should not distract us from the fact that there are better and worse educators. It is not surprising, then, that Protagoras' self-declared superiority as an educator resonates

¹⁰² The same is true for the historical Protagoras. On this point, see Farrar 1988: p. 78: "he [i.e. Protagoras] did not rely on fear of the gods – even mediated by the *polis* – as the source of self-restraint, but solely on the force of human reason and its expression in human action."

perfectly with the homo-mensura statement¹⁰³ that man is the measure of all things.¹⁰⁴ Although the problem of the homo-mensura statement¹⁰⁵ cannot be examined here, it may be stated by way of conclusion that while Parmenides follows no way of inquiry other than the *impersonal*, i.e. *divine* speech of truth, Protagoras puts all his rhetorical effort into charming his audience into following the words of a *personal*, i.e. *human* educator in political virtue, namely Protagoras himself.

1.2. The *Euthydemus*

1.2.1. Notes on the philosophical background to the eristic arguments

In the *Euthydemus*, which is increasingly becoming a focus for Plato's interpreters after having been neglected¹⁰⁶ for a long time and even dismissed as being less valuable than other dialogues of Plato, we witness a battle between philosophy and sophistry presented under the cloak of "the art of disputation" (ἡ ἐριστική)¹⁰⁷ and their underlying goals. Socrates, who claims to defend the importance of philosophical reflection, contrasts himself with the two proponents of the ἐριστική Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, whose main objective is to leave the field victorious in the discussion at any price. Of special interest for us is the comparison between Socrates' issues-based elenctic method aimed at gaining knowledge and Euthydemus' and Dionysodorus eristic teaching of virtue. For, despite Euthydemus' claim to be able to teach virtue in a most excellent manner and very quickly (ἀρετήν, ἔφη, ὃ Σώκρατες, οἰόμεθα οἷω τ' εἶναι παραδοῦναι κάλλιστ' ἀνθρώπων καὶ τάχιστα, 273d8-9), the end of the dialogue, which reaches an impasse, contradicts this claim. The aim of the present section is to show that Euthydemus' and Dionysodorus' failure to teach virtue is due to the negative impact of Eleatic philosophy upon its eristic successors.

¹⁰³ At *Theaetetus* 156c4, Socrates explicitly calls Protagoras' theory of perception a "myth" (μῦθος). Cf. also 164d8.

¹⁰⁴ See also Coby 1987: pp. 61-70.

¹⁰⁵ For more information about the relationship between Protagoras' man-measure statement and Parmenides' philosophy see, e.g. Versényi 1962: pp. 183-184; Kahn 1973: p. 456, n. 1 and Schiappa 2003: p. 121-125.

¹⁰⁶ Diels and Kranz's *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* excludes Euthydemus and Dionysodorus from the list of the sophists. The same is true for Guthrie's overall account of the fifth-century enlightenment, although individual references to Plato's *Euthydemus* are made on several occasions (Guthrie 1969).

¹⁰⁷ First mentioned at 272b10.

With respect to the latter issue, focussing on the content-related proximity of eristic disputation and Eleaticism is not a new interpretative approach, since it has already been promoted, in particular by Sprague's seminal work *The Older Sophists* (1972).¹⁰⁸ Before Sprague, some scholars had already pointed out the structural similarities between eristic arguments and Eleatic views on being and language.¹⁰⁹ But in her works Sprague showed that Euthydemus and Dionysodorus are to be seen as historical figures, and, moreover, that they are even Socrates' contemporaries. Despite the promise of Sprague's reading, there have been critical voices like that of Dorion. In his article "*Euthydème et Dionysodore sont-ils des Mégariques ?*"¹¹⁰ Dorion puts forward the hypothesis that Euthydemus and Dionysodorus should not be interpreted as being Socrates' contemporaries, but rather as Plato's. In Dorion's view, then, the theoretical roots of the two sophists' positions should be sought within the Megarian school and not so much within the Eleatic tradition.¹¹¹ Another author who had argued against a solely Parmenidean influence on Plato's *Euthydemus* is Keulen. In his thorough *Untersuchungen zu Platons "Euthydem"* (1971), he argues in favour of a Protagorean influence¹¹² on sophistic eristic, without thereby neglecting the impact of Eleaticism on Plato's thinking. Despite Dorion's numerous references to Megarian traces¹¹³ in the eristic argumentation in the *Euthydemus* and Keulen's persuasive approach with respect to Protagorean philosophy, it remains difficult to establish with certainty an exclusive correlation with either the Megarians or Protagoras. For, not only can Dorion's references to the *Euthydemus*, through which he hopes to convince his readers, be called into question – as a matter of fact the *Euthydemus* is complex enough to allow different readings –¹¹⁴ but also the

¹⁰⁸ Cf. also Sprague 1962: pp. 13ff. and 2000: p. 16.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. e.g. Natorp 1994: p. 119; De Corte 1955: pp. 47-58 and Grieder 1962: pp. 43ff.

¹¹⁰ Dorion 2000: pp. 35-50.

¹¹¹ In order to defend his Megarian reading of the *Euthydemus*, Dorion gives 14 convergent pieces of evidences for his interpretation. Yet only three out of 14 arguments are based not on the *Euthydemus*, but on other sources (2000: pp. 46-49): "d) Un autre indice de l'affiliation d' Euthydème et Dionysodore à l'école de Mégare est un témoignage méconnu de Sextus Empiricus: «La logique, enfin, fut la seule partie de la philosophie que pratiquèrent les écoles de Panthoïdes, d'Alexinos, D'Eubulide, de Bryson, de Dionysodore et d'Euthydème [originaires tous deux de Thurium, et mentionnés aussi par Platon dans son *Euthydème*]; e) Diogène Laërce rapporte une anecdote qui associe clairement l'*Euthydème* aux Mégariques: «Voyons Euclide s'intéresser aux arguments éristiques (τοὺς ἐριστικούς λόγους): "Euclide, dit-il (scil. Socrate), avec des sophistes (σοφισταίς) tu pourrais frayer, mais avec des hommes, pas du tout." Car il pensait que cette manière vétilleuse de parler de ces questions est sans utilité comme Platon le dit aussi dans l'*Euthydème*; g) Last, but not least, les SE d'Aristote contiennent plusieurs indices supplémentaires qui renforcent l'hypothèse d'après laquelle l'*Euthydème* vise les Mégariques." Cf. also Dorion 2009: pp.63-70.

¹¹² Other scholars who argue that eristic has Protagorean roots include, for example, Schiappa 2003: p. 164-165 and Scolnicov 2013: p. 159.

¹¹³ A good overview of the main material on the Megarians is provided, for example, by Döring 1972 and 1998 (c): pp. 207-237.

¹¹⁴ The material for different sources for the eristic in the *Euthydemus* is now helpfully assembled by Erler 2017: pp. 93-103.

scarcity of sources concerning the origins of eristic and its teaching tradition¹¹⁵ prevents us from postulating a solely Megarian¹¹⁶ or primarily Protagorean influence on Euthydemus' and Dionysodorus' art of disputation.¹¹⁷

Although the present section aims at cementing an Eleatic reading of the *Euthydemus*, Sprague's, Dorion's and Keulen's analysis of the dialogue allows us to draw a more complex picture of the two historical figures Euthydemus and Dionysodorus. For, just as in other dialogues, where Plato uses historical characters as the protagonists of his dialogues in order to imitate their thinking and behaviour without thereby simply reporting historically true arguments or ideas,¹¹⁸ it is highly likely that the same goes for the two sophists in the *Euthydemus*. Personalities such as Euthydemus and Dionysodorus may therefore represent a certain type of thinker belonging to the sophistic movement and standing for certain ideas which run against Plato's own belief system. Seen from this perspective, Plato is free to mix fictional and non-fictional features in order to exemplify typical characteristics of the opponents of his teacher Socrates. His creative freedom shows in the way in which he uses different philosophical sources for the portrayal of Euthydemus and Dionysodorus. But what is crucial above all is that even if the sophists in the *Euthydemus* have been mostly influenced by the Megarian and/or the Protagorean way of thinking, the influence of Eleatic philosophy is still predominant. For, it can be argued that Parmenides and Zeno are ultimately responsible for the emergence of the Megarian mind-set¹¹⁹ and to a certain extent for the development of the Protagorean one as well.¹²⁰

¹¹⁵ For references to the sources of eristic cf. Keulen 1971: p. 77, note 68.

¹¹⁶ A rather suggestive influence of the Megarians on the development of the eristic is postulated by Hawtrey 1981: p. 28.

¹¹⁷ Cf. also Hawtrey 1981: pp. 35-37, who in his short introduction to eristic refers mainly to Keulen 1971 and Thompson 1901.

¹¹⁸ The different speeches about love in the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus* attributed to historical figures, such as Phaedrus, Pausanias, Eryximachus, Aristophanes, Agathon, Alcibiades and Lysias, could serve as examples here. See also Plato's portrayal of Gorgias and, in this connection, the subchapter "1.7.4. Plato's Gorgias and the Historical Gorgias" *infra*.

¹¹⁹ See DL II.106: "οὗτος καὶ τὰ Παρμενίδεια μετεχειρίζετο"; Cicero *Acad. pr.* II, 42, 129 = fr. 26A Döring; Aristocles ap. Eusèbe, *Prep. Ev.* XIV, 17, 1 = fr. 27 Döring; Seneca, *Moral Letters to Lucilius*, 88,44 = fr. 28 Döring; Sextus, *Adv. Math.* X, 48 = fr. 122 Döring. These references are taken from Muller (1987: pp. 274-276), who argues against von Fritz (1931: pp. 707-724) that Eucleides and, in general, the Megarians, are influenced by Eleatic thinkers. Cf. also Döring's rather careful comments on this matter (1998 (c): pp. 207-236).

¹²⁰ The theoretical basis for discussing the combination of Eleatic and Protagorean philosophy are presented in the previous chapter on Plato's *Protagoras* and will be discussed again below.

1.2.2. Drawing a psychogram of Euthydemus and Dionysodorus

Having thus ascertained the decisive foundation for the development of the eristic, we may now proceed to consider some of the relevant passages of the *Euthydemus* that speak in favour of our interpretative approach. First, we shall sketch with bold strokes a psychogram of the two sophists Euthydemus and Dionysodorus. At the very beginning of the dialogue between Socrates and Critias, the two brothers Euthydemus and Dionysodorus are introduced as “new sophists” (καινοί σοφισταί, 271b9-c1) from Chios,¹²¹ who first escaped to Thurii¹²² and have been living in Athens for several years now. Similar to the description in the *Hippias Major* (285b-286c) and *Hippias Minor* (367a-369a) where Socrates speaks about the tremendous knowledge of the sophist Hippias, as well as about the new art of the younger sophists (*Hippias Major* 281d-283b), the versatility of the later sophists Euthydemus and Dionysodorus does not escape Socrates’s notice, who calls them “all-wise” (πάσσοφοι, 271c6).¹²³ Given their skillfulness and the easy confidence with which they attract young people, Socrates is tempted to learn more about the roadshow in which the new sophists play the leading roles. Not only the “wisdom” (ἡ σοφία) of the new sophists catches Socrates’ attention. It is above all their promise “to transmit virtue in a most excellent manner and most quickly” (ἀρετήν [...] παραδοῦναι [...] κάλλιστα καὶ τάχιστα, 273d8-9) that makes him feel obliged to approach Euthydemus and Dionysodorus. During the subsequent meeting, Socrates even addresses the admired men from Thurii, in his effusive manner, “as though they were Gods” (ὥσπερ θεῶ, 273e7). Between the first claim of being all-wise and the second claim of being able to teach virtue lies a third main claim no less fundamental, namely that they possess mastery of refutation. Having praised the sophists’ expertise “in the pancratic art” (παγκρατιαστικῇ τέχνῃ, 272a5), Socrates reminds Critias by analogy of the extraordinary rhetorical fighting capacity with which they refute any statement (δεινὸν γέγονατον ἐν τοῖς λόγοις μάχεσθαι τε καὶ ἐξελέγχειν τὸ ἀεὶ λεγόμενον), “no matter whether it is true or false” (ὁμοίως ἔαντε ψεῦδος ἔαντε ἀληθὲς ᾗ, 272b1). This last point conveys a double message: for although Socrates does his best to ensure Euthydemus and Dionysodorus’ astonishing mastery of the art of refutation, it should not be overlooked that the addendum “no matter whether it is true or false” undermines his previous praise of the excellence of the new sophists in being wise and teaching

¹²¹ Chios was in the federation of Delos together with Athens.

¹²² Thurii was a town of Magna Graecia in southern Italy and was founded in 444/3 B. C. For more information cf. e.g. Nails 2002.

¹²³ A further sophist who is called “πάσσοφος ἀνὴρ” is Prodicus. On this cf. e.g. *Protagoras* 315e7.

virtue. For if the two brothers see themselves as being wise, how can their wisdom be guaranteed if the sophists, in their eristic teaching method, leave aside both truth and falsity? This problem is, in fact, underlined by Socrates' later indirect question about whether Euthydemus and Dionysodorus have spoken the truth about their capacity to transmit virtue (274a2). For now, we shall leave aside this disputed point and return to it later.

1.2.3. Witnessing the irritating effects of eristic games

1.2.3.1. *Do wise or ignorant men learn?*

After this introductory comment describing the two sophists, let us now turn to the analysis of the eristic arguments developed in the *Euthydemus*. The first source of irritation for the young man Cleinias, to whom Euthydemus gives his lesson in virtue, is the weighty question of whether “wise men” (οἱ σοφοί) or “ignorant men” (οἱ ἀμαθεῖς) “learn” (μανθάνοντες, 275d4). Given that Cleinias projects himself into the group of young beginners who need further instruction in virtue,¹²⁴ but who are willing to learn and can therefore be regarded as intelligent, and given that he is encouraged by Socrates to answer openly, he opts for the first possibility: wise men learn (οἱ σοφοὶ εἶναι οἱ μανθάνοντες, 276a1-2). The refutation follows promptly. For Euthydemus explains to Cleinias that “learners” (μαθηταί, 276a7), when they are learning, do not know the things they are learning. And, not knowing corresponds to ignorance. This being so, before and while engaging in the process of learning, learners of things to be known are not wise but ignorant. Consequently, only “ignorant men learn, but not the wise” (οἱ ἀμαθεῖς μανθάνουσιν, [...], ἀλλ' οὐχ οἱ σοφοί, 276b4-5). As a confirmation of Socrates' prediction that Euthydemus and Dionysodorus can argue against any statement no matter whether it is true or false, and spurred on by the laughter of the audience, Dionysodorus intervenes and demonstrates the validity of the opposite claim. He poses the same question to the now intimidated Cleinias as before, namely whether the σοφοὶ or ἀμαθεῖς learn with the restriction that “the writing master” (ὁ γραμματιστής, 276c4) teaches his pupils something by dictation (ἀποστοματίζω). Totally ignorant of the art of generating contradictions exhibited by

¹²⁴ It is with this in mind that Euthydemus addresses Cleinias in the form of the 2nd person plural in the following passages (276a7-b3): ἄλλο τι οὖν, ἥνικα ἐμανθάνετε, οὐπω ἠπίστασθε ταῦτα ἃ ἐμανθάνετε; – οὐκ ἔφη. – ἄρ' οὖν σοφοὶ ἦτε, ὅτε ταῦτα οὐκ ἠπίστασθε; – οὐ δῆτα, ἦ δ' ὅς. – οὐκοῦν εἰ μὴ σοφοί, ἀμαθεῖς; – πάνυ γε. – ὑμεῖς ἄρα μανθάνοντες ἃ οὐκ ἠπίστασθε, ἀμαθεῖς ὄντες ἐμανθάνετε.

Dionysodorus, Cleinias sticks to his unreflected response by stating that the wise men learn. This time, the answer is accepted by Dionysodorus who therefore disagrees with Cleinias' previous conclusion that the ἀμαθεῖς learn (276c3-7).¹²⁵

Now let it be noted that in the present context it is not certain at all whether Cleinias has learned anything from the conversation at hand, all the more so because the present stage-victory of the sophists fails to produce noteworthy results. For it has not yet been definitively clarified who the right candidate for education is, nor how Cleinias could possibly escape from the unfortunate position in which he seems to make himself a hopeless laughing stock and turn into a kind of clone of the sophists, as the debate that immediately follows will show. The situation is aggravated by the fact that neither Euthydemus nor Dionysodorus seriously take care of the confused Cleinias, as Socrates will do later, but continue to amuse themselves, tickled by the noise of their cheering fans.¹²⁶ Hence the second round of the eristic exercises displays no new approach with respect to the previous discussion. Consequently, there is no need for Socrates to explain further how the second eristic example is used by Euthydemus and Dionysodorus. For it is enough to understand the mode of operation of the first illustration to figure out the eristic demonstration in general (277e3-278b2). Such an understanding of eristic argumentation assumes though that the eristic method requires a repetitive description in order to ensure that its irritating effects are complete. In this sense, the sophists remain faithful to what Socrates mentioned earlier: the eristic manoeuvres are not in the service of a higher cause for which a complex theory of virtue is needed, as well as an analytical description of the learning process, but rather constitute a play on words, as the following example will illustrate.

¹²⁵ Socrates explains to Cleinias a few lines later that the deceptive technique of the sophists is implemented “by means of the distinctions among words” (διὰ τὴν τῶν ὀνομάτων διαφοράν, 278b6-7). According to him, μανθάνειν then can be understood in two different senses, both with respect to σοφοὶ as well as ἀμαθεῖς. Sometimes, μανθάνειν refers to getting information about something, and other times it means “to understand something”. In the latter sense, the conception of μανθάνειν relies on the idea that understanding is nothing other than using existing knowledge in order to acquire more complex information concerning a certain subject (277e3-278b2). Cf. also Sprague 1965: p. 10, note 16; Keulen 1971: pp. 16ff and 68ff.; Erler 2017: pp. 125-130. A vaguer interpretation of this point is given by Hawtrey 1981: pp. 57ff.

¹²⁶ That the two brothers have no compunction about mistreating the young Cleinias publicly is clear from the very beginning of the dialogue. For the unconcealed audacity of the sophists is expressed more than once, when, for example, Dionysodorus whispers in Socrates' ear that Cleinias “will be refuted” (ἐξελεγχθήσεται) no matter what he answers; 275e4-6; 276d8-276e2.

1.2.3.2. *Do learners learn what they know or what they do not know?*

Having focused on the target group of the learning process, Euthydemus now shifts his attention to the content of education, asking Cleinias whether learners learn “what they know or what they do not know” (ἃ ἐπίστανται ἢ ἃ μὴ ἐπίστανται, 276d8). The inexperienced Cleinias answers that learners learn what they do not know (276e8-9). However, this answer is eventually refuted by Euthydemus’ affirmation that the pupils learn what they know. For they learn with the help of the “letters of alphabet” (γράμματα) which they know and with which they repeat what the writing-master dictates to them (276e10-277b2). Given that the eristic legerdemain is not entirely developed, Dionysodorus jumps in to complete the exercise by transforming Euthydemus’s conclusion into its opposite: learners pick up what they do not know because “learning” (μανθάνειν) is an intellectual activity through which the learner acquires knowledge (ἐπιστήμην λαμβάνειν, 277b6-7). We must conclude, therefore, that learning can only be done by those who do not yet possess knowledge and not by those who already have it (277b3-c7).

So much for the second example through which Cleinias should acquire moral knowledge concerning virtue. But does the second example truly move Cleinias a step further towards the desired knowledge? The answer is negative and the conclusion drawn from the second example is as unsatisfactory as the first. For neither in formal terms – *Do the learners learn what they know or what they don’t know?* – nor from the point of view of content – *What is taught in the process of learning?* – could Cleinias benefit from the debate with the eristics. The tiring enumeration of examples and the lack of positive results¹²⁷ seems not to have any pedagogical purposes. On the contrary, the original eristic “game” (παιδιά, 277d9)¹²⁸ is simply the cover for another game, for the joy of purely rhetorical battle and, to a certain extent, for the amusement of the gathered crowd. What is lacking, though, are not only substantial contributions to a better understanding of the process of learning, but also the exhortation that

¹²⁷ The eristic parts of the *Euthydemus* are to a certain extent comparable with the opposing arguments contained in the difficult-to-date *Dissoi Logoi* (*Contrasting Arguments*), which is often regarded as being close to Protagoras’ works (τέχνη ἐριστικῶν, *Ἀντιλογίαι, καταβάλλοντες λόγοι*). An essential difference between the two lies in the dialogical structure of the *Euthydemus*, in contrast to the *Dissoi Logoi*. Interestingly, Hösl points out that Plato wants to emphasise the duality between Socrates, on the one hand, and Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, on the other, in order to exemplify the decisive difference between the true philosopher and the eristic charlatans; Hösl 2004: pp. 252 ff.

¹²⁸ Socrates compares the eristic exercises with “dancing and game” (χορεία [...] καὶ παιδιά, 277d9) just as what people do “in the Corybantic rites” (ἐν τῇ τελετῇ τῶν Κορυβάντων, 277d7). It is significant, though, that the reference of the Corybantic mysteries appears also in the *Dissoi Logoi* (μύστας εἰμί, 4.4). Concerning Socrates’ distinction of two different types of initiation (277e2 ff.) cf. recently Erler 2017: p. 137.

we are dealing with “serious things” (τὰ σπουδαῖα, 278c3)¹²⁹ when we speak about virtue and its promised teachability.¹³⁰

A further danger of eristic games can be seen in the possibility of Cleinias – as well as of the audience – deciding to imitate Euthydemus and Dionysodorus so that he not only becomes a passive supporter of eristics, but even worse an active representative.¹³¹ Such a purely formal perspective is all the more dangerous in that it serves no higher purpose, but rather enables the proponent of sophistry to take pleasure in his own rhetoric.¹³² By contrast, Zeno’s antilogical arguments which in many ways resemble the eristic style of arguing in the *Euthydemus* at least serve Parmenides’ monism, if we are to believe Plato’s *Parmenides*.¹³³ Precisely in order to avoid the risk of becoming merely an eristic acrobat, Socrates calls on the practitioners of eristics to show their protreptic reasoning and he himself promises to give concrete examples of what a protreptic initiative to encourage young people to acquire wisdom and virtue should look like ([...] προτρέποντε τὸ μειράκιον ὅπως χρή σοφίας τε καὶ ἀρετῆς ἐπιμεληθῆναι. πρότερον δ’ ἐγὼ σφῶν ἐνδείξομαι οἷον αὐτὸ ὑπολαμβάνω καὶ οἷου αὐτοῦ ἐπιθυμῶ ἀκοῦσαι, 278d2-5).¹³⁴ In the course of the subsequent discussion with Cleinias, Socrates reminds his interlocutors that all people want “to be happy” (εὖ πράττειν, 278e3)¹³⁵ and that the right use of an item is based on the “knowledge” (ἐπιστήμη) of particular things, that is “intelligence and wisdom” (φρόνησις καὶ σοφία). He therefore concludes that the pursuit of wisdom is indispensable for living a good human life (278e3-282d3).

¹²⁹ It should not be forgotten, however, that a playful approach for educational purposes is central for Plato; cf. e.g. the *Parmenides*. Here it is a matter of showing that Euthydemus and Dionysodorus separate the play from the seriousness of education so that the sophistic demonstration becomes a mere game for its own sake. Concerning the importance of play in education for Plato see e.g. Hawtrey 1981: pp. 74-75. For further reading about knowledge and seriousness see e.g. Niggli 1982.

¹³⁰ Cf. *Euthydemus* 282c1-4. Whether the virtue of “wisdom” (σοφία) can be taught is a question that Plato discusses in the *Meno*.

¹³¹ The example set by Ctesippus is instructive insofar as he really begins to imitate the sophists’ skill at argumentation without thereby becoming their supporter. This is due to the fact that in contrast to the less well-educated crowd, which manifests itself in loud clamor, Ctesippus not only quickly learns and uses sophistic puns, but also notices the emptiness of the alleged eristic games.

¹³² Concerning the sophists’ wish to appear skilled in rhetoric, cf. e.g. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, VII 3, 1146a21-24: ἔτι ὁ σοφιστικὸς λόγος ψευδόμενος ἀπορία: διὰ γὰρ τὸ παράδοξα βούλεσθαι ἐλέγχειν, ἵνα δεινοὶ ὦσιν ὅταν ἐπιτύχωσιν, ὁ γινόμενος συλλογισμὸς ἀπορία γίνεται.

¹³³ Hans von Arnim argues in a similar vein (1989: pp. 5-6): “Bei den Eleaten hat diese Eristik einen philosophischen Zweck. Aber man braucht nur von der eleatischen Ontologie abzusehen und die den Eleaten abgelauschte eristische Technik auf andere Stoffe zu übertragen, um ein neues Machtmittel der σοφία zu gewinnen, das sich ergänzend zu der rednerischen Peitho gesellte. Zenon und Melissos sind in unserem Sinne Philosophen; aber ihre Methode athmet sophistischen Geist. Sie haben den nach ihnen kommenden Sophisten die Waffen geschmiedet.”

¹³⁴ See Von Arnim 1989: pp. 4-114.

¹³⁵ On the double sense of εὖ πράττειν in the *Euthydemus* see Sprague 1965: p. 15, note 23. The opposite of εὖ πράττειν, namely κακῶς πράττειν, is also mentioned a few lines later (281c2); cf. also Gifford 1973: pp. 24-25.

1.2.4. Parmenides and the eristic *logoi*

1.2.4.1. The ambiguity of the term “becoming”

But, as much as Socrates’ protreptic interjection¹³⁶ appears stimulating and therefore deserving of in-depth discussion, it does not change the sophists’ previous argumentative behaviour. For Dionysodorus, who first reacts to Socrates’ conversation with Cleinias, does not flinch from beginning his game of generating conflicting arguments again. This time, the focus is on the ambiguity of “becoming” (γίγνεσθαι) and “not being, existing” (μὴ εἶναι) in accordance with Socrates’ wish that Cleinias may make serious efforts to learn to be virtuous from the sophists. Dionysodorus argues that if Socrates and Cleinias’ supporters hope that Cleinias will “become wise” (γενέσθαι σοφόν, 283d1), they will be wishing that he will become someone who he “is not” (μὴ εἶναι) at the moment, namely a wise man. By twisting the original meaning of the goal, Dionysodorus concludes that Socrates is, in fact, arguing for no less than Cleinias’ death, since he and Cleinias’ followers wish that their beloved should “utterly perish” (ἐξολωλέναι, 283d8).¹³⁷ So, if anyone wishes Cleinias to be wise, this wish turns out to be fatal, according to the eristic way of thinking and speaking. But what sense are we to make out of this if we remember Euthydemus’ aforementioned ability to teach virtue (273d8-9)? No answer is given here and we are forced to remain with Dionysodorus’ transformation of the sentence (“Cleinias should become wise.”) into (“Cleinias should not exist anymore.”). As a matter of fact, this mistake is often called a fallacy of *secundum quid* which appears if one shifts the meaning of “not being in a particular sense” to “not being absolutely”. Regarding the rhetorical pursuit of the sophists, the description of Cleinias as “not being wise” is therefore transformed by Dionysodorus into “not being or existing absolutely” in order to win the battle of words in this context. But this latter argumentative step worries Cleinias’ admirer Ctesippus, who accuses Dionysodorus of having misrepresented his account (283e).

However, during the exchange between Dionysodorus and Cleinias about the ambiguity of “becoming”, there appear to be clear references to Parmenides’ ontological theses which need further clarification.¹³⁸ But before concentrating on this topic, let it be first noted that

¹³⁶ See Sprague, who, according to Düring (*Aristotle’s Protrepticus: An Attempt at Reconstruction*), points out that Socrates’ protreptic arguments are the earliest preserved to us (Sprague 1965: p. 21, note 30). Cf. also Canto-Sperber 1989: pp. 59-64 and Corey 2015: pp. 131-163.

¹³⁷ Cf. e.g. Hawtrey 1981: p. 97; similarly Erler 2017: p. 157: “In Dichtung findet sich der Ausdruck (*scil. ἐξολωλέναι*) z.B. Hom. Ed. 17,597; Eur. Hip. 725; Aristoph. Pax 366; in Prosa aber nur hier im *Euthydemus*.”

¹³⁸ On this point, cf. e.g. Natorp’s subsequent comment on the content-related closeness between the *Theaetetus* and *Euthydemus* (1994: p. 119): “So werden die echten “Buchstaben” des “Seins” zu den kategorialen

Dionysodorus' analysis of "becoming" and "non-being/existing" seems not to be a goal *per se*, but is rather raised, in a sense, accidentally. For Socrates in his previous speech set himself the goal of demonstrating a protreptic technique that would allow Cleinias to become wise and virtuous. In this regard, the discussion was conducted in accordance with ethical principles, without explicitly recommending a metaphysical turn in the debate. Nevertheless, it looks as though the theoretical argumentation about "becoming" and "non-being" presented by Dionysodorus in the present context reaches the highest level of abstraction which forces the interlocutors to move from ethics towards ontology.¹³⁹ Dionysodorus' eristic tricks can therefore again be put in parallel, to a certain extent, with the rhetorical arguments exemplified in the enigmatic *Dissoi Logoi*, although the closeness to Parmenides' philosophy is much more significant. Let us therefore return to the previously mentioned references to Parmenides in order to search for further evidence in support of this assumption.

First, it is important to note that the two seemingly contradictory statements a. "Cleinias should *become* wise" and b. "Cleinias should *utterly perish* or *not exist*" are not opposites in the strict Platonic sense. For the notion of "becoming" (γίγνεσθαι) stands between "being" (ὄν, εἶναι) and "non-being" (μὴ εἶναι) and is a part of Plato's ontology¹⁴⁰ in which there is not only place for "being", as is the case for the sophists and, before them, for Parmenides, but also for "non-being" and "becoming". Hence, if Dionysodorus concludes that Socrates is, in fact, wishing for Cleinias' non-existence, he basically sticks to the Parmenidean metaphysics according to which there is neither "non-being" nor "becoming". The mechanics of this rejection runs as follows: There is no "non-being", because it is neither discernible nor predicable (fr. 2).¹⁴¹ Consequently, there is no "becoming"¹⁴² either, because "becoming" is conceived as a mixture of something that is ("being") and something that is not ("non-being") (fr. 6),¹⁴³ although the latter is in no way possible. On this point, see also Sprague:

Grundbestimmungen; wie ja auch jene "überall sich herumtreibenden" Bestimmungen Sein und Nichtsein, Es und Jenes, Jedes und so weiter, nur verschiedene Ausdrücke der Bestimmung überhaupt, also der allgemeinen Denkfunktion sind. [...] Geradezu als ergänzender Nachtrag zu dem polemischen Geplänkel, das den zweiten Teil des Theaetetus füllt, darf der *Euthydem* bezeichnet werden; ein Nachtrag, der im *Theaetetus* so bestimmt angekündigt ist, daß er sogar als Anhang zu diesem, wie eine Art Satyrspiel, zugleich veröffentlicht sein könnte, was ich übrigens nicht gerade behaupten möchte."

¹³⁹ A similar situation is given in the *Dissoi Logoi* where a discussion on "things that are or are not" is carried on (5, 1-15) without being in the realm of a purely metaphysical discourse.

¹⁴⁰ See, for example, *Phaedo* 78d-79a, *Symposium* 211a-e, *Republic* V, 476d-479d and *Timaeus* 27d-28a.

¹⁴¹ DK 28 B2.7-8: οὐτε γὰρ ἂν γνοίης τὸ γε μὴ ἔδν (οὐ γὰρ ἀνυστόν) οὐτε φράσαις. Cf. also DK 28 B8.8-9: οὐ γὰρ φατὸν οὐδὲ νοητόν ἔστιν ὅπως οὐκ ἔστι.

¹⁴² On Parmenides' analysis of becoming and passing away, see DK 28 B8.7-21.

¹⁴³ DK 28 B6.8-9: [...] οἷς τὸ πέλειν τε καὶ οὐκ εἶναι ταῦτον νενόμισται κοῦ ταῦτόν, πάντων δὲ παλίντροπὸς ἔστι κέλευθος.

The Eleatic logic which is at the bottom of the majority of fallacies in this present scene is inextricably tied to a metaphysics which denies becoming; as a result it is necessary for Plato to expose these arguments, since in doing so he discredits the metaphysics as well.¹⁴⁴

But although the procedure employed in this argument may be easily explained with the help of Parmenides' logic, as Sprague notes, it is interesting to observe that the next eristic play avoids a more detailed explanation of whether and to what extent "becoming" can be shown to be the opposite of "non-being". Instead, Euthydemus shifts his focus from the subject area of becoming to the problem of the definition of falsehood (283e7-285a1). In the following lines, we shall therefore evoke the transition from a pure Parmenidean θεωρία to an eristic πράξις, a transition which is essential for better understanding the pragmatic attitude of the two sophists Dionysodorus and Euthydemus towards philosophy.¹⁴⁵

1.2.4.2. *The case of false speaking*

Exasperated by the sophist's blurring line of argumentation, Ctesippus accuses Dionysodorus of telling lies (καταψεύδεσθαι, 283e4) about the awkward risk of Cleinias' death. It is interesting to note, though, that Ctesippus makes no reference to the Parmenidean theoretical background by which the eristic distortion is caused,¹⁴⁶ although he is portrayed in the beginning of the *Euthydemus* as a well-bred person (καλός τε κάγαθός τὴν φύσιν, 273a8).¹⁴⁷ His giftedness and potential extends at least so far as to enable him to seize the eristic art and to use it against its creators, as the following discussion will show, admittedly without eradicating the sophistic malady. To return to the case that has given rise to the debate about falsity, the accusation of lying is taken by Euthydemus as an occasion to generate a further fallacy that denies the possibility of false speaking. This fallacy should not, in fact, be

¹⁴⁴ Sprague 1962: pp. 13-14.

¹⁴⁵ The interpretation that there is a shift from a theoretical to a pragmatic point of view goes beyond Sprague's reading, which indicates that the fallacy that occurs in the case of false speaking, arises merely because of equivocation (Sprague 1962: pp. 15ff.). In this respect, the line of thought announced by De Corte in relation to the sophists' general attitude seems to me to be particularly apt: "Le problème philosophique que la Sophistique doit affronter en fonction de la tyrannique dichotomie parménidienne dont elle est tributaire est alors très simple: nous sommes dans un monde d'apparence où il n'y a qu'un seul point fixe, *l'homme*, son λόγος inébranlable, les idées immanentes au λόγος. [...]: si la philosophie n'est plus θεωρία, elle ne peut plus être que πράξις: *l'homme fait* le réel, *l'homme fait* la réalité." A few lines later, De Corte also adds (1955: pp. 52-53): "On comprend ainsi pourquoi l'éducation tient une telle place dans la Sophistique: à la logique, science première, correspond la pédagogie, art premier." However, De Corte leaves the question open which passages in Plato's dialogues suggest such an interpretation. The objective of the following reflexions is therefore to close this gap.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. also Palmer 1999: pp. 124-134.

¹⁴⁷ On this cf. e.g. Hawtrey 1981: p. 48.

interpreted as one paradox among others, but rather as one upon which depends to a substantial part the success of the sophists' rhetorical engagement.

Euthydemus argues that, if someone tells lies, he in fact “speaks the thing” or “concrete reality” (λέγοντα τὸ πρᾶγμα, 283e9) he is talking about and “not something else among the things that are” (οὐκ ἄλλο [...] τῶν ὄντων, 284a2). From the assumption that one can only speak about things that are, or rather exist, Euthydemus concludes that the one who “speaks about existing things” (λέγει τὰ ὄντα, 284a7), in fact always “speaks the truth” (λέγει τἀληθῆ, 284a7).¹⁴⁸ Ctesippus is not satisfied with this explanation, particularly because, as he rightly objects, one who speaks in this way, “does not say the things that are” (οὐ τὰ ὄντα λέγει, 284b2). We can thus state that Ctesippus, who previously affirmed that it is possible to lie (283e8), distinguishes between a “speech act” or a “sentence”¹⁴⁹ and an “established fact”, without thereby identifying the speaking or speech act with a concrete reality. Yet this is precisely what Euthydemus intends to do, namely to classify the “speaking” (τὸ λέγειν) as a thing that is. He therefore continues with the explanation of the non-being in order to clarify the special status of speech: just as there is no place where the things that are, on the one side, are not, on the other (284b4-5), no one can make out of a thing that is a thing that is not (ἔστιν οὖν ὅπως περὶ ταῦτα, τὰ μὴ ὄντα, πράξειεν ἂν τίς τι, ὥστ' ἐκεῖνα ποιήσειεν ἂν καὶ ὅτισοῦν τὰ μηδαμοῦ ὄντα, 284b5-7). By contrast, when the orators “do something, they also make something” (εἴπερ πράττουσι, καὶ ποιοῦσι, 284c1)¹⁵⁰ so that the speaking becomes a doing and making (τὸ λέγειν ἄρα πράττειν τε καὶ ποιεῖν ἔστιν, 284c1-2)¹⁵¹ and not nothing, one who speaks does something that is and not something that is not. In conclusion, telling lies is impossible since the orator cannot transform the things that are not into things that are. In other words: the orator cannot bring into existence (ποιεῖν) things that are not. This is why Euthydemus maintains Dionysodorus' innocence by affirming that “he speaks the truth and the things that are” (τἀληθῆ τε καὶ τὰ ὄντα λέγει, 284c6).

¹⁴⁸ Concerning this interpretation, I propose to follow Sprague (1962: p. 15): “Here the argument relies again on the fallacy of equivocation. The verb ‘to be’ (here τὰ ὄντα) is again taken in two senses, as meaning either ‘to exist’ or ‘to be true’. Conversely, its negation is taken to mean either ‘not to exist’ or ‘to be false’.” Against this, Gifford argues that the equivocation is on λέγειν; Gifford 1973: p. 30. The equivocal use of words occurs not only with respect to λέγειν, as Sprague rightly points out (p. 15, note 11), but I would agree with Gifford that the special role attributed to λέγειν should not be dismissed. For the speaking exemplifies *the* object par excellence (τὸ ὄν or τὰ ὄντα) as will be argued in what follows.

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Hawtrey 1981: pp. 98ff.

¹⁵⁰ On the equivocation on ποιεῖν, see e.g. Hawtrey 1981: p. 101.

¹⁵¹ Concerning Protagoras' rhetorical skill cf. *Protagoras* 312d6-7: [...] ἐπιστάτην τοῦ ποιῆσαι δεινὸν λέγειν.

Plato interpreters have not failed to notice that the refutation of false speaking is reminiscent of Parmenides.¹⁵² It is argued that the impossibility of falsehood is deduced from the expression τὰ ὄντα λέγειν – “to speak the things that are” means “to speak the truth” – which goes back to Parmenides’ χρὴ τὸ λέγειν τε νοεῖν τ’ ἐὸν ἔμμεναι.¹⁵³ It is further suggested that the whole sophistic enterprise succeeds or fails on the basis of the meaning of “the things that are” (here τὰ ὄντα) and “the things that are not” (τὰ μὴ ὄντα), respectively. By using τὰ ὄντα in an equivocal¹⁵⁴ manner (the expression can have either an existential or a veridical meaning), the sophists produce a series of fallacies aimed at denying the possibility of false speech. Before going into detail about the content and form of this agreement, let us first see what further conclusions can be extracted from this line of argumentation.

According to Euthydemus, an orator makes things that are and not things that are not. But what are these things a speaker does and makes? If we think of an orator like Hippias, then the answer is that he does and makes all kind of things. Hippias, as he is portrayed in the *Lesser Hippias*, is not only able to produce speeches about diverse sciences, but also to make different sorts of craft products (368b-e). But does this answer apply equally to orators like Euthydemus and Dionysodorus? According to Plato’s description of the sophists’ products in the *Euthydemus*, the situation appears to be quite different: an orator makes no craft products but only speeches (λογοί). Yet, if this is to be taken as the main activity of an eristic orator, and if we suppose that he makes no other things, then we must conclude that the universe of the sophists like Dionysodorus and Euthydemus consists of nothing other than making and performing speeches. From this point of view, we might describe the influence of the Parmenidean way of thinking on the eristic speakers as follows: what was known as the prevalent existing thing in the Parmenidean cosmos, namely logical being (ὄν), turns out to be an activity that limits itself to making and producing speeches (τὸ λέγειν πράττειν τε καὶ ποιεῖν ἐστίν) in the world of Euthydemus and Dionysodorus. However, since Euthydemus and Dionysodorus do not want to appear to present fine words and empty speeches or – put another way – to produce false speaking, they must defend the idea of the impossibility of falsity. What

¹⁵² Cf. Gifford 1973: notes on p. 30; Sprague 1962: pp. 12-17; Hawtrey 1981: p. 99 and 111; Chance 1992: pp. 88-89 and Palmer 1999: pp. 124-134.

¹⁵³ DK 28 B6.1. Other relevant references include B2.7-8: οὔτε γὰρ ἂν γνοίης τό γε μὴδὲν (οὐ γὰρ ἀνυστόν) οὔτε φράσαις; B8.8-9: οὐ γὰρ φατὸν οὐδὲ νοητὸν ἔστιν ὅπως οὐκ ἔστι; B8.16-18: ἔστιν ἢ οὐκ ἔστιν· κέκριται δ’ οὖν, ὥσπερ ἀνάγκη, τὴν μὲν ἑᾶν ἀνόητον ἀνώνυμον (οὐ γὰρ ἀληθὴς ἔστιν ὁδός), τὴν δ’ ὥστε πέλειν καὶ ἐτήτυμον εἶναι.

¹⁵⁴ Sprague 1962: pp. 15-16. Critical reflexions on Sprague’s interpretation are advanced by Stewart 1977: p. 21-44.

is spoken is always true, and what is true is true because of the making and doing of the λόγοι.¹⁵⁵ Consequently, the making and doing of speeches somehow appears to be the only free area left in the Parmenidean cosmos, in which orators like Euthydemus and Dionysodorus have no other function than to give speeches in one way or another.

During the further course of the discussion between Socrates and his interlocutors, other assumptions are made that seem no less important for Euthydemus and Dionysodorus. The result of the assumption that there are only true statements is not only that there cannot be “false speaking” (ψευδῇ λέγειν, 286c6), but also that “contradiction” (ἀντιλέγειν)¹⁵⁶ is in no way possible. We can compare with this, for example, Dionysodorus’ verdict against Ctesippus who defends the possibility of contradicting each other: “When I say what there is to be said about a thing, and you say something else, do we contradict each other? Or do I rather speak about it and you speak nothing at all? And how can someone who does not speak contradict someone who does?”¹⁵⁷ Furthermore, “false opinion” (ψευδῆς δόξα, 286d4), “ignorance” (ἀμαθία, 286d6) or “ignorant men” (ἀμαθεῖς ἄνθρωποι, 286d6) do not exist if there is no such thing as ψευδῇ λέγειν. And even knowledge of something that is false appears to be absurd in the eyes of the sophists, since falsity has no place in the realm of being (296d-297d).

In the course of the conversation, Socrates regularly denounces the incoherencies in Euthydemus and Dionysodorus’ theses, unmasking their argumentative weaknesses. Yet he is also not surprised by this type of deceptive reasoning, since he attributes it not only to Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, but also to those around Protagoras, as well as to earlier thinkers (παλαιότεροι).¹⁵⁸ Scholars have asked themselves who is being referred to by the term παλαιότεροι. While Gomperz¹⁵⁹ opts for Heraclitus, other interpreters, such as Hoffmann,¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁵ The doing and making of speeches for the eristics is limited to the practical side of rhetoric. In the case of Protagoras, the case is slightly different, since, in his dialogue of the same name, Plato describes speaking as an activity which is connected to the realm of politics (λέγειν τε καὶ πράττειν). In this sense, the act of speaking is not a goal *per se* but should enable the speaker to transpose his thoughts and speeches into tangible political actions.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. also Sprague 1962: pp. 17, 17, n. 13, 23, 26 and Palmer 1999: pp. 124-128, 130-133. The problem of contradiction will be discussed again in the last part on Plato’s *Sophist*.

¹⁵⁷ 286b3-6: ἀλλ’ ἄρα, ὅταν ἐγὼ μὲν τὸν τοῦ πράγματος λόγον λέγω, σὺ δὲ ἄλλου τινὸς ἄλλον, τότε ἀντιλέγομεν; ἢ ἐγὼ λέγω μὲν τὸ πρᾶγμα, σὺ δὲ οὐδὲ λέγεις τὸ παράπαν; ὁ δὲ μὴ λέγων τῷ λέγοντι πῶς ἂν ἀντιλέγοι; It is, however, a clear indication of the inner inconsistency of the sophistic position that Euthydemus on other occasions accuses Socrates of self-contradiction (αὐτὸς σαυτὸν γε δὴ ἐξελέγχεις, ἔφη, ὦ Σώκρατες, 293e1). As a reaction to this unsatisfactory situation, Socrates immediately points out this inconsistency, and yet this does not lead the two brothers to revisit their theoretical commitments or even to reject them altogether. On this latter point, compare also Chance who in general concludes that “the two brothers as character types [...] do not develop in the way Kleinias and Ktesippus do.”; Chance 1992: p. 78.

¹⁵⁸ 286b8-c3: ἀλλὰ τοῦτόν γε τὸν λόγον πολλῶν δὴ καὶ πολλὰκις ἀκηκοὼς ἀεὶ θαυμάζω—καὶ γὰρ οἱ ἀμφὶ Πρωταγόραν σφόδρα ἐχρῶντο αὐτῷ καὶ οἱ ἔτι παλαιότεροι.

¹⁵⁹ Gomperz 1912: pp. 224-225.

¹⁶⁰ Hoffmann 2005: p. 155.

think that Socrates has Parmenides in mind. That Plato, although not necessarily Socrates, is referring to Parmenides is made clear at *Sophist* 236d9-237a9, where the Stranger from Elea traces the problem of false speaking back to Parmenides' notion of non-being.¹⁶¹ For while the Stranger proves in detail that telling lies or contradiction is possible, the same is not true of Socrates. That said, Socrates' critical approach is well suited to continuing the process of deconstructing Euthydemus' and Dionysodorus' fallacious reasoning, but because he is unaware of the deeper roots of these eristic arguments, his objection to the sophists are merely of relative importance.¹⁶²

1.2.5. Final remarks

Taking a closer look at Socrates' counterarguments was not the goal of the previous section. Rather, it was necessary to clarify that the affirmation of "true speeches" (λόγοι ἀληθεῖς) that is, "being" (τὸ ὄν), and the denial of "false speeches" (λόγοι ψευδεῖς), that is, "nonbeing" (τὸ μὴ ὄν), can be restricted to the production of eristic *logoi* with respect to the general scope of the sophists' activity in the *Euthydemus*. Dionysodorus and Euthydemus do not concern themselves with establishing a consistent justification for their theses. An exposition on being and nonbeing, such as the one developed by Parmenides, does not therefore fall within their domain of philosophical responsibility. Rather, the "art of producing speeches" (λογοποιικὴ τέχνη, 289c6-7) via a method of refuting every sentence, whether true or false, stands at the forefront. Therefore, it does not matter that Cleinias and Ctesippus should be taught in wisdom and virtue to become happy, and, conversely, that their teachers should be seriously interested in doing philosophy (ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι φιλοσοφεῖν, 282d1).¹⁶³ For the pedagogical context serves Euthydemus and Dionysodorus simply as a pretext for eristic games. Socrates, on the other hand, works to reveal the deceptive nature of eristic *logoi*, without necessarily being able to deal with the problem at its Eleatic source.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ The lines B7.1-2 (οὐ γὰρ μή ποτε τοῦτο δαμῆ, εἶναι μὴ ἔόντα, ἀλλὰ σὺ τῆσδ' ἀφ' ὁδοῦ διζήσιος εἶργε νόημα) are even quoted twice (237a8-9 and 258d2-3).

¹⁶² In fact, an in-depth-discussion on the notion of non-being is engaged in the *Parmenides* and, especially, in the *Sophist*, where Socrates plays only a minor role.

¹⁶³ See also Erler who emphasises the importance of the expression ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι φιλοσοφεῖν for the whole dialogue; Erler 2017: p. 149.

¹⁶⁴ On the influence of eristic *logoi* on Crito, see Corey 2015: pp. 157-161.

1.3. The *Hippias Minor*

Another historical figure with whom Plato deals on an ongoing basis is Hippias of Elis. Hippias, who lived in the 5th century B.C., was known for his tremendous versatility and professional competence in many different disciplines.¹⁶⁵ Due to his encyclopaedic knowledge, Socrates calls him a “polymath” (πολυμαθής),¹⁶⁶ in Xenophon’s *Memorabilia* (IV.4.6), as one who is versed in astronomy,¹⁶⁷ mathematics and geometry,¹⁶⁸ genealogy, mythology, history,¹⁶⁹ syllables, rhythms and musical scales,¹⁷⁰ craftsmanship,¹⁷¹ and writing poems and speeches.¹⁷² Finally, he was also supposed to have had a good memory,¹⁷³ a capacity which Plato calls into question in *Hippias Minor* 369a and *Hippias Maior* 285e ff.

In the *Hippias Minor*, Plato chooses to examine Hippias’ active role in public life, where the sophist is presented as an orator and teacher of wisdom (σοφία).¹⁷⁴ Hippias’ performance of an *epideixis* about Homeric heroes, which serves as the background to the discussion in this dialogue, may in fact be interpreted as the summit of his encyclopaedic learning. This is because, according to Plato and Socrates, moral matters belong among the most important things (τὰ μέγιστα)¹⁷⁵ that a human being should pursue.¹⁷⁶ Rather than assessing the educational value of the Homeric epics – this task is actually reserved for the *Republic* – Plato chooses to display Hippias’ own knowledge in order to evaluate Hippias’ self-

¹⁶⁵ *Hippias Minor* 368a8-369e1, *Hippias Maior* 285b8-286c2.

¹⁶⁶ DK 86, A 14. For the Greeks, it was not very flattering to be called a polymath; cf. Heraclitus’ witticism: “Much learning does not teach understanding” (πολυμαθίη νόον οὐ διδάσκει, DL IX, 1). The issue of all-round knowledge is also considered in *Dissoi Logoi* 8. < Περὶ τοῦ πάντα ἐπιστᾶσθαι >, 1-13.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. *Hippias Minor* 367e9. Cf. also *Protagoras* 315c5-7, where Hippias is described as discussing questions about natural sciences and astronomy. See also *Protagoras* 318e1-3.

¹⁶⁸ Cf. *Hippias Minor* 366c5, 367d6. Cf. Proclus, *In Eucl.*, p. 272.3-10. Note that not all scholars agree that the Hippias whom Proclus mentions in his *Commentary on Euclid’s Elements* is the famous Hippias of Elis. For Jean-François Pradeau, Proclus’ testimonials belong to the “Textes douteux ou apocryphes”; 2009: p. 61.

¹⁶⁹ See Patzer 1986. Cf. also the remarkable article by Snell 1944: pp. 170-182.

¹⁷⁰ *Hippias Minor* 368d4-5.

¹⁷¹ *Hippias Minor* 378b.

¹⁷² *Hippias Minor* 368c8-d2.

¹⁷³ *Hippias Minor* 368d6. For further testimony about Hippias’ technique of mnemonics, see e.g. Guthrie 1969: p. 283, note 2. Cf. also Philostratus who in his *Lives of the Sophists* begins his portrayal of Hippias by first mentioning the sophist’s extraordinary “powers of memory” (μνημονικόν), DK 86 A 2. In *Dissoi Logoi*, 8,1 “memory” (μνήμη) is described as “the greatest and most beautiful invention” (μέγιστον δὲ καὶ κάλλιστον ἐξεῦρημα). It is important to note though that Hippias’ much-vaunted power of memory will be used against him in *Hippias Minor* 369a7-8.

¹⁷⁴ *Hippias Minor* 364a3, b2, 366d2-3, *passim*.

¹⁷⁵ *Apology* 22 d7 and *Phaedrus* 274a ff.

¹⁷⁶ Hippias’ reasons for presenting an *epideixis* dedicated to heroes are given in *Hippias Maior* 285b1-e2. There Hippias explains to Socrates that the Lacedaemonians preferred to listen to his beautiful discourses about heroes and antiquity rather than about astronomy, geometry, grammar, rhythms or harmony.

proclaimed superiority in wisdom over his competitors (364a7-9).¹⁷⁷ The examiner of the proposed arguments is once again Socrates: his method of examination is that of refutation (ἐλεγχος). That Socrates is indeed a suitable interlocutor – or rather the most challenging opponent for a discussion of the questions of which Homeric characters is morally better – is foreshadowed in the *Apology*. Here, Plato recalls that, according to the Delphi Oracle, which is expressed through the mouth of the priestess Pythia, no one is “wiser” (σοφώτερος, 21a7) than Socrates. Ignorant about the real meaning of this prophecy, Socrates sets himself the goal of examining whether he is wiser than anyone else, comparing himself to other supposedly wise men (20e-22e). Accordingly, Plato’s presentation of an agon between Socrates and Hippias is a consistent implementation of the requirement to evaluate different types of knowledge and education.¹⁷⁸

The difficulties in understanding the content and aporetic structure of the *Hippias Minor* therefore results from the fact that ethical knowledge and the moral character of a person are, in Plato’s eyes, intrinsically interconnected: the more Socrates exposes Hippias’ ignorance about ethical issues, the more he induces Hippias to show his true character and vice versa. The same applies, of course, to Socrates, because his knowledge, or rather ignorance, in matters of wisdom¹⁷⁹ is reflected in the way in which he stimulates the debate and articulates the driving force behind his philosophical and personal engagements. The precise relationship between character and arguments, especially regarding the embedding of literary characters into a philosophical educational system, is shown by Blundell in her illuminating article “Character and Meaning in Plato’s *Hippias Minor*”.¹⁸⁰ In the present study, Socrates’ role as an

¹⁷⁷ The agonistic attitude of Hippias is, in fact, characteristic of the most of the sophists. On this point, see also *Gorgias* 448a1-3; *Euthydemus* 273d8-9 and *Protagoras* 318d-319a, 328b. Of special interest here is the observation that at *Protagoras* 318e, Hippias seems to acknowledge Protagoras as the greatest sophist, since he does not engage in a critical discussion with his colleague, after the latter calls into question Hippias’ teaching method. How can this discrepancy between Hippias’ self-proclaimed superiority in the *Hippias Minor* and his submissiveness towards Protagoras in the *Protagoras* be explained? My guess is that for Plato, although not necessarily for the historical Hippias, Protagoras is the greatest of all the sophists. This interpretation receives support, first, from the initial scene in *Protagoras* 314c-316a, which is reminiscent of Odysseus’ journey into the Netherworld in *Odyssey* 11. Here, Socrates’ arrival at Callias’ house in order to meet with Protagoras is accompanied by a skilful depiction of the local and foreign guests, whose presence shows loyalty and submissiveness towards Protagoras. Second, the principal reason for Plato’s preferential treatment of Protagoras is that the latter is the only sophist who has the privilege of telling a myth in a Platonic dialogue. On this point, see my reading of Protagoras’ Great Speech above.

¹⁷⁸ In the *Apology*, Socrates puts knowledge of the statesmen, poets and craftsmen to the test. In contrast, in the *Hippias Minor* (and *Hippias Major*), Socrates’ attention is focused on Hippias’ alleged expertise in ethical issues no less than on Hippias’ moral character.

¹⁷⁹ Cf. *Apology* 20b4-5: ἐγὼ γὰρ δὴ οὔτε μέγα οὔτε μικρὸν σύννοια ἑμαυτῷ σοφὸς ὢν; and 21d6-7: ἔοικα γοῦν τούτου γε μικρῷ τι αὐτῷ τούτῳ σοφώτερος εἶναι, ὅτι ἂν μὴ οἶδα οὐδὲ οἶμαι εἰδέναι.

¹⁸⁰ Blundell 1992: pp. 131-172. See also Coventry 1990: pp. 174-196; Robinson 1980: pp. 15-16; Gulley 1968: pp. 59-60; Stokes 1986: ch. 1.

indefatigable and radical truth-seeker, no less than Hippias' dubious status as an educator of the Greeks provide the basis for further analysis. In the following sections, I shall first describe the opening scene and second, provide a precise summary of the two major paradoxes. The last section will be dedicated to the analysis of both the obvious and the deeper-seated reasons for Socrates' struggle with Hippias' alleged wisdom.

1.3.1. The opening scene

The dramatic dialogue starts with Eudicus' prompt¹⁸¹ request to Socrates to "praise" (συνεπαινέω) or to "blame" (ἐλέγχω) Hippias' speech that has just been delivered (363a), a proposal which conforms with the rhetorical traditions and practices of an *epideixis*. Socrates is willing to accept the challenge as long as he is allowed to "question" (πυνθάνεσθαι, 363a) Hippias' moral evaluation of Homer's protagonists (363a-c).¹⁸² His interest in the interpretation of the Homeric epics therefore seems to be limited to the extent that it simply leads to pure eloquence. *Epideixis* should give way to a responsible dialogue in which the preoccupation, for example, with the diversity of "characters" (τρόποι) no longer serves purely rhetorical purpose, but enhances moral reasoning.¹⁸³ What is therefore needed is a "justification" (λόγον διδόναι)¹⁸⁴ of the moral evaluation, because Socrates wants to "understand" (μανθάνω, 364c9)¹⁸⁵ the issue at stake and is not willing to merely follow the effusive praise of past heroes. While Hippias' public speech, which was held someplace "inside" (ἐνδον, 364b5),¹⁸⁶ certainly attracted many listeners,¹⁸⁷ only a few of them show intrinsic interest in Hippias' discourse and

¹⁸¹ Concerning the replacement of the long sophistical speeches by questions and answers cf. e.g. the commentary of Jantzen 1989: p. 29, note 2.

¹⁸² For more information about Plato's embedding of Homeric poetry into the *Hippias Minor* see Labarbe 1949: pp. 49-87.

¹⁸³ Socrates' preference of the meaning of the poetic words over the automatic memorization of Homeric verses is also underlined at *Ion* 530b10-c1.

¹⁸⁴ The ability to give an account of the important issues is a fundamental characteristic of an art. In the *Gorgias*, Socrates insists that the difference between an "art" (τέχνη) and "practice" (ἐμπερία), for example, between "politics" (πολιτική τέχνη) and "rhetoric" (ῥητορική), is due to the incapacity of the latter to explain the object which an art is dealing with as well as the real meaning of the correspondent activities.

¹⁸⁵ Cf. also 369d1-e2. Parmenides, in his poem, behaves similarly: He also goes to the one who knows, namely the Goddess, and who will teach him "the truth" (ἀλήθεια). Moreover, the young Parmenides will have the opportunity to learn "the opinions" (δόξαι) of mortals as well: [...] ταῦτα μαθήσεται [...]; (DK 28 B 1, 11-13).

¹⁸⁶ Regarding the importance of the location of a sophistical *epideixis*, cf. also the chapter on the *Gorgias*, where further references are given. See also Hölsle 2006: pp. 210-234.

¹⁸⁷ Useful considerations on the motive of the πολλοί are given by Voigtländer 1980: especially pp. 121-126.

engage “in philosophical discussion” (τῆς ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ διατριβῆς, 363a5).¹⁸⁸ This is indeed the first indication that the following conversation between the attendees will not follow rhetorically well-known paths, but is rather incited to engage in a question and answer session, to which Hippias agrees voluntarily (363c7-d4, 364d3-6).¹⁸⁹

1.3.2. The two paradoxes: “the true and the false man are identical” and “lying voluntarily is better than lying involuntarily”

Socrates now opens the intellectual agon, by briefly summing up the central themes of Hippias’ speech that he wishes to discuss, namely that the *Iliad* is a “finer” (κάλλιον, 363b2) poem than the *Odyssey* inasmuch as Achilles is “better” (ἀμείνων, 363b3-4) than Odysseus.¹⁹⁰ In what sense is Achilles better than Odysseus? Hippias promises to gently answer Socrates’ questions and to show “more clearly” (σαφέστερον, 364c3)¹⁹¹ why Achilles is the “best, bravest” (ἄριστον, 364c5), Nestor the “wisest” (σοφώτατον, 364c6) and Odysseus the “wiliest” (πολυτροπώτατον, 364c6-7).¹⁹² But of all the three character traits, Socrates is most interested in Odysseus and the peculiar meaning of πολυτροπώτατον, i.e. πολύτροπος. The reason for this is that Socrates seems to be able to recognize the behaviour of the bravest and wisest man, unlike the conduct of a person who is the most resourceful (364d-e).¹⁹³ So how does Hippias explain the behaviour or character (τρόπος, 365b3) of the wiliest of the Greek heroes?

In order to pursue the discussion and to give further evidence from the Homeric epics (365a-b, citing from *Iliad* IX, 308ff.)¹⁹⁴ for the portrayal of Odysseus, Hippias distinguishes

¹⁸⁸ On the use of the term *philosophia* in the present context, cf. e.g. Balaudé 2004: p. 88-89, note 1 and Pinjuh 2014: pp. 121-122. On Socrates’ conceptualisation of philosophy as love of wisdom cf. e.g. *Gorg.* 481b-482c. Concerning Plato’s general use of philosophy see e.g. Erler 2006: pp. 62-63.

¹⁸⁹ It is also worth noting that contrary to Protagoras’s Great Speech in the *Protagoras*, Hippias is not allowed to present his rhetorical speech in its entirety, although he is known for his many various speeches about poets, including Homer (*Hippias Minor* 363c1-3).

¹⁹⁰ On the different meaning of καλός and its relation to ἀγαθός cf. e.g. Pinjuh 2014: pp. 99-101.

¹⁹¹ Cf. also *Gorg.* 457d2-3, where the motive of being precise is underlined.

¹⁹² The term πολυτροπώτατος or πολύτροπος does not have a pejorative meaning *per se*. It is rather with respect to Hippias’ explanation that the use of the term will turn out to be negative; Balaudé 2004: p. 92, note 1. Cf. also Pradeau & Fronterotta 2005: p. 196, note 9. Cf. instead Pinjuh 2014: p. 115: “Zu platonischer Zeit hatte *polytropos* eine durchaus negative Konnotation.”

¹⁹³ Cf. also Mulhern 1968: p. 283.

¹⁹⁴ *Iliad* IX, 308ff.: Διογενὲς Λαερτιάδῃ, πολυμήχαν’ Ὀδυσσεῦ, χρή μὲν δὴ τὸν μῦθον ἀπηλεγέως ἀποειπεῖν, ὥσπερ δὴ κρανέω τε καὶ ὥς τελέεσθαι οἶω· ἐχθρὸς γάρ μοι κεῖνος ὁμῶς Αἴδαιο πύλησιν, ὃς χ’ ἕτερον μὲν κεῦθη ἐνὶ φρεσὶν, ἄλλο δὲ εἶπῃ. αὐτὰρ ἐγὼν ἐρέω, ὥς καὶ τετελεσμένον ἔσται. (365a1-b2). – “Son of Laertes, sprung from Zeus, resourceful Odysseus, I must speak the word bluntly, how I will act and how I think it shall be accomplished, for as hateful to me as the gates of Hades is he who hides one thing in his mind, and says another. As for me, I will speak as it shall also be accomplished” (translation Smith 1997: pp. 924).

between Achilles, who is “most simple and most true” (ἀπλούστατος καὶ ἀληθέστατος, 364e7-8)¹⁹⁵ and Odysseus, who is “wily and false” (πολύτροπός τε καὶ ψευδής, 365b5). For Hippias believes, in accordance with Homer, that for a person to be true, he must be open-hearted and never say anything other than what he thinks or feels. Since Achilles has this trait, he is necessarily a “true man” (ἀνὴρ ἀληθής). If on the other hand a person such as Odysseus does not reveal what he has in his heart, but says something, he deserves to be called a “false man” (ἀνὴρ ψευδής).

In general terms, people evaluated moral aspects of a person based on his or her honesty and it is, to a certain extent, with respect to Homer’s epics that they applied such an evaluative criterion. Hippias’ account of the evaluation of characters is therefore nothing other than a reference to the daily habits of human interaction,¹⁹⁶ except that they receive fuller expression by his rhetoric skills. Now, the task for Socrates is not so much to challenge the common sense understanding of the diversity of characters, as rather, whether Hippias’ reference to the generally accepted norms along with his Homeric exegesis are rooted in some deeper philosophical reflections. Only then would it be justified to call Hippias a wise man. Socrates is, therefore, interested in assessing Hippias’ own belief system (δόξαι),¹⁹⁷ explaining that Hippias should answer for both himself and Homer since he “agrees with” (συνδοκεῖν) what he says about Homer (365d2-4). What follows is the unfolding of Socrates’ elenctic method for the purpose of understanding Hippias’ alleged wisdom.

After repeating Hippias’ initial statement that being πολύτροπος implies being ψευδής (365b7-8) and that being true is different from being false (c3-4), Socrates inserts a new element, namely the power/capacity (δύναμις) to do something, before continuing the argumentation. He asks Hippias whether “the false are unable or able of doing something” (τοὺς ψευδεῖς ... ἀδυνάτους τι ποιεῖν ... ἢ δυνατοὺς τι ποιεῖν, 365d6-7). Socrates will explain only later how he understands the meaning of δυνατός (366b12-c5): a person who is capable of doing something is a person who can do something whenever he wants to. The capacity to

¹⁹⁵ Cf. also *Gorg.* 474a5-6 (ἓνα μὲν παρασχέσθαι μάρτυρα) and 475e-476a, where Socrates points out that the truth requires only one witness, whereas the false is manifold and therefore always needs many witnesses.

¹⁹⁶ It is generally the case that Hippias pays attention to the issue of how people usually speak, but only in the presence of Socrates does he admit that the many do not know the truth, *Hippias Major* 284d6-e5. Cf. also *Hippias Major* 288a3-5, 289e4-6; *Protagoras* 317a4-6. See also *Republic* 493a-494a, where Socrates explains that the sophists teach nothing else than “the opinions of the masses” (τὰ τῶν πολλῶν δόγματα, 493a8), which they call “wisdom” (σοφία, 493a9). But since the many are unable to philosophize, each of their agents must be a “strange teacher” (ἄτοπος παιδευτής, 493c7-8). This is why Plato is convinced that there are always only a few who are talented in doing philosophy (491a-b). The boastful sophists, who promise to teach all kind of things to anyone willing to pay for their services, represent, therefore, a great danger for the philosophical education of the youth.

¹⁹⁷ Cf. also 369d-e, where Socrates clarifies that he always plays very close attention to what the wise men have to say.

do something therefore goes hand in hand with the intention of an agent. Hippias answers that the people in question possess the power to do what they do and gives a further explanation of what the concrete ability of the wrongdoers involves: among many things that the false can do, it is the ability to “deceive people” (ἐξαπατᾶν ἀνθρώπους) that is accentuated (365d7-8). So if the false, like Odysseus, are called πολύτροποι, it is because they are powerful in deceiving people.

Yet the credibility of Hippias’ determination of the ψευδεῖς begins to crumble when Socrates deepens the discussion (365e2 ff.). He first asks whether the false act the way they act “because of silliness and thoughtlessness” (ὕπὸ ἡλιθιότητος καὶ ἀφροσύνης, 365e3) or on the contrary “by virtue of shrewdness and prudence” (ὕπὸ πανουργίας καὶ φρονήσεως, 365e3-4). Since Hippias affirms the latter, Socrates adds that if the false are φρόνιμοι, they must inevitably also be “those who know” (ἐπιστάμενοι), and they must be “wise” (σοφοί)¹⁹⁸ instead of “ignorant” (ἄμαθεῖς). So, if the false are wise in terms of being able to deceive people, the following question arises: in what sense can there be a real distinction between the false – who are δυνατοί, φρόνιμοι, ἐπιστάμενοι and σοφοί – and the true, who also share the same features of being δυνατοί, φρόνιμοι, ἐπιστάμενοι and σοφοί, but who are not mentioned explicitly either by Socrates or by Hippias? This question marks the beginning of the aporetic situation running through the whole dialogue, since things that usually stand in opposition to each other (e.g. “true-false” or “silliness/thoughtlessness-shrewdness/prudence”) seem not to hold in the case of the two opposing characters, namely the true Achilles and the false Odysseus. To be more precise, the paradoxical situation results from the following two positions: a. Hippias’ account of the false who are δυνατοί and therefore φρόνιμοι, ἐπιστάμενοι and σοφοί on the one hand, and b. the assertion that “the true and the false are different and opposed of each other” (ἄλλους δὲ τοὺς ἀληθεῖς τε καὶ ψευδεῖς, καὶ ἐναντιωτάτους ἀλλήλοις, 366a5-6) on the other hand.¹⁹⁹ In the present case, we are simply not able to understand how the ψευδεῖς can share positive features, which usually belong to the ἀληθεῖς, and still be different than or opposed to the true.²⁰⁰

In order to give an answer in line with Hippias’ distinction between true and false individuals, Socrates identifies a further point of concern, namely the question of the free will

¹⁹⁸ Balaudé 2004: p. 99, note 1: “*Sophoi*. Le context montre que le terme ne peut être pris que dans le sens d’une compétence dans un domaine donné; “savant” ferait ici faux sens.”

¹⁹⁹ In this context, Pradeau and Fronterotta prefer to talk about a paradox called a sort of “volontarisme irrationaliste”; 2005: p. 199, note 17.

²⁰⁰ Cf. also Jantzen 1989: p. 44: “Hippias’ urprüngliche These verlangt einen gleichsam gebrochenen Blick auf die beiden Helden Achill und Odysseus; sie muß sagen, *inwiefern* (κατά τι) der eine *besser* ist als der andere.”

(366b2-3): [...] δυνατοὺς εἶναι ψεύδεσθαι ἐὰν βούλωνται, ἢ ἀδυνάτους [...]. A little later on, he also uses the terms “involuntarily” (ἄκων, 367a3) and “voluntarily” (ἐκών, 370e8) in relation to the false persons, who best utilize their abilities “concerning all the sciences” (κατὰ πασῶν τῶν ἐπιστημῶν, 368a8-b1) if done ἐκών as opposed to ἄκων. By contrast a man who “does not have the power to deceive people” (ἀδύνατος ψεύδεσθαι) and is “ignorant” (ἄμαθής),²⁰¹ can never be called “false” (ψευδής, 366b6-7). And even in the case where the ἄμαθής intends to say something wrong, and involuntarily tells the truth, he will not demonstrate any ability and could never be better than the false man, in terms of being a better deceiver. For the false man knows the truth and therefore deliberately chooses to utter falsehoods always and uniformly, and not just by accident (366e1-367a5). Consequently, the false person is different from both the ignorant person and the true person: he differs from the true person in so far as he knows the true about a particular thing, but deliberately chooses to deceive people,²⁰² and he differs from the ignorant person in so far as he never utters falsehood involuntarily or by accident.²⁰³

But these sophistic arguments do not seem to convince Socrates, who forces himself to reach beyond rhetorical persuasion concerning what is a true and what is a false character by examining other consequences that result from Hippias’ underlying point of view. He therefore continues to argue that if Hippias is “the most powerful and wise” (δυνατότατός τε καὶ σοφώτατος, 366d2) in, for example, arithmetic calculations (366c6),²⁰⁴ he must also be “the best” (ἄριστος, 366d4) in the same discipline. Socrates further claims that if Hippias is the best, he must equally be good in deliberately telling the correct as well as the wrong answer of a simple calculation. Given that the best must also be “the good and the true” (ὁ ἀγαθὸς καὶ ἀληθής, 367c5-6), it follows that “the false and the true men are one and the same [...], and that the true man is in no sense better than the false man” (ὅτι ὁ αὐτὸς ψευδής τε καὶ ἀληθής [...], καὶ οὐδὲν ἀμείνων ὁ ἀληθής τοῦ ψευδοῦς, 367c7-9). Note that Socrates will later maintain that the true and the false men are “similar” (ὅμοιοι, 369b7) to each other rather than identical with each other.²⁰⁵ Consequently, Hippias’ previous assurance that the false person is not only different from the ignorant one, but also different from and opposed to the true person (366a5-

²⁰¹ On the use of the term ἄμαθής in Herodotus as opposed to Plato, cf. e.g. Pinjuh 2014: pp. 133-134.

²⁰² Zeitler 1983: p. 36.

²⁰³ Regarding the main problem which lies behind this line of reasoning, cf. e.g. Pradeau & Fronterotta 2005: p. 199, note 19: “[...], car s’il est vrai que les hommes les plus savants sont les meilleurs et qu’ils sont aussi les plus trompeurs, il faudra en conclure que ce sont justement les hommes les meilleures qui sont les plus trompeurs.”

²⁰⁴ Other disciplines in which Hippias presents himself as being skillfull are geometry (367d5-e7) and astronomy (367e8-368a11). On the status of these disciplines in Plato’s dialogues, c.f. e.g. Pinjuh 2014: pp. 134-136.

²⁰⁵ To this point, cf. e.g. Pinjuh 2014: p. 162, note 479.

6), represents a considerable relativisation in the present context.²⁰⁶ And it will be Socrates' task to demonstrate the untenability of Hippias' point of view, which will not permit him to cease from the straying (376b8-c6).²⁰⁷

1.3.3. What lessons can be drawn from the aporetic structure?

1.3.3.1. *The prima facie interpretation: Socrates' struggle with "wise men"*

What is it that forces Socrates and Hippias to end the dialogue with the paradox mentioned above? An initial answer²⁰⁸ to this question can be articulated as follows: neither Hippias²⁰⁹ nor Socrates are willing to accept the outcome that committing injustice voluntarily is superior to committing it involuntarily (376b7-8). For it cannot be the case, that a person who is supposed to exemplify such superior behavior is in the end "the good man, [who] has a good soul" (ὁ ἀγαθὸς ἀγαθὴν ψυχὴν ἔχει, 376b3-4).²¹⁰ Yet, they both agree that these conclusions inevitably result from their line of reasoning (ἀλλ' ἀναγκαῖον οὕτω φαίνεσθαι νῦν γε ἡμῖν ἐκ τοῦ λόγου, 376b8-c1). It is therefore important to acknowledge that Hippias is free to conceptualize and theorize about moral issues. But the measure of the truth of such things must remain the way of the *logos*,²¹¹ rather than the memorization and reproduction of the Homeric epics.²¹²

The reference to ἐκ τοῦ λόγου (376c1) poses an interesting challenge, because it shows that Hippias' account of false and true characters cannot withstand Socrates' criticism, a criticism which should not be interpreted as being based on Socrates' wish to mislead and/or

²⁰⁶ Cf. also Pradeau & Fronterotta 2005: p. 200, note 20: "Platon va montrer que les faiblesses exégétiques du sophiste ne sont que l'une des manifestations de son ignorance."

²⁰⁷ Socrates' ignorance is not absolute if we bear in mind that he at least manages to free his interlocutor from his errors. The fundamental problem for Socrates is rather the inability to come up with a positive solution for the ethical dilemma presented in the *Hippias Minor*.

²⁰⁸ A second and profound answer will be given in the following section.

²⁰⁹ Cf. also Pradeau & Fronterotta 2005: p. 203, note 37: "On pourrait en déduire que cet « immoraliste » n'est pas vraiment prêt à soutenir jusqu'au fond les conséquences de sa propre éthique, et qu'il n'arrive donc pas à reconnaître que l'homme le plus savant est celui qui fait le mal, et vice versa."

²¹⁰ See also M, Erler 1987: p. 137.

²¹¹ A more detailed account of the applied logical terminology is given by Kahn 1996: p. 120.

²¹² The historical Hippias was known for his rhetorical speeches, which were compiled from various texts by renowned poets (DK 86 B 6). Whether he lacked philosophical skills, as the example of Plato's Hippias suggests, is difficult to discern clearly. For if we are to believe Xenophon's report, Hippias was able to defend his claims in a much more determined and consistent manner than the Platonic Hippias (*Memorabilia* IV 4, 5-25). For more information about Xenophon's reference, see, for example, Pradeau 2009: pp. 171-172, note 13.

insult²¹³ his interlocutor, but rather results from the coercive force of the impersonal *logos* itself. Socrates is nevertheless exposed to the accusation that his detailed survey method is not appropriate. Hippias, for example, blames Socrates for choosing the most difficult topics and focusing exclusively on them without keeping the whole issue in sight (καὶ οὐχ ὅλῳ ἀγωνίζῃ τῷ πράγματι περὶ οὗτου ἅν ὁ λόγος ἦ, 369c1-2).²¹⁴ This accusation loses substance if we consider the fact that Hippias does not engage with the details of Socrates' objections, but rather promises to come up with new arguments taken from the Homeric epics.²¹⁵ It should be clear that the necessity with which Socrates follows the right *logos* is of a different type than the necessity with which Hippias tries to defend his position. Socrates is guided by his “desire to learn” (ἐπιθυμῶν μαθεῖν, 369d4) from the wise men in order to know what beautiful speeches consist of.²¹⁶ Hippias, by contrast, is worried about his reputation as a public speaker. He must therefore prevent himself from losing the verbal exchange with Socrates, since this might drive potential customers away, leading to the loss of his major source of revenue. In short, one of the parties is driven by the will to know the truth with respect to moral judgments, the other by the fear of losing his reputation as a teacher and, by extension, his income.²¹⁷

The obvious discrepancy between Socrates' serious philosophical endeavour and Hippias' personal, as well as economic interests, is, in fact, unbridgeable. The only way for Hippias to cooperate with Socrates is therefore to stick to a generally accepted source, such as the Homeric epics from which he extracts his arguments about the moral evaluation of characters. In 370e5-9, for example, he critically addresses Socrates' interpretation of Homer – i.e. that there is no difference between Achilles and Odysseus because they both end up in a similar condition with respect to telling lies – saying: “You aren't examining it in the right manner, Socrates.” (οὐ γὰρ καλῶς σκοπεῖς, ὦ Σώκρατες, 370e5). And he goes on to argue that Achilles and Odysseus are not equal because the former lies “involuntarily” (ἄκων) due to his “guilelessness” (εὐήθεια)²¹⁸, while the latter does so “voluntarily and by treachery” (ἐκὼν τε καὶ ἐξ ἐπιβουλῆς, 370e5-9). This leaves entirely open the possibility that even Achilles might lie voluntarily, since, according to Hippias's account, he lies in some sense because of his guilelessness. But since guilelessness is not identical with ignorance, Achilles is able to lie not only involuntarily but also voluntarily, as Socrates tries to point out. Instead of arguing further

²¹³ *Hippias Minor* 373b4-5: ἀλλὰ Σωκράτης, ὦ Εὐδিকে, ἀεὶ ταραττεῖ ἐν τοῖς λόγοις καὶ ἔοικεν ὥσπερ κακουργοῦντι.

²¹⁴ On this point, see also *Hippias Major* 301b2-7, 304a4-b6; *Gorgias* 489b f.

²¹⁵ Cf. also Pinjuh 2014: pp. 162-166.

²¹⁶ Cf. also *Hippias Major* 297e3: ὑπὸ ἐπιθυμίας τοῦ εἰδέναι, 304c-d; *Euthydemus* 272b1-4.

²¹⁷ Cf. *Hippias Major* 300d.

²¹⁸ Reading εὐηθείας in 371e1.

for his position and for his understanding of the different characters of Achilles and Odysseus, Hippias prefers to simply attack Socrates on a general level by accusing him of being vicious (373b4-5). In this sense, Hippias refuses to believe that there are honest motives behind Socrates' argumentation, although the latter in fact wants "to heal the soul" (ιάσασθαι τὴν ψυχὴν, 372e7) from error, particularly regarding the ambivalent assessment that committing injustice voluntarily is superior to doing so involuntarily. Hence Socrates can and will remain loyal to the paradox after his explicit recognition of the force of the logos,²¹⁹ but he will have to continue the inquiry into the questions of whether there can be such a man (εἴπερ τίς ἔστιν οὗτος, 376b5-6), who can do wrong things voluntarily and whether the world governed by sophists is the right one for him. Hippias, by contrast, does not recognize any other aims in life than fame and honor, which he achieves with the help of rhetorical speeches.²²⁰ And as long as he is in search of potential listeners and their wallets, he will have to remain faithful to his supposedly beautiful speeches.

1.3.3.2. *The pseudo-lovers of wisdom vs. the philosopher king in the Republic*

What are the deeper reasons why the dialogue between Socrates and Hippias ends in an *aporia*? This question can best be answered by further exploring Socrates' daily encounters with the supposedly wise men. In the context of the *Apology*, which I have discussed above, Socrates pursues his ethical mission of questioning and observing whether he is wiser than all others, by addressing different experts personally. The outcome is twofold: first, each of them "appears to be wise" (δοκεῖν μὲν εἶναι σοφός, 21c6), "but is not so" (εἶναι δ' οὐ, 21c7), and second, each of them deduces from one particular form of expertise (statesmanship, poetry and craftsmanship) that he must also "be very wise in the other most important matters" (τὰλλα τὰ μέγιστα σοφώτατος εἶναι, 22d7-8). Socrates' encounter with Hippias in the *Hippias Minor* leads to the same results. Hippias is portrayed as a wise man at the beginning of the dialogue, worthy of receiving a "monument of wisdom" (τῆς σοφίας ἀνάθημα, 364b2), but by the end, his inability to justify his claims and his stubborn refusal to admit to his ignorance cast his credibility in a poor light. Furthermore, Socrates makes clear through persistent critical questioning that Hippias' polymathy is not the right method for achieving knowledge about the

²¹⁹ Cf. also *Hippias Major* 295b4-5, 304c ff.

²²⁰ *Hippias Major* 286a3-5.

most important matters. In a certain sense, Plato wants to point out to his readers that the acquisition of wisdom can be achieved neither through one form of expertise alone²²¹ nor through many disparate ones, but rather involves a long and systematic learning process. This is because the philosopher does not have a preference for one or many disparate fields of expertise, but a deep longing for the truth as a whole (*Republic* 475b8-9). The writing of the *Republic* and *Laws* no less than the foundation of the Academy all serve here as examples of what the Platonic educational ideal is and how it should be realised. With reference to the *Hippias Minor*, Hippias' "curiosity after knowledge or meddlesomeness" (πολυπραγμοσύνη)²²² seems to be considered the worst example of erudition, because precisely this activity leads to "injustice" (ἀδικία). For if we are to believe what is said in the *Republic*, the possibility of creating a just state and becoming a good person exists only if each individual limits himself to doing his own work (τὸ τὰ ἑαυτοῦ πράττειν, 433a8, b4, d4),²²³ without thereby meddling in the affairs of others (433a-434d), and if everyone voluntarily follows the norms imposed by a philosopher king. In order to achieve this ideal, passing traders who show themselves, in all kinds of ways, as being able to imitate²²⁴ everything and give fine speeches – no doubt, Hippias is one of these – are asked to leave the city in order to protect it from the harmful effects of ill-advised poetry (398a-b).

But a much greater problem for Socrates is to understand *how* "this appearing and seeming, but not being and this saying things, but not true things" (τὸ γὰρ φαίνεσθαι τοῦτο καὶ τὸ δοκεῖν, εἶναι δὲ μὴ, καὶ τὸ λέγειν μὲν ἅπαντα, ἀληθῆ δὲ μὴ, *Sophist* 236e1-2) is possible, i.e. how a supposedly wise man, such as Hippias, can appear to be wise even though he is not. In fact, the baffling conclusions that the true and the false man are identical, or at least similar, and that lying voluntarily is better than lying involuntarily exemplify the *problem of appearing* along with the *problem of falsehood* from an ethical-moral perspective. While one part of the solution to these puzzle is elaborated by Socrates to a great extent – though not exclusively –

²²¹ Among the supposedly wise men, who falsely assume that wisdom can be deduced from a particular form of expertise, we may also count Protagoras. The fact that he dissociates himself from Hippias' teaching method, containing a variety of learning subjects, and his insistence on teaching one subject only, i.e. "good counsel" (εὐβουλία) (*Protagoras* 318d-319a), is viewed by Socrates as the wrong approach to achieving virtue.

²²² At *Republic* 434b7, *passim*, Socrates uses the term πολυπραγμοσύνη in order to explain the causes of injustice. In this context, Hippias' name is not mentioned explicitly, but it is not difficult to guess that the sophists such as Hippias also count among those individuals who interfere in other people's businesses and who are, therefore, responsible for the ruin of a state no less than for the "discord" (στάσις, 444b1, *passim*) among different parts of the soul. On Plato's use of the term πολυπραγμοσύνη, see, for example, Ehrenberg 1947: pp. 60-61.

²²³ Cf. also *Charmides* 161d2 and *Gorgias* 526c3-4.

²²⁴ As the *Sophist* teaches us, the decisive factor in assessing the figure of the sophist is his ability to "imitate" (μιμεῖσθαι) the wise man. See also *Gorgias* 465b1-e1, where "sophistry and rhetoric" (σοφιστική καὶ ῥητορική) are presented as imitating two branches of politics called "legislation and justice" (νομοθετική καὶ δικαιοσύνη).

in the *Republic*, the other metaphysically oriented answers are presented by the Stranger from Elea in the *Sophist*. However, scholars have often argued that the arguments in the *Hippias Minor* are invalid because of Socrates' devious use of equivocations.²²⁵ It is argued in particular that concepts like *agathon*, *ameinon* and *hekon* are used equivocally by shifting between their two meanings: *dunamis* and *tropos*. On Mulhern's interpretation, then, the terms *agathon* and *hekon* can refer either to abilities or skills (*dunamis* meaning), or to typical conduct (*tropos* meaning). That the authenticity of the *Hippias Minor* is not wholly contested is due to the fact that Aristotle explicitly mentions the dialogue in *Metaphysics* Δ 29, 1025a ff.²²⁶ Instead what has been questioned is whether the arguments presented in the *Hippias Minor* are fallacious and whether their conclusions are immoral. *Contra* Mulhern and others, Weiss accepts the arguments as valid, arguing that Socrates does not use different terms equivocally, but rather works with the *dunamis* meaning in a consistent manner.²²⁷ Yet, Weiss leaves the question open as to why Plato has "Socrates wonder if there are any such men (εἴπερ τις ἔδτιν οὗτος. – 376b5-6)"²²⁸ who can do wrong things intentionally. In response to Weiss, Erler²²⁹ convincingly shows that such a man indeed exists (even if only in theory)²³⁰ and thus that the morality of the conclusions of the *Hippias Minor* being should not be contested. In particular, with reference to the *Republic* and *Statesman*, Erler argues that only the philosopher king, who has the required knowledge of absolute moral goodness, is allowed to lie as long as it benefits the city and its inhabitants.²³¹ However, what is lacking from Erler's account is an awareness of the fact that the ethical and political solution to the *paradoxes* obtained in the *Hippias Minor* is only one part of the story. The other is the necessity of becoming attentive to *the metaphysical background of the problem of lying or falsehood*. As the *Sophist* shows, tackling this fundamental issue will constitute a turning point in Plato's search for the *genos* of the sophist, not least because the introduction of the idea of Nonbeing into the realm of Being will finally open up a suitable understanding of the existence of falsehood and the possibility of appearing.

Socrates' puzzlement about how the pseudo-lovers of wisdom, such as Hippias, can appear wise even though, in reality, they are not, and how they can say things that are not true,

²²⁵ Mulhern 1968: pp. 238-288; Sprague 1962: pp. 65-79; Guthrie 1975 and Kahn 1996: pp. 113-124.

²²⁶ See also *NE* VI, 5, 1140b21-24.

²²⁷ Weiss 1981: pp. 287-304. Cf. also Zembaty 1989: pp. 51-69, who further refines Weiss' argumentation and, thus, arrives at different conclusions.

²²⁸ Weiss 1981: p. 304.

²²⁹ Erler 1987: pp. 121-144.

²³⁰ Erler 1987: p. 141.

²³¹ Erler 1987: pp. 139-140.

is not explicitly present in the *Hippias Minor*, and yet it casts a long shadow over the whole dialogue. This pervasive perplexity takes us in one leap to the discussion in the *Hippias Major*, where Socrates makes a renewed attempt to interrogate Hippias' alleged knowledge. That this endeavour to reveal the deeper cause of falsehood will not suffice either, remains to be shown what follows.

1.4. The *Hippias Major*

It does not seem possible to interpret the *Hippias Major* without saying a few words about the authenticity of the dialogue. As is well-known, doubts about the work's genuineness were first raised by Friedrich Schleiermacher at the beginning of the 19th century. Until this time, all ancient authors,²³² as well as modern ones up until the 19th century, considered the *Greater Hippias* to be a genuine dialogue. A little more than 100 years later, Dorothy Tarrant produced numerous publications²³³ in which she advocated for considering it spurious on the basis of arguments concerning chronology and stylistic particularities of the dialogue.²³⁴ One of her strongest opponents who defended the authenticity of the dialogue was G. M. A. Grube.²³⁵ Although most modern scholars accept the authenticity of the *Greater Hippias*,²³⁶ the debate is still ongoing.

The present study aims at strengthening the thematic link between the *Hippias Minor* and *Hippias Major* and, in addition, providing evidence for the authenticity of the latter.²³⁷ The whole point of analysing the paradoxes in the *Hippias Minor* was to uncover Socrates' fundamental puzzlement about how Hippias can appear wise even though he is not so. There,

²³² Aristotle e.g. mentions the *Lesser Hippias* Minor in *Metaph.* 1025a6, but not the *Greater Hippias*. It must be added though that arguments concerning questions about the status of beauty are present in other of his works, such as e.g. *Topics* 102a6; 135a12 ff. where Aristotle discusses the two notions καλόν and πρέπον. This may be read as a reference to *Greater Hippias* 293e4-5.

²³³ Tarrant 1976; 1927: pp. 82-87; 1920: pp. 319-331.

²³⁴ As for the authors before and after Tarrant who defend the spuriousness of the dialogue, Hoerber in his article 'Plato's *Greater Hippias*' (1964: p. 143) mentions the following: Ast, Ueberweg, Zeller, Horneffer, F.W. Röllig, Zilles, Bruns, Jowett, Windelband, Goedeckemeyer, Gomperz, Pohlenz, Wilamowitz. Other authors such as Moreau, Kahn, Heitsch and Corey may also be added to the list.

²³⁵ Grube 1929: pp. 369-375; 1926 (a): pp. 134-148; 1926 (b): pp. 188-189.

²³⁶ Cf. again Hoerber, who denominates the defenders of its genuineness (1964: p. 143): Socher, Steinhart, Susemihl, Munk, K.F. Hermann, Stallbaum, G. Burges, Dümmler, Apelt, Vrijlandt, Wichmann, Dupréel, Adam, Burnet, Mauersberger, Raeder, Ritter, von Arnim, Cornford, Shorey, A.E. Taylor, P. Friedländer, Ross and M. Soreth. To these, I would add five more scholars: Pradeau, Hoerber himself, Sider, Malcolm, and Woodruff.

²³⁷ And even if we deny Plato's authorship of the *Greater Hippias*, the question of how the topics discussed in the dialogue are to be interpreted, should not be regarded as negligible since they may refer, inter alia, to the intellectual background of Plato's Academy. On this point, see Heitsch 2011: p. 8.

Hippias' ability to bewitch with words stood in sharp contrast to his inability to admit his ignorance of moral issues. It is this very experience which forces Socrates to continue the search for truth by resuming his conversations with Hippias. However, the new set of circumstances in the *Hippias Major* makes clear that Socrates has learnt some lessons from his previous conversation and thus, that his way of proceeding will require more profound immersion in the content discussed. The problem of appearing wise and beautiful will be analysed in more depth, but from a perspective that is much more familiar to Socrates. For rather than turning once more towards Hippias' rhetorical declarations, Socrates will break with the usual rhetorical practices and analyse the problem of appearing wise and beautiful from the point of view of Beauty itself. The emergence of concepts of Beauty, Justice, Wisdom and the Good (*Hippias Major* 287c)²³⁸ will, in fact, encourage Socrates to elaborate a more abstract theoretical background against which Hippias' alleged wisdom will be measured.

First, we shall start with some remarks about the hidden beauty competition between Hippias and Socrates and the utility of Hippias' rhetorical skills. We shall then emphasize Socrates' break with the usual rhetorical practices as the starting point for the philosophical discussion, containing Hippias' three different definitions of Beauty. Finally, we will make some final remarks about Hippias and Socrates.

1.4.1. The Opening Scene

1.4.1.1. *The hidden beauty competition between Hippias and Socrates*

At the beginning of the dialogue, Plato indirectly introduces the subject to be studied by means of Socrates' exclamation (281a1): Ἰππίας ὁ καλός τε καὶ σοφός [...].²³⁹ Yet, readers of Plato, who know Socrates well, may be amused but not surprised to learn why a person like Hippias is called καλός τε καὶ σοφός. That Hippias is neither wise nor beautiful – as far as his soul is concerned – is in fact the main reason for Socrates' irony, a point which becomes clearer as the discussion between the two proceeds. In the *Lesser Hippias*, it is Hippias' lack of wisdom

²³⁸ That Socrates is most familiar with the Forms of Justice, Beauty and the Good – and that he prefers to return to them whenever he is faced with difficult philosophical questions – is stated at *Parmenides* 130bc.

²³⁹ A few lines later, Socrates also calls Hippias a “truly wise and perfect man” (τῇ ἀληθείᾳ σοφόν τε καὶ τέλειον ἄνδρα, 281b5-6). Interestingly, Plato even calls Parmenides καλὸν δὲ κάγαθὸν τὴν ὄψιν (*Parm.* 127b2-3). As regards the meaning of καλός τε καὶ σοφός cf. e.g. Heitsch 2011: pp. 42-47.

which is broadly exhibited, in the *Greater Hippias* it is Hippias' lack of knowledge about beauty that will cast his own inner beauty in a bad light. In a sense, the hidden beauty competition between Socrates and Hippias is an expression of Plato's attempt to awaken the readers' attention to unexpected perspectives: Socrates will not win the challenge when it comes to external beauty because of his universally acknowledged ugliness.²⁴⁰ Hippias, on the other hand, is described as being "so beautifully clothed and beautifully shod" (καλῶς μὲν οὕτως ἄμπεχομένῳ, καλῶς δὲ ὑποδεδεμένῳ, 291a6-7),²⁴¹ and this description serves as a foil for comparison with Socrates who is often portrayed as wearing no shoes and a shoddy coat.²⁴² But his inner beauty pales beside that of Socrates who acknowledges his ignorance with respect to the question of what beauty is, but nevertheless continues the pursuit of healing his own soul (304b-e).

1.4.1.2. *The utility of Hippias' skills for handling of public affairs?*

Beauty and wisdom are not only needed for the proper care of one's inner life, so that a person who tries to acquire both may achieve the goal of a better life. Beauty, wisdom or in general "virtue" (ἀρετή) are, inter alia, also required when it comes to responsibly administering public affairs (283b-284d). This view is supported by Hippias' first words in the dialogue, in which he prides himself on having been chosen as an "envoy" (πρεσβευτήν, 281a5)²⁴³ to deliver public services to his hometown Elis (281b). Through his sophistic teaching and public speeches Hippias, like other sophists, became not only rich and famous, but also caught the attention of politicians who flocked to his door to benefit from his skills (τέχνη), as well as taking him at his word, when he promises to teach "virtue" (ἀρετή) to other people in the best way.²⁴⁴ To better understand Hippias' power of attraction, Socrates asks him why the old men

²⁴⁰ See Plato's famous description of Socrates' appearance in *Symposium* 215a-217a where Socrates is compared with Silenus. Cf. also *Theaet.* 143e.

²⁴¹ Cf. also Pradeau & Fronterotta 2005: p. 130, note 105: "[...], l'entretien évoquera la distinction de la beauté réelle et de la beauté apparente." On the opposition between καλῶς μὲν ... καλῶς δὲ ... see Tarrant 1976: p. 55: "The rhetorical style here, and the repetition of καλῶς with obvious point [...], are clearly intended as a gibe at Hippias."

²⁴² Cf. e.g. Xenophon, *Mem.* 1. 6. 2; Aristophanes *Clouds* 103, 363; Plato *Symp.* 220b, see also 173b where Aristodemus, an eager student of Socrates, is described as wearing no shoes, *Phdr.* 229a; *DL* 2, 28.

²⁴³ Concerning Hippias' role as ambassador, cf. e.g. Brunschwig 1984: pp. 269-276.

²⁴⁴ 284a1-4: ΣΩ. ἐν δέ γε ταῖς εὐνόμοις πόλεσιν τιμώτατον ἢ ἀρετή. – ΠΙ. πάνυ γε. – ΣΩ. σὺ δὲ ταύτην παραδιδόναι ἄλλω κάλλιστ' ἀνθρώπων ἐπίστασαι. – ΠΙ. καὶ πολὺ γε, ὃ Σώκρατες. The ability to teach virtue was indeed generally claimed by all the sophists.

– such as Pittacus, Bias, Thales and others down to Anaxagoras –,²⁴⁵ who are still famous for wisdom abstained from dealing with politics if such engagements would have been useful to the public (281c).²⁴⁶ Hippias answers briefly and succinctly that “they were incapable and not competent in virtue of their wisdom to grasp both areas, the public and the private” (ἀδύνατοι ἦσαν καὶ οὐχ ἱκανοὶ ἐξικνεῖσθαι φρονήσει ἐπ’ ἀμφοτέρεα, τὰ τε κοινὰ καὶ τὰ ἴδια, 281c9-d2).²⁴⁷ If we are to believe Aristotle, who in his *Nicomachean Ethics* VI, 1141b3-8 writes that people, such as Anaxagoras, Thales and other wise men, know many fine, though “useless” (ἄχρηστα), things, “because they do not search the human goods” (ὅτι οὐ τὰ ἀνθρώπινα ἀγαθὰ ζητοῦσιν), then we may assume that Hippias is right in scolding the men of old for having ignored certain domains of human occupation – for people need to be guided by a wise man who should give good laws in order to live well.

One of the inconsistencies regarding Hippias’ critical attitude towards his predecessors is that not all of the wise men abstained from engaging publicly. On this point, see, for example, Woodruff’s instructive comments:

The men Socrates mentions did not abstain from affairs of state, but Hippias chooses to proceed as if this absurdity were true, rather than to refuse Socrates’ praise. Socrates has set directly to making a fool of Hippias.

Pittacus ruled in Mytilene for ten years, about 600 B.C., and was famous as a lawgiver. Bias was famous as a statesman or Priene, about 570 B.C. Thales, who is said to have predicted the eclipse of 585 B.C., was the foremost of the seven sages, and at least a forerunner of pre-Socratic philosophy. He also was famous for practical statesmanship (Herodotus I, 170).²⁴⁸

Regarding these observations, it may to some extent seem strange that Hippias pretends to be wiser than the men of old who did indeed engage politically. One can, admittedly, say that

²⁴⁵ Though not explicitly mentioned by Socrates, we should add the old Parmenides to this list and conclude that he, according to Hippias, must also be called “worthless” (φαῦλος, 281d5) in comparison with the new sophists (281d ff.), since he did not engage in the political sphere. Whether or not Parmenides completely abstained from engaging publicly can be questioned on the basis of Speusippus’ report, according to which Parmenides also gave laws to his city (DL IX.23).

²⁴⁶ Regarding the name of the wise men cf. e.g. Tarrant 1976: pp. 31-32: “οἱ παλαιοὶ ἐκεῖνοι, κτλ. Evidently a reference to the tradition of the ἑπτὰ σοφοί. Pittacus, Bias, Thales and Solon appear in all the lists, which otherwise vary. The earliest extant, in *Prot.* 343a, gives Thales, Pittacus, Bias, Solon, Cleobulus, Myson, Chilon.” According to Balaudé 2004: p. 216, note 1, Socrates is using the register of the catalogue of the sages which was established by Hippias himself.

²⁴⁷ On this point, cf. e.g. Soreth 1953, p. 8: “So deutet Hippias die Frage aus, um seine geistige Überlegenheit herauszustellen.”

²⁴⁸ Woodruff 1982: p. 37, note 6. Regarding Anaxagoras, a few lines later, Woodruff writes the following: “Anaxagoras (c. 500-c. 428), a philosopher in whom Socrates took special interest (*Phaedo* 97c), gave a preeminent position in his system to *nous* (“intelligence”). For the tradition about his financial acumen, see Diogenes Laertius II.7, who reports that Anaxagoras gave his wealth to his relatives when they complained he was neglecting it.” (1982: p. 39, note 23). Cf. also Schiappa 2003: p. 176: “Virtually all of the presocratic philosophers were actively involved in the political affairs of their time.”

Hippias is less concerned with telling the truth about the men of old than he is about getting attention from anyone willing to pay for his services, by shedding a disgraceful light on his potential rivals. The worst problem is, however, not why Hippias makes no attempt to correct Socrates' statements, but rather the observation that Hippias is wrong in complaining about the fact that those who lived earlier did not recognize how much money they would have gained if they had engaged in public affairs (282b-283b). The men of old simply valued other things more than money. Hippias' intent to deny the wisdom, i.e. the inner beauty of earlier men, because of their unwillingness to concern themselves with money, is simply his way of competing with other sophists in order to gain market advantage. Hence, it can be said that Hippias' affected attitude, which opposes Socrates' endeavour to get to the bottom of things without thinking about money, significantly diminishes the attraction behind "the progressive art of the sophists" (τὴν τῶν σοφιστῶν τέχνην ἐπιδεδωκέναι, 281d5-6).²⁴⁹ In all of this, Hippias' sophistical τέχνη and his educational promises represent not so much an improvement with respect to the preoccupations of earlier wise men as it is an indirect reference to the rising generational conflicts which harbours the risk of undermining the confidence in the Greek tradition.

1.4.2. Socrates' break with the usual rhetorical practices

There are other reasons why Hippias' apparent beauty and wisdom has a negative impact on the beauty of public institutions which are regulated by useful "laws" (νόμοι)²⁵⁰ and allow citizens to live under "good government" (εὐνομία, 284d5).²⁵¹ More important than his practical motivations for earning money –, is the fact that Plato presents him as someone who possesses no knowledge about "what beauty itself is" (τί ἐστὶ τὸ καλόν).²⁵² Before looking at

²⁴⁹ The question about progress can be evaluated in different manners. Sider, for example, speaks about Hippias' belief in progress in the arts in general and he interprets the dialogue as a hint for Plato's early aesthetics. Furthermore, he concludes that the dialogue can be read as "a theory of aesthetics which ignores ethics and morality" (1977: p. 465) despite his awareness that this can be regarded as a dangerous interpretative step (1977: pp. 465-470). The idea of progress is also present in Plato's *Protagoras* where the sophist Protagoras describes a mythical view of history (320c-328d). Cf. also Balaudé 2004: p. 217, note 1.

²⁵⁰ Regarding the utility of the laws, cf. e.g. Woodruff 1982: p. 41, note 32.

²⁵¹ Concerning the meaning of the term, cf. e.g. Hesiod's *Theogony* 902, where *Eunomia* is personified as daughter of Themis; see also Pi. O. 9.16, 13.6; B. 12.186, D.25.11.

²⁵² In the *Republic*, Socrates calls those people, who love beautiful things, but who have no real knowledge about what beauty itself is, the "lovers of sounds and sights" (φιλήκοοι καὶ φιλοθεάμονες, 476b4). That Hippias counts among these sight-lovers was first acknowledged by Burnyeat 1988 and was later also defended by Palmer 1999: pp. 59-66.

this portrayal closely, let it first be noted why Socrates chooses to discuss the subject of beauty. After a brief introduction in which Hippias explains that he was asked by Lacedaemonians to give speeches about the genealogies of heroes and men and the foundations of ancient cities (285d6-e2) and after he mentions his “very beautiful speech” (παγκάλως λόγος, 286a5) about “what the beautiful pursuits are” (ποῖά ἐστι καλὰ ἐπιτηδεύματα, 286b1)²⁵³ for a young man, Socrates interrupts and promises him “to give judgment to the discourses” (κρῖναι τὰ λεγόμενα, 286c1-2), “God willing” (ἂν θεὸς θέλῃ, 286c3). It should be said, though, that Socrates indeed discusses Hippias’ public speeches in the *Hippias Minor*, but refuses to do so in the *Hippias Major*. The reason for this is that after having applied the usual rhetorical practices by praising certain discourse for their beauty and by condemning others for their badness, he was embarrassed by a man²⁵⁴ who asked him the following questions: “But, Socrates, how do you know what beautiful and what ugly is? Look, could you say what the beautiful is?” (πόθεν δέ μοι σύ, ἔφη, ὃ Σώκρατες, οἶσθα ὅποια καλὰ καὶ αἰσχρά; ἐπεὶ φέρε, ἔχοις ἂν εἰπεῖν τί ἐστι τὸ καλόν; 286c8-d2).²⁵⁵ Yet, the inquirer receives no answer. In principal, Socrates has no hesitation about judging sophistic discourses, but he falls silent when the person in question begins to interrogate his own level of knowledge because he recognizes his non-existent power of judgement concerning the τί ἐστι question about τὸ καλόν. Consequently, Socrates chooses to take the critical voices very seriously and regards it as a turning-point in his previous argumentative behaviour. In view of how he treated other people and their discourses before,²⁵⁶ he now should be angry with himself and blame himself (286d4). This is because Socrates finally realizes that it is not the rhetorical speeches, which were presented to him as well as to a wider audience, that deserve to be criticised, but rather his naïve adherence to the usual rhetorical practices. Thus, Socrates is not content with being upset, but chooses to seek out for

²⁵³ Note that the adjective “beautiful” (καλός, καλή, καλόν) and the adverb “beautifully” (καλῶς) are constantly in use. Abstraction is made from the discussion about beauty itself: 281a1, 282b1, 282d6, 283a8, 284a3, 284a4, 285b8, 286a4, 286b4, 286c5, 286c7, 286d1, 286d8, 287d10, 287e5, 291a6, 291a7, 291d4, 295b4, 296b2, 297b7, 297b9, 297c1, 297d3-4, 299b8, 300d5, 304a7, 304c8, 304d6, 304e1. Interestingly enough, Homer uses the adverb καλῶς only once (*Odyssey*, II, 63)!

²⁵⁴ The reference to “someone” (τις) is often used as a major reason for questioning the authenticity of the *Hippias Major*. Regarding the philosophical importance of the anonymous in Plato’s dialogues, however, I agree with Edelstein’s conclusion which is equally valid for the *Hippias Major*: “Thus the dialogues always divert attention from the person of Socrates and direct it to the truth; they always appeal not to his authority but rather to the strength of his arguments. The name of Socrates obviously counts for little.”; Edelstein 1962: p. 17. Cf. also Plass 1964: p. 260: “[...] does Socrates’ personality drop out at the moment of impersonal truth, [...]”. In contrast, see Heitsch (2011: pp. 125-130) who supports the idea that it is Socrates who hides behind the seemingly unknown man, but who does not interpret the second Socrates to be the impersonal force of truth.

²⁵⁵ Cf. also Balaudé 2004: p. 238, note 2, who rightly points out that the anonymous enquirer himself does not explain the relationship between beauty and beautiful things.

²⁵⁶ On this point, cf. the opening scene of *Hippias Minor* 363a, where Eudicus asks Socrates to blame or to praise the *epideixis* previously given by Hippias.

the wise men from whom he hopes to learn more about the issue at stake. Just as the politicians go to Hippias to ask for political advice, so Socrates needs to turn his attention to people who know how things stand. Summing up, the problem of judging the content of Hippias' seemingly beautiful speeches, which was a central issue in the *Lesser Hippias*, now becomes secondary with respect to the transcendent meaning of beauty itself in the *Hippias Major*.²⁵⁷

1.4.3. Hippias' definitions of τὸ καλόν

So does the wise Hippias know more about τὸ καλόν than the ignorant Socrates? With this question, we come back to the previously mentioned statement about Hippias' ignorance with respect to the status of beauty. We saw before that Hippias shares a belief in the progressive evolution of arts, that he thought of earlier wise men as neither competent nor able to combine private and public affairs. His interest in proving that there was a lot of "ignorance" (ἀμαθία) among the men of old comes out in a set of arguments in which he attributes to himself much success in earning money – a success which did not come to his predecessors (281a-283b). Nevertheless, his newly gained wealth may make an impression to most of his fellow citizens – after all, he gave his money to his father (282e5) rather than keeping it for himself –,²⁵⁸ but obviously, it has no influence on Socrates, who interrupts Hippias' self-praise with the following exclamation: "Enough of that" (καὶ ταῦτα μὲν ἱκανῶς ἐχέτω (283b3-4). It might therefore be said that it is Socrates who makes Hippias speak of more important issues than money, such as τὸ καλόν in order to better understand the subject itself as well as the "skill" (τέχνη) that lies behind Hippias' conduct. In this situation, Hippias will gradually and progressively express his point of view, not without first mentioning that the subject to be discussed is "a small one and of no value" (σμικρὸν [...] καὶ οὐδενὸς ἄξιον, 286e5-6). Yet, it is not very difficult to guess that the opposite will soon be shown to be true. For already the failure of the first attempt to give an answer to the question of what beauty is obviously increases the risk of repeated failures. First of all: how does Hippias initially conceive the meaning of τὸ καλόν and why is it not a promising approach in the eyes of Socrates? Before answering this question, it should be noted that we shall pass over Socrates' more interesting

²⁵⁷ In contrast, see Soreth 1953: p. 12.

²⁵⁸ This behaviour towards his father is, in fact, an expression of filial piety justified by Hippias' moral conviction that every man should honor his parents, in life as well as in death. On this, cf. Hippias' third answer to the question about beauty (291d9-e2). Cf. also Woodruff's remark that also Anaxagoras too gave his wealth to his parents; Woodruff 1982, p. 39, note 23.

proposals concerning the notion of beauty (293d6-304e9), although his suggestions are, of course, important for a better understanding of the issue at stake. Of immediate interest is the outcome of the dialogue between Hippias and Socrates at this stage, especially since the passage 281a1-293d5 expresses Hippias' own mindset.

Hippias begins his philosophical exchange with Socrates after the latter had explained to him how the question τί ἐστι τὸ καλόν should be understood: just as the just are just “by justice” (δικαιοσύνη, 287c2),²⁵⁹ the wise wise “by wisdom” (σοφία, 287c5), all the good things good “by the good” (τῷ ἀγαθῷ, 287c6), so must all beautiful things be beautiful “by beauty” (τῷ καλῷ, 287c8). Since both protagonists agree that justice, wisdom, the good and the beautiful are “something” (τι) and not nothing, the immediate question is then what “being something” means in the case of beauty, in other words: what is the thing in virtue of which a thing is *beautiful*? Unfortunately, Hippias is still not sure about the meaning of the fundamental question “What is beauty?” (τί ἐστι τὸ καλόν;) and he therefore asks whether this question is identical with the following: “What is beautiful?” (τί ἐστι καλόν, 287d5).²⁶⁰ Although Socrates denies this identification ([...] οὐ τί ἐστι καλόν, ἀλλ’ ὅτι ἐστι τὸ καλόν, 287d11-e1), Hippias pretends to understand the issue²⁶¹ and presents his seemingly promising idea that “a beautiful girl is a beautiful thing”²⁶² (παρθένος καλὴ καλόν, 287e4). The answer calls for care. For it is worth going slowly through the first as well as the following two answers, not in search of some surprising theory of Plato's account of beauty – the answers to the question of beauty proposed by Socrates in the second part of the dialogue will in fact be put aside – but so that the background shading and details of Hippias' own theoretical framework may emerge.

In the following passages, Socrates adds to the example of the beautiful girl three further exemplars: “a mare” (ἵππος, 288b9),²⁶³ “a lyre” (λύρα, 288c6) and “a pot” (χῦτρα,

²⁵⁹ See Woodruff 1982: p. 45, note 55, who explains that the dative case is also used in *Euthyphro* 6d11 and *Phaedo* 100d7. It is also important to note that although justice is responsible for just things, its causal role is not further clarified; Balaudé 2004: p. 241, note 1. Cf. also Pradeau & Fronterotta 2005: p. 124, note 75.

²⁶⁰ It is interesting to note that the *ti esti* question is, according to Balaudé, “la dernière question directe adressée par l'anonyme (via Socrate) à Hippias.” (2004: p. 243, note 1).

²⁶¹ Cf. also Narcy 1984: p. 89, who points out that Hippias is unable to distinguish between the quality of beauty from the object that possess the quality of beauty.

²⁶² Translation Woodruff 1982: p. 50. This translation opposes to many other translations given by Grote 1888: II, 40, Guthrie 1975: p. 179, note 4) and Nehamas 1975: pp. 299 ff., as Woodruff explains in his commentary. Against the standard translation of παρθένος καλὴ καλόν into “A fine girl is fine” compare Woodruff's convincing argument: ““A fine girl is fine” would be incorrect; the Greek for that tautology would be *parthenos kale kale*. *Parthenos* and *kale* are feminine, but *kalon* is neuter singular.” *ibid*. Cf. also Pradeau & Fronterotta 2005: p. 68, who wrongly nominalize the word καλόν although it has no article: “Le beau, [...], c'est une belle vierge.” Soreth translates παρθένος καλὴ καλόν into „Ein schönes Mädchen ist schön!"; 1953: p. 18. Against this translation see again Woodruff's explanation above.

²⁶³ Note that the region of Elis was known for horse-breeding.

288c10).²⁶⁴ Living beings as well as inanimate objects are qualified as being “beautiful” (καλόν). The respect with which the unknown man, through the mouth of Socrates, treats Hippias’ views is all the more impressive given his profound disagreement with him. Hence one of the main obstacles to Socrates’ believing Hippias is the fact the one and the same object appears “no more beautiful than ugly” (οὐδὲν μᾶλλον καλὸν ἢ αἰσχρόν, 289c5). For just as the finest monkey is ugly if compared to humanity, so the prettiest pot is ugly if compared to a girl, and even the most beautiful girl appears ugly in comparison with the gods (289a3-b7). Of course, Hippias would not deny the relative perspective from which each example is put under examination. In fact, he himself insists that the whole thing “is not worth judging” (οὐκ ἔστιν ἄξιον κρίνειν, 288e8)²⁶⁵ if things with different kinds of perceptual qualities are placed side by side. In a nutshell: the beauty of the aforementioned examples is not absolutely denied by Socrates, but simply relativized.²⁶⁶ A further objection to Hippias’ answer, which Socrates does not mention explicitly, is that a beautiful girl is in no sense a thing through which all other beautiful things – such as a mare, a lyre or a pot – are beautiful. For it is true that all beautiful young women are beautiful in a certain context and from a certain perspective, but not that all beautiful things receive their beauty through a beautiful young woman. A further consequence is that we cannot even know the hierarchy of all things that are beautiful. For example, is a beautiful young woman more beautiful than a beautiful mare or vice-versa?²⁶⁷ To say that Hippias had an absolutely relativistic theory of aesthetics would be an exaggeration, but it is nevertheless evident that a relativizing tendency, as well as the consideration of a limited range of beautiful things, informs his conversation with Socrates.²⁶⁸

In order to take a closer look at these latter aspects, let us shift now to Hippias’ second answer concerning what beauty is. In accordance with the previous arguments, Socrates suggests considering the case of beauty as something “by which everything else is ordered” (ὅ καὶ τᾶλλα πάντα κοσμεῖται, 289d2-3). He also adds that beauty must be equally responsible for making everything else “appear beautiful, when the form (*viz.* of beauty) is added to it” (καλὰ φαίνεται, ἐπειδὴν προσγένηται ἐκεῖνο τὸ εἶδος, 289d3-5).²⁶⁹ The instrumental dative

²⁶⁴ Regarding the example of the pot, cf. Woodruff 1982: p. 53, note 73.

²⁶⁵ Compare also Heitsch’ instructive remarks regarding the historical Socrates’ tendency to use simple examples in his reasoning: 2011: pp. 65-66, note 78.

²⁶⁶ Balaudé 2004: pp. 252-253, note 3 and Pradeau & Fronterotta 2005: pp. 126-127, note 94.

²⁶⁷ Malcolm 1968: p. 191.

²⁶⁸ Cf. also: Soreth 1953: p. 19.

²⁶⁹ Regarding the possibility that Plato may have already established his theory of Forms in the *Greater Hippias* cf. e.g. Grube’s negative assessment (1927: p. 272): “It is important to note that in neither of the two dialogues referred to does he make any use of the theory of ideas. Not a single expression either in the *Gorgias* or the *Hippias Major* need imply that Beauty has any existence of its own apart from the particular objects in which it

which appeared before in the case of justice (287c2), wisdom (287c5), the good (287c6) and beauty (287c8) reappears again and it is only for the second time that it catches Hippias' attention. For he assures Socrates that "it is the easiest thing to answer him what beauty is by which all the other things are adorned and appear beautiful when it (*viz.* the form of beauty) is added" (πάντων ῥᾶστον ἀποκρίνασθαι αὐτῷ τί ἐστὶ τὸ καλὸν ᾧ καὶ τὰ ἄλλα πάντα κοσμεῖται καὶ προσγενομένου αὐτοῦ καλὰ φαίνεται, 289d6-8). It is in Hippias' eyes nothing other than "gold" (χρυσός, 289e3). With this second answer Hippias is not suggesting that gold is the only fine thing, but rather that his new proposal is in no sense refutable (οὐκ ... ἐλέγχειν, 289e3-4).

Hippias' narrow use of the term beauty as well as of the verb κοσμεῖται²⁷⁰ is in fact illustrated by the example of the artwork, namely the sculpture of Athena which was produced by the "good artist" (ἀγαθὸν δημιουργὸν, 290a9)²⁷¹ Phidias. On Hippias' view though, all the things such as Phidias' Athena "appear beautiful, when they are adorned with gold" (καλὸν φανεῖται χρυσῷ γε κοσμηθέν, 289e5-6). The justification, then, in Socrates' mind, for putting the example of the artwork into Hippias's mouth is not that he himself forces Hippias to restrict the meaning of κοσμεῖν to 'adorn', but that he anticipates his interlocutor's mind-set since Hippias already used a restricted definition of beauty in his first answer. Finally, the difference between Socrates and Hippias is important, for the latter is a passionate advocate of beauty, which, as such, is taken for granted by everyone (289e4-6) and which happens to be at one moment a girl and at another gold, while Socrates admires beauty itself.²⁷²

appears. Not so in the *Republic*. There Beauty is, like Goodness, Justice and the like, a fully fledged Platonic "idea". Cf. also Tarrant, who comes more or less to the same conclusion (1976: p. lx): "Thus the *Hippias Major* excludes the more characteristic aspect of the theory of Ideas, and, markedly concentrating on the less usual and more difficult one, shows this at its worst." A critique of the usual reading of the Forms into the *Hippias Major* is also presented by Soreth 1953: pp. 25-30. See instead Malcolm 1968: pp. 189-195. Malcolm rightly points out that "we do not have there [*viz.* in the *Hippias Major*] the Form described as 'separate' or as 'more real', but we do have the distinction, crucial to the later 'degrees of reality' theory, between the Beautiful, which is (beautiful), and the many particular beautifuls which are and are not (beautiful)": *ibid.* p. 193. It should be added though that Plato not only mentions the Form of Beauty but also other Forms such as Justice, Wisdom and The good which therefore deserve further study with respect to the whole content of the *Greater Hippias*.

²⁷⁰ According to the Liddle & Scott Greek-English Lexicon, in the most general sense, κοσμεῖν means "to order" and "to arrange" and in the second place "to adorn" or "to embellish."

²⁷¹ This positive portrayal of an artist contrasts with Plato's description of art in *Republic* X, where tragic poets and all other imitators are banished from the ideal state. The positive aspects of an artist are again illustrated in *Timaeus* 29a2-3, where Plato speaks about the good Demiurge and his beautiful product, namely the cosmos: [...] καλὸς ἐστὶν ὁδε ὁ κόσμος ὃς τε δημιουργὸς ἀγαθός, [...].

²⁷² See also *Philebus* 51c1-d3: σχημάτων τε γὰρ κάλλος οὐχ ὅπερ ἂν ὑπολάβοιεν οἱ πολλοὶ πειρῶμαι νῦν λέγειν, ἢ ζῶων ἢ τινων ζωγραφημάτων, ἀλλ' εὐθύ τι λέγω, φησὶν ὁ λόγος, καὶ περιφερὲς καὶ ἀπὸ τούτων δὴ τὰ τε τοῖς τῶν τοῖς γινόμενα ἐπίπεδά τε καὶ στερεὰ καὶ τὰ τοῖς κανόσι καὶ γωνίαις, εἴ μου μανθάνεις. ταῦτα γὰρ οὐκ εἶναι πρὸς τι καλὰ λέγω, καθάπερ ἄλλα, ἀλλ' αἰεὶ καλὰ καθ' αὐτὰ πεφυκέναι καὶ τινὰς ἡδονὰς οἰκείας ἔχειν, οὐδὲν ταῖς τῶν κινήσεων προσφερεῖς; καὶ χρώματα δὴ τοῦτον τὸν τύπον ἔχοντα καλὰ καὶ ἡδονὰς ἄλλ' ἄρα μανθάνομεν, ἢ πῶς; - "By the beauty of a shape, I do not mean what the many might presuppose, namely that of a living being or of a picture. What I mean, what the argument demands, is rather something straight or round and what is constructed out of these with a compass, rule, and square, such as plane figures and solids. Those things I take it are not beautiful in a relative sense, as others are, but are by their very nature forever beautiful by themselves."

Now how does Socrates counter the second argument? Why is “gold” not a suitable definition of beauty? The second answer is in fact a repetition of the first one, if one assumes (as Socrates does) that gold is no more beautiful than other materials. For Socrates points out that Phidias did not only use gold, but that he also made the eyes, hands and feet of Athena’s statue “of ivory” (ἐλεφάντινον, 290b5) and the inner part of the eyes “of stone” (λίθινα, 290c4) in order to create a beautiful artwork. Asked by Socrates whether he would agree that even “a beautiful stone is something beautiful” (ὁ λίθος ὁ καλὸς καλὸν ἐστὶ, 290c5-6), Hippias concedes²⁷³ on the condition that it is “appropriate” (πρέπων, 290c7). What seems to be the last anchor for Hippias, namely the reference to the quality of being appropriate in light of the conditions of, for example, a beautiful artwork, turns out to be a new fallacy when we consider the conditions of beautiful actions.²⁷⁴ For Socrates explains that while cooking it is more appropriate to use a ladle made of fig wood rather than gold since the former makes the soup smell better and does not run the risk of shattering the pot, spilling the soup, extinguishing the fire and making us do without a fine meal (290e4-291a2). Surprisingly, Hippias acknowledges that Socrates is right by affirming that the ladle made of fig wood is “more appropriate” (πρέπει μᾶλλον, 291a3) than one made of gold for cooking a good soup. For this, of course, stands in opposition to Hippias’ previous assertion that gold is appropriate to everything – including cooking –, since it makes each particular thing beautiful (290d5-6). This is why he expresses annoyance about having to talk to someone who asks such questions (291a3-4).

It is interesting to note though that Hippias gives no counter-examples to Socrates’ claim that the ladle made of fig wood is more appropriate than one made of gold. For Socrates’ argument about the dangers of cooking with a golden ladle appear in some sense artificial. For example, why would a cook run more risk of spilling the soup if he cooked with a golden ladle? And if the soup smells better with the flavour of fig wood, would it not be enough to simply add some to the soup for flavour? Critical questions of this type may not only challenge Socrates’ idea that a ladle of fig wood is finer than one of gold. A more critical attitude would also show that even if Socrates were to give other arguments in favour of the primacy of fig wood over gold in cooking, it would not follow from it that gold is, in general, no finer than

They provide their own specific pleasures that are not at all comparable to those of rubbing! And colors are beautiful in an analogous way and import their own kinds of pleasures. Do we now understand it better, or how do you feel?” Translation Frede 1997: p. 441.

²⁷³ Cf. also Balaudé’s observation (2004: p. 256, note 1): “On perçoit donc clairement la logique intégrative du raisonnement d’Hippias: il n’y a pas un seul type de chose belle, mais diverses sortes qui ne sont pas exclusives les une des autres, et sont à penser en continuité, comme il le plaidera à la fin du dialogue.”

²⁷⁴ Another interpretation of the different use of the term “appropriate” by Hippias and Socrates is given by Woodruff 1982: p.66, note 120, who combines Hippias’ understanding of the term “appropriate” with Socrates’ own proposal presented later in the dialogue.

fig wood.²⁷⁵ Furthermore, the critical questions mentioned above may also show that Hippias is unwilling or rather unable to challenge Socrates' examples. For him, it is not appropriate to talk about cheap things, since it is much more appropriate to be well-dressed and famous for wisdom all over Greece, as Socrates scornfully points out.²⁷⁶

Socrates and Hippias might differ in their estimate of the relative value of each thing, but neither of them is willing to bring an end to the discussion. Instead, Hippias, who is worried about his reputation for being a good teacher and who neither wants to compromise himself nor admit his ignorance, proposes in his unbridled vitality a third solution to resolving the controversy about beauty. First, he lists three conditions under which beauty should be studied: "beauty is the sort of thing that will never appear²⁷⁷ ugly anywhere to anybody" (τοιοῦτόν τι τὸ καλὸν [...], ὃ μηδέποτε αἰσχρὸν μηδαμοῦ μηδενὶ φανεῖται, 291d1-3). The three prerequisites touch on the issue of time, space and the non-subjective perspective of beauty. This passage, which describes so well Hippias' natural capacity to learn,²⁷⁸ is in fact the first time that Socrates gives sincere praise to his interlocutor: "Bravo, Hippias! Now, you understand it very well" (πάνυ μὲν οὖν, ὦ Ἰππία: καὶ καλῶς γε νῦν ὑπολαμβάνεις, 291d4-5). Socrates' appreciation is honest because Hippias has come close to the core of the matter: beauty as such, as will be shown partially in the *Hippias Major*, transcends common aesthetic experiences which refer to temporally beautiful things (i.e. the beauty of phenomena) because it is the sort of thing that is absolutely beautiful.²⁷⁹ Secondly, Hippias presents his third and most promising view by affirming that the most beautiful thing for every man is to be rich,²⁸⁰ healthy, honoured by the Greeks, to arrive at old age,²⁸¹ to hold a beautiful funeral for his parents when they die, and to have a fine, grand burial by his own children (291d9-e2).²⁸² This latter aspect – that Hippias defends moral convictions with regard to the appropriate behaviour towards parents –

²⁷⁵ Woodruff 1982: p. 59.

²⁷⁶ 291a5-8: ὁρθῶς γε, ὃ φίλε: σοὶ μὲν γὰρ οὐκ ἂν πρόποι τοιούτων ὀνομάτων ἀναμίπλασθαι, καλῶς μὲν οὕτως ἀμπεχομένῳ, καλῶς δὲ ὑποδεδεμένῳ, εὐδοκίμοῦντι δὲ ἐπὶ σοφίᾳ ἐν πᾶσι τοῖς Ἑλλήσιν.

²⁷⁷ Hippias' proposed third definition may be problematic insofar as he seems to be committed to the existence of beauty in an absolute sense, yet, the use of the verb φανεῖται suggests that beauty is relative to a person or to an observer. On this point, cf. e.g. Woodruff 1982: p. 60, note 102, who explains that "phaneitai here has the objective use [...]."

²⁷⁸ However, whether Hippias' ability to learn matches his willing to learn is an issue which remains open for now.

²⁷⁹ For a broader view on Plato's conception of Beauty cf. e.g. Kosman 2010: pp. 341-357; Barney 2010: pp. 363-377; Hyland 2008 and Grube 1927: pp. 269-288.

²⁸⁰ At *Republic* 347b, Socrates condemns those who are ambitious and greedy for money.

²⁸¹ Cf. also *Euthydemus* 278e-280a where external and internal goods are both mentioned.

²⁸² See also Heitsch 2011: p. 70: "Wie auf den ersten Blick zu sehen, ist, was Hippias gibt, eine Antwort nicht eigentlich auf die Frage nach dem Schönen, sondern nach dem glücklichen Leben, nach εὐδαιμονία; ein Leben, das innerhalb der von der Natur gesetzten Grenzen seine Erfüllung findet in der Gesellschaft und im Kreise der Familie."

represents not so much the typical sophistic mentality as an essential part of the ethical belief system in Greek culture.²⁸³ But although Socrates is very pleased with Hippias' answer, he nevertheless pulls his interlocutor's argument to pieces once again. If the refutation of Hippias' third answer appears to be an easy route for Socrates, that is because Socrates must simply examine whether Hippias' previously given conditions of beauty are met with his answer.

Taking up this procedure, Socrates forces Hippias to ask himself whether what according to him appears beautiful "to everyone" (πᾶσι, 292e4) will always²⁸⁴ be so in the future as it was in the past (292e4-8). The motive of following the opinion of "everyone" is indeed striking since it returns repeatedly in Hippias' conversation. It is as if Plato wants to underline the difference between following everyone's opinion about beauty, on the one hand, and sticking to what is true according to the reality of beauty as such, on the other hand.²⁸⁵ In addition, Socrates forces Hippias to agree that if it is beautiful for everyone to have a nice funeral, it must equally be beautiful for children of the gods such as Achilles and for the gods themselves (292e). By citing counter-examples – the gods are immortal and do not need any funerals –, Socrates shows that it is not his inquiry that is "sacrilegious" (εὐφημος), as Hippias accuses him, but rather Hippias' own definition of the beautiful (293a-b). And if Hippias' suggestion is refuted by the mention of the lack of need for a funeral in certain cases, Socrates can further conclude that although Hippias affirmed that "it is always most beautiful for every man and everywhere" (ἀεὶ καὶ παντὶ καὶ πανταχοῦ κάλλιστον εἶναι ἀνδρί, 291d9-10) to have a beautiful funeral, that the same action "is sometimes dishonourable for others" (ἐνίοτε καὶ ἐνίοις αἰσχρὸν εἶναι, 293b11-c1). This conclusion came out of the previous lines, where Socrates together with Hippias had agreed that what is "awful, sacrilegious and ugly" (δαινόν τε καὶ ἀνόσιον καὶ αἰσχρόν, 293b7)²⁸⁶ for some heroes – Tantalus, Dardanus and Zethus – is

²⁸³ A more detailed presentation of the relationship to the family in general and the relation to the parents in particular is given by Schmidt 1882: pp. 133-219. In addition, Schmidt's precise and exhaustive study of Greek ethics is particularly useful, as he describes different types of responsibility that the Ancient Greeks had towards the gods, nature, their descendents, the state and their fellow human beings.

²⁸⁴ The determination of Beauty as being always identical to itself, is in fact a feature of the Platonic Forms.

²⁸⁵ See also Pradeau & Fronterotta 2005: p. 131, note 120: "Quand bien même il serait universel, l'accord ne suffirait pas, selon Platon: l'approbation du grand nombre ne saurait tenir lieu de connaissance assurée ni ne suffirait à justifier l'existence de quoi que ce soit. Pour que la définition du beau soit pertinente, il ne faut pas que tous s'accordent à l'admettre, mais il faut qu'elle soit adéquate à la réalité qu'elle nomme et définit."

²⁸⁶ A special feature of the Platonic philosophy is the comparison between one and many. As is stated in the present dialogue, there are several forms of ugliness but only one of Beauty. In the *Lesser Hippias* the same idea is presented regarding Hippias' description of the two characters Achilles and Odysseus. Whereas the latter is described as "wily or many-faceted and false" (πολύτροπός τε καὶ ψευδής, 365b5), the former is portrayed as being "true and simple" (ἀληθής τε καὶ ἀπλοῦς, 365b4). Cf. also *Politeia* IV, where Socrates speaks about "one Form of virtue and an infinite number of evil" (ἐν μὲν [...] εἶδος τῆς ἀρετῆς, ἅπειρα δὲ τῆς κακίας, 445c5-6). Cf. also Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* II, 5, 1106b35: ἐσθλοὶ μὲν γὰρ ἀπλῶς, παντοδαπῶς δὲ κακοί. The origin of this citation is, however, unknown.

“fine” (καλόν, 293b8) for Pelops, who has no divine origin (292b5-8). Hippias’ third answer is therefore no more relative²⁸⁷ than the previous two: one and the same thing, respectively action, is beautiful in a certain context and not beautiful in another.²⁸⁸

So, what was first described as Hippias’ ability to learn turns out to be too good to be true. For in his last words, he calls Socrates’ argumentative attempt to grasp the notion of beauty “babbling nonsense” (λήρους καὶ φλυαρίας, 304b5).²⁸⁹ On the other hand, it may be stated though that Socrates’ astuteness and critical attitude towards Hippias should not be misunderstood as arrogance or even pure irony,²⁹⁰ since the discussion about beauty is not only guided by the wish to achieve knowledge, at whatever price, but also by his compassion for his interlocutor, which flashes in the middle²⁹¹ of the *Hippias Major*. It is a compassion that he develops from within himself (293c-d) in order to avoid the appearance of a hypocritical interest for further debate. Regrettably, Socrates’ favourable attitude towards his interlocutor in the most critical situation – Hippias has depleted all of his argumentative ammunition – is not based on reciprocity. Sighing heavily, Socrates finally recalls the famous proverb that “beautiful things are difficult” (χαλεπὰ τὰ καλά, 304e8).²⁹²

²⁸⁷ Cf. e.g. Balaudé 2004: p. 269, note 2: “La définition du beau proposée n’était au mieux que relative aux hommes; le naturalisme d’Hippias est purement anthropocentrique.”

²⁸⁸ In contrast, compare Woodruff 1982: p. 62.

²⁸⁹ Cf. also *Euthydemus* 295c10-11 and *Gorgias* 486c6-7.

²⁹⁰ Even if Socrates’ behaviour is portrayed in what follows as mainly positive, I do not wish to exclude that Socrates’ way of engaging in a dialogue with his interlocutor Hippias is also full of irony. I therefore agree with Woodruff that Socrates’ “irony is intense from the first line” (1982: p. 35). The point here, however, is to bear in mind that there is a difference between Hippias’ unwillingness to acknowledge his intellectual limits and Socrates’ wish to better understand the main subject of the dialogue even if this may reveal his own ignorance. Cf. again Woodruff 1982: p. 35: “We shall see that Hippias probably does appreciate Socrates’ irony, but makes the best of a bad situation by not responding to it.” See also Heitsch’ cautious assessment (2011: p. 71): “Im Rahmen einer solchen Dreier-Komposition aber mag es schwierig, wenn nicht unmöglich sein, zu differenzieren, ob Sokrates eine Diskussion führt als Wortgefecht oder aber als sachliche Erörterung und demzufolge entweder mit dem Partner seine Späße treibt, ihm Fallen stellt und ihn zu Fall zu bringen sucht oder aber ernsthaft ist und dem Partner wieder aufhilft, indem er ihn nur auf jene Fehler hinweist, wo sein Irrtum in ihm selbst und seinem bisherigen Umgang gegründet ist.”

²⁹¹ What is discussed “in the middle” (εἰς τὸ μέσον) of a Platonic dialogue is always worth taking a closer look at. On this point, compare e.g. Wyller 2007: p. 14: “Dass die mittlere Partie in Platons Dialogen wie sonst häufig in antiker Kunstprosa und Poesie, vorzugsweise ihren Omphalos darstellt, wird oft betont.”

²⁹² The proverb originates from Solon and is also often cited by Platon; cf. e.g. *Cratylus* 384b1 and *Republic* 364a2-4: [...] ὥς καλὸν μὲν ἢ σωφροσύνη τε καὶ δικαιοσύνη, χαλεπὸν μὲντοι καὶ ἐπίπονον, ἀκολασία δὲ καὶ ἀδικία ἥδὲ μὲν καὶ εὐπετὲς κτήσασθαι, [...].

1.4.4. Conclusions

What are we think of Socrates' second attempt to interrogate Hippias' knowledge? Since Plato clearly disapproves of rhetorical play for the sake of mere amusement, the example of the *Hippias Major* unmistakably shows why Socrates' efforts to bring to light Hippias' alleged knowledge of fine pursuits must necessarily end at an impasse. Socrates' designation of Hippias as being καλός τε καὶ σοφός is problematic, because the latter only *appears* to be beautiful and wise, but he *is* not beautiful and wise, precisely because he places great importance in his outward appearance without taking care of his own soul. For, when asked by Socrates to explain what beauty is, he fails to give an acceptable answer, although certain elements, such as the idea of the “appropriate” (πρέπων), are again taken up by Socrates later in the dialogue (293d-295a). Yet, Hippias' inability to do justice to his reputation as a wise man, is not only disappointing for Socrates, who has a deep need to go beyond the limits of the ordinary discussion in order to receive answers about the notion of beauty, but also with regard to securing present and future public affairs. For, the question of what advantages or benefits the state and the politicians will derive from Hippias' rhetorical skills, if he does not possess the knowledge of beauty by which everything else, including political institutions and laws, becomes beautiful, remains unanswered in the *Hippias Major*. It remains equally puzzling due to what kind of knowledge Hippias feels superior to his wise predecessors, who, according to Hippias, refused to engage in public affairs. Even if he is right (if only to a certain degree) in blaming the men of old for abstaining from political life, this does not mean that political engagement is beautiful because of monetary gain, as Hippias proudly claims.²⁹³ For, this attitude gives no answer to the question of what constitutes a good and beautiful life. Hence Socrates, unlike most other public figures, refuses to seek advice from Hippias in a purely uncritical way: Socrates is not interested in the side effects of doing politics – earning money may be considered good only in a secondary sense – but rather in knowing what “wisdom” (σοφία), or rather “beauty” (καλόν) is, by which all “arts” (τέχναι) including “politics” (πολιτική) become beautiful and therefore worth pursuing.

In order to achieve this goal, Socrates decides to break with the usual rhetorical practices which consist in blaming and praising rhetorical *epideixeis*, so as to initiate a philosophical dialogue with his interlocutor Hippias. At the same time, and despite Socrates'

²⁹³ 282d6-7: οὐδὲν γάρ, ὦ Σώκρατες, οἶσθα τῶν καλῶν περὶ τοῦτο. εἰ γὰρ εἰδείης ὅσον ἀργύριον εἴργασμαι ἐγώ, θαυμάσαις ἄν.

astuteness and critical attitude towards Hippias, the attempt to reveal the deeper-seated reasons for Hippias' lack of beauty and wisdom fails for a second time. The aporetic structure of the *Hippias Major*, no less than that of the *Hippias Minor*, leaves the reader perplexed about the nature of illusion and reality, i.e. about the difference between what is truly beautiful and what only appears to be so. Ultimately, it also remains unclear whether or not beauty, through which all the other things are or become beautiful, is also the cause of the illusion of beautiful appearances.

1.5. The *Gorgias*

We have so far portrayed Protagoras, Euthydemus and Hippias as teachers of young Greeks. Yet, the similarity between, for example, Protagoras' educational mission in the *Protagoras* and Gorgias' account of rhetoric in the *Gorgias* suggests a possible conflation between the declared aim of the sophist and that of the rhetorician. Whereas Protagoras calls himself a sophist, who aims to teach "virtue" (ἀρετή) in order to make people better (*Protagoras* 317b), Gorgias presents himself as a good orator and praises his own ability to persuade the multitudes "about what is just and unjust" (περὶ τούτων ἃ ἐστὶ δίκαιά τε καὶ ἄδικοι, *Gorgias* 454b7). Common to both the sophist and the rhetorician is that they claim to possess specific knowledge and skills that allow them to carry out their tasks in an authoritative way. It is worth noting, though, that the two portrayals do not, strictly speaking, represent the historical truth about the protagonists involved, but rather exhibit Platonic traits. Athenaeus' report²⁹⁴ seems to prove that the historical Gorgias was not particularly enthusiastic about the statements which Plato puts into his mouth. The reason why Gorgias might have been upset with Plato is illustrated in *Meno* 95c1-3, where it is stated that Gorgias never claimed to teach virtue and, consequently, that he laughed at those who promised to do so. What is ultimately important for Gorgias, is "to make people clever at speaking" (λέγειν ποιεῖν δεινούς, *Meno* 95c4), because the content of his teaching bears not on virtue, but on oratory.

The main goal of this study will be to shed light on the puzzling case of Gorgias in Plato's *Gorgias* and to answer the question of whether he should be labelled as a sophist or as a rhetorician. First, I will give a brief overview of the current state of research. Then I will say few words about Plato's indecisiveness concerning Gorgias' profession. This will be followed

²⁹⁴ *Deipnosophistae*, XI 505d-e (Gulick 1933).

by a presentation of Gorgias's views on rhetoric, as well as some remarks on the difference between Plato's Gorgias and the historical Gorgias. Finally, I will explain why the distinction between genuine arts and fake arts provides a solution to the puzzling case of Gorgias' profession.

1.5.1. Introduction: was Gorgias a rhetorician or a sophist?

The question of whether or not Gorgias was a sophist has triggered lively discussion among scholars. Advocates of the suggestion that Gorgias was a sophist include, for example, Gomperz who argues that the educational ideal of the sophists was purely rhetorical and that, for this reason, Gorgias belongs to the clique of the sophists.²⁹⁵ Harrison adopts the same position in a critical discussion of passages from different Platonic dialogues (*Apology* 19d-20c and *Hippias Major* 282b) which seem to support the idea that Gorgias was a sophist. At the same time, Harrison points out that other passages, such as *Meno* 95b ff. and *Gorgias* 519e ff., support the thesis that Gorgias should not be labelled a sophist.²⁹⁶ Guthrie calls Gorgias "the great member of the first generation of Sophists"²⁹⁷ or even "the Sophist-orator"²⁹⁸ and explains why Gorgias deserves to be listed among the sophists:

Like other Sophists he was an itinerant, practising in various cities and giving public exhibitions of his skill at the great pan-Hellenic centres of Olympia and Delphi, and charged fees for his instruction and performances... A special feature of his displays was to invite miscellaneous questions from the audience and give impromptu replies. When he came to Athens in 427, on an embassy from Leontini, he was already about sixty, and took the city by storm with his novel style of oratory, as well as earning large sums by special performances and classes for the young...²⁹⁹

Guthrie does not confine himself to merely delivering empirical descriptions of Gorgias' activities, but expands on his portrayal of Gorgias by adding that the latter had "a relativistic philosophy similar to that of Protagoras."³⁰⁰ Other scholars³⁰¹ take for granted that Gorgias was

²⁹⁵ Gomperz 1912: pp. 35-49.

²⁹⁶ Harrison 1964: pp. 183-192.

²⁹⁷ Guthrie 1969: p. 269.

²⁹⁸ Guthrie 1969: p. 273. See also Dilman 1979: pp. 14-24 and 170-171), who also uses the term "sophistical orator" when speaking about Gorgias' intellectual activities.

²⁹⁹ Guthrie 1969: p. 270.

³⁰⁰ Guthrie 1969: p. 272.

³⁰¹ Diels 1976: pp. 351-383; Von Arnim 1898: pp. 9 ff.; Calogero 1932: pp. 157-222; Dupréel 1980: pp. 59-113; Sprague 1972; Kerferd 1981; De Romilly 1988; Buchheim 1989: pp. VII-XLI; Dalfen 2004 and Desclos 2009.

a sophist, without considering interpretative problems in connection with Gorgias's intellectual and social status and activities. On this point, compare, for example, the final verdict of Kerferd, one of the foremost experts on the history of the sophistic movement:

In all this Gorgias was clearly functioning as a sophist and was clearly known as such. Modern suggestions that he should not be classed as a sophist rest on an arbitrary narrowing of the concept of a sophist and even then are not supported by ancient evidence.³⁰²

In view of the large number of scholars who apparently share the same idea, there seems to be little doubt about Gorgias' status as a σοφιστής. And yet, no lesser a figure than Dodds expressed a great deal of concern in this regard.³⁰³ The arguments put forward by Dodds against the idea of identifying Gorgias as a sophist – Gorgias' absence from the *Protagoras*, Gorgias' self-designation as a rhetorician, Callicles' condescending attitudes towards the sophists, and Gorgias' rejection of the idea that he teaches virtue – are not new, Dodds himself admits that already Grote and Raeder had proposed not to count Gorgias among the sophists.³⁰⁴ Before we consider the issue itself, let us mention another scholar who adopts the same arguments as Dodds, without explicitly referring to him, namely Canto-Sperber. She defends the idea that Gorgias should be labelled a rhetorician rather than a sophist, arguing that Gorgias did not propose the same kind of education as the sophists. Canto-Sperber admits, however, that the passage at 282b in the *Hippias Major* might speak against her reading, because here Gorgias is, in fact, called a sophist. Yet, she explains that the word “sophist” in this context has the general meaning of “sage” (*savant*)³⁰⁵ and that Gorgias should be called a sophist only in the sense that Plato took him to be a wise man.³⁰⁶

1.5.2. Plato's indecision concerning Gorgias' profession

Previous research has raised the question of how to evaluate Plato's portrayal of Gorgias and, by extension, how to understand the confusing situation out of which emerged the distinction between the professions of the sophist and the rhetorician. First, we must acknowledge the fundamental lack of clarity concerning the status of Gorgias, given the disparate, or rather

³⁰² Kerferd 1981: p. 45.

³⁰³ Dodds 1976: pp. 6-7.

³⁰⁴ Dodds 1976: p. 7, note 1.

³⁰⁵ Canto-Sperber 2007: p. 29.

³⁰⁶ Canto-Sperber 2007: pp. 27-30.

mutually exclusive, judgements in different Platonic dialogues. Second, it is important to understand that the cause of disagreement does not lie with Plato scholars, but rather must be attributed to Plato himself. As we have seen, his presentation of Gorgias in the *Gorgias*, the *Meno*, the *Hippias Major* and the *Apology*³⁰⁷ is not historically accurate, and this is no more the case than with other historical characters who appear in Plato's writings. For Plato changes the historical characteristics of prominent characters and transforms them into art form to suit his own philosophical purposes. However, we do not have to go so far as to conclude that Plato's portrayal of Gorgias does not correspond at all to the historical Gorgias, but rather that Plato's Gorgias speaks and acts in accordance with the mentality of the historical Gorgias.³⁰⁸ If Gorgias is at one moment portrayed as a sophist (*Apology* 19d-20c and *Hippias Major* 282b), and at another as a rhetorician (*Gorgias* 449a, *passim*),³⁰⁹ then we may assume that for Plato, but not necessarily for Gorgias, the title or profession of a sophist can be assimilated to that of a rhetorician and vice-versa.³¹⁰ This is justified by Socrates' claim that "sophists and rhetoricians" (σοφισταὶ καὶ ῥήτορες) feel essentially akin to each other despite their differences (*Gorgias* 465c3-5). An important difference between Plato's Gorgias and the historical Gorgias, however, is that Plato puts arguments into the mouth of Gorgias, which the historical Gorgias did not himself present, but which somehow necessarily followed from the premisses that he did accept. The relationship between Plato's Gorgias and the historical Gorgias shall be more closely considered in what follows.

It must not be forgotten, however, that Plato's creative approach to his predecessors does not completely lose sight of the educational ideal that thinkers such as Gorgias had established. Here we have to remember Gorgias' claim, mentioned above, to possess the persuasive power to determine what is just and what is unjust. In a culture where people strived for a practical ideal of excellence (ἀρετή) both in private and in the public sphere, it is no surprise that the need for qualified teachers and educators increased and that this in turn brought many different professionals into the arena. But what are the essential criteria for establishing a high standard of education? For example, will Gorgias be a suitable candidate for the crucial role of educating an ambitious young Greek if his teaching does not consist in transmitting virtue? One thing is certain: Gorgias' dazzling command of language, known from his rhetorical and philosophical writings, had a tremendous effect on his Greek listeners. It is,

³⁰⁷ To this list of dialogues, we can also add *Phaedrus* 260d-261c and *Philebus* 58a-b.

³⁰⁸ See also Renaud 2001: p. 72.

³⁰⁹ See also *Meno* 95c; *Phaedrus* 260d-261c and *Philebus* 58a-b.

³¹⁰ Compare also Von Arnim 1898: p. 16 and Gomperz 1912: pp. 279-291.

however, equally clear that Plato sees Gorgias in a less flattering light and we need to better understand why this is so. After all, Plato's attempt to evaluate Gorgias' mindset involves nothing less than finding a philosophical alternative to the sophist-orator's teaching, to make use of Guthrie's label. In other words, Plato is devoted to uncovering the philosophical substructure behind the rhetorical scaffolding in order to establish the difference between the philosophical commitments embodied by the figure of Socrates, and intentions hidden behind Gorgias' epideictic oratory.

However, one of the interpretative difficulties inherent in Plato's portrayal of Gorgias in the *Gorgias* is that he seems to neglect his *Περὶ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος ἢ Περὶ φύσεως*,³¹¹ and instead focuses first and foremost on Gorgias' rhetorical treatises.³¹² This is the conclusion we can draw from the fact that the discussion between Socrates and Gorgias contains no reference to ontological problems related to Being and Non-Being, but almost exclusively addresses the topic of rhetoric. The question of whether Gorgias should be called a rhetorician or a sophist, or even a sophist-orator, may therefore coincide with the question of Gorgias' philosophical ambitions: was Gorgias an orator or a "philosopher" (*φιλόσοφος*)³¹³ or even a philosopher-orator? In the absence of a discussion of ontological questions about Being and Non-Being, such as those elaborated by Gorgias in his *Περὶ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος*, we are forced to consider other philosophical topics, such as, for example, ethical arguments about what is just and what is unjust. Ethical considerations are, in fact, found in Gorgias' rhetorical writings, albeit in a cryptic form, and it is Plato who attempts to make the implicit explicit. Our task will therefore be to analyse Plato's presentation of Gorgias' rhetorical art and his associated professional activities in the *Gorgias* in order to better understand Plato's portrayal of Gorgias as a rhetorician and, as a result, to better understand why the need arises to distinguish between the activities of the rhetorician and those of the sophist. We will start with Gorgias' own description of himself as a rhetorician, before turning to Socrates' critique of this portrayal, which, in a sense, represents Plato's philosophical evaluation and expansion of Gorgias' position. Regarding our method of analysis: since two speeches by the historical Gorgias (*Encomium of Helen* and *Defense of Palamedes*) are extant, it will be possible to occasionally compare Plato's *Gorgias* with the surviving writings of the historical Gorgias in order to both

³¹¹ This is the title used by Sextus Empiricus in his *Adversus mathematicos* VII 65 (DK 82 B 3). Other alternative titles are *Περὶ φύσεως* (Olympiodorus, *Commentary on Plato's Gorgias* (DK 82 B 2). On the authenticity of the title see Newiger 1973: p. 1, note 3).

³¹² See Renaud, who rightly points out that Plato does not explicitly mention Gorgias' two rhetorical treatises *Encomium of Helen* and *Defense of Palamedes* in the dialogue. Renaud (2001: p. 70), insists however that there is an indirect relation between Gorgias' *Encomium of Helen* and Plato's *Gorgias*.

³¹³ Gomperz 1912: p. 279, *passim*, believes that Gorgias should in no way be called a philosopher.

broaden the scope of the present study and to enable a comparative examination of relevant passages.

1.5.3. Gorgias' thoughts on rhetoric

The philosophical dialogue between Callicles, Socrates, Chaerephon, Gorgias and Polus begins after³¹⁴ Gorgias' lecture on rhetoric, which was held somewhere outside³¹⁵ Callicles' house, where Gorgias is staying. We are not told what kind of *epideixis* Gorgias presented,³¹⁶ but only that, as Callicles emphasizes, "many fine things" (πολλὰ καὶ καλά, 447a5) were said.³¹⁷ A rigorous examination of rhetoric is first demanded by Socrates, who insists on knowing the power, the nature, and the content of Gorgias' much-vaunted art (447c1-3). To be precise, Socrates is not interested in hearing the same speech again, but rather in engaging his interlocutor in a philosophical dialogue about the ultimate value of the issue at stake (447b9-c1).³¹⁸ This would imply, in principle, that Socrates is already familiar with Gorgias' rhetorical speeches and does not require a further demonstration. The question at issue is: what kind of

³¹⁴ Illuminating insights on the significance of Socrates' being late for Gorgias' speech are given by Arends 2007: pp. 52-56).

³¹⁵ While it is very important to determine the field of activity of the orators such as Gorgias, the framework of Plato's *Gorgias* cannot easily be defined. This is due to Plato's puzzling description of the dialogue's setting, which has caused interpretative confusion among scholars, not only with respect to the setting of Gorgias' rhetorical display, but also with respect to the meeting place of the main protagonists. Hildebrandt 1983: p. 176, note 3 and Canto-Sperber 2007: p. 11, for example, think that the dialogue between the protagonists of the *Gorgias* take place at Callias' house. Dalfen 2004: p. 163 assumes that even Gorgias' lecture took place at Callias' home. Compelling arguments in favour of a differentiated approach are given by Dodds 1976: p. 188, who insists on paying attention to the exact words used in this context, which provide a more detailed description of the setting. Hence, according to Dodds, neither Gorgias' *epideixis* nor the subsequent discussion takes place at Callias' house, but rather "out of doors – presumably at the entrance to the γυμνάσιον or other public building where Gorgias has been lecturing. But at 447d6, when Chaerephon puts his question, we must assume that they have entered the building, who at 458c make a *θόρυβος* when Gorgias suggests closing the discussion (cf. also 455c6, 473e5, 487b4, 490b2)." Dodds' careful reading (though based on conjecture) is convincing, insofar as he draws attention to the public arenas in which orators such as Gorgias operated and in which they were perceived as influential personalities by Greek society. On the basis of this interpretation, it is also plausible that the reason why Gorgias is not mentioned in the *Protagoras* is not that only sophists are named there and that Gorgias himself is not a sophist, but rather that Gorgias's aim was to exercise significant influence on many people in the public sphere, as opposed to few persons in a private location. It should not be forgotten, however, that public speakers encountered much animosity and were more or less forced to choose a protected space in order to deliver their speeches (*Protagoras* 316d1-2). Concerning the location of the speeches of the sophists, see also *Protagoras* 311a1, a8, a10, 317c7; *Statesman* 328b8; *Symposium* 176e8, 213c6; *Gorgias* 447c7, 455c6; these supplementary indications are taken from the commentary of Pinjuh 2014: p. 88, note 159).

³¹⁶ On the differing content of sophistic and rhetorical speeches cf. e.g. Canto-Sperber 2007: p. 315, note 2).

³¹⁷ See also Polus' effusive praise – not to say imitation – of Gorgias' expertise, *Gorgias* 448c-d.

³¹⁸ This is the reason why Socrates criticises Polos who instead of engaging in a philosophical discussion about the question of which "art" (τέχνη) Gorgias is skilled in, prefers to provide a purely rhetorical explanation (448c-d).

knowledge is the art practiced by Gorgias? And are we actually entitled to call Gorgias' rhetoric an "art" (τέχνη) at all?

After Socrates calls Gorgias a "specialist" (ἐπιστήμων, 449a3),³¹⁹ insofar as he is a "rhetorician" (ρήτωρ, 449a6),³²⁰ the latter clarifies that he is a "good rhetorician" (ρήτωρ ἀγαθός, 449a6-7). Furthermore, Gorgias boasts that he can transmit rhetorical skills to others (449b1-3, *passim*). Since Socrates is afraid that Gorgias might give another long speech in order to prove his linguistic abilities, he makes sure that Gorgias is willing to give concise answers to the subsequent questions (449b8).³²¹ In order to emphasize his exceptional skills as a rhetorician in front of the audience, Gorgias insists that "no one is able to speak about the same things more briefly than me" (μηδέν αὖ ἐν βραχυτέροις ἐμοῦ τὰ αὐτὰ εἰπεῖν, 449c2-3). In response to Socrates' question about the object in relation to which rhetoric is "knowledge" (ἐπιστήμη), Gorgias gives a demonstration of his "brevity in speech" (βραχυλογία) as opposed to his previous "long-windedness" (μακρολογία) with the succinct answer that it is "about speeches" (περὶ τοὺς λόγους, 449e3). Since they both agree that rhetoric does not refer to all types of speeches (449e3-4), Socrates asks Gorgias an important, though often overlooked question, namely whether rhetoric not only makes men "powerful at speaking" (λέγειν δυνατούς, 449e4-5), but also at "understanding" (φρονεῖν, 449e6) the things that are spoken. For though Gorgias indirectly affirms that this is the case, he misses the implicit meaning of the word "understanding", which Socrates refers to throughout the whole discussion. In fact, the perceived need to distinguish between purely rhetorical speech and factual *understanding*, on the one hand, and to move from "speaking" to "understanding", on the other, becomes crucial insofar as this entails the ability to "justify" (λόγον διδόναι, ὑπέχειν) one's own beliefs if they are subjected to criticism (465a2-7).³²² The historical Gorgias was at least aware of the need to justify his own point of view since he emphasizes in his *Defense of Palamedes* that the

³¹⁹ Later on, Socrates also calls Gorgias a "craftsman" (δημιουργός, 452d4) whose rhetoric becomes a "craftsman of persuasion" (πειθοῦς δημιουργός, 453a2, *passim*).

³²⁰ Anyone who was called a rhetorician, was also seen as a politician (Dodds 1976: p. 194). The identification of the rhetorician with the politician will soon be disproved, however, particularly because Plato understands rhetoric as a counterfeit art which imitates, or rather competes with, the genuine art of politics. On the double meaning of ῥήτωρ, i.e. a person who knows the theory of rhetoric and/or the practical rhetoric, see again Dodds and Irwin 1979: p. 113, who mentions Aristotle's criticism of Gorgias' unsystematic use of rhetoric (*Soph. El.* 183b-184a) (Ross 1974).

³²¹ Concerning the emphasis on the rules for communication and its further implications, see for example Dalfen 2004: pp. 177-178.

³²² Similarly Irwin 1979: p. 115. Dodds 1976: pp. 195-196 makes an interesting comment concerning the risk of confusing mere speeches with rational discourse (λόγοι), which Gorgias apparently made and which let him "usurp the place of philosophy." Compare also Dalfen 2004: pp. 181-182, who translates the verb φρονεῖν as "practical wisdom" (*praktische Klugheit*) and who enumerates the use of the word not only in Plato's *Gorgias*, but also with reference to Isocrates and Xenophon.

blame assigned to Palamedes is unjustified, in light of his ability “to render an account of his past life” (λόγον ὑπέχω τοῦ παροικομένου βίου, 28).

The analysis of rhetoric leads to the question of the nature of rhetoric: Socrates insists in finding out from Gorgias what kind of speeches rhetoric bears on. Gorgias begins his answer by claiming that rhetoric requires “no manual operations” (οὐδέν ... χειρουργημα, 450b8-9), as this is the case for many other arts, but rather that its “whole activity and achievement” (πᾶσα ἡ πρᾶξις καὶ ἡ κύρωσις, 450b9)³²³ is accomplished through speeches. He then explains that speeches refer to “the greatest – and the best – of human affairs” (τὰ μέγιστα τῶν ἀνθρωπείων πραγμάτων καὶ ἄριστα, 451d7-8) which is the first attempt to define the nature and purpose of rhetoric. Although Gorgias is given encouragement for his answer, it remains to be seen how he would eliminate his competitors, such as medical doctors, gym teachers and merchants, especially since they also claim to know the “greatest good for men” (μέγιστον ἀγαθὸν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις, 452d3-4). For health, the beauty and strength of the body and wealth³²⁴ are all considered by many the greatest and best of human things (452a-c). Against this, Gorgias argues that the highest good for men is “the cause of both the freedom of men and of the rule of each man over the others in his city” (αἴτιον ἅμα μὲν ἐλευθερίας αὐτοῖς τοῖς ἀνθρώποις, ἅμα δὲ τοῦ ἄλλων ἄρχειν ἐν τῇ αὐτοῦ πόλει ἐκάστῳ, 452d6-8).³²⁵ This response is revealing. Gorgias explains, in particular, that “freedom” (ἐλευθερία) consists in “persuading with speeches” (τὸ πείθειν τοῖς λόγοις, 452e1) those people who act in political institutions such as the lawcourts, the Council Chamber and the Assembly or any other “political association” (πολιτικὸς σύλλογος, 452e4).³²⁶ It cannot be excluded that in delimiting the sphere of activity of rhetoricians in this way, Plato is referring to the *Encomium of Helen* (13), where Gorgias writes about “battles of words” (λόγων ἀγῶνας) held by rhetoricians in front of a “large crowd” (πολὺν ὄχλον). Moreover, when Socrates goes on to state that rhetoric is a “craftsman of persuasion” (πειθοῦς δημιουργός, 453a2), which produces persuasion “in the souls of listeners” (τοῖς ἀκούουσιν ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ, 453a5), there are clear parallels with the *Encomium of Helen* (9-11). Finally, it is quite likely that Gorgias’ stated belief that rhetoric refers to “those things that

³²³ On Plato’s imitation of Gorgias’ style, characterized by the use of the rare terms χειρουργημα and κύρωσις, see also Dodds 1976: p. 196 and Dalfen 2004: pp. 182-183.

³²⁴ These represent the set of values of Greek aristocrats and are often mentioned by Plato in his dialogues.

³²⁵ See Vickers 1989: p. 92: “Plato now makes Gorgias deliver the traditional praise of rhetoric in society, which persisted from Isocrates to the eighteenth century, associating it with liberty and power in a democracy.” Compare also Dodds 1976: p. 202, who thinks that the account of the highest good refers to the beliefs of the historical Gorgias.

³²⁶ Gorgias makes it clear that rhetoric “includes the functions of the lobbyist, the mass media, and the advertiser”, as Irwin 1979: p. 117 pointedly remarks.

are just and unjust” (περὶ τούτων ἃ ἐστὶ δίκαιά τε καὶ ἄδικοι, 454b7) can equally be derived from the rhetorical speeches of the historical Gorgias.³²⁷

Gorgias’ presentation of rhetoric reveals important traits of this art, which is limited to making people powerful in speaking and understanding with the help of speeches. However, rhetoric does not involve manual labor, but is restricted to the domain of the greatest and best of human affairs. These mainly consist in the freedom of men and rule over others. Freedom, in turn, comprises the activity of persuading people who engage with political institutions.

However, Gorgias’ account of rhetoric does not meet with universal approval, since Socrates insists on engaging his interlocutor in a deeper conversation (454b9-c1) in order to finish the discussion properly (454c1-2). Socrates does not heap scorn (462e6-8) on Gorgias (454c2), as he does later, to some extent, with Polos and Callicles,³²⁸ but rather permits Gorgias to express his insights and thus to play his role as an “expert” (ἐπιστήμων) by answering questions about rhetoric. Seen from this perspective, it is important to understand, that the conclusions that are drawn about rhetoric in the *Gorgias* rely on arguments which the historical Gorgias himself did not explicitly defend, but which draw on premisses he accepted (454c4). This is Plato’s approach, which we will address in what follows.

The ambiguity in Gorgias’ account of rhetoric begins to emerge at 454c-460e, eventually leading Socrates to deny oratory the status of an “art” (τέχνη), because it does not fulfill the conditions of an art,³²⁹ calling it mere “flattery” (κολακεία, 463b1) instead.³³⁰ Prior to this, however, Socrates succeeds in forcing Gorgias to accept the difference between two epistemic attitudes: “knowledge and belief” (μάθησις καὶ πίστις,³³¹ 454d2). To demonstrate the full scope of these terms, Socrates further explains how one could “come to know” (γινώσκειν) that knowledge and belief should be distinguished from one another. While there is “false and true belief” (πίστις ψευδῆς καὶ ἀληθῆς, 454d5), the same does not hold for knowledge, since there is only “true” (ἀληθῆς) but no “false knowledge” (ἐπιστήμη ψευδῆς). This pair of epistemic attitude thus require “two forms of persuasion” (δύο εἶδη πειθοῦς, 454e3), as Socrates continues to demonstrate, “one yielding belief without knowing, the other providing knowledge” (τὸ μὲν πίστιν παρεχόμενον ἄνευ τοῦ εἰδέναι, τὸ δ’ ἐπιστήμην, 454e3-

³²⁷ See instead Renaud 2001: p. 70. Renaud does not refer here to the thesis that practical rhetoric deals with issues concerning justice and injustice. Rather he points out that Plato’s Gorgias accepts the following propositions which the historical rhetorician of the same name did not defend: the negation of the universality of rhetoric and the assumed distinction between the rhetoric which imparts knowledge, on the one hand, and the rhetoric which generates belief, on the other.

³²⁸ On this point, see Duchemin 1943: p. 282.

³²⁹ The conditions for being an art are mentioned in 464b-466a and will be discussed later.

³³⁰ On the meaning of flattery, compare Irwin 1979: pp. 131-132.

³³¹ For Plato, πίστις and δόξα are interchangeable.

4). The next argumentative step leads to Gorgias' surprising concession that rhetoric only produces "persuasion" (πιστεύειν), not knowledge (454e8-455a6-7). Socrates and Gorgias thus conclude that rhetoric cannot be called a "craftsman of teaching/instruction" (δημιουργός διδασκαλικῆς) with respect to the just and the unjust, but should rather be called a "craftsman of persuasion" (δημιουργός πιστευτικῆς). Hence, "the rhetorician is not a teacher" (οὐδ' ἄρα διδασκαλικὸς ὁ ῥήτωρ ἐστίν, 455a2-3) of the just and the unjust to members of political assemblies, "but only a persuader" (ἀλλὰ πιστικὸς μόνον, 455a4-5).

1.5.4. Plato's Gorgias and the historical Gorgias

So far, Plato's Gorgias seems to be advocating in favour of an oratorical performance which is based on mere persuasion rather than knowledge. But even if one heeds this advice, as Gorgias' pupils Polos and Callicles do later in the dialogue, why admit the existence of "knowledge" (μάθησις, ἐπιστήμη) if the rhetorician can operate effectively without it? And what about the importance of "belief" (πίστις) itself? Is Plato's Gorgias defending an idea that the historical Gorgias did not? I think that the answer to both questions can be derived from the basic principle outlined above, namely that Plato puts thoughts into the mouth of his Gorgias that can be deduced from the positions of the historical Gorgias, at least to some extent. For although certain scholars, such as Vickers, believe that Plato is first and foremost showing hostility towards rhetoric and is not willing to do justice to its representatives,³³² we should be careful to distinguish between Socrates' disavowal of rhetoric³³³ and that of Plato. Plato's motives for critiquing rhetoric are much more complex and cannot be reduced to mere "hatred of Athenian democracy", as Vickers claims.³³⁴

³³² Vickers 1989: pp. 83-147.

³³³ Vickers 1989: p. 88: "Socrates practices dialectic but wholly rejects rhetoric." Vickers is right in saying that Socrates dismisses rhetoric, but it is equally true that Socrates at least seeks an open dialogue and invites rhetoricians such as Polos to join a discussion and to talk as he pleases (*Gorgias* 461e1-462a4), because he has a genuine interest in knowing the truth and the good, as well as for the well-being of people (481d3). The opposite is true of the rhetoricians, whose similar enthusiasm for speeches and people is merely derived from the power of oratory (481d4-5). On this point, compare also the initial scenes of the *Gorgias*. Compare also Renaud 2001: pp. 81-83.

³³⁴ Vickers 1989: p. 88. See also Duchemin's interesting article (1943: pp. 265-286) on Plato's aims in the *Gorgias*: to clarify the value of rhetoric and to show the close connection between a destructive rhetoric leading to the trial of Socrates. Compared to Vickers, Duchemin's interpretation is more differentiated because she explains Plato's animosity towards rhetoric from a dramatic point of view which includes Plato's personal pain at the loss of his highly esteemed teacher Socrates. Similar thoughts are expressed by Dalfen 2004: pp. 176-177. See also Kahn 1996: p. 127.

Regarding the questions of why Plato's *Gorgias* accepts Socrates' distinction between knowledge and belief, let us take a closer look at the *Encomium of Helen* before returning to the *Gorgias*. In the *Encomium of Helen*, Gorgias suggests that he will give a rational demonstration in order "to show the truth" (δείξαι τᾰληθές) of Helen's innocence (2). It is nonetheless important to understand that Gorgias' rational explanation is not based upon knowledge and truth, although the term τᾰληθές might suggest this, but rather on belief and opinion. The reason for this is that "persuasion" (πειθώ) is not, as Gorgias later explains, nourished by the experience of an objective reality (13), but is rather crowned with success when it is artfully written (τέχνη γραφεῖς, 13). Since "speech is a great master" (λόγος δυνάστης μέγας ἐστίν, 8), to use Gorgias' famous dictum, the credibility of a speech derives merely from its poetic composition. Furthermore, the rhetorician must equally presuppose a certain complicity with his audience, to whom the written or spoken words are addressed. For, the nexus of belief, rhetoric and the emotive process caused by the art of persuasion help illuminate "the kind of control and manipulation by a rational agent as the body by the drugs of the doctor."³³⁵ Hence, if reality is reduced to *constructed* reality, then truth³³⁶ or knowledge must be replaced by the epistemological attitude called "the persuasiveness of opinion" (τὴν τῆς δόξης πίστιν, 13).

Seen from this perspective, Renaud's conclusion that Plato's *Gorgias* differs from the historical Gorgias because the former admits knowledge, while the latter does not, is somewhat misleading.³³⁷ One might argue against Renaud that Plato's *Gorgias* is far from accepting the notion of knowledge in the sense Socrates conceives it,³³⁸ for at least two reasons. First, Plato's *Gorgias* does not have the requisite notion of knowledge, but is motivated by other factors to discuss philosophical issues. The dialogue sets up a situation in which one of the main reasons for Gorgias to engage in a serious discussion is his competitive attitude.³³⁹ When asked by Socrates to give short answers, Gorgias affirms that nobody can speak more briefly than him (449c7-8).³⁴⁰ This motivation goes hand in hand with Gorgias' wish to create a good impression, by catering to the preference of his audience. Not only the *Encomium of Helen* speaks as evidence for this view, but also the initial scene with Socrates and Callicles in *Gorgias* 447b9-c8, as well as a later passage in which Gorgias is willing to continue the debate

³³⁵ Segal 1962: p. 104.

³³⁶ For more information concerning truth in *Gorgias*, see for example Bona 1974: p. 5-33.

³³⁷ Renaud 2001: p. 71.

³³⁸ We will discuss Socrates' conception of ἐπιστήμη and its relation to the τέχνη in the following.

³³⁹ In the previous chapters, we saw that competition between different types of professionals was nothing unusual when it came to vying for public attention. See. e.g. *Hippias Minor* 364a; *Gorgias* 448a.

³⁴⁰ See also Dalfen 2004: pp. 212-213.

only on the condition that his admirers are interested in pursuing the rhetorical exchange, so as not to detain them from doing something more interesting (458c2).³⁴¹

Second, the actual proof that Gorgias accepts, without thinking, Socrates' distinction between knowledge and belief can be deduced from the fact that he is neither competent nor capable of arguing in favour of the capacity of rhetoric to convey knowledge. The tension between Gorgias' wish to impress his audience and his lack of argumentative acumen plays out in the following example: after Socrates explains to Gorgias that rhetoric, which he calls a "craftsman of persuasion with regard to belief" (πειθοῦς δημιουργός πιστευτικῆς, 454e9-455a1), does not instruct people in political assemblies about the just and the unjust, but only makes them believe (455a2-5), Gorgias gives a first example of "the full power of rhetoric" (τὴν τῆς ῥητορικῆς δύναμιν ἅπασαν, 455d7) with respect to the affairs of the *polis*: although the order to build the arsenals and the walls of Athens, as well as its harbors, was given by Themistocles and Pericles, it is through the rhetorical power of the orators that these decisions were made in the first place (456a1-3). Socrates expresses astonishment at this, describing rhetoric as a thing of "divine greatness" (δαιμονία τὸ μέγεθος, 456a5-6).³⁴² Instead of presenting a further argument to show that he possesses knowledge, Gorgias merely provides another example in order to show the practical benefits of his rhetorical skills (456b1). He boasts of being able to produce more conviction than, for example, a doctor "by means of no other art than rhetoric" (οὐκ ἄλλη τέχνη ἢ τῇ ῥητορικῇ, 456b5). However, Socrates forces Gorgias to concede that someone who is ignorant, such as an orator who does not know the art of medicine, will be more persuasive only to others who are ignorant, but not to those who know (458e-459c), through the use of persuasive device (459b8-c1). A few lines later, Gorgias declares quite openly that the rhetorician will never be defeated by the craftsman, although the former has never learned any other skill than rhetoric (459c3-5).³⁴³ Socrates, who does not accept this last argument as it is, refuses to discuss the issue in this context. Instead he wishes to investigate the peculiar connection between rhetoric, on the one hand, and justice and injustice, on the other, in which he detects a far more serious fallacy within Gorgias' reasoning. For Socrates explains that if "the rhetoric is never an unjust thing" (ὥς οὐδέποτε ἂν εἴη ἡ

³⁴¹ For more information about the description of the two-sided (i.e. practical and ethical) nature to rhetoric, see Irani 2017: pp. 49-66.

³⁴² On this point see Levy 2005: p. 195: "Why Socrates would claim the orator appears to be of divine stature is not immediately clear." Later on, Levy (2005: p. 196) traces the divinity of rhetoric back to the fact that its influence ranges over political and personal, public and private matters. It must however be added that Plato takes over the divine characterization of rhetoric from the *Encomium of Helen* (8) of the historical Gorgias. Note that in the case of Protagoras, the divinisation of skills is also a typical line of reasoning in favour of its own merits. On this point cf. e.g. Protagoras' great speech in the *Protagoras*.

³⁴³ On this point, see also Irwin 1979: pp. 123-124.

ῥητορικὴ ἄδικον πρᾶγμα, 460e6-7), which is his reformulation of Gorgias' position,³⁴⁴ then Gorgias' admission that rhetoricians sometimes do use their rhetoric unjustly (457b5-c3, 460e5-461ab2)³⁴⁵ poses a problem: how can knowledge of rhetoric, which is never unjust, produce unjust rhetoricians?³⁴⁶

1.5.5. Genuine arts vs. counterfeits arts

Having acknowledged similarities between Plato's Gorgias and the historical Gorgias – they both crave public attention, they manipulate people and their opinions through verbal manoeuvres but are uninterested in knowledge – we may now focus on Socrates' understanding of what it means to have knowledge of an art (τέχνη).³⁴⁷ This will in turn allow us to return to our initial question of whether Gorgias should be called a rhetorician rather than a sophist or vice-versa. An art, which by definition, is based upon knowledge, aims at the best (464d1) rather than at the most pleasant (464d2).³⁴⁸ By this, Socrates not only means that an art aims directly at revealing the essence of an object (the “what it is: *ti esti*”) or what is really beneficial for it,³⁴⁹ but also that it does not need to disguise itself as something else in order to fulfil its purpose (464c7). Such deceptive behaviour rather corresponds to the fake arts. Over and above this, however, it is important to notice that an art is able to offer a rational account (465a3) of the things it deals with. This is precisely what Gorgias is unable to do. A τέχνη, or rather the person who has that specific expertise,³⁵⁰ can explain the “nature” (φύσις, 465a4) of the things falling under it, as well as the “cause” (αἰτία, 465a5) of its own activities. In the end, the “value” (ἄξια) of an art very much depends on whether it is able to define things with accuracy and

³⁴⁴ A critical view of the Socratic assumption is given by Irwin 1979: p. 128.

³⁴⁵ Regarding the possibility of misuse of rhetoric, see again Irwin 1979: p. 121 and Dalfen 2004: pp. 210-211 and 223-224.

³⁴⁶ Canto-Sperber 2007: p. 323, note 33 points out that Gorgias' two declaration may even represent the attitude of the historical Gorgias.

³⁴⁷ For more information about the meaning and use of τέχνη in the *Gorgias*, see Graham 1991: pp. 1-24; Kahn 1996: pp. 125-147; in response to Kahn see Levy 2005: pp. 185-227; compare also Franklin 2005: pp. 229-255.

³⁴⁸ The relationship between the good and the pleasant will be again taken up and further developed later in the dialogue. A critical approach to Socrates' distinction between the two relevant topics is given by Klosko 1984: pp. 126-139. See also Moravcsik 2007: pp. 122-127.

³⁴⁹ *Republic* 342b-c.

³⁵⁰ It is characteristic of Socrates' explanation that he personifies the arts as if they themselves were active actors. See also Dodds 1976: p. 228): “Plato takes a whimsical pleasure in attributing human behaviour to abstractions: other instances may be seen at 482a and 505d1.”

truth.³⁵¹ A τέχνη that exemplifies these elementary characteristics deserves to be described as “beautiful” (καλή, 463a2-4).³⁵²

The tension between Socrates’ account of the nature of an art and Gorgias’ description of rhetoric, as it is presented by Plato, is due to the fact that rhetoric lacks the previously mentioned properties. Rhetoric is not a τέχνη (462b8-9) but merely a “certain practice” (ἐμπειρίαν τινα, 462c3), because it aims at “gratification and pleasure” (χάρις καὶ ἡδονή, 462c7) and ignores the best. Socrates will later call it a “flattery” (κολακεία, 463b1).³⁵³ It does not know either the nature of things nor the reasons for which it is employed. Due to its own irrational nature (465a6)³⁵⁴ and lack of capacity to discriminate, rhetoric mixes all things together instead of distinguishing one discipline from another (465d). Therefore, Socrates calls rhetoric “a part of a thing which is not at all beautiful” (πράγματός τινός ἐστι μόνον οὐδενὸς τῶν καλῶν, 463a3-4) or even “evil” (κακή, 463d4). It is therefore not surprising that its representatives, namely “sophists and rhetoricians” (σοφισταὶ καὶ ῥήτορες), are mixed together as belonging to the same discipline and dealing with the same subjects without anyone knowing how to make use of their skills (465c3-7).

As the dialogue proceeds, Socrates changes roles, answering questions posed by Polos, who wishes to give another and better *epideixis* than Gorgias did, while Gorgias’ presence recedes further and further into the background. In line with the new orientation of the conversation, Socrates explains to what extent rhetoric and sophistry have the same origin. The classification of different disciplines which can be ordered into “arts” (τέχναι), on the one side, and “practices” (ἐμπειρίαι), on the other, depends on the distinction between two different aims.³⁵⁵ the good and pleasure. Given the distinction between body and soul, Socrates argues that there must be a “good condition” (εὐεξία, 464a2) for each of them which is caused by the good as opposed to a “seemingly good condition” (δοκοῦσαν μὲν εὐεξίαν, 464a3) which is founded on pleasure. Those who can perceive the difference between the good and the seemingly good state are those who possess knowledge about the nature of things. It is therefore

³⁵¹ See *Gorgias* 457d2-3, where Socrates speaks about encounters between people who share different opinions and therefore accuse each other of arguing incorrectly and obscurely. Note also that the terms *σαφές* and *σαφὺς* are frequently used in the *Gorgias* to show the importance of giving precise information about the things that are discussed.

³⁵² On the different subject of rhetoric, including beauty, see Kahn 1996: p. 129.

³⁵³ Examples of the flattering occupations are given later, *Gorgias* 501d-503d. Concerning the different aspects of flattery, see Dodds 1976: p. 225; Irwin 1979: pp. 131-132 and Dalfen 2004: pp. 236-237.

³⁵⁴ See for example Irwin 1979: pp. 135-136. Compare also Dalfen 2004: pp. 245-246, who characterises the *ἄλογον πρᾶγμα* as referring to a true opinion, which cannot be justified.

³⁵⁵ The importance of teleology for the definition of τέχνη is underlined by Graham 1991: pp. 1-24 and Franklin 2005: pp. 229-255.

necessary to distinguish between “two kinds of art” (δύο τέχναι, 464b3), one responsible for the soul – Socrates calls it “politics” (πολιτική, 464b4) – the other for the body.³⁵⁶ Whereas politics includes “legislation and justice” (νομοθετική καὶ δικαιοσύνη), the art concerned with the body, for which Socrates has no single name, comprises “gymnastics and medicine” (γυμναστική καὶ ἰατρική, 464b6-7).

But just as there are arts that aim at the good condition of the body and soul, Socrates explains that there are also “pseudo-arts” that exert a bad influence, aiming at the apparent, rather than the real good of the body and soul. These include “cookery and cosmetics” (ὀψοποιία καὶ κομμωτική) with respect to the body and “rhetoric and sophistry” (ῥητορική καὶ σοφιστική) with respect to the soul (462e-463b). Socrates begins to take a harsher tone towards rhetoric and its practitioners, because of their contempt for the genuine human good, although he admits that the orators exhibit a certain braveness and cleverness in their interactions with people (463a6-8). The rhetoricians do not care for the good of the soul, rather their skill lies in pretending to exercise a genuine art that contributes to the welfare of their listeners (464c6-d3), when in reality they are only concerned with the apparent good.

At the core of Socrates’ comparison of genuine arts with apparent arts is the claim that rhetoric is not an art, but rather a form of “flattery” (κολακεία), a “practice and knack” (ἐμπειρία καὶ τριβή, 463b4), which merely represents “an image of a branch of politics” (πολιτικῆς μορίου εἶδωλον, 463d2). For just as “cookery” (ὀψοποιική) imitates “medicine” (ἰατρική), so too does “sophistry” (σοφιστική) imitate “legislation” (νομοθετική), and as “cosmetics” (κομμωτική) is to “gymnastics” (γυμναστική), “rhetoric” (ῥητορική) is to “justice” (δικαιοσύνη) (465b1-e1).

The implications of this analogy for the question of whether Gorgias should be labelled a rhetorician rather than a sophist are considerable. We have been told that both sophistry and rhetoric belong to the fake arts because they represent images or “ornamental artifices” of the related branches of politics. This explanation has the advantage of enabling us to compare the observations concerning the portrayal of Gorgias at the beginning of this chapter with Socrates’ analysis of oratory, sophistry and their corresponding representatives. As far as we can judge, most, if not all, scholars dealing with the figure of Gorgias fail to recognize that Socrates’ more or less systematic analysis of the relevant disciplines provides the necessary background for evaluating Plato’s portrayal of Gorgias. For when Socrates brings up the distinction between

³⁵⁶ What politics actually consists in and whether or not the political *technē* is teachable, are points that have been the subject of a controversial debate in the Platonic dialogues. On this point, see Dalfen 2004: pp. 242-243.

body and soul, he does so in order to give the example a more illustrative dimension so that it is easier for his interlocutor to follow his analogy.³⁵⁷ This consists not only in explaining which disciplines are beneficial to the body and soul, and which are harmful to them,³⁵⁸ but also *how a possible confusion between the areas of responsibility can be avoided*. Socrates declares that “if the soul were not in command of the body, but the latter were self-managing” (εἰ μὴ ἡ ψυχὴ τῷ σώματι ἐπεστάτει, ἀλλ’ αὐτὸ αὐτῷ, 465c7-d1), then it would judge on the basis of gratification, and would fail to examine and distinguish between cookery and medicine, that is to say between the pseudo-art and the genuine one (465c7-d3). From this it follows that it is the soul which is the master, both of itself and of the body, for it is the soul, and not the body, that has the capacity to distinguish between what is good and what is bad.³⁵⁹

But the real problem, which keeps cropping up, is not the confusion of the body, but that of the soul. For just as there exist pseudo-arts aiming to provide harmful “goods” to the body, thereby conflating the good with pleasure, there also exist pseudo-arts that harm the soul, i.e. sophistry and rhetoric. It is revealing, however, that Plato does not explicitly state in what sense these practices are detrimental to the soul,³⁶⁰ but rather implicitly does so through the behavior of Gorgias and his pupils Polos and Callicles, who make several attempts to more or less convincing attempts to articulate their position. Levy goes even further in his criticism of Socrates:

Socrates never gives a general account of flattery itself. Instead, he gives a general indication of how flattery works in these four cases [*scil.* of the counterfeit arts]. ... Thus, at this point in the dialogue Socrates’ rejection of oratory as a *techne* is unmotivated.³⁶¹

But it is not only with respect to the missing explanation of “flattery” (κολακεία) that Socrates’ arguments in favour of the superiority of τέχνη seem to be somewhat insufficient, but also with

³⁵⁷ Concerning the problem of using arguments from analogy, compare Robinson 1980: pp. 209 ff. and Kahn 1996: p. 144: “When he composed the *Gorgias*, Plato may have believed that these arguments were stronger than we would be inclined to suppose. But we know that Plato’s friend Eucleides criticized the argument from analogy. And in the *Charmides* Plato makes Critias express a similar criticism. Sooner or later Plato must have realized that the positive arguments of the *Gorgias* were unsatisfactory. It was in order to do the job better that he had later to write the *Republic*.” Few lines later, Kahn also adds that Plato needed to write the *Republic* after the *Gorgias*, because he needed to “provide more content for the notion of *techne*, more substance to the notion of moral knowledge as a decisive component of the life in philosophy” (1996: pp. 144-145). In addition to Kahn’s concerns, one must, however, also consider the fact that Plato had to write the *Sophist* and *Statesman* as well, in order to better distinguish between the counterfeits disciplines, such as sophistry, and the genuine arts of politics. On the use of the *Techne*-Analogy, see also Roochnik 1986: pp. 295-310.

³⁵⁸ Compare also *Hippias Minor* 372e7-373a2 and *Charmides* 156d-157c.

³⁵⁹ On this point, see for example Kahn 1996: p. 131.

³⁶⁰ For a detailed description of the negative influences of rhetoric, see for example Dilman 1979: p. 22.

³⁶¹ Levy 2005: p. 205.

respect to the missing explanation of what it means to be an “image” (εἶδωλον). Socrates provides no metaphysical foundation for the special relation between εἶδωλα and τέχνη, i.e. between appearances and reality. This will only be done in subsequent Platonic dialogues. However, despite the ambiguity and missing philosophical justification for these claims (*logon didonai*), Socrates’ attempt to systematically define the two practices of sophistry and rhetoric and to distinguish them from politics with its sub-disciplines justice and legislation, should not be ignored. This is because the Socratic classification enables us to begin to understand why, for example, Gorgias and his followers are misguided souls: they confuse rhetoric with justice, and sophistry with the art of legislation. Or as Dodds puts it: “Plato is suggesting that just as body is incapable of distinguishing between the cook and the doctor, so the unphilosophical mind fails to distinguish the sophist and the orator from the statesmen whom they mimic.”³⁶² Therefore, when Socrates alleges that the rhetorician is similar to the sophist, or rather observes that “they stand near to each other” (ἐγγύς ὄντων, 465c4), it is precisely because they both have a detrimental influence on the souls of human beings. In this respect, it does not matter whether Gorgias should be branded as a rhetorician or as a sophist. For both labels refer to people who have negative influences on the human soul. A distinction does need to be drawn, however, insofar as they differ in their nature (465c4). Whereas rhetoric aims to mimic justice, sophistry imitates legislation. According to Irwin, the operating principles of rhetoricians and sophists can be described as follows:

The sophist does consider how the *nomoi*, general moral and political norms, should be, and so offers to teach people these norms and make them virtuous. The rhetor takes the *nomoi* for granted and appeals to them either in the law-courts, governed by rules of just procedure, or in the assembly, guided by rules of procedure and by more general norms.³⁶³

This citation indirectly suggests that Gorgias does not teach virtue and is therefore right in differentiating himself from the sophists – a position which Gorgias defends in Plato’s *Meno* 95c. Instead, he aims at strengthening existing laws in political assemblies with the help of his rhetoric, albeit only for personal purposes. Gorgias’ rhetorical works *Defense of Palamedes* and *Encomium of Helen* are examples that speak volumes. Therefore Gomperz’ argument that Gorgias should be called a rhetorician because of his rhetorical educational ideal loses its attraction,³⁶⁴ in that it fails to take into account the connection between rhetoric and its practical

³⁶² Dodds 1976: p. 231.

³⁶³ Irwin 1979: p. 136.

³⁶⁴ See the beginning of this chapter.

application to justice in public gatherings. Similarly, Guthrie's evaluation of Gorgias' portrayal needs to be modified, especially since his descriptive approach (Gorgias was an itinerant, he gave public exhibitions of his skills and charged fees for his teaching, etc.)³⁶⁵ is not sufficient in order to identify Gorgias as a sophist. What is needed here instead is a reference to the systematic subdivision of the different disciplines, as presented in the *Gorgias*, and an explanation of which of these disciplines Gorgias' activities belong to, before passing final judgement on these matters. Finally, when Dodds pleads that Gorgias should be called a rhetorician because, contrary to the sophists, he does not teach virtue, he refers to the *Meno* and *Gorgias*, but without reflecting on further implications which result from the argument of the latter dialogue. If he had done so, Dodds would have been forced to conclude that, first and foremost, Gorgias should be branded a rhetorician, but insofar as his activities are analogously harmful to those of a sophist, not least because an ignorant soul confuses the imitations³⁶⁶ of rhetoricians and sophists with the activities of a true statesman,³⁶⁷ Gorgias does not deserve to be called a rhetorician rather than a sophist.

Nevertheless, one might also criticize Plato, since he somewhat unexpectedly places the occupation of sophist and rhetorician side by side. For the necessity of comparing these two professionals does not arise naturally out of the structure of dialogue. It is easier, for example, to find traces of Gorgias' rhetorical activities than those of a sophist, which, according to Irwin, consisted in formulating laws in order to transmit virtue.³⁶⁸ In fact, Gorgias himself sets out the context in which he presents his understanding of rhetorical mission. By contrast, there is no explicit reference to a representative of sophistry, which would make it plausible to understand why a sophist belongs to the same group of people, who use deceptive words. And we can even suggest that the field of activity of the sophists might be much larger than that of the rhetoricians, such that the former are more dangerous. This is confirmed by the fact that a person who manipulates or even changes laws for his own purposes (i.e. a sophist) is in some sense more dangerous than a person who accepts them and tries to benefit from them as much as possible (i.e. a rhetorician).³⁶⁹ While the latter obeys the laws, and does not question the existing form of government, the former has the power to transform or even revolutionize the political system by introducing new laws that serve his own personal needs. It is evident

³⁶⁵ Compare again the beginning of the present study.

³⁶⁶ The mimetic activities of the sophists are, as is well known, taken up and vividly discussed in the *Sophist*. See also *Republic* 602b.

³⁶⁷ That rhetoric is subordinated to politics is, for example, emphasized in *Statesman* 304d-e.

³⁶⁸ A historical example of a sophist, who wrote laws for a city, is Protagoras, as Diogenes Laërtius IX.50 reports.

³⁶⁹ As mentioned before, Gorgias' rhetorical writings are good examples for the practical engagement in political assemblies.

that, in the *Gorgias* at least, Socrates does not criticize Gorgias directly but rather his pupils Polos and Callicles. The same does not hold for the many sophists, who are at the centre of the discussion in other Platonic dialogues, and against whom Plato addresses strong, direct attacks. This raises the suspicion that the youths Polos and Callicles might better be called sophists rather than rhetoricians.³⁷⁰ The great risk involved in rhetoric as far as ethical, moral and political foundations are concerned is, therefore, demonstrated in the *Gorgias* by the behavior of Polos and even more so by the aggressivity of Callicles towards Socrates.³⁷¹ But how difficult it is to grasp the definition of the sophist and how great the potential confusion between the σοφιστής, πολιτικός and φιλόσοφος is, becomes obvious only in the *Sophist*, not to mention the metaphysical assumptions which Plato needs to make in order to capture the multi-faceted figure of the sophist.³⁷²

1.5.6. Final remarks

The question of whether Gorgias was a rhetorician or a sophist, which has compelled numerous scholars to seek an either-or solution, was answered from a Platonic point of view. This chapter has shown that for Plato, the activities of a rhetorician and a sophist resemble each other to such an extent that ordinary people fail to distinguish between the specific nature of the two vocations. Plato's purpose consists in explaining that neither rhetoricians nor sophists possess genuine knowledge in their respective fields, but only deal with counterfeit goods. Rhetoric and sophistry were described as pseudo-arts, i.e. images of politics, which have a detrimental influence on the souls of human beings. Plato's tendency to switch between labelling Gorgias a rhetorician and a sophist is, therefore, justified by the fact that for Plato, although not necessarily for the historical Gorgias, the title or profession of sophist can be assimilated to that of rhetorician and vice-versa.

Additionally, it soon became clear that the need to distinguish between pseudo-arts and genuine arts required further analysis into their respective inner structures. I suggested the activities of a rhetorician are less dangerous than those of a sophist, because unlike the sophist,

³⁷⁰ See instead Sidgwick 1872: pp. 304-305.

³⁷¹ See Duchemin 1943: pp. 265-286.

³⁷² It will nevertheless gradually become evident that just as Plato aims at developing a true, i.e. a philosophical rhetoric in the *Phaedrus* as opposed to Gorgias' rhetoric, there also exists a so-called *noble sophistry* in *Sophist* 226b-231c, in whose name Socrates acts vis-à-vis his opponents. Concerning Plato's conception of true rhetoric in the *Phaedrus*, see for example the useful study by Hartmann 2017.

the rhetorician does not change laws and/or political systems, but only applies them for his own benefit. However, Socrates' rather brief consideration of the branch of sophistry (σοφιστική) showed that the comparison between sophistry and rhetoric should have been analysed more exactly, not least because the content of the *Gorgias* did not make sufficiently clear how and for what reason the sophist is also counted among those professionals who use deceptive arguments.

In closing, what the *Gorgias* has in common with the *Hippias Minor* and the *Hippias Major* is that all these dialogues tackle the problem of distinguishing between appearances and reality. While the two *Hippias* underline the necessity of determining the cause of illusions of beautiful appearances, the *Gorgias* leaves open what the true essence of images (εἰδωλα), such as rhetoric and sophistry, actually is.

PART II: THE *PARMENIDES*

In the opening chapters covering some of the well-known sophists, my intention was to give more than a brief glimpse into the typical attitudes and values of these thinkers, to whom Plato dedicates a great deal of attention in his writings. Not only does he constantly alert the reader to the potential danger of unlimited ambition and ruthlessness towards the customs and traditions of Greek society, but he also appropriates and continues to alter the sophistical worldview for his own purposes. In the following chapters, I aim to undertake a reconsideration of the influence of Eleatic philosophy on the rise of sophistry in the *Parmenides*.

Plato's *Parmenides* is known to be one of his most difficult dialogues to understand. It exemplifies a labyrinthine system of thought, creating both profound fascination and agonizing irritation. Neither the overall plan of the dialogue nor the structural links between the various philosophical problem areas it deals with seem to be sufficiently comprehensible for Plato's interpreters. There exists no consensus about Plato's aim in the *Parmenides*³⁷³ nor about how the two parts are linked together nor about how the problem of unity and plurality, placed in the foreground of the dialogue, is connected with the other topics, which are no less opaque. Plato's preoccupation with his predecessors, such as the Presocratics, the sophists and Socrates,³⁷⁴ and his contemporaries, such as Antisthenes,³⁷⁵ Euclid of Megara and Eudoxus³⁷⁶ has also been the subject of heated debate, all the more so as Plato's attitude toward the aforementioned thinkers remains puzzling and therefore worthy of discussion.³⁷⁷ With regard to the latter aspect, the focus on the Eleatic protagonists of the dialogue, such as Parmenides and Zeno, will serve as a springboard for further discussion, in order to make clearer the allusions to Eleatic philosophy in the *Parmenides* and to connect the dialogue with some of the important outcomes of Plato's earlier works on the sophists. We shall therefore proceed with a

³⁷³ According to Proclus' *Commentary on the Parmenides*, the dialogue was read in the antiquity either as a *logical* (Albinus' *Isagoge*, Alcinoüs' *Didaskalikos*) or as a *metaphysical* text (Origenes, Marinus of Neapolis, Galen of Pergamon, Plotinus V 1 [10], Amelius Gentilianus, Porphyry, Iamblichus, Plutarch, Syrianus, Damascius). To have a good overview over the different ancient interpretations of the *Parmenides*, see for example Steel 2002: pp. 11-40 and Turner/Corrigan 2007. In the current state of research, it is scarcely possible to have a global overview of all existing commentaries on Plato's *Parmenides*, not to mention the disparate articles aiming at analysing and solving divergent problems. Even if my choice to include specific interpretations on the *Parmenides* and to dismiss others is necessarily highly subjective, my practice in this study will be to justify my subjective choices as thoroughly as possible, with the acknowledgement that I may involuntarily overlook important commentaries and articles or simply not be able to consider all of them.

³⁷⁴ Cf. e.g. Coxon 1999: 7-25.

³⁷⁵ Zekl 1972: XXIV.

³⁷⁶ See e.g. Zekl 1972: p. XXII; Von Kutschera 1995: pp. 24-29.

³⁷⁷ For general information about Plato's sources for his *Parmenides*, see for example Wahl 1951: pp. 17-18, *passim*, pp. 53-60; Taylor 1934: pp. 11-12; Hardie 1936: pp. 5-7 and pp. 80-81.

Careful examination of Zeno's role as a guest and Parmenides' mission in the first part of the dialogue before moving on to consider some important consequences for the second part of the dialogue.

2.1. Parmenides between the Sophists and Plato

Before we proceed to look at how Plato, through the mouth of Parmenides, transforms Zeno's methodology, let us first recall some of the key ideas and conclusions of the historical Parmenides in order to draw a broader picture of the present argumentative reasoning. In particular, this approach will allow us to determine the interpretative possibilities of Parmenides' poem and to better understand Plato's decision to make Parmenides his principal speaker in the *Parmenides*.

In his hexameter poem, Parmenides establishes a what we may call a theory of everything (πάντα, DK 28 B 1, 28), comprising an account of truth (ἀλήθεια, DK 28 B 1, 29), as well as that of the opinions of mortals (βροτῶν δόξας, DK 28 B 1, 30). Parmenides' discovery of the truth is rendered possible by an unnamed Goddess, who explains that there are "only two ways of inquiry that can be thought of" (ὁδοὶ μούνα διζήσιός εἰσι νοῆσαι, DK 28 B 2, 2): "one that <That which is> is, and it is impossible for it not to be" (ἡ μὲν ὅπως ἔστιν τε καὶ ὥς οὐκ ἔστι μὴ εἶναι, DK 28 B 2, 3), "another, that It is not, and must needs not be"³⁷⁸ (ἡ δ' ὥς οὐκ ἔστιν τε καὶ ὥς χρεὼν ἔστι μὴ εἶναι, DK 28 B 2, 5). Whereas the way of being (ἔστιν or εἶναι) is described as the "way of conviction, since it follows the truth" (πειθοῦς κέλευθος – Ἀληθείῃ γὰρ ὁπηδεῖ, DK 28 B 2, 4), the way of non-being (μὴ εἶναι or μὴ εἶναι) is characterised as "wholly impassable" (παναπευθέα ἀταρπόν, DK 28 B 2, 6), because it can neither be known nor uttered.³⁷⁹ In contrast, being and its relationship with thinking or knowing poses no problem, because being and thinking are identical: τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἐστίν τε καὶ εἶναι (DK 28 B, 3). Additionally, the Goddess explains to Parmenides that he must not only avoid the path of non-being, but also reject the opinions of the ignorant mortals. By claiming

³⁷⁸ I make use here of Cornford's translation, because I agree with him and others (Riaux 1840: p. 209; Reinhardt 2012: p. 35; Becker 1937: p. 141 and Tugwell 1964: p. 36) that the subject of ἔστιν and οὐκ ἔστιν is "what is" or "beings" and "what is not" or "non-being" respectively. Other candidates for the subject of ἔστιν, such as "that, which can be uttered, thought or known", "any object", "the real world" or "the totality of things" cannot be integrated into Parmenides' philosophy without further assumptions and explanations.

³⁷⁹ DK 28 B 2, 7-8: οὔτε γὰρ ἂν γνοίης τό γε μὴ εἶναι (οὐ γὰρ ἀνυστόν) οὔτε φράσαις. A variant of this idea is expressed many times by the Goddess, as for example again in fragment 8: "for what is not is neither pronounceable nor thinkable" (οὐ γὰρ φατὸν οὐδὲ νοητόν ἔστιν ὅπως οὐκ ἔστι, DK 28 B 8, 8-9).

that “being and non-being are both identical and not identical” (τὸ ... τε καὶ οὐκ εἶναι ταὐτόν ... κοῦ ταὐτόν, DK 28 B 6, 8-9), the mortals, according to the Goddess, have gone astray, i. e. they have adopted a false and deceptive way of thinking. Consequently, Parmenides should stick to the way of being, because it follows the truth, exclude the way of non-being, because it is utterly undiscernible and reject the opinions of mortals, because they lack “true belief” (πίστις ἀληθείας, DK 28 B 1, 30).³⁸⁰

The absolute distinction between being and non-being, on the one side, and the deceptive ordering of words within the opinion of mortals, on the other, is assumed to be the cause of disagreement among Parmenides’ successors, who will be compelled to choose one of these ways of inquiry or even to reject Parmenides’ philosophy altogether. While Plato seems to make the way of being or thinking absolute, as the study of the second part of the *Parmenides* will subsequently demonstrate, Protagoras favours the opinions of mortals. In contrast, the complete rejection of Parmenides’ philosophy is the result of Gorgias’ chain of arguments in his *Περὶ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος ἢ περὶ φύσεως*. Furthermore, the case of eristic games, such as those played by Euthydemus and Dionysodorus in the *Euthydemus*, will also serve Plato as a counter-foil for his philosophical exercise, which, as such, is committed to truth and requires great effort and long-term studies. The case of Hippias adds a further aspect, inasmuch as he draws our attention to Parmenides’ missing practical political vision. In contrast, to the different definitions of the sophist in the *Sophist*, Hippias’ case is, however, not considered as a meaningful indicator for the theoretical discussions in the *Parmenides*. For this reason, I will refrain here from making a comparison between Parmenides and Hippias.

Let us now first briefly recall how the sophists made use of Parmenides’ philosophy, before engaging in a deeper analysis of how Plato responds to the sophistic misuse of Parmenides’ philosophy.³⁸¹

³⁸⁰ The problem of the number of ways of inquiry in Parmenides’ poem was and still is critically discussed by many interpreters. In particular, it is the difficult balancing between fragment two, where Parmenides speaks about being and non-being belonging to the two ways of inquiry, and fragment six, where the misleading path of the ignorant mortals is equally described as a “way of inquiry” (ὁδὸς διζήσιος), that forms an interpretative obstacle. In following Palmer (2009: pp. 114-124) and others, I maintain that Parmenides introduces only two ways of inquiry, whereby the path of the mortals merely stands for a failed attempt to establish a third way of inquiry.

³⁸¹ By providing arguments for Plato’s rejection of a sophistic appropriation of Parmenides in the *Parmenides*, the present study differs in many ways from Palmer 1999, as will become progressively clearer.

The mythological pattern of argumentation in Protagoras' Great Speech about the teachability of virtue in Plato's *Protagoras* was interpreted as creating an artistic illustration of a worldview that is the inverse of that of Parmenides. That Protagoras chooses precisely the path of humans, thereby invoking the charm of *doxa* in order to draw his audience into the spell with a pleasant rhetoric, may appear surprising, given that Parmenides condemns the mortals for being unable to judge correctly (DK B 28, 6). However, from Protagoras' point of view, as confirmed by Plato's *Theaetetus*, the epistemic attitude of *doxa* is predominant as it is a necessary result of his homo-mensura statement, that "man is the measure of all things, of those which are that they are and of those which are not that they are not" (πάντων χρημάτων μέτρον ἄνθρωπον εἶναι τῶν μὲν ὄντων ὡς ἔστι, τῶν δὲ μὴ ὄντων ὡς οὐκ ἔστιν, *Theaetetus* 152a2-4).³⁸² According to Plato, Protagoras' underlying idea of the above is that "things" (χρήματα) are the way they appear to each observer.³⁸³ In other words, no one possess objective criteria of truth, but every man is the measure of things, insofar as things appear differently to each individual and are perceived by each observer in a different subjective manner. Thus, "appearance and perception" (φαντασία καὶ αἴσθησις, 162c1) are two sides of the same coin, describing the peculiar relationship between the perceived object and the perceiving subject. Furthermore, since no appearance coincides with another, because of the subjective point of view, and since "there is nothing which is in itself one" (ἐν μὲν αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτὸ οὐδὲν ἔστιν, 152d2-3), Socrates concludes that for Protagoras "nothing ever exists, but is always in the process of becoming" (ἔστι μὲν γὰρ οὐδέποτε οὐδέν, ἀεὶ δὲ γίγνεται, 152e1). In other words, the reality entails no determined properties or things, but only constantly changing processes.

Later in the *Theaetetus*, Plato suggests, through the mouth of Socrates, that the homo-mensura statement has its roots in the ontology of flux, as elaborated by Heraclitus and Homer (152e), whom Socrates also calls "the flowing ones" (τοὺς ῥέοντας, 181a5). They are explicitly set in contrast to Melissus and Parmenides – the latter is called, in an odd pun, "the existent unique Parmenides" (ἓνα ὄντα Παρμενίδην, 183e5) – who argue the contrary, saying that "everything is one and stands still within itself" (ἐν τε πάντα ἔστι καὶ ἑστηκεν αὐτὸ ἐν αὐτῷ, 180e3-4). Another option is to say that both Protagoras' and Heraclitus' approaches are a

³⁸² Other references to the homo-mensura statement are 160c, 160d, 161c, 166d, 170d, 170e-171a, 171c, 178b, 178b-c; cf. also *Cratylus* 385e4-386a4.

³⁸³ *Theaetetus* 152a6-8: ὡς οἷα μὲν ἕκαστα ἐμοὶ φαίνεται τοιαῦτα μὲν ἔστιν ἐμοί, οἷα δὲ σοί, τοιαῦτα δὲ αὖ σοί.

product of a critical engagement with Parmenides' philosophy, as Reinhardt suggests.³⁸⁴ Regardless of which of the two possibilities we choose, it is quite evident that Protagoras put great effort into arguing against the idea that truth is purely dependent on thinking, because for him, truth depends fundamentally on sensible experiences. If Protagoras began his *Truth* (Ἀλήθεια) with the homo-mensura statement, as Plato indicates in *Theaetetus* 161c3-4, in order to provide a counter project to Parmenides' concepts of Truth and being,³⁸⁵ then also the *On What-Is* (Περὶ τοῦ ὄντος)³⁸⁶ may be interpreted as a further result of his rejection of Eleatic thinking.³⁸⁷

Parmenides, Euthydemus and Dionysodorus

The course of conversation presented in the *Euthydemus* is designed to make the reader aware of the danger of purely eristic games (ἐριστική). Euthydemus and Dionysodorus praise themselves for being able “to transmit virtue in a most excellent manner and most quickly” (ἀρετήν [...] παραδοῦναι [...] κάλλιστα καὶ τάχιστα, *Euthydemus* 273d8-9). The different fallacies, that are discussed with Socrates and Cleinias for seemingly educational endeavours rely, *inter alia*, on Parmenides' denial of false speaking (ψευδῆ λέγειν) and contradiction (ἀντιλέγειν). The result of this is that speech of any kind must always be true, because there is no way for something that is not to be uttered.

To put an end to this abusive rhetorical behaviour, Plato sets himself out to develop a philosophical exercise that counters false educational promises. In the *Parmenides*, with respect to Socrates' intellectual potential, Parmenides emphasizes that he needs to make a dedicated effort to practice philosophy (135d3-4). It is hard to imagine that such an exercise can be done quickly and easily and that, in doing so, Socrates will produce quick results. On the contrary, if Parmenides expressly refers to Socrates' youth, as a period during which he needs to train (135d5-6), then it is obvious that philosophical experience can only be acquired

³⁸⁴ Reinhardt 2012: pp. 241-249. See also Koch 1970: pp. 35-39.

³⁸⁵ Similar Guthrie 1969: p. 47 and Palmer 1999: p. 105.

³⁸⁶ It is difficult to assess whether Ἀλήθεια and Περὶ τοῦ ὄντος constituted one and the same writing, as some scholars have suggested. A brief summary of interpretative possibilities are given by Guthrie 1969: p. 47, note 1. See also Palmer (1999: p. 115, note 36), who suggests that it would be easier to trace back a Protagorean presence in the first Deduction of Plato's *Parmenides* “if we possessed even a summary of Protagoras' ‘On What-Is’”. However, the purpose of the chapter on Plato's *Protagoras* in the first part of this study was to show that Parmenides' poem served Protagoras as a foil for his narrative about the development of human beings and the teachability of virtue.

³⁸⁷ Cf. e.g. Krämer 1959: p. 508, note 40.

slowly and continuously.³⁸⁸ Furthermore, Plato, through the mouth of Parmenides, points out that the dialectical exercise is not a mere “loquacity” (ἀδολεσχία, 135d5), but rather serves to find the “truth” (ἀλήθεια, 135d6). Overall, Plato attempts to develop a philosophical exercise that stands in stark contrast to the eristic practices, not least because philosophy is committed to finding the truth, which in many ways represents a long and challenging process of learning.

Parmenides and Gorgias

It has been observed that Plato’s portrayal of Gorgias as a rhetorician in the eponymous dialogue relies primarily on Gorgias’ rhetorical writings, such as the *Encomium of Helen* and the *Defense of Palamedes*, where Gorgias’ talents as a rhetorician are most fully demonstrated. Yet Plato makes no direct allusions to Gorgias’ Περὶ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος ἢ Περὶ φύσεως, which is often interpreted as mirroring a critical reaction towards Eleatic ontology, in general,³⁸⁹ or towards Parmenides’ philosophy, in particular.³⁹⁰ The reference to the Περὶ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος, that Olympiodoros describes as “an ingenious treatise” (σύγγραμμα οὐκ ἄκομψον),³⁹¹ is not only missing from Plato’s *Gorgias*,³⁹² *Meno*,³⁹³ *Phaedrus*³⁹⁴ and *Philebus*,³⁹⁵ where Gorgias is called a rhetorician, but also from the *Apology*³⁹⁶ and *Hippias Major*,³⁹⁷ where Gorgias is also labelled as a sophist.³⁹⁸ The difficulty in evaluating Plato’s silence about Gorgias’ Περὶ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος can be overcome with the help of the *Parmenides* and the *Sophist*. Since Gorgias’ presence in the *Sophist* will be analysed more in detail in the last part of the present study, we shall therefore concentrate on Gorgias’ traces of the Περὶ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος in Plato’s *Parmenides* in what follows.

³⁸⁸ Concerning the long process of learning, see also Plato’s description of the educational ideal in the *Politeia*.

³⁸⁹ Cf. e.g. Calogero 1932: pp. 157-222 and Bröcker 1958: pp. 425-440.

³⁹⁰ See Nestle 1922: pp. 551-562 and Buchheim 1989: pp. XVI-XXI. For more information about an overall assessment of Gorgias’ thinking, see e.g. Newiger 1973: pp. 1-9.

³⁹¹ Olymp. In *Gorg.* Prooem 9.

³⁹² *Gorgias* 449a, *passim*.

³⁹³ *Meno* 95c.

³⁹⁴ *Phaedrus* 260d-261c.

³⁹⁵ *Philebus* 58b.

³⁹⁶ *Apology* 19d-20c.

³⁹⁷ *Hippias Major* 282b.

³⁹⁸ On the differences and similarities between the professions of rhetorician and sophist, see the chapter on Plato’s *Gorgias*.

Some scholars, such as Hays³⁹⁹ and Palmer,⁴⁰⁰ have not failed to recognize that Plato is borrowing Gorgias' argumentative strategies and specific arguments in order to defend himself against sceptical attacks. For example, Palmer emphasizes that Gorgias' philosophical treatise, resulting in three theses that 1) "nothing is" (οὐκ εἶναι ... οὐδέν); 2. "and if it is, it is unknowable" (εἰ δ' ἔστιν, ἄγνωστον εἶναι); 3. "and if it is and is knowable, it cannot be transmitted to others" (εἰ δὲ καὶ ἔστι καὶ γνωστόν, ἀλλ' οὐ δηλωτὸν ἄλλοις) (MXG 979a12-14;⁴⁰¹ Sext. Emp. adv. math, VII, 65),⁴⁰² is, in fact, reminiscent of *Parmenides* 135a3-b2:⁴⁰³

The person hearing these problems will be at a loss and will contend that (i) these things [sc. the forms or αἱ ἰδέαι τῶν ὄντων] do not exist (οὔτε ἔστι), and that (ii) even if they should exist, it is altogether necessary that they are unknowable (ἄγνωστα) to human nature. In making these points he believes he is saying something and, as we recently said, it is amazing how difficult he is to persuade. While (ii') it is the mark of a man of extraordinary natural ability to be able to understand that there is for each thing some general kind and a being itself in itself, (iii) it is the mark of someone still more remarkable to have discovered this and to be able to teach all these things to someone who has thoroughly examined all these difficulties (135a3-b2).⁴⁰⁴

Apart from the passage at 135a7-9 (ii'), where Parmenides praises the man who is able to learn that there are kinds and beings themselves in themselves,⁴⁰⁵ there are striking parallels between Gorgias' Περὶ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος and Plato's *Parmenides*, which cannot be emphasized enough. In a broader sense, Plato's indirect reference to Gorgias may suggest that Parmenides' criticism of Socrates' theory of Forms, such as presented in the first part of the *Parmenides*, is not a goal *per se*, but a necessary step in order to engage more deeply in the study of Forms. For, only then will it be possible to find a solution for the greatest struggle, i.e. the absolute separation of the Forms from the things that participate in them (*Parm.* 134d9-e8), and to counter sceptical arguments against the existence of an absolute being, such as those developed by Gorgias.

³⁹⁹ Hays 1990: pp. 335-337.

⁴⁰⁰ Palmer 1999: p. 109.

⁴⁰¹ Aristotelis qui fertur de Melisso Xehophane Gorgia libellus. Edidit Hermannus Diels. Phil. und hist. Abhandlungen der KGL. Akad. d. Wiss. zu Berlin. Berlin 1900.

⁴⁰² DK 82 B 3.

⁴⁰³ For the purpose of further discussion, I cite Palmer's translation and arrangement of Plato's text. Palmer 1999: p. 109.

⁴⁰⁴ *Parm.* 135a3-b2: ὥστε ἀπορεῖν τε τὸν ἀκούοντα καὶ ἀμφισβητεῖν ὡς οὔτε ἔστι ταῦτα, εἴ τε ὅτι μάλιστα εἴη, πολλὴ ἀνάγκη αὐτὰ εἶναι τῇ ἀνθρωπίνῃ φύσει ἄγνωστα, καὶ ταῦτα λέγοντα δοκεῖν τε τὶ λέγειν καί, ὃ ἄρτι ἐλέγομεν, θαυμαστῶς ὡς δυσανάπειστον εἶναι. καὶ ἀνδρὸς πάνυ μὲν εὐφυοῦς τοῦ δυνησομένου μαθεῖν ὡς ἔστι γένος τι ἐκάστου καὶ οὐσία αὐτὴ καθ' αὐτήν, ἔτι δὲ θαυμαστοτέρου τοῦ εὐρήσοντος καὶ ἄλλον δυνησομένου διδάξαι ταῦτα πάντα ἱκανῶς διεκρινησάμενον.

⁴⁰⁵ Interestingly, Sayre (1996: p. 92) points out that Plato is referring to himself when noting that the acquisition and transmission of knowledge of Forms require remarkable intellectual capacities.

Besides the passages mentioned above and following Wahl,⁴⁰⁶ Schofield,⁴⁰⁷ and Mansfeld,⁴⁰⁸ Palmer also takes the First Deduction (137c4-142a8) to be a further proof of Gorgias' presence in the *Parmenides*. Palmer highlights particularly the fact that Plato employs 1) "the same type of Gorgianic conclusions", 2) "an argumentative strategy directly reminiscent of that in the first division of Gorgias" 'On What-Is-Not'" and 3) the same form of Gorgianic reasoning "at the level of individual arguments."⁴⁰⁹ In the first case, with respect to Gorgianic conclusions, Plato adapts, through the mouth of Parmenides, the same negative conclusions about the One as Gorgias does about being and non-being. For just as there is nothing to be said, known or communicated about being and non-being, there is also nothing that can be attributed to the One.⁴¹⁰ In the second and third case, Palmer points out that various pairs of contrary predicates, such as "one and many", "ungenerated and generated", "changing and unchanging" and "moving and at rest" are also employed in the First Deduction in the form of a neither-nor conundrum.⁴¹¹ From these structural similarities, Palmer concludes that "Plato in the First Deduction presents a certain sophistic appropriation of Parmenides and gives Parmenides himself the opportunity to repudiate it."⁴¹²

Palmer's evaluation of Gorgias's presence in the *Parmenides* deserves special attention, since few other scholars have emphasized the striking parallels between Plato and Gorgias. However, this does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that the *Parmenides* should in no way be interpreted without reference to Gorgias' Περὶ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος, given that Plato's *Parmenides* contains numerous references to other authors and arguments as well. Suffice it to say that it is necessary to take Gorgias' ontological arguments into account when dealing with Plato's metaphysical theses concerning being and non-being, because they have tremendous effects upon many of the fundamental doctrines that are discussed in the *Parmenides*. Indeed in the *Parmenides*, Plato's portrayal of Gorgias becomes in many ways subtler than in the *Gorgias*, where the Περὶ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος is left unmentioned. This is because particular arguments contained in Gorgias' philosophical treatise are actually incorporated in the first and second part of the *Parmenides*, which entails the necessary dialectical exercise for the young Socrates in order to gain deeper knowledge in philosophy. Nevertheless, Palmer's suggestion that "Plato presents a certain sophistic appropriation of Parmenides" appears problematic for following

⁴⁰⁶ Wahl 1951: pp. 56-57 and pp. 59-60.

⁴⁰⁷ Schofield 1977: p. 150.

⁴⁰⁸ Mansfeld 1990: pp. 258-265.

⁴⁰⁹ Palmer 1999: pp. 112-113.

⁴¹⁰ Palmer 1999: p. 112.

⁴¹¹ Palmer 1999: pp. 112-115.

⁴¹² Palmer 1999: p. 117.

reason: Palmer's interpretation of Plato's appropriation of Gorgias' *On What-Is-Not* fails to provide sufficient grounds to explain the seriousness of the dialectical exercise in the *Parmenides*. Palmer's interpretative weaknesses are demonstrated by the fact that he points to the sophistic appropriation of Parmenides in the dialectical exercise, on the one hand, and assumes that the exercise as such has a serious character for Socrates' continuing education, on the other.⁴¹³ The unsatisfactory situation here is not that these two assumptions are incompatible with each other. The weakness of this argument is that Palmer does not justify his interpretative approach with respect to the *Parmenides* itself, but rather with respect to the *Theaetetus*, Proclus (*in Prm.* 635, 31 ff. Cousin) and the *Sophist*, where Socrates' meeting with the profound personality of Parmenides (*Theaetetus* 183-e3-184a2) and Parmenides' presentation of excellent arguments (*Sophist* 217c5-7) are mentioned.⁴¹⁴ Yet this can hardly form a sufficient basis of argument for the seriousness of the dialectical exercise in the *Parmenides*. Furthermore, Palmer is wrong to suggest that the criticism, with which Plato addresses Parmenides in the *Sophist* can be projected back onto the *Parmenides*.⁴¹⁵ Indeed, as we will see in more detail below, and regarding the *Parmenides*, Plato is first and foremost portraying Parmenides in a positive light, because he wants to emphasize Parmenides' main merit: the orientation towards "thinking and being" (νοεῖν ... καὶ εἶναι, DK B 28, 3), or in terms of Plato's Parmenides: the emphasis on "those things, which are specially grasped by reasoning and which we call Forms" (περὶ ἐκεῖνα ἃ μάλιστα τις ἂν λόγῳ λάβοι καὶ εἶδη ἂν ἡγήσασαιτο εἶναι, *Parm.* 135e2-4). Because Plato is drawing on Parmenides' account of truth, he is fostering the predominance of thinking (the Forms) as a necessary condition for doing philosophy. The dialectical exercise therefore serves as a point of departure for Socrates' further philosophical development, because it is a product of the thinking process itself, which is enriched by Parmenides' unitary vision of the world, and which, according to Plato, represents a model to be followed and further developed.⁴¹⁶ If Plato were not to bring out Parmenides' positive qualities, such as presented in the context of the *Parmenides*, we would not understand how Socrates would possibly be able to make any philosophical progress in following Parmenides' dialectical exercise in the second part of the dialogue. Worse still, Socrates would even be in danger of becoming a "misologist" (μισόλογος), as the context of Plato's *Phaedo* (89d-90d) teaches us. In sum, although Palmer is right in calling attention to

⁴¹³ Palmer 1999: p. 149.

⁴¹⁴ Palmer 1999: pp. 149-150.

⁴¹⁵ Palmer 1999: p. 119: "We shall see that the sophistic appropriations that figure in the *Sophist* also figure in the dialectical exercise of the *Parmenides*."

⁴¹⁶ See also Turnbull 1998: pp. 49-50.

the “sophistic Parmenideanism in the *Sophist*”,⁴¹⁷ not least because Plato here explicitly broaches the issue of likelihood of confusion between the sophist, the statesman and the philosopher, he is wrong in assuming that the same problematic situation is prevalent in the *Parmenides*.

Parmenides and Plato

The content of Plato’s *Parmenides* can be regarded, though not necessarily exclusively, as a counter-proposal to the different sophists’ appropriation of Parmenides’ philosophy. From Plato’s point of view, then, the purpose is not to place the opinions of mortals at the centre of things, as was the case for Protagoras, nor to appropriate certain Parmenidean theses for abusive purposes, as this was done by Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, nor again to produce a devastating, but over-hasty critique of Parmenides’ ontology, as Gorgias has proposed in his Περὶ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος. The reasons for Plato’s avoidance of the sophists’ positions are the following: 1) the δόξαι are not always reliable, they cannot, therefore, enjoy epistemic authority; 2) Euthydemus’ and Dionysodorus’ eristic arguments do not result from honest educational motives, but are rather constructed for the sake of mere amusement. Consequently, eristic disputes must be rejected as much as possible if the danger of becoming a misologist is to be avoided; 3) Gorgias’ criticism of Parmenides’ ontology is legitimate, though too one-sided, because it ignores Parmenides’ fundamental insights, without which the project of philosophy becomes impossible.

Taken in its entirety, Plato’s appropriation of the figure of Parmenides in the *Parmenides* is an enhancement of some of the main Eleatic ideas, eventually leading to new ways of thinking. The poetic creativity that Plato draws on in his portrayal of Parmenides, who is even allowed to criticize Plato’s own teacher Socrates, may, at first glance, surprise and confuse the reader. Who else was ever given the opportunity to put Socrates’s capacity for doing philosophy to the test? Yet the very same creativity is, in the end, the expression of Plato’s deep admiration for Parmenides’ intellectual achievements, which he even shows in the *Sophist*, where Plato presents his critical views towards Parmenides. The question that arises from the above is how Plato shows his appreciation for Parmenides. In order to answer this

⁴¹⁷ Palmer 1999: pp. 118-181.

question, we will begin our interpretation of Plato's *Parmenides* against the background of the outcome of the first part of the present study.

2.2. Why Zeno? Measuring the Argument on Similarity and Dissimilarity

The dramatic setting of the *Parmenides* finds Zeno giving a philosophy lesson and reading from his book. Pythodoros' house in Athens serves as the venue where Parmenides and Zeno are temporarily staying and where Socrates, together with others, comes to join in the discussion with the Eleatic guests. Plato tells his readers that, having heard the end of the discourse, Socrates began the conversation with Zeno by summarizing the latter's argument (127d6-8):

If the plurality of things exists, then it is necessary that the same things are similar and dissimilar. But this is impossible, because neither can the dissimilar be similar nor the similar dissimilar. [...] If it is impossible that the dissimilar is similar and the similar dissimilar, it is impossible that the plurality of things exists.

εἰ πολλά ἐστὶ τὰ ὄντα, ὥς ἄρα δεῖ αὐτὰ ὁμοιά τε εἶναι καὶ ἀνόμοια, τοῦτο δὲ δὴ ἀδύνατον· οὔτε γὰρ τὰ ἀνόμοια ὅμοια οὔτε τὰ ὅμοια ἀνόμοια οἷόν τε εἶναι; [...] οὐκοῦν εἰ ἀδύνατον τὰ τε ἀνόμοια ὅμοια εἶναι καὶ τὰ ὅμοια ἀνόμοια, ἀδύνατον δὴ καὶ πολλὰ εἶναι; (127e1-7)

Zeno is trying to refute the view that many things exist by proving that it leads to contradictory results (128d1-2). If the plurality of things exists, the antithetical character of the consequences emerges in light of the following considerations. If there are many things, then it is necessary that the ascription of one property to particular things, namely being similar, necessary implies that the opposite property, namely being dissimilar, must likewise be ascribed to the same things. No further comments are given on this topic. Socrates continues to summarize the consequences of Zeno's argument instead, adding that it is impossible that the dissimilar can be similar or the similar dissimilar. The idea here is that one and the same thing cannot have opposing properties. Consequently, if one and the same thing is supposed to have simultaneously the property x (= being similar) and the property $\neg x$ (= being unlike or dissimilar), then this reasoning necessarily results in a contradiction. Therefore, the premiss that the plurality of things exists is false according to Zeno.

On the basis of these initial arguments, Socrates points out to his audience that Zeno is not only a close friend, but, furthermore, a philosophical disciple of Parmenides (128a4-6). He interprets the friendship between the two Eleatics as implying that they have the same philosophical position, albeit drawing on different proofs. Whereas Parmenides claims that “the Whole is one” (ὅν εἶναι τὸ πᾶν) or simply “unity” (ἓν), Zeno argues that “there is no plurality” (οὐ πολλὰ εἶναι) or simply “no plurality” (μὴ πολλὰ), both basically aiming at one and the same result (128ba8-b6). Zeno asserts his *no plurality-view*, explaining that he wrote his book to provide “help” (βοήθεια, 128c6)⁴¹⁸ to his friend Parmenides against his adversaries, who laughed at Parmenides’ *unity-view*. Zeno explains that if Parmenides’ opponents argued that the assumption ἓν ἐστὶν leads to “many absurdities” (πολλὰ καὶ γελοῖα, 128c8) and “contradictions” (ἐνάντια,⁴¹⁹ 128d2), then his aim is to show how much more problematic it is to postulate πολλὰ ἐστὶν, the position defended by Parmenides’ opponents (128d2-6).⁴²⁰

Many scholars have pondered the puzzling case of Zeno and have come to different conclusions by reflecting on Plato’s report about Zeno’s argumentation and method, on the one hand, as well as on the historical evidence for placing Zeno in the company of Parmenides, on the other. But what is the theoretical difficulty of the Zenonian argument on similarity and dissimilarity and why has it disturbed so many scholars? To a large extent, the confusing situation emerging from the beginning of the philosophical discussion in the *Parmenides* is, I firmly believe, a consequence of the fact that Plato, through the mouth of Socrates, gives a rather cryptic summary of Zeno’s argument, leaving open the conditions under which Zeno took a single thing to be similar at one time and dissimilar at another.⁴²¹ With a more transparent and clear presentation, the reader might have been in a better position to evaluate

⁴¹⁸ Cf. also Simpl. *In Phys.*, p. 138.18-22.

⁴¹⁹ Cf. also Simpl. *In Phys.*, p. 139.5-7 (DK 29 B 2).

⁴²⁰ See again Simpl. *In Phys.*, p. 141.8-11. It remains, however, questionable why Zeno, but not Parmenides himself felt the need to go to engage in an oscillating battle of words against the pluralists’ views. Proclus, for example, thinks that Zeno is somehow imprisoned in the world of his opponents, because *he touches plurality in his own thoughts*, by arguing against the plurality of things. The logical impasse expresses itself in a confused awareness that Zeno himself has not yet been installed *in the One*, but is only on his way to it, and is forced to engage in a *battle of words* (Proclus, *In Parm.* 698.6-21). Yet, Plato’s *Parmenides* teaches us that Proclus’ interpretation must be inverted. For, Proclus’ statements on Parmenides and Zeno refer to the roles of the historical figures, but Plato’s Parmenides and Zeno play just the opposite roles: whereas Zeno makes a brief entrance in the dialogue and remains silent after his conversation with Socrates, the great Parmenides will become the main speaker and defend himself against his opponents.

⁴²¹ On this point, cf. for example Calogero 1932: p. 108: ‘[...] non abbiamo alcuna nozione autentica del modo con cui fosse costituito questo primo λόγος [...]’; Cornford 2010: p. 68: “What Zeno meant by the terms ‘like’ and ‘unlike’ is uncertain.” Cornford makes a further attempt to clarify the meaning of “like” and “unlike” by referring to other Eleatic writings such those of Parmenides and Melissus. Against this approach, it can be argued that Zeno is actually pointing to the use of the words by his opponents when he says that assuming plurality leads to contradictions, “if properly examined” (εἰ τις ἱκανῶς ἐπεξίτοι, *Parm.* 128d6). Thus it is not the Eleatic meaning of “like” and “unlike” that is open for discussion but that of Parmenides’ opponents.

Zeno's argument against plurality.⁴²² For example, Plato could have referred to specific qualities of things, such as their "magnitude" (μέγεθος), "thickness" (πάχος), "volume" (ὄγκος)⁴²³ or any other property, when reformulating Zeno's argument about similarity and dissimilarity. But none of this is mentioned. Yet we cannot rid ourselves of the suspicion that, in the absence of further explanation, Plato is revealing, by means of this lack of clarity, characteristic features of Zeno's works: to a certain extent, the arguments were quite abstract and almost inaccessible to the uninitiated. Socrates makes the same point, when he openly confesses to his Eleatic interlocutors: "what you have explained in your writings, seems to overstretch outsiders like us" (ὕπερ ἡμᾶς τοὺς ἄλλους φαίνεται ὑμῖν τὰ εἰρημένα εἰρησθαι, 128b5-6). And it is telling that at *Sophist* 243a7-b1,⁴²⁴ no less a figure than the visitor from Elea explicitly calls this problem *the lack of accessibility of old teachings*, and proposes as a solution *to meld the doctrines of the old men into a dialogical learning process*.

It is within this realm of restricted possibilities of understanding that Plato writes his *Parmenides*. The challenge for the reader consists, therefore, in testing the outcomes of the *Parmenides* in light of other Platonic writings. More specifically, we need to turn our attention to the *Phaedrus*, where the enigmatic figure of Zeno as well as "the art of arguing from contradictions" (ἡ ἀντιλογικὴ τέχνη) are portrayed, and to draw conclusions in relation to the *Parmenides*.

2.2.1. Plato's Zeno in the *Phaedrus*

In 259e-262c, Socrates, together with Phaedrus, discusses the problem of whether rhetoric relies upon precise knowledge of the truth or "the true nature" (τὸ ἀληθές, 259e5) of things.⁴²⁵ Phaedrus reports a different opinion, namely that an orator need not "learn what is really just" (τὰ τῷ ὄντι δίκαια μανθάνειν, 259e7-260a2),⁴²⁶ "good or noble" (ἀγαθὰ ἢ καλὰ, 260a3), but

⁴²² See also Taylor 1934: p. 5: "If we had the text of Zeno's work before us, much that is perplexing in the *Parmenides* would probably become clear; as it is, we are constantly confronted with arguments which seem only half-intelligible because we are unacquainted with the text of the work which has obviously suggested them."

⁴²³ These are the examples reported by Simplicius, *In Phys.* p. 139.10 (DK 29 B 1).

⁴²⁴ *Sophist* 243a7-b1: ὅτι λίαν τῶν πολλῶν ἡμῶν ὑπεριδόντες ὀλιγόρησαν: οὐδὲν γὰρ φροντίσαντες εἴτ' ἐπακολουθοῦμεν αὐτοῖς λέγουσιν εἴτε ἀπολειπόμεθα, περαίνουσι τὸ σφέτερον αὐτῶν ἕκαστοι.

⁴²⁵ *Phaedrus* 259e-262c.

⁴²⁶ See also De Vries 1969: p. 195, who rightly points out that "Plato's constant reproach, from the *Apol.* on through *Gorg.*, *Meno*, *Euthyd.* and *Rep.* on, is that the teachers of rhetoric are indifferent to τὰ τῷ ὄντι δίκαια μανθάνειν."

only what “will seem so” (ὅσα δόξει, 260a3) to the crowd (πλήθει, 260a2).⁴²⁷ The intellectual activity of the rhetorician is therefore reduced to “persuasion” (τὸ πείθειν: 260a4) as opposed to telling of “what is true” (τὸ ἀληθές). The archetypal orator who possesses the outstanding talent to persuade other people is not identified with Nestor, Odysseus, Palamedes, Gorgias, Thrasymachus or Theodorus,⁴²⁸ as the interlocutors first suggest,⁴²⁹ but with Zeno, the Eleatic Palamedes. Bearing in mind that Thrasymachus of Chalcedon was, according to Plato’s testimony, a dazzling and extremely provocative rhetorician,⁴³⁰ it is astonishing that he is not in the position to replace Zeno as, in a sense, *the* orator. Even more surprising is the fact that Gorgias, originally from Leontini and one of the best-known orators and sophists of the fifth century B.C. cannot compete with the Eleatic Palamedes. Why is this so? Does Plato have an evaluative criterion for determining the best orator? To acquire further information about Zeno’s outstanding abilities let us go back to the *Phaedrus* where Socrates talks about the art of rhetoric in general and Zeno’s virtuosity in particular.

First, as we have already seen, Phaedrus had argued that an orator need not know or learn the truth about things, but only about what appears to be so, in order to demonstrate his rhetorical talents. Consequently, successful products of rhetoric, i.e. the speeches, are not to be identified with λόγοι about true things, but rather with discourses about how things appear.⁴³¹ Hence, according to the opinion transmitted by Socrates’ interlocutor, a good orator does not so much possess the art of telling the truth as the art of persuasion. For these reasons, it comes as no surprise that Socrates is not satisfied with this picture. He therefore affirms that it is necessary to examine the “speeches” (λόγοι) or rather “the art of speeches” (ἡ τῶν λόγων τέχνη) of a “rhetorician” (ῥητορικός), in order to argue for his own understanding of good rhetoric. Through the mouth of Socrates, Plato wants to suggest that an orator must know the truth of things in order to deliver a good and noble discourse, as opposed to mere persuasive

⁴²⁷ Hackforth 1982: p. 121 suggests that “what Phaedrus says he has heard [...] corresponds closely to the conception of his art ascribed to Gorgias in the dialogue which bears his name, and we may take it as representing a position commonly taken up by the theorists of rhetoric.” Cf. also the chapter on Plato’s *Gorgias* above, where the art of rhetoric is discussed in detail.

⁴²⁸ Little is known about Theodorus of Byzantium who lived in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. Plato calls him “the most excellent Byzantine artist of the words” (τόν γε βέλτιστον λογοδαίδαλον Βυζάντιον ἄνδρα: *Phaedrus* 266e4-5). Aristotle ranks him among those who had advanced the art of rhetoric, *Soph. el.* 183b2. Suda describes him as a sophist.

⁴²⁹ It is surprising to note that other sophist-orators, such as Protagoras, Euthydemus, Dionysodorus and Hippias, to whom Plato dedicated dialogues of the same name, are not mentioned here, although in the *Gorgias*, Plato writes that sophists and rhetoricians stand near to each other (465c3-5).

⁴³⁰ See *Phaedrus* 267c7-d2, *Republic* 338c, 339b, 343c. As far as Thrasymachus’ political attitude is concerned, it is not clear whether the views Plato attributes to him are historically accurate. It might be that Plato took him to have had influence over the decision-making of the contemporary society through his teaching and writings and therefore thought him worth discussing.

⁴³¹ See also the case of Hippias in Plato’s *Hippias Minor* and *Hippias Major*.

words (259e). For his ulterior motive is to lay down a prototype of a philosophical rhetoric, which aims to awaken and stimulate the rational potential of human beings. After all, man should not simply be reduced to his ability to produce opinions or persuasive discourses, but rather be uplifted by means of his faculty of intelligence.

Now, his analysis starts from the assumption that “the art of rhetoric” (ἡ ῥητορικὴ τέχνη) is to be understood as “a certain guidance of the soul by means of speeches” (ψυχαγωγία τις διὰ λόγων, 261a8). The Greek word ψυχαγωγία usually denotes verbal flattery, an enchantment or an enticement through which souls are conducted or attracted.⁴³² Hence, it is closely linked to the discussion of the art of persuasion (πειθώ) and can be described as a result of rational demonstration. Plato himself seems to have had the idea to redefine the ordinary meaning of psychagogy, which often had manipulative or abusive connotations,⁴³³ in order to give an account of a philosophical rhetoric. As stated above, human souls have a noble objective, i.e. to achieve knowledge of things with the help of true λόγοι. Anything that hinders this intellectual pursuit – and this seems to be the case with respect to the previous practice of ψυχαγωγία⁴³⁴ – should be first analysed and then eliminated. Yet, there is a puzzle. For it is generally not possible, as Socrates himself admits on behalf of rhetoric, “to persuade artfully” (πείθειν τέχνη, 260d9), if the person who knows the truth about things understands nothing of rhetoric (260d3-7). This means not only that the speaker, who wants to produce good and noble discourses, needs to know the truth about things, but also that the person who does in fact know the truth, needs to possess the art of rhetoric as well. In other words, a good orator must know the truth about things, and this means also the truth about rhetoric. This is, in fact, the reason why Socrates emphasizes the idea of exposing the rational force of the λόγοι⁴³⁵ “in the lawcourts” (ἐν δικαστηρίοις), “in private life” (ἐν ιδίοις) or “in terms of small and large things” (ἐν μικροῖς τε καὶ μεγάλοις).⁴³⁶ He is keenly interested in learning more about the success of powerful speakers. How does Socrates set about his task, how does he reveal the rhetorical power of the λόγοι?

⁴³² In Greek mythology, Hermes is known as the “spiritual director” (ψυχοπομπός), who conducts the shadows of the mortals into the nether-world. For more evidence for ψυχαγωγία as verbal flattery, cf. e.g. Isocrates, *Ad Nicoclem* § 49 (Hackforth 1982: p. 122, note 1).

⁴³³ Cf. also *Statesman* 304c7-e2.

⁴³⁴ Psychagogy as a rhetorical practice had its established place in sophistry. Gorgias’ achievement is to have perceived the emotional power of the *logos* that produces certain desired results. His famous definition of the rhetorician as a “craftsman of persuasion” (πειθοῦς δημιουργός) indicates the enigmatic relation between a speech and its impact on the motivation of action. For more information about Gorgias’ and psychagogy see e.g. Segal 1962: pp. 99-155; Asmis 1986: pp. 153-172 and Heitsch 1994: pp. 219-234.

⁴³⁵ Cf. also *Phaedrus* 271c10, where Socrates explicitly speaks about λόγου δύναμις.

⁴³⁶ *Phaedrus* 261a8-261b1.

With this question we come to our second point, which concerns Zeno's specific rhetorical know-how. Keeping in mind the important role of the right *ψυχαγωγία*, Socrates examines the specific tasks and actions of the protagonists in the main state institutions by asking his interlocutor whether or not it is true that, e.g., the "adversaries" (ἀντίδικοι, 261c5) in the judiciary "contradict each other" (ἀντιλέγουσιν, 261c5) about what is "just" (δίκαιον) and "unjust" (ἄδικον). Phaedrus agrees to this. To this evidence, Socrates adds that when an adversary in a lawsuit argues "skilfully" (τέχνη, 261c10) in favour of one or another position, he "will make" (ποιήσει) the same thing "appear" (φανῆναι) just and unjust to the same audience, as he pleases (261c10-d1). The same rhetorical practice can be observed "in popular oratory" (ἐν δημηγορίᾳ, 261d3), Socrates adds, where the city considers "the same law at one time to be good, at another again just the opposite" (τὰ αὐτὰ τοτὲ μὲν ἀγαθὰ, τοτὲ δ' αὖ τὰναντία, 261d3-4). Now, if rhetoric has a central role to play in the law courts and assemblies, is it a surprise that it must also have left its mark on other fields, such as, for example, philosophy? Similarly, as regards the artful reasoning of adversaries in the law courts, one finds the equivalent discourse structure in Zeno's writings, as Socrates points out: "Don't we know that the Eleatic Palamedes speaks so artfully, that to his audience *the same things appear to be similar and dissimilar* (φαίνεσθαι τὰ αὐτὰ ὅμοια καὶ ἀνόμοια) both one and many, and again both at rest and in motion?"⁴³⁷ Now, rhetorical practice in Zeno's writings, culminating in the use of the ἀντιλογικὴ τέχνη, calls for significant further research, as it presupposes at least two important aspects that need to be commented: the appearance of things and opposites.

(i) *The Appearance of Things*

To begin with the first factor, namely things that appear to us, we have already seen that, in the *Parmenides*, Socrates attributes to Zeno the thesis that a plurality of things does not exist, on the grounds that it entails a contradiction: if many things exist, "they must be both like and unlike" (δεῖ αὐτὰ ὅμοιά τε εἶναι καὶ ἀνόμοια, 127e2), but this is impossible, as one and the same thing can never have two opposite attributes. Compared to what Socrates says about Zeno in the *Phaedrus* (φαίνεσθαι τὰ αὐτὰ ὅμοια καὶ ἀνόμοια), the argument seems to be quite different. It is in fact not the same to identify a. "the being of things" and b. "the appearance of

⁴³⁷ *Phaedrus* 261d6-8: Τὸν οὖν Ἑλεατικὸν Παλαμήδην λέγοντα οὐκ ἴσμεν τέχνη, ὥστε φαίνεσθαι τοῖς ἀκούουσι τὰ αὐτὰ ὅμοια καὶ ἀνόμοια, καὶ ἓν καὶ πολλὰ, μένοντά τε αὖ καὶ φερόμενα;

things,” given that “being” means something different than “appearing,” both for Plato and the Eleatics. Hence, if the historical Zeno really maintained position a, as the *Parmenides* suggests, why then does Plato attribute to him position b in the *Phaedrus*? The answer to this question remains uncertain, at least for now. But we will have the opportunity to give a precise answer to this question in the next chapter. In this context, however, let us note that the Eleatic Palamedes has various roles in both dialogues. While Zeno is portrayed in the *Parmenides* as a talented thinker, whose intention is to help defend his teacher against criticism, his supporting role in the *Phaedrus* consists in showing an incomparable mastery of “the art of arguing from contradictories” (ἡ ἀντιλογικὴ τέχνη), since he is able not only to assimilate all sorts of things into anything whatsoever, but also to bring to light the same practice in those who try to hide it.⁴³⁸ In contrast to the *Parmenides*, the *Phaedrus* underlines the negative side of Zeno’s rhetorical capacities, which leads to the undesirable result of producing “deception” (ἀπάτη, 261e6).⁴³⁹ For, the one who is capable of arguing on opposite sides will not teach his audience what a thing actually consists of, but rather *deceive* him by leaving the truth about things in abeyance. Or as Socrates explains: “A person who wants to deceive others, but who does not himself want to be deceived, must know accurately the similarity and dissimilarity of things” (δεῖ ἄρα τὸν μέλλοντα ἀπατήσῃν μὲν ἄλλον, αὐτὸν δὲ μὴ ἀπατήσεσθαι, τὴν ὁμοιότητα τῶν ὄντων καὶ ἀνομοιότητα ἀκριβῶς διειδέναι, 262a5-7). According to Socrates, such knowledge presupposes that the deceiver in general “knows the truth about a given thing” (ἀλήθειαν ἀγνοῶν ἐκάστου, 262a9).

(ii) *Opposites*

Regarding the second factor, namely opposites, Zeno’s rhetorical ability should not simply be reduced to a social technique of cunning persuasion or of speaking in an elegant way in the interest of enchanting his audience, although the *Phaedrus* seem to suggest this. For the real question in the present context is not so much whether he is able to deceive his listeners, but rather what the *technē* of his persuasion really consists in. In the case of Gorgias,⁴⁴⁰ we can say that the force of his *logoi* works directly upon the *psyche*. The *dynamis* of his persuasive words

⁴³⁸ *Phaedrus*, 261d10-e4.

⁴³⁹ *Phaedrus* 261d-262a. Cf. also *Parmenides*’ poem, where the Goddess explains to Parmenides the “deceptive ordering” (κόσμον ἀπατηλὸν, fr. 8) of the opinions of mortals.

⁴⁴⁰ The following considerations about Gorgias’ *technē* take their lead from Segal 1962: pp. 99-155.

form, model and manipulate the soul like an actual drug, one that stimulates the attention, but weakens the power of judgment. Segal summarises Gorgias' rhetorical art as follows: "Thus the *techne* of Gorgias rests upon a 'psychological' foundation: it is at least assumed that the psyche has an independent life and area of activity of which the rhetor must learn and which to some extent he must be able to control."⁴⁴¹ In other words, the more Gorgias knows how to influence his listeners' psychological states, the less likely it is that the audience will be able to resist his words. Now, how does the situation present itself in the discourse of our character? What is the *techne* of Zeno's *logoi*?

We saw before that Zeno is capable of making things appear similar and dissimilar without showing the real nature or the truth of that which is argued about, at least as far as Socrates' understanding of the truth of things is concerned. That this way of arguing leads necessarily to deception comes as no surprise, but rather represents a challenge for critical philosophical voices, although at the broader institutional level, arriving at conflicting results was nothing unusual. On the contrary, one of the most significant features of rhetorical practice within different institutional bodies was the interplay of opposites. In the context of the lawcourts and popular assemblies, which are used as examples in the *Phaedrus*, it is the contrast between the two juridical notions "just" (δίκαιον) and "unjust" (ἄδικον) or the ethical "good" (ἀγαθόν) and "bad"⁴⁴² that is brought into play at relevant points throughout the process of decision-making. In the case of Eleatic philosophy, Zeno behaves in a similar way towards his opponents, although the outcome is a far more serious situation. Socrates lists the following pairs of opposites: "similar" (ὅμοια) and "dissimilar" (ἀνόμοια), "one" (ἓν) and "many" (πολλά), "at rest" (μένοντά) and "in motion" (φερόμενα).⁴⁴³ Instead of discussing the last two pairs of opposites "one and many", "at rest and in motion", Socrates points out that it is the usage of the opposition between ὅμοια and ἀνόμοια in particular that displays Zeno's "art of arguing from contradictories" (ἡ ἀντιλογικὴ τέχνη).⁴⁴⁴ For this way of disputing is not only performed in lawcourts and popular assemblies, but governs "as it seems" (ὥς ἔοικε) "all

⁴⁴¹ Segal 1962: pp. 105-106.

⁴⁴² Note that in the relevant passages of the *Phaedrus* (261d3-4), Plato does not explicitly use a specific Greek term for the notion of the bad, but simply refers to it as "the opposite" (τὰναντία) of the good.

⁴⁴³ *Phaedrus* 261d6-8. Interestingly, Calogero points out that the enumeration of these examples echoes the structure of Zeno's book, which starts with the argument from the *similar and dissimilar* and ends with the other two pairs of opposites, namely *one and many*, and *rest and motion*, not least because the same enumeration can be found in two different dialogues, the *Phaedrus* and *Parmenides* 129d-e. However, Calogero rightly emphasizes that we must not draw premature conclusions about Zeno's arguments. For the sequence shows neither the internal preconditions of each argument nor whether each opposite is based on the same preconditions; (1932: pp. 107-111).

⁴⁴⁴ *Phaedrus* 261d10-e4.

speaking” (πάντα τὰ λεγόμενα). And this is also the crux of the matter: the decisive factor in considering the question of whether and to what extent Plato takes Zeno to be *the* orator, is above all his vertiginous ἀντιλογική, which can be used in any imaginable field of application. Whoever wants to practice rhetoric in its most effective form cannot ignore the Eleatics’ power of speaking. Put succinctly, Zeno’s rhetorical *technē* consists in producing “deception” (ἀπάτη) or confusion about the truth of things by making any thing whatsoever appear similar or dissimilar to any thing that can be made similar or dissimilar.

2.2.2. Consequences for the *Parmenides*

The substantive philosophical point made in the *Phaedrus* is that the account of ἀντιλογική τέχνη and the argument about ὁμοιότης and ἀνομοιότης are clearly not afterthoughts⁴⁴⁵ on Plato’s part concerning his portrayal of Zeno: they both have key roles to play in alerting the reader to the problem of “deception” (ἀπάτη). Zeno, known as the Eleatic Palamedes, is necessarily portrayed negatively because of his rhetorical cleverness in deceiving his audience without telling the “truth” (ἀλήθεια) about things. And in this context, it is not unimportant to mention a key passage from the *Sophist* where the Visitor from Elea warns his young interlocutor Theaitetos, saying: “The cautious man must be most careful with the matter of resemblances [ὁμοιότητας], because it represents an extremely dangerous kind” (τὸν δὲ ἀσφαλῆ δεῖ πάντων μάλιστα περὶ τὰς ὁμοιότητας ἀεὶ ποιεῖσθαι τὴν φυλακὴν: ὀλισθηρότατον γὰρ τὸ γένος, 231a6-8).⁴⁴⁶ In light of the results of the *Phaedrus*, it is easy to see why the reader must exercise caution when dealing with Zeno’s ἀντιλογική. His way of arguing is highly questionable for two fundamental reasons: 1) the ἀντιλογική τέχνη *is not committed to the truth*, such as it is conceived by Parmenides’ opponents, and 2) it *governs “all speaking”* (πάντα τὰ λεγόμενα). My claim is that, in the *Parmenides*, both reasons also apply, although they are accentuated differently.⁴⁴⁷ While the problem of deception as opposed to truth only seems to move into the background, Socrates instead uses the words “wonder” (τέρας, 128b2) and “worth being admiring” (ἄξιον θαυμάζειν, 128c3) when referring to Zeno’s deceptive way

⁴⁴⁵ In ancient time, the *Phaedrus* was considered to be Plato’s earliest dialogue (cf. e.g. DL III, 38; Olympiodorus, *Vita Platonis* 3; Hermias, *In Platonis Phaedrum Scholia* 65,13,3-4 (Couvreur)). Schleiermacher defends the same view. Usener (1880: pp. 131-151) argues that Plato wrote his *Phaedrus* when he was around 25 years old. Cf. also Tomin 1997: pp. 31-45. Today, most scholars agree that the *Phaedrus* belong to the so-called middle group of dialogues; cf. e.g. Ross 1971: p. 10; Zekl 1972: pp. XIV-XVII and others.

⁴⁴⁶ Cf. also *Sophist* 258e6-259e7.

⁴⁴⁷ Similarly Brisson 1999: p. 28.

of arguing, the antinomy of similarity and dissimilarity again serves as an example of how to maintain “against everything that is said” (παρὰ πάντα τὰ λεγόμενα, 127c9-10)⁴⁴⁸ that the things are not many.⁴⁴⁹ Plato is, therefore, on the one hand, presenting the idea that the ἀντιλογική is folded up inside Parmenidean philosophy and, on the other, borrowing Zeno’s method of arguing from contradictions for purposes which fall within the scope of the *Parmenides*.⁴⁵⁰ The argument about similarity and dissimilarity is put in an abstract way and does not refer to a specific object or property, because Zeno’s ἀντιλογική is, according to the *Phaedrus*, the fundament of all deceptive rhetoric. It is not limited to one field of application or another, but argues against any given position. In the *Parmenides*, however, Zeno sees the ἀντιλογική as defending the idea of *no plurality* and *unity*, respectively.⁴⁵¹ This focus on the significance of Parmenides’ unity view for Zeno’s no plurality argumentation is a new approach in comparison to Zeno’s portrayal in the *Phaedrus* and requires further consideration.

The scope of the *Phaedrus* encompasses different performers of rhetoric, from the judicial to the popular rhetorician to Zeno. The richness and complexity of Zeno’s rhetorical *technē* is not made explicit in the *Phaedrus*, where all rhetoricians have recourse to the power of deception, when arguing artfully in public or private arenas. The difference in Zeno’s case is that, contrary to other rhetoricians, such as e.g. Gorgias, he uses the ἀντιλογική not for his own personal purposes but rather for philosophical reasons. Plato actually emphasizes the integration of Zeno’s rhetoric with Parmenides’ philosophy in order to indicate the origin or the provenance of all deceptive rhetoric. In other words, while the *Phaedrus* teaches us that Zeno’s ἀντιλογική is the culmination of deceptive rhetoric at work, the *Parmenides* shows that Parmenides’ unity view provides full justification for Zeno’s ἀντιλογική or no-plurality-

⁴⁴⁸ See also *Parm.* 128d3: πρὸς τοὺς τὰ πολλὰ λέγοντας.

⁴⁴⁹ The question whether Zeno’s way of arguing is directed against common opinions or rather against Parmenides’ opponents, such as the Pythagoreans, is a subject of dispute among scholars. One of the supporters of the Pythagorean reading is Tannery (1930: pp. 225-254), whose interpretation was later criticized by Mondolfo 1934; Cherniss 1983 and Cornford 2010. This overview is taken from Rapp 2013: pp. 531-532. By contrast, the present study aims at defending the idea that Zeno’s argument in the *Parmenides* is not primarily directed against the Pythagoreans but rather against all pluralist systems. Similarly Allen 1983: p. 72.

⁴⁵⁰ Regarding the historical accuracy of Plato’s account of Zeno’s arguments, many interpreters have taken the obvious step of reconstructing Zeno’s antinomy about plurality from the surviving sources, to draw usable conclusions for the *Parmenides*. We shall come back to this comparative procedure in the following chapter. Here, it is sufficient to point out that Plato may have had the intention to report the historical position of Zeno, but he was not obliged to do so. For, if he puts into the mouth of Parmenides arguments, which the historical figure did not defend, it is not surprising that he might have used the same practice regarding Zeno as well. See also the *Phaedrus*, where Plato through the mouth of Socrates explains that being “clear” (σαφές) or “certain” (βέβαιον, 275c6) is not enough, because letters alone “are incapable of teaching the truth adequately” (ἀδυνάτων δὲ ἱκανῶς τὰληθὴ διδάξαι, 276c9).

⁴⁵¹ See also DL 9.72. However, it must be noted that Zeno’s way of arguing from contradiction can be turned not only against Parmenides’ opponents, but against Zeno and Parmenides as well, as Calogero 1932: pp. 87-155 emphasizes. See also Von Fritz’s critical review of Calogero’s work (1970: pp. 302-320).

view.⁴⁵² Socrates may say in *Phaedrus* 262a that the deceiver must know the truth about a given thing in order to be able to deceive others. In the case of Zeno, however, deceiving people is a necessary outcome of all speeches about the plurality of things, because there only exists one “trustworthy speech and thought about the truth” (πιστὸν λόγον ἢ δὲ νόημα ἀμφὶς ἀληθείης, DK 28 B 8, 50-51). For if we again follow Parmenides’ words, there is only one way of inquiry, which has being as its sole subject. Consequently, the true nature of the world must inevitably carry over into the exclusionary character of the plurality of things. The latter are assimilated to the opinions of mortals (δόξας βροτείας, DK 28 B 8, 51), as Parmenides announces through the mouth of the Goddess, and correspond to a deceptive ordering of words (κόσμον ἐπέων ἀπατηλὸν, DK 28 B 8, 52). This attempt to put Zeno in a position that contrasts with popular oratory is Plato’s own decision and enables the reader to understand the deeper meaning of Zeno’s rhetoric. Considering Parmenides’ philosophy, we can confirm that Zeno’s performance and acquisition of speaking skills do not correspond to a different form of rhetoric, but to a different universe of thinking and speaking that derives from Parmenides’ metaphysical system.

Plato’s evaluation of Eleatic philosophy is, however considerably more complicated than that. For although Zeno’s above mentioned deceitful rhetoric is a negative byproduct of Parmenidean metaphysics and incites the reader to reject both theoretical approaches, it represents only a minor part of the entire dialogue in the *Parmenides*. Only three out of 55 Stephanus pages are dedicated to the discussion between Socrates and Zeno. Far more attention is paid, instead, to Plato’s positive evaluation of Eleatic thinking, as we shall show in more detail in the following chapters.

2.3. Forms as the Prerequisites for a Revised Methodology

The transition, in the *Parmenides*, from Zeno’s powerful ἀντιλογική to Parmenides’ revision of the Zenonian methodology (135c-137c), occurs after the introduction and problematization of the theory of Forms (130a-135c). The utility of the introduction of Forms is that they provide a possible solution to Zeno’s antinomy of similarity and dissimilarity, and can therefore be interpreted as a prerequisite for handling the problem of deception. The deeper meaning and

⁴⁵² See e.g. Palmer 1999; p. 101.

importance of the Forms is, I will argue, that Forms are needed for Parmenides' revision of Zeno's deceitful, albeit useful methodology, because Forms and not visible things are the real content of a reliable methodology. That said, the theory of Forms carries the concern of the *Parmenides* to its logical conclusion and becomes an indispensable exercise for dialectical enquiry. What are further reasons for this approach?

The first hint of the importance of the introduction of the Forms is given by Socrates in *Parmenides* 130a5-b1. Here, it is explained that Parmenides praises Socrates' "zeal for research" (τῆς ὀρμῆς τῆς ἐπὶ τοὺς λόγους, 130b1), after the latter had explained how Zeno's antinomy of similarity and dissimilarity can be solved on the basis of the theory of the Forms. If there is "a Form of Likeness itself by itself" (αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτὸ εἶδος τι ὁμοιότητος, 128e6-129a1), and "an opposite" (τι ἐναντίον, 129a1-2), namely the Form of "Unlikeness" (ἀνόμοιος, 129a2), and if a thing "participates" (μεταλαμβάνει, μετέχει) in the Form of Likeness and another thing in the Form of Unlikeness, then these things become similar and dissimilar, respectively. Moreover, if one thing participates simultaneously in both Forms, then it is not surprising that one and the same thing can have opposite properties (129a2-b1). Therefore, according to Socrates, Zeno is no longer justified in maintaining the strong thesis that there is no plurality of things. For, the contradictory or deceitful characteristics of things speak not against their mode of existence, which is ensured by the postulation of Forms and the idea that visible things participate in Forms, but rather lead to a higher level of reflexion about these matters. This consists in placing the problem of participation in opposite properties on the level of Forms: "But if someone shows that Similarity itself is dissimilar or that Dissimilarity is similar, this would be, I think, a wonder" (εἰ μὲν γὰρ αὐτὰ τὰ ὅμοιά τις ἀπέφαινε ἀνόμοια γιγνόμενα ἢ τὰ ἀνόμοια ὅμοια, τέρας ἂν οἶμαι ἦν, 129b1-3). A few lines later, Socrates again emphasizes the same problem, choosing another pair of Forms: "But if someone shows that One itself is many and again that Many are one, I would be astonished" (ἀλλ' εἰ ὃ ἔστιν ἓν, αὐτὸ τοῦτο πολλὰ ἀποδείξει καὶ αὖ τὰ πολλὰ δὴ ἓν, τοῦτο ἤδη θαυμάσομαι, 129b6-c1). Following this passage immediately, Socrates also indicates that it would be strange if all the other "kinds and Forms" (γένη τε καὶ εἶδη, 129c2)⁴⁵³ "have these opposite properties" (τὰναντία ταῦτα πάθη πάσχοντα, 129c3).⁴⁵⁴ The discussion of the theory of Forms receives

⁴⁵³ Gill & Ryan (1996: p. 129, note 8) suggest that "Plato uses three different abstract expressions to specify forms": *genos*, *eidos* and *idea*.

⁴⁵⁴ Affections or *πάθη* are usually attributed to corporeal things, because only spatio-temporal entities can suffer affections. Socrates' astonishment regarding this issue is instructive, because the case of the Forms and their participation in opposite properties receives its full attention only in the *Sophist*, where the idea of the "interweaving of the Forms" (συμπλοκή τῶν εἰδῶν, 259e5-6) is made a subject of discussion.

Parmenides' and Zeno's full attention when Socrates' explains that he would be very pleased⁴⁵⁵ if a person is able "to distinguish" (διαίρειν) one Form from another, – such as Similarity and Dissimilarity, Multitude and One, Rest and Motion – as being "apart" (χωρίς) from each other, and then again if the same person is able to "mix" (συγκεράννυσθαι) the Forms together and to "separate" (διακρίνεσθαι) them from one another (129d6-e4). Zeno's argument regarding the plurality of things concerns only visible things. By contrast, Socrates' concern is not so much to talk about the perplexing situation "in the visible objects" (ἐν τοῖς ὁρώμενοις, 130a1),⁴⁵⁶ but rather to go deeper "into the Forms themselves" (ἐν αὐτοῖς τοῖς εἶδεσι, 129e6) in order to develop a new philosophical methodology. This consists in explaining the procedure of separating and mixing Forms together, which "are apprehended by reasoning" (ἐν τοῖς λογισμῷ λαμβανομένοις, 130a2),⁴⁵⁷ or, in other words, in elaborating in detail "this same *aporia* [*sc.* of the participation in opposite properties], which is intertwined in many ways in the Forms themselves" (τὴν αὐτὴν ταύτην ἀπορίαν ἐν αὐτοῖς τοῖς εἶδεσι παντοδαπῶς πλεκομένην, 129e6-130a1).

The second hint concerning the importance of the Forms is given by Parmenides at the end of the critical discussion about the ontological status of Forms (135b5-c6). Despite the recurring *aporiai* that are generated with respect to the theory of Forms (130b-134e), and especially with respect to the last and greatest *aporia* of the separation between Forms and sensible things, Parmenides indirectly emphasizes that 1) there "are Forms of things that are" (εἶδη τῶν ὄντων εἶναι, 135b6), that 2) there is a "definite Form in every case" (εἶδος ἐνὸς ἐκάστου, 135b7-8), and that 3) Forms ensure the "power of all discourse" (τὴν τοῦ διαλέγεσθαι δύναμιν, 135c1-2). Otherwise, "one will not have a reference point in which to turn one's thought" (οὐδὲ ὅποι τρέψει τὴν διάνοιαν ἔξει, 135b8) and "philosophy" (φιλοσοφία, 135c5) will somehow become a matter of uncertainty or even impossibility.⁴⁵⁸

Why does Plato choose two different candidates to defend the theory of Forms? In response, we might say, first, that Socrates is aware of the existing incongruity within the realm of the visible world exposed by Zeno, but he is convinced that such a problem is easy to solve with the help of the theory of Forms (135e5-7). However, his intellectual failure lies in his incapacity to solve the *aporiai* regarding the theory of Forms resulting from his discussion with

⁴⁵⁵ 129e3-4: [...], ἀγαίμην ἂν ἐγὼ γ', ἔφη, θαυμαστῶς, ὃ Ζήνων.

⁴⁵⁶ Socrates repeats several times that the problem of participation in opposites properties within the realm of the visible is not worth wondering (129b1: τί θαυμαστόν; 129b4: οὐδὲν ἔμοιγε, ὃ Ζήνων, ἄτοπον δοκεῖ, 129c4: τί θαυμαστόν, 129d5-6: οὐδέ τι θαυμαστόν λέγειν, ἀλλ' ἄπερ ἂν πάντες ὁμολογοῖμεν).

⁴⁵⁷ Cf. also 135e3.

⁴⁵⁸ Palmer (1999: p. 117) suggests that Plato is 'giving Parmenides the chance to respond to Gorgias' attack', which consists in denying an intelligible reality altogether. We will come to this point later.

Parmenides: Socrates does not know what there are Forms of (*aporia* 1); he does not know how things participate in Forms (*aporia* 2); he is unable to give reasons for his thesis that there is a Form for a given homonymous thing (*aporia* 3); he falsely identifies Forms as thoughts in the soul (*aporia* 4); he falsely identifies Forms as paradigms in nature, of which the visible things are images (*aporia* 5); and he separates the Forms from the visible things (*aporia* 6). In principal, we can say that it was clear from the outset how easy it would be for Parmenides to show Socrates' intellectual limitations. For, even before Socrates was progressively forced into the corner by critical questions about the ontological status of Forms, he had exhibited his uncertainty by claiming that “it would be worth wondering if someone were to show *kinds and Forms themselves suffering these opposite effects within themselves*” (εἰ μὲν αὐτὰ τὰ γένη τε καὶ εἶδη ἐν αὐτοῖς ἀποφαίνοι τάναντία ταῦτα πάθη πάσχοντα, ἄξιον θαυμάζειν, 129c2-3). In earlier passages culminating in the one just cited, Socrates dramatizes the tension between the correct belief that all visible or corporeal things can suffer opposite effects and the misleading assumption that Forms too – which are, among other things, incorporeal, simple, eternal, perfect –⁴⁵⁹ might experience opposite affects. In talking about kinds and Forms as experiencing affections (πάθη πάσχοντα), a thesis which he dismisses, he wrongly assumes that this would be the only way to explain the relations among the Forms themselves. And yet, he could have avoided exposing himself to Parmenides' attacks, if he had pursued his view that Forms do not suffer opposite affects, but rather stand in a dialectical relationship to each other and can therefore be interwoven (πλέκεσθαι) with each other (129e5-130a2). The significance of the interweaving of Forms with one another (ἡ ἀλλήλων τῶν εἰδῶν συμπλοκή) is highlighted in *Sophist* 259e5-6, where the Stranger from Elea initiates his young interlocutor Theaetetus into the “highest knowledge” (μεγίστη ἐπιστήμη, 253c4-5) called the “science of dialectic” (διαλεκτική ἐπιστήμη, 253d2-3), explaining that the συμπλοκή τῶν εἰδῶν is needed to ensure the possibility of discourse (λόγος, 259e5-6). As we have seen, Parmenides also suggested that we need Forms in order to ensure the possibility of discourse and the practice of philosophy. So, although Socrates rightly draws attention to the notion of πλέκεσθαι, as the *Parmenides* shows, he is nevertheless unable to explain in detail how the method of collection and division of Forms works.

What are we to make, then, of the Socrates' emphasis on πλέκεσθαι on the one side and his lack of dialectical experience on the other? If Socrates' preliminary thoughts on the philosophical method resulting in collection and division of Forms are to be saved and further

⁴⁵⁹ See e.g. *Symposium* 210e6-211b5, *Phaedo* 79a and *Republic* 502c-518b.

developed, then it is equally clear that he will need additional philosophical “training” (γυμνασία, 135d4, d7) in order to fulfil this task. He cannot therefore not play the leading part in the present case, but is forced to give way to Parmenides, who will offer him his educational services (135c-136c).⁴⁶⁰ It remains open, however, why Plato chooses Parmenides to be the best candidate for an explanation of the importance of Forms, if we consider that, with the exception of the Eleatic Stranger in Plato’s *Sophist*, this role was usually reserved for Socrates. One might argue that if the συμπλοκή τῶν εἰδῶν ensures the possibility of all discourse and if this observation is emphasized by Parmenides in the *Parmenides* and the Eleatic Stranger in the *Sophist*, then it is quite plausible to assume that the dialectical intertwining of Forms is a result of Plato’s intensive preoccupation with Parmenides’ philosophy. However, we also have to keep in mind that the emphasis on the importance of the theory of Forms does not merely concern Forms *per se*, but will enable Socrates and the reader to acquire deeper knowledge of visible things as well. In other words, we need Forms in order to deal with the question of dialectical science and to understand how the way in which Forms are intertwined with each other has a direct influence on our comprehension of the visible things that participate in these Forms. With this approach, we will see that although the Zenonian antinomy on similarity and dissimilarity cannot withstand Socratic examination, Zeno’s way of arguing against the plurality of things will nevertheless inspire new ways of critical thinking, that will be useful and fruitful for doing philosophy.

2.4. Explaining the Exercise

The method that stands at the centre here, which was called “dialectic”,⁴⁶¹ is presented in 135c-137c.⁴⁶² It is placed at the end of the first part of the *Parmenides*, and serves as a bridge to the second part of the dialogue. Metaphorically speaking and according to the historical Parmenides, the passage 135c-137c could be described as the “gates” (πύλαι, DK 28 B 1, 11) that enable the transition from the first part of the dialogue, containing the unstable opinions about the theory of Forms, to the second part, where aporetic thoughts are developed. The

⁴⁶⁰ See also *Theaetetus* 183e5-184a2, where Socrates remembers meeting with Parmenides, whom he describes in the style of Homer (*Odyssey* VIII, 22 and *Iliad* III, 172) as ‘to be honoured’ (αἰδοῖός τέ μοι) and ‘awful’ (δεινός τε).

⁴⁶¹ See also Allen 1983: pp. 187-189.

⁴⁶² Cf. Palmer 1999: pp. 106-108.

metaphor of πύλαι is especially suitable, because it allows us to compare Socrates' ascent towards the light, i.e. to new insights, with the philosophical experience of the historical Parmenides. For, just as the Goddess speaks about "the gates of the paths night and day" (πύλαι Νυκτός τε καὶ Ἡματός [...] κελεύθων, DK 28 B 1, 11), through which the young Parmenides enters in order to get access to the truth, so too does the young Socrates have the possibility to discover new paths towards the truth.⁴⁶³ That the conversation in the *Parmenides* has brought Socrates this far is due to his "impulse towards arguments" (ὁρμή ἐπὶ τοὺς λόγους, 135d3).⁴⁶⁴ But he has not yet found the truth (ἀλήθεια, 135d6), because of his young age. For, truth lies, so to speak, behind the gates, and it can only be acquired bit by bit through philosophical exercise, i.e. through repetitive training (136b-c).⁴⁶⁵ Therefore, Parmenides suggests to him that he take the opportunity to learn the truth while he is still young (135d5-6). Here again, we could compare this passage with Parmenides' poem, where the Goddess promises to the young Parmenides in an emphatic way,⁴⁶⁶ that he shall learn all things, the truth as well as the opinions of mortals.⁴⁶⁷ Regarding the *Parmenides*, Socrates should therefore continue to follow his "noble and divine impulse" (καλὴ ...καὶ θεία, ... ὁρμή 135d2-3), even if this is not well seen by the crowd, which takes philosophical engagement to be "useless" (ἄχρηστος, 135d4) and a mere "chattering" (ἀδολεσχία, 135d5).⁴⁶⁸ Furthermore, Plato's intent is to present his philosophical exercise as a foil to the different discursive practices of the sophists, who misused the λόγοι as an instrument for eristic games, thus turning philosophical argumentation into a farce. Euthydemus' and Dionysodorus' sophistic pranks in the *Euthydemus* are examples that speak volumes.⁴⁶⁹ Against this background, it is quite clear that, in the *Parmenides*, the exercise cannot be labelled as being a joke,⁴⁷⁰ since it has a key role to play in fostering a sincere attitude towards philosophical arguments.

Let us again return to the presentation of the exercise itself. For the explanation of the γυμνασία, Parmenides comes back to Zeno, whose presence had in the meantime been pushed

⁴⁶³ The metaphor of day and light, or rather of brightness (λαμπρόν) and darkness (σκοτεινόν) is evoked once again at *Sophist* 254a.

⁴⁶⁴ See also Sayre 1996: p. 106: "[...] the term *logos* being synonymous with *hypothesis* in the context of the method of hypothesis."

⁴⁶⁵ Gill & Ryan 1996: pp. 60-61.

⁴⁶⁶ DK 28 B 1, 24-26: ὦ κοῦρ' ἀθανάτοισι συνάορος ἡνίοχοισιν, ἵπποις ταῖ σε φέρουσιν ικάνων ἡμέτερον δῶ, χαῖρ, [...].

⁴⁶⁷ DK 28 B 1, 28: [...] χρεὼ δέ σε πάντα πυθέσθαι

ἡμὲν Ἀληθείης [...]

ἡδὲ βροτῶν δόξας, [...].

⁴⁶⁸ Cf. also *Apology* 18b ff.

⁴⁶⁹ See also *Republic* 499a4-9, *Theaetetus* 195b9-c2 and *Sophist* 225d10-11.

⁴⁷⁰ Cf. e.g. Calogero 1932: pp. 269-311 and Taylor 1934: pp. 10 ff..

into the background. He makes it clear that Zeno's way of arguing should serve as a basis for the following stages of training, since it showed itself to be victorious prior to Socrates' intervention: the assumption of the existence of the plurality of things is wrong, because it results in the contradiction according to which one and the same thing shares opposite properties. Socrates was able to solve the problem with the help of the theory of Forms, but proved himself to be too inexperienced in order to explain his theory in detail and to defend it against Parmenides' criticism. Parmenides therefore proposes to keep Zeno's methodology under the condition that it is not only applied to sensible things, but also to the Forms themselves (135e2-3). We have already seen that this step is necessary, because the Forms are the necessary prerequisites for a revised methodology. However, the consideration of the theory of Forms involves a further important aspect. While in Zeno's account, the existence of sensible things or "being and sensible things" were placed at the centre of the discussion, the non-existence or "nonbeing", along with the Forms, must now be used in the methodological context, as quasi-counterpoint to the previous content. Parmenides explains this by urging Socrates to examine the consequences not only of the conditional "if <something> is" (εἰ ἔστιν, 135e9),⁴⁷¹ but also the consequences of the condition, "if <something> is not" (εἰ μὴ ἔστι, 136a1). For, this is the only way, Parmenides goes on to explain, that Socrates could "train better" (μᾶλλον γυμνασθῆναι, 136a2). From Parmenides' point of view, then, the requested γυμνασία consists not only in taking into account the two aspects of "being" and "sensible things", but also in considering the important role of "Forms" and "nonbeing" for further philosophical improvements.

The fact that the required exercise not only comprises the Forms, since they guarantee the possibility of a philosophical discourse, but also includes the aspect of "nonbeing", requires additional explanations. Socrates therefore asks Parmenides for advice: "What do you mean?" (Πῶς λέγεις; 136a3). One could also reword the question as follows: how does our knowledge in philosophy increase if we examine a certain object under the condition that it is not? And

⁴⁷¹ I agree with Cornford (2010: p. 110), citing Grote, that the purpose of Plato's *Parmenides* is, to a large extent, to unfold the ambiguous status of the term εἶναι, as well as that of the "One". Another ambiguous term is "the others". Cf. e.g. Allen 1983: p. 187 and Gill & Ryan 1996: pp. 55-56, note 89. No less interesting is the question of why Plato deliberately chooses obscure terms for the development of his philosophical exercise if the aim of the whole laborious game (πραγματειώδης παιδία, 137b1) is to instruct young students, such as Socrates, to become better in doing philosophy. My guess is that Plato is abandoning here the Socratic educational method, which consist in adapting the teaching material in accordance with the level of knowledge of his interlocutors, and is following Parmenides' pedagogical practice instead, which encouraged his companions, such as Zeno, to develop new ways of abstract thinking at an early age. To this, compare 128d-e, where Zeno explains that he wrote his arguments against the assumptions of the plurality of things in his young days and not when he was older. For arguments against the ambiguity theory, see for example Allen 1983: p. 185.

are there other aspects that we need to place at the centre of the analysis of the methodology? Parmenides takes Zeno's example "if the plurality is" (εἰ πολλά ἐστὶ) and adds the negative hypothesis "if the plurality is not" (εἰ μὴ ἐστὶ πολλά) as starting points for the illustration of the revised methodology:

If plurality is [εἰ πολλά ἐστὶ], what must necessarily result for the plurality in relation to itself and in relation to the unity, and <vice versa>, for the unity in relation to itself and in relation to the plurality. If plurality is not [εἰ μὴ ἐστὶ πολλά], [...] what will result for the unity and for the plurality of things both in relation to itself and in relation to other things [καὶ πρὸς αὐτὰ καὶ πρὸς ἄλληλα].

εἰ πολλά ἐστὶ, τί χρή συμβαίνειν καὶ αὐτοῖς τοῖς πολλοῖς πρὸς αὐτὰ καὶ πρὸς τὸ ἓν καὶ τῷ ἐνὶ πρὸς τε αὐτὸ καὶ πρὸς τὰ πολλά. καὶ αὖ εἰ μὴ ἐστὶ πολλά, [...] τί συμβήσεται καὶ τῷ ἐνὶ καὶ τοῖς πολλοῖς καὶ πρὸς αὐτὰ καὶ πρὸς ἄλληλα (136a5-b1)

The idea here is that Socrates must not only concentrate on the conclusions that can be drawn from a positive or a negative assumption, but also consider the different perspectives from which these consequences should be analysed. Thus, the consequences of a positive or negative assumption must be drawn both from the perspective of the particular object itself (πρὸς ἑαυτό) and from the perspective of other things (πρὸς ἄλληλα). The change in perspective must occur twice, within both a positive hypothesis and a negative hypothesis, such that we end up with eight different conclusions: four conclusions resulting from a positive hypothesis and an additional four resulting from a negative hypothesis.⁴⁷² As Parmenides explains, this systematic approach is also valid for other examples, such as similarity and dissimilarity, movement and rest, creation and destruction, being and nonbeing (136b4-6). In each case, Socrates is asked not only to examine the consequences, which result from the assumption of the existence or non-existence of a particular object, but also to take into account the consequences resulting from different perspectives: πρὸς αὐτό/αὐτά and πρὸς ἄλλο/ἄλληλα (136b6-c4). Fulfilling these conditions will allow Socrates to be "trained completely" (τελέως γυμνασάμενος) and, what is more, "to fully grasp the truth" (κυρίως διόψεσθαι τὸ ἀληθές, 136c5).

But what intrinsic supportive role is played by the relative terms πρὸς αὐτό/αὐτά and πρὸς ἄλλο/ἄλληλα? Why are they also necessary for the revision of Zeno's methodology? If we again recall the outcome of the analysis of the *Phaedrus*, where the *techne* of Zeno's speeches is discussed, we come across two significant aspects that are closely linked together:

⁴⁷² Cf. e.g. Karfik 2005: pp. 141-164.

the appearance of things and the problem of opposites. The analysis of both conceptions reveals that Zeno's *technē* governs all speaking and enables him to produce deception about the truth of the visible things, because of their opposite or rather contradicting properties. However, since Socrates has solved the problem of deception by assuming that the existence of the visible things, which share opposite properties, is secured through their participation in the Forms, Zeno's methodology must be subjected to further refinements. Defined narrowly: the aim of the introduction of the relative terms *πρὸς αὐτό/αὐτά* and *πρὸς ἄλλο/ἄλλήλα* is to ensure the possibility of describing or determining things from different perspectives, such that the production of contradictions is no longer a threat to the study of different objects of investigation. In order to illustrate this, we can say that an object *x* is "F" from one point of view, for example, "in relation to itself" (*πρὸς ἑαυτό*) and "not F" from another point of view, for example, "in relation to other things" (*πρὸς ἄλλήλα*). The object is "the same thing" (*τὸ αὐτὸ τοῦτο*, 136a1-2), but the ways in which we assign a predicate or a property to it are different.⁴⁷³

On the basis of these preliminarily thoughts, we can now better understand Parmenides' refinement of Zeno's methodology: the introduction of new elements, such as the theory of Forms, the reference to negative statements and the relative terms *πρὸς αὐτό/αὐτά* and *πρὸς ἄλλο/ἄλλήλα* pave the way for more general conclusions. As the second part of the *Parmenides* will show, we do not only obtain negative conclusions resulting from the assumption of the existence of sensible things, as was the case in Zeno's example, but also negative and positive conclusions both regarding the assumption of the existence of sensible things and regarding the assumption of the existence of Forms.⁴⁷⁴ These conclusions will, in turn, trigger new ways of thinking about the Forms, sensible things and the problem of participation.

What is decisive is that Zeno's revised methodology is not put into practice by Zeno himself, but by his teacher Parmenides, after Socrates admits that he is not yet able to entirely understand the procedure of the required exercise (136c6-7). There appear to be at least two

⁴⁷³ One of the most influential interpretation of the *πρὸς ἑαυτό/πρὸς ἄλλα* distinction is Meinwald's book *Plato's Parmenides* (1991). Meinwald puts great effort into showing that these terms refer to two kinds of predication, a *pros heauto* predication and a *pros ta alla* predication, that represent the central pivotal point on which the correct understanding of the whole *Parmenides* depends. Despite this approach being promising and shedding great light on possible subject-predicate structures and, for example, its consequences for the theory of Forms, Meinwald's theoretical considerations were soon called into question, notable because of her tendency to impose her interpretation on the text that does not always provide an adequate basis for the proposed reading. Critical voices worth mentioning here are, in particular, Sayre 1996: pp. 110-114; Turnbull 1998: pp. 197-199; Palmer 1999: pp. 155-156 and pp. 239-241; Karfik 2005: pp. 153-154, note 8. A more positive response to Meinwald's interpretation is given by Peterson 1996: pp. 167-192.

⁴⁷⁴ Cf. also Sayre 1996: p. 105.

major reasons for this, namely Parmenides' great experience in doing philosophy and the knowledge he has acquired because of it. As far as the first aspect is concerned, the choice of Parmenides as the leading figure is due to the fact that the proposed dialectical exercise demands a certain philosophical experience because of the level of difficulty of the issue at stake. For, not only does the young Socrates admit that the required exercise represents an "enormous amount of study" (ἀμήχανόν [...] πραγματείαν, 136c6) but Zeno also explains that the task is "no light matter" (οὐ φαῦλον, 136d5). Finally, Parmenides' himself hesitates to comply with the request of demonstrating the use of the exercise, because he too believes that the demand represents a "great task" (πολὺ ἔργον, 136d1). Yet whilst the difficulty for Socrates lies in his philosophical inexperience, which is why he fails to understand how the methodology operates, the difficulty for Parmenides himself is just the opposite, namely to address the "laborious play" (πραγματειώδης παιδία, 137b2) in spite of his advanced age (136d8; 137a1, a3, a5).

But to uncover the real reason why Parmenides enjoys a special status requires the reader to delve deeper into the subject. Following up on the results of the first part of our study, we can state that Plato is distancing himself from the sophists' reception of Parmenides, which often produces tendentious outcomes and therefore fails to do justice to the complexity of Parmenides' philosophy. As a counterbalance to these negative results, Plato intends to give a positive portrayal of Parmenides, for two major reasons. First, Plato approves of and makes use of Parmenides' rationalistic approach to reality, which is based on the identification of being and thinking (τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἐστίν τε καὶ εἶναι, DK 28 B 3), Second, the anticipation of a holistic approach to the use of the exercise, as it is explained in the methodological part of the *Parmenides* (135c8-137c3), enables the reader to grasp Plato's reception of Parmenides' unfragmented vision of reality⁴⁷⁵ and its corresponding reality or truth structures: unity and multiplicity or "the one and the others" (τὸ ἓν καὶ τὰλλα, 159c1). This consists in construing a unitary theory of reality, i.e. a theory of everything that is and that is not, both from the perspective of the assumed object, e.g. the plurality, and its opposite, namely the one or unity (135e9-136b1). But why does Parmenides propose to start the exercise with his own hypothesis instead of that of Zeno (137b2-4)? The answer to this is the following: Zeno's argument on similarity and dissimilarity, as presented in the first part of the dialogue, does not challenge the plurality of the Forms, but only the plurality of sensible things. To compensate for this lack,

⁴⁷⁵ Parmenides' unitary vision of reality is repeatedly stated not only in the *Parmenides*, but also in *Theaetetus* 180e3, 183e3-4 and *Sophistes* 242d5-6, 244b6.

Parmenides must enlarge the scope of the enquiry which in turn has significant impact on the overall structure of the exercise. This is, for example, reflected at the moment in which Socrates asks Zeno to explain the required methodology (136d2-3). Zeno refuses to comply with the request, explaining that “the many ignore that it is impossible to find the truth and achieve real understanding without this wandering around and going through all things” (ἀγνοοῦσιν [...] οἱ πολλοὶ ὅτι ἄνευ ταύτης τῆς διὰ πάντων διεξόδου τε καὶ πλάνης ἀδύνατον ἐντυχόντα τῷ ἀληθεῖ νοῦν σχεῖν, 136e1-3).⁴⁷⁶ Thus, in order to go through all things, Zeno would not only be forced to examine the plurality of visible things and that of the Forms, but also its opposite, namely the one. Yet, he admitted in the beginning of the *Parmenides*, that his writing against Parmenides’ opponents does not have the objective of showing that it is indeed problematic to postulate the one, but rather to show “how much more absurd” (ὥς ἔτι γελοιότερα, 128d4-5) it is if someone assumes the existence of plurality (εἰ πολλά ἐστίν, 128d2-6). Zeno provides the necessary method to be followed and pays attention to the notion of plurality. But because he considers plurality merely from a negative point of view, Zeno is neither in the position to determine the content nor the sequence of arguments of the required philosophical exercise. What is needed instead is a theoretical approach in which the relevant dichotomies, such as unity and plurality, are examined together if the unitary vision of reality is to be grasped in its totality.

That Plato is gathering inspiration from the old Parmenides regarding a holistic approach to reality⁴⁷⁷ becomes clear, when we turn our attention to Parmenides’ poem, where the Goddess’ promises a) that the young Parmenides will “learn all things” (πάντα πυθέσθαι, DK 28 B 1, 28), the truth as well the opinions of mortals (DK 28 B 1, 29-30), b) that truth or being is identical with thinking (τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἐστίν τε καὶ εἶναι, DK 28 B 3)⁴⁷⁸ and c) that being or reality is, *inter alia*, “whole” (πᾶν, DK 28 B 8, 5) and “one” (ἓν, DK 28 B 8, 6). So, both Parmenides and Plato suppose that to be real is to be intelligible. Whereas the historical Parmenides thinks that to be intelligible is, *inter alia*, to be whole and uniform, Plato’s Parmenides takes the intelligible to be a “Form” (εἶδος), which is always the same (135b5-c6). Before we consider what reasons could be invoked to explain this, we need to turn our attention

⁴⁷⁶ A counterexample to the difficult and laborious process of acquiring philosophical experiences, as presented in the *Parmenides*, is the educational process proposed by the sophists. On this, cf. e.g. the *Euthydemus*. In the *Sophist*, however, through the mouth of the Eleatic Visitor, Plato denounces the sophists who claim to know all things and to be able to teach these things to others very quickly (233a-234a).

⁴⁷⁷ The idea that someone can give a holistic picture of things in their connection is, in fact, a characteristic of a dialectician, as Plato describes it, through the mouth of Socrates, in *Republic* 537b2-c7. See also Aristotle *Metaph.* Γ, 1005b6ff.

⁴⁷⁸ Cf. also DK 28 B 4.

to the philosophical exercise itself. For the sake of clarity, we shall limit ourselves here to the examination of some generally correlations, in full knowledge that the hypotheses enable far more diverse possibilities of making comparisons and, consequently, a wide range of insights into the Forms, visible things and the problem of participation.

2.5. The Dialectical Exercise in the Second Part of the *Parmenides*

2.5.1. The Positive Hypotheses (H1-H4)

H1: 137c4-142a8

Keeping in mind the operation of the revised methodology, the first hypothesis should be read as follows: if the one is, what follows for the one in relation to itself? What exactly is meant by this question is not immediately clear. Yet the attentive reader notices that the perspective from which the one is carefully scrutinized is that of its opposite, namely the many or multiplicity, as Parmenides explains: “if the one is, the one would not be many, right?” (εἰ ἓν ἐστίν, ἄλλο τι οὐκ ἂν εἴη πολλὰ τὸ ἓν, 137c4-5). The delimitation of the one from the multiplicity is done repeatedly, though only at the beginning of the first hypothesis, where the possibility of the one having whole-part structures is denied (137d1, d2, e5). Once the young Aristotle has understood this intention by affirming several times that the one is not many (137c5, d1, d2, e6), Parmenides can proceed with his exercise. The arguments of the first hypothesis show that the one has no properties whatsoever. If the one is, then it is not many. And if it is not many, then it must lack all those properties, that are part of multiple systems. Apart from the already mentioned lack of whole-part structures, the one neither has a beginning, middle, nor an end (137d); it is unlimited (137d); it has no shape (137d-138a) or location (138a-b); it is not in motion or at rest (138b-139b); it is neither different nor the same (139b-e), neither similar nor dissimilar (139e-140b), it is neither equal nor unequal (140b-d), neither older nor younger or has the same age (141a); it has no temporal modes (141d); it is not, not even one (141d-e); and it is not subject to name, speech, knowledge, perception, or

opinion (142a). At the end of the first hypotheses, Aristotle thus faces significant pressure to accept something like a bare unity (141d5).⁴⁷⁹

Now, the reader is given no further details about Aristotle's confusion, such that a number of different questions rises: what exactly is it that poses interpretative problems for the young Aristotle? Is he worried about the special status of the one that has no properties whatsoever? Or is he confused about the special status of the speech that has as its subject a non-existent entity? The content of the first hypothesis suggests that these questions are inextricably linked. For, the possibility of speech is ensured by its subject, i.e. by the one that partakes of being, as it becomes evident in the second hypothesis (H2). Such a one or unity is therefore necessarily linked to the many or multiplicity. If, on the other hand, the one does not partake of being, it cannot be subject to name, speech, knowledge, perception, or opinion (H1).

Once we have acknowledged the basic and fundamental dependence of H1 on H2, we can also observe how it can be linked to other passages in H2. For example, let us take a closer look on the arguments presented in 141d7-142a8, where Parmenides describes the different possibilities of how the one can partake of time. The one could either be in connection with the past (τὸ ἦν, τὸ γέγονε, τὸ ἐγίγνετο, 141d7), the future (τὸ ἔσται, τὸ γενήσεται, τὸ γενηθήσεται, 141e1) or the present (τὸ ἔστι, τὸ γίγνεται οὐ τοῦ νῦν παρόντος, 141e2-3). But since the one is deprived of all temporal modes (141e3-6), and since Parmenides does not assume that there is another way of how the one could partake of being (ἔστιν οὖν οὐσίας ὅπως ἂν τι μετάσχοι ἄλλως ἢ κατὰ τούτων τι, 141e7-8), he concludes that the one cannot be, not even one (141e12-142a1). Yet, the argumentation relies on the erroneous step that the one must be temporally determined, if it is in one way or another.⁴⁸⁰ And because of this, the reader is forced to look for other passages which speak in favour of another understanding of the one. It thus appears that Parmenides presents other examples of the one, which do not depend on time but which are still entities. Such is the case with the one, which is the process of transition, for example, from moving to standing still. As Parmenides explains in H2 (155e-157b), the moment of transition is called "the instant" (τὸ ἐξαίφνης, 157d2-3). Since the nature of the instant is placeless (φύσις ἄτοπος, 156d6-7) and since the instant is situated "in the middle" (μεταξύ, 156d7) between two opposite properties, the nature of the instant "does not exist in any time" (ἐν χρόνῳ οὐδενὶ οὔσα, 156e1). In other words, since the change does not occur in any time, the one, which is in the process of transition, "neither is nor is not, neither comes into being

⁴⁷⁹ When presenting the results of each hypothesis, I refer mainly to Gill and Ryan's concise summary of the processing steps; Gill & Ryan 1996: pp. 117-123.

⁴⁸⁰ See also Miller 1986: p. 90.

nor is destroyed” (οὔτε ἔστι τότε οὔτε οὐκ ἔστι, οὔτε γίγνεται οὔτε ἀπόλλυται, 157a2-3). The one, which is in the process of transition is, therefore, not completely determined by temporal conditions, because the transition from one state to another takes place outside of time.⁴⁸¹

The two ways in which the first hypothesis is connected to the second hypothesis are that the one must have a bond with being in order to be what it is and in order to be a subject to speech and knowledge. Furthermore, the false statement that the one must be temporally determined also ties the first hypotheses with the second, because there it is said that the one must not be entirely temporally determined in order to be an entity.

H2: 142b1-157b5

If the one, is, what follows for the one in relation to the others? This is the guiding question in the second hypothesis. In comparison with the previous results, the situation is reversed. For, the one possess all of the properties that were denied in the first hypotheses: it not only partakes of being (142b), but is also different from the one (142b-c); it further has parts and forms a whole (142c-d); it is unlimited (142d-144e) and limited in multitude (144e-145a); it has a beginning, middle, and end (144a-b); it has a shape (145b); it is in itself (145b-c) and in the others (145c-e); it is in motion and at rest (145e-146a); it is the same and different both in relation to itself and to others (146a-147b); it is similar and dissimilar both in relation to itself and to others (147c-148d); it touches and does not touch both itself and the others (148d-149d); it is equal and unequal both to itself and to others (149d-151b); it partakes of time (151e-152a); it is and is not older and younger than itself and the others (152a-155c); it partakes of time past, present, and future (155d) and is subject to naming, speech, knowledge, perception, or opinion (155d-e).

The end of the second hypothesis is not yet reached, because Plato’s *Parmenides* adds further arguments about the one that has opposite properties. The passage in question, 155e4-157b5, is treated either as a further hypothesis in addition to the other eight,⁴⁸² or as a corollary

⁴⁸¹ Another example would be to think of an intelligible One, namely a Form. In contrast to a spatial-temporal thing, which partially transcends temporal modes, in particular, when it is in the transition between two opposite states, a Form is not bound by any temporal modes. A Form transcends time completely, because it is, what it is, namely genuinely real, and can, therefore, not be determined by temporal conditions.

⁴⁸² Scholars, who count nine instead of eight hypotheses include, for example, Speiser 1937; Wahl 1951 and Allen 1983: p. 188. The first to treat the *Parmenides* as having nine hypotheses were the Neoplatonists, such as Plotinus V 1 [10], 8.1-27 and Proclus, *In Parmenidem* 1039-40, 1054 (Cousin).

to the first two hypotheses.⁴⁸³ I will refrain here from taking up the arguments again, since this has already been done in the previous subsection. I shall simply add that the “instant” (ἐξαιφνης) not only concerns the transition from moving to standing still,⁴⁸⁴ as was mentioned before, but also all the other transitions (καὶ πρὸς τὰς ἄλλας μεταβολάς, 156e7-8), for example, the change from being to perishing or from nonbeing to becoming.

The paradigmatic importance of the second hypothesis, with its idea of participation in being (οὐσίας μετέχειν), requires further consideration. The first step towards a better understanding of H2 is to answer the question of why the attribution of all properties to the one leads to another philosophical impasse, although the young Aristotle seems not to have any problem in accepting the achieved results (156b4-5). First, it is important to remember that the initial conditions in H2 were introduced in order to overcome the philosophical impasse in H1.⁴⁸⁵ To determine a possible subject of thinking and speaking, we had to put the one in relation to being so that it becomes “one being” (ἐν ὄν). Yet the new challenge is that the connection between ἐν and ὄν not only makes thinking and speaking possible, but also produces a variety of contradictory statements about the one, as stated above. Although one could argue that some of the contradictions can be solved with reference to the role of the instant (an object can both be *x* and non-*x* if it is analysed as being in the process of transition), suspicion remains whether the arguments in 155e4-157b5 represent the key to understanding the attribution of all contradictory statements to the one. This is even more unfortunate as the problematic line of reasoning about the one being, which potentially entails an unlimited number of contradictions (142d-144e), may easily be compared with the sophistic art of disputation, through which everything can be said about anything.⁴⁸⁶

We are faced, then, with the positive side of H2 that identifies a necessary connection between ἐν and ὄν, as far as the possibility of thinking and speaking is concerned, and the negative side that prevents us from finding the criteria for the distinction between a philosopher and a sophist. Yet the relationship between a philosopher and a sophist in view of the potential

⁴⁸³ In accordance with Cornford 2010: p. 194; Kahn 2015: pp. 18-46; Meinwald 1991: pp. 124-129; Miller 1986: p. 251, note 53; Rickless 2007: pp. 188-198; Sayre 1996: pp. 240-241; Scolnicov 2003: p. 134; Turnbull 1998: p. 112; Brisson 1999: p. 46, note 96; Von Kutschera 1995: pp. 50-52; Zekl 1972: pp. 161-162, n. 206, I think that the corollary to the second hypothesis is not a further and independent hypothesis.

⁴⁸⁴ It can be assumed with great probability that the notion of ἐξαιφνης is Plato’s solution of Zeno’s aporia of movement.

⁴⁸⁵ This is illustrated by the fact that, at the end of H1, after Parmenides asked the young Aristotle whether the one can be such that it has no properties whatsoever and after the young Aristotle answers the question in the negative, Parmenides continues his exercise with H2.

⁴⁸⁶ Cf. the paradigmatic case of deceptive reasoning in the *Euthydemus*. See also our analysis of Plato’s early dialogues on the sophists in the first part of our study.

danger of confusion is rigorously scrutinised in the *Sophist*. And it is also there that, through the mouth of the Eleatic stranger, Plato again reflects on the nature of being and whether the men of old thought of it in terms of “one and many”, respectively, in terms of “one and whole” (*Soph.* 242b6-249d5). This leads one to the conclusion that Plato pursues different goals in the *Parmenides* and *Sophist*. For, it is reasonable to presume that while Plato’s objective in H2 is to provide evidence for the puzzling contradictions of the traditional concepts of reality⁴⁸⁷ – this could partially explain why he is compelled to violate the principle of non-contradiction by attributing contradictory statements to the one –⁴⁸⁸ one of the main goals in the *Sophist* is to undertake constructive criticism of his predecessors’ theories of reality. If this interpretation is correct, then this would acquit Plato of the charge of using sophistic or contradictory reasoning for the purpose of misleading his readers.⁴⁸⁹

H3: 157b6-159b1

If the one is, what follows for the others in relation to the one? This is the question which is at the centre of H3. In the course of the investigation, the many, or rather, “the others” (τᾶλλα, 157b6) are described as whole-part structures that participate in the one (157b7-158b8), that are unlimited and limited (158b-158d), as well as similar and dissimilar (158e-159a). Furthermore, at the end of H3, Parmenides attributes “all the opposite properties” (πάντα τὰ ἐναντία πάθῃ, 159a7) to the others without further arguments (159a-b). Of the many opposites, which were first attributed to the one in H2, only two are mentioned explicitly, namely: “sameness and difference” and “movement and rest”.

As Parmenides explains to Aristotle, the others are not completely deprived of the one (157c1-2), but partake of the one in a certain way (τοῦ ἐνὸς τᾶλλα, ἀλλὰ μετέχει πῃ, 157c2). To specify the manner in which participation takes place is, therefore, an important part of the argumentation in H3. In particular, this includes the following claims: since “the others are other than one by virtue of having parts” (τὰ ἄλλα τοῦ ἐνὸς μέρη ἔχοντα ἄλλα ἐστίν, 157c3)

⁴⁸⁷ Here I propose to follow Wahl who in his detailed discussion of H2 speaks about a “histoire hypothétique”; (1951: pp. 139-140 and pp. 163-165).

⁴⁸⁸ Another factor for explaining why Plato deliberately employs contradictory arguments is that he may have used the principle of non-contradiction in a critical sense in order to develop a new way of thinking. In other words and according to Wahl, the participation of things in opposite properties must not be understood in a materialist, but rather in a “spiritual and internal way”; (1951: p. 156). Cf. also Kahn 2015: pp. 42-44.

⁴⁸⁹ That Plato is predicating contrary attributes of the One in order to counter Zeno’s arguments about the impossibility of plurality, is another interpretative suggestion, which is defended by Cornford 2010: p. 204 and Miller 1986: p. 92.

and since the parts themselves belong to a whole, i.e. to a “unity composed of many” (ἐν ἐκ πολλῶν, 157c), each part of the others is what it is by virtue of its participation in the whole and the one (τοῦ ὅλου τε καὶ ἐνὸς μετέχου, 157e3). As Parmenides further explains: “it is, therefore, necessary that the things other than the one are one complete whole which have parts” (ἐν ἅρα ὅλον τέλειον μέρη ἔχον ἀνάγκη εἶναι τᾶλλα τοῦ ἐνός, 157e4-5).⁴⁹⁰ Or, put another way, the others are not a mere sum of many parts, but a unified entity because of participation in the one.

How does Parmenides argue in favour of the idea that the others are both unlimited and limited? If one were to consider the nature of other than the one “itself by itself” (αὐτὴ καθ’ αὐτήν, 158c5), i.e. independently of participation in the one, the others would simply “be unlimited in number” (πλήθει ἄπειρα εἶναι, 158b6-7). So, before “taking part” (κοινωνεῖν, 158d4) in the one, the others possess “unlimitedness” (ἄπειρία, 158d6), due to their own nature. The “limit” (πέρας) is, therefore, imposed on the others, as a well-defined whole-part structure, only when the interaction with the one takes place.

This line of argument allows us to understand, further, why “<the others are> similar and dissimilar both to each other and to themselves” (ὁμοιά τε καὶ ἀνόμοια ἀλλήλοις τε καὶ ἑαυτοῖς, 158e1). The others are similar and dissimilar because of the opposing properties that they possess. On the one hand, due to their own nature, they are unlimited in number. On the other hand, because of the participation in the one, they are limited. Thus, the others are like each other and themselves insofar as all their parts and the complete whole “are affected in the same way” (ταὐτὸν πεπονθότα, 158e3, 4). However, since the others are affected by opposite properties, and “opposite properties are as unlike as possible” (τὰ δ’ ἐναντία γε ὡς οἷόν τε ἀνομοιότατα, 159a1-2), the others will again be unlike each other and themselves.

In what sense does the third hypothesis represent a development in respect to the results obtained in H1 and H2? To sum up: whereas the idea of participation (μέθεξις) is denied altogether in H1, it receives its full meaning in H3 and becomes decisive in learning how the many, or rather, “the others” (τᾶλλα, 157b6), which are described as whole-part structures, participate in the one.

⁴⁹⁰ The idea that things other than the one are “one complete whole with parts” is partly reminiscent of the old Parmenides, who in his poem describes being, *inter alia*, as “whole, one and continuous” (πᾶν, ἓν, συνεχές, DK 28, B 8, 5-6).

H4: 159b2-160b4

The examination of the fourth hypothesis with its guiding question “if the one is, what follows for the others in relation to themselves?” leads to the following insights: not only are the others separate from the one, but the one is also separate from the others (159b-c); the others are neither one (159c-d) nor many (159d-e); the others are neither similar nor dissimilar, nor are they both similar and dissimilar to the one (159e-160a); the others are deprived of all properties (160a).

The upshot of the analysis in H4 is that if the others are completely separate from the one, they cannot have any unity. And if there is no unity, there can be no plurality either. The lack of unity and plurality is, therefore, decisive for depriving the others of all properties.

Without going into detail, one can immediately see that the first part of the philosophical exercise marks the convergence of the results of H4 and the results of H1 because of the introduction of the principle of absolute separation (*χωρίς, χωρισμός*). While the term *χωρίς* in H1 appears only in the middle of the examination (139e9, 140a1), the same does not hold for H4, where *χωρίς* is mentioned twice right at the beginning of the analysis (159b6). Furthermore, the principle of separation is applied to the one first, and only secondarily to other things, which might imply a certain pre-eminence of the one over the others. However, the beginning of the fourth hypothesis makes it clear that we should not restrict our attention to one or the other of these two aspects, because the whole reality is determined by the one *and* the others. As Parmenides puts it: “Everything is said, when the one and the others are asserted” (*πάντα γὰρ εἴρηται, ὅταν ῥηθῇ τό τε ἓν καὶ τᾶλλα*, 159c1). It can be concluded from this that we should not restrict our attention to one aspect of reality without considering the other, if we are to make progress in doing philosophy. Stimulation for this approach is also given in the remaining hypotheses five to eight, as we will describe in detail in what follows.

2.5.2. The Negative Hypotheses (H5-H8)

H5: 160b5-163b6

“If the one is not, what follows for the one in relation to the others?” Taking this as the guiding question, Parmenides deduces that the one in H5 is not only knowable and different from the others (160b-e), but even more that terms such as *that, something, this, to this, these*, etc. apply to it (160e-161a); that it is like and unlike (161a-c), unequal and equal (161c-e); that it partakes of being and not-being (161e-162b);⁴⁹¹ that it is both in motion and at rest (162b-e), altered and not altered (162e-163a); and that it comes to be and ceases to be, and does not come to be or cease to be (163a-b).

If we remember that in H2, Parmenides had already examined the one in relation to the others, we can now ask what the difference between the one in H2 and the one in H5 is.⁴⁹² To begin with H5, Parmenides develops a conceptual analysis of the *one, which is not and yet is still an entity* (161e3-162b8). The idea here is that in order “to tell the truth” (ἀληθῆ λέγειν) about a given entity, one must refer to a thing whose being is not absolutely denied. Parmenides explains this towards the end of the H5 as follows: “If we assert that we are telling the truth, we also necessarily assert those things that are” (Ἐπειδὴ δὲ φαμεν ἀληθῆ λέγειν, ἀνάγκη ἡμῖν φάναι καὶ ὄντα λέγειν, 161e7-162a1). Contrary to the one in H2, which is “one being”, the one in H5 is a “one which is not”. What is the difference between the sentences “The one is” and the sentence “The one is not”? If we apply the fundamental principle that in order to tell the truth about a given entity, one must refer to a thing that is, then the subject of the statement “The one is not” is not a bare nothing. On contrary, *the one, which is not, is an entity*, because any true statement about the one entails a subject that is. In our case, the subject of the sentence “the one is not” is an entity, *which is* and, furthermore, an entity *which is different from* the subject of the sentence “the one is”.

With respect to the new starting position for the analysis about the one which is not, the preceding points can also be illustrated in the following way: the content of the expression “if the one is not” (εἰ ἔν μὴ ἔστι, 160c1-2) “is different” (διαφέρει, 160b7) from the content of the

⁴⁹¹ Scholars have not failed to recognize that the idea of participation in non-being “prefigures the full discussion of this topic in the *Sophist*”; Kahn 2015: p. 33. Cf. also Wahl 1951: p. 182 and Cornford 2010: p. 230. See also Allen 1983: p. 280.

⁴⁹² See instead Miller (1986: pp. 141-143), who argues that H5 should rather be put in parallel with H1 than with H2.

expression “if the not-one is not” (εἰ μὴ ἓν μὴ ἔστι, 160c1) or even “the complete opposite” (πᾶν τοῦναντίον, 160b8-c1). However, it is sufficient if the aspects of reality, which are communicated through verbal expressions, are different from each other in order for the hearer to understand what the speaker is referring to. As Parmenides explains, if someone says “one”, then the speaker implies that the one is “knowable” (γνωστόν, 160c7) and “different from the others” (ἕτερον τῶν ἄλλων, 160c7-8) no matter whether the entity is “one that is” or “one that is not” (160c8-d1). This provides the necessary theoretical background to explain why the one that is not, is still an entity, as noted above: “thus, just as being has a share in non-being and non-being in being, the one also, since it is not, must have a share in being in order not to be” (οὐκοῦν ἐπεὶ περ τῷ τε ὄντι τοῦ μὴ εἶναι καὶ τῷ μὴ ὄντι τοῦ εἶναι μέτεστι, καὶ τῷ ἐνί, ἐπειδὴ οὐκ ἔστι, τοῦ εἶναι ἀνάγκη μετεῖναι εἰς τὸ μὴ εἶναι, 162b3-6).⁴⁹³ Or, to put it another way, if we want to assert the truth about the one that is not, we must presuppose the participation of being in non-being *and* the participation of non-being in being. Plato will further differentiate the notion of non-being in the remaining hypotheses, as well as in the *Sophist*, not least in order to draw a clear line between his philosophy and the sophistic line of argumentation, in which fallacious arguments about the meaning of the words “is not” are used for purpose of ensuring success in verbal exchanges.

H6: 163b7-164b4

“If the one is not, what follows for the one in relation to itself” The answer to this question is that the one in H6, which is examined independently of the others and only in relation to itself, lacks all properties. It does not participate in being (163c-d); it neither comes to be nor ceases to be (163d); it is not altered (163d-e) and is neither in motion nor at rest (163e); the others stand in no relation to the one (164a); terms, such as *of that*, *to that*, *something*, *this*, etc. are not applicable to the one (164a); neither past, future nor present pertain to the one (164b); neither knowledge, opinion, perception, definition or naming pertain to the one (164b).

We remember that the above consequences were first introduced in H1, although the beginning of the analysis of the one in H1 is different from that in H6. Whereas the examination in H1 starts with the presupposition that the one *is* and ends with the conclusion that the one

⁴⁹³ The idea that being and non-being must partake of each other is again taken up in *Sophist* 241d6-7, where the Eleatic Stranger builds upon the content of Plato’s *Parmenides* in order to criticize the conception of non-being of the old Parmenides.

that lacks all the properties, the examination in H6 starts with the assumption that the one *is not*. To illustrate the new starting position, Parmenides introduces the idea of the “absence of being” (οὐσίας ἀπουσία, 163c3), explaining that the one *is not in a way*, as was the case for the one in H5, but rather that “the one that is not is in no way at all and does not partake of being” (οὐδαμῶς οὐδαμῇ ἔστιν οὐδέ πη μετέχει οὐσίας τό γε μὴ ὄν, 163c4-5).⁴⁹⁴ The emphasis on the one that lacks any participation in being should alert us on the puzzling consequences of absolute separation.⁴⁹⁵ For, not only *the one that is*, as assumed in H1, lacks all properties if it does not partake of being in one way or another, but also *the one that is not*, as assumed in H6.

H7: 164b5-165e1

If the one is not, what follows for the others in relation to the one? In the seventh hypothesis, the question is answered as follows: the others, which are other than the others (164b-c) are masses unlimited in multitude (164c-d); they appear to be one without really being so (164d); they appear to be a number, either even or odd (164d-e); they appear unequal and equal (164e-165a) or limited and unlimited (165a-c); they appear to be like and unlike themselves and each other and to have all the other properties (165c-d).

From the content of the seventh hypothesis we learn that the less the others partake of being, the less they are conceivable and explainable. If, for example, we compare the results in H7 with those in H3, we understand that the others in H3 “really” (ἀληθῶς) have opposite properties, whereas the others in H7 only create the “illusion” (φάντασμα) of possessing them. As Parmenides explains, each “mass” (ὄγκος) of the others is “unlimited in multitude” (ἄπειρός ... πλήθει, 164d1) and “without unity” (ἄνευ ἑνός, 165b6). He, therefore, prefers to compare the others to a shadow-painting (ἐσκιαγραφημένα, 165c7) that changes its appearance whenever the observer changes his position (165b7-c3). Yet, even though the others have indistinct forms, they are not entirely inconceivable, as will be the case for the others in H8. For the others maintain a connection to the one and enable us, in this way, to discern structures of reality that exist, albeit vaguely.

⁴⁹⁴ As Cornford rightly points out, the idea of an absolute nonentity is considered again in *Sophist* 237b ff.; Cornford 2010: p. 234.

⁴⁹⁵ Note that the term “separation” (χωρισμός) is not explicitly used in H6.

If the one is not, what follows for the others in relation to itself? In the last hypothesis, the others are examined in relation to itself and independently of the one. The consequences are similar to those presented in the fourth hypothesis, where the others are also analyzed independently of the one: the others in H8 neither are nor appear one or many (165e-166b). Seen from this new perspective, nothing can be said about the being or appearing of the others (166b) and we are left with the conclusion that, in the end, “nothing is” (οὐδέν ἐστιν, 166c1). The decisive step at arriving at these conclusions is, however, presented in 166a1-3, where Parmenides introduces the idea of non-existent communion (κοινωνία) between the others and anything that is not. This suggests that the principle of absolute separation (χωρίς, χωρισμός), as introduced in H4, is again prevalent in H8, where the others completely disappear.

2.6. Plato’s Parmenides and the ἀντιλογικὴ τέχνη

What general conclusions can be drawn from the whole study of the *Parmenides* for our main concern, which is to discern the peculiar relationship between sophistry and Eleaticism? In order to answer this question, I will first say a few words about the outcome of the dialectical exercise, then I will evaluate Plato’s choice for portraying his Parmenides as a sophistical “debater” (ἀντιλογικός).

Looking at the outcome of the second part of the *Parmenides*, what stands out the most is that the distinction between the negative consequences (the lack of any properties whatsoever: H1, H4, H6 and H8) and the positive ones (having opposite properties: H2, H3, H5 and H7) results from the concepts of separation (χωρισμός) and participation (μεθέξις), respectively. Regarding the latter aspect, the axiom of *thinking* is presented in the form of a conditional: a given subject is conceivable *only if* we presuppose that the same subject participates in being. By contrast, the *impossibility of thinking* is the result of a given subject being completely separated from being. The multivalence of the philosophical exercise allows Plato to adhere to Parmenides’ principle of identity between being and thinking and, thus, to remind the reader of the culmination of all philosophical enquiry: whatever stands in relation

to being must be thinkable, and whatever is thinkable must be.⁴⁹⁶ That said, the Parmenidean advice, that Plato's Parmenides follows, is "look [at those things] in your mind" (λεῦσσε νόῳ,⁴⁹⁷), because there "they are firmly present" (παρεόντα βεβαίως, DK 28 B 4, 7). Furthermore, the limits of thinking are evidently reduced to those of being and the limits of being to those of thinking. As placeholders for these limits, Plato's Parmenides chooses the terms "one" (ἓν) and "many" (τᾶλλα).⁴⁹⁸ One of the major differences between Plato's Parmenides and the historic Parmenides is, however, that in contrast to the latter, the former introduces Forms into his philosophy. To be more precise, Plato's Parmenides develops a dialectical exercise, applying Zeno's methodology on the condition that it is not only applied to sensible things, but also to the Forms themselves. This is because Forms ensure the possibility of discourse and the practice of philosophy. Moreover, Plato's Parmenides examines the consequences not only of the condition "if something is", but also those of the condition "if something is not".

Why does Plato present his Parmenides as a sophistical debater, who produces various types of contradictions and brings the dialogue to a close in *aporia*? Should the content of the *Parmenides* not stand as a counter-proposal to the different sophists' appropriations of Parmenides' philosophy, as we suggested in chapter 2.1.? As we will see in the third part of the study, it is in the very nature of the sophist that he possesses the ἐναντιοποιολογική (see the final definition in the *Sophist*). The reason for this that the art of making contradictions has universal validity that is needed for the definition of the sophist. However, the fact that Parmenides' philosophy serves as a breeding ground for the sophistical mindset – see the first part of the study and 2.2.2. – leads Plato to introduce his Parmenides as the father of the sophistical mindset, i.e. as a debater par excellence.

But why does Plato insist that the dialectical exercise should serve philosophical purposes, if the sophists usually prefer to pursue their own aspirations? Here again, we must refer to the *Sophist*. Bearing in mind that the sophist is placed within Nonbeing, and the philosopher within Being, and that the Forms of Nonbeing and Being must not be seen as opposites, but merely as different, we come to the following surprising discovery: the different

⁴⁹⁶ Turnbull 1998: p. 187.

⁴⁹⁷ νόῳ: *Clem. Strom.* 5, 15.

⁴⁹⁸ We shall not delve deeper into the subject of how the resulting consequences of our interpretation of the *Parmenides* can be made fruitful for the discussion about the theory of Forms. This also because valuable insights that contribute to illuminating the problem of collection and division of Forms and the participation of things in Forms must necessarily be interpreted in connection with other Platonic dialogues, such as the *Theaetetus*, the *Sophist*, the *Statesman*, the *Timaeus* and the *Philebus*, as numerous scholars have not failed to highlight. These include, for example Miller 1986: pp. 176-183; Turnbull 1998; Palmer 1999; Kahn 2015. See also Curd 1982 and others, who analyze the theory of Forms and participation exclusively from the point of view of the *Parmenides*.

hypotheses, which Plato's *Parmenides* puts to the test, are important in order to learn more about the Nonbeing (of the sophist) and the Being (of the philosopher). Because both Forms permeate each other, the nature of the sophist cannot be revealed without that of the philosopher and vice-versa. The *aporiai* in the second part of the *Parmenides* are, therefore, intended as a dialectical exercise, through which we become better at doing philosophy. Detecting and overcoming contradictions, will then enable us to understand even more deeply how both Being and Nonbeing, not less than the sophist and the philosopher, define and influence each other reciprocally. Plato's *Parmenides* becomes, therefore, not only the father of the sophist but also the father of the philosopher.

PART III: THE *SOPHIST*

Plato's attempt to defend a position that mediates between a positive and a more negative reception of Parmenides is evidenced in the *Sophist*. The figure of the historical Parmenides symbolizes here the power of thinking, reasoning and conceptualizing that, however ambivalent, is used by Plato to define the essence of the sophists, and thus, to end the confrontation with the sophists, once and for all. Seeing Parmenides' influence on Plato as highly ambivalent does not, therefore, entail believing that Plato was not sure about how to portray Parmenides. Rather, it reflects the attitude that the characterization of Parmenides cannot be a one-way process, given the fact that the interpretation of his philosophy represents a highly challenging task, comprising both philosophical aspects, which, according to Plato, cannot be abandoned, and conceptions, which must be modified. Understanding precisely what it is, from both a positive and negative perspective, to interpret Plato's reception of Parmenides' philosophy is the purpose of the following chapters. I will begin with the analysis of the first six attempts to define the sophist (3.1.-3.3.), before explaining why Plato's discussion of Parmenides' conception of Being and Not-Being establishes the necessary theoretical background for the final definition of the sophist (3.4.-3.7.).

3.1. Preliminary Remarks About the Object of Study

In the opening chapters of the *Sophist* (216a1-219a3), Theodorus, Socrates and the guest from Elea agree that the idea that the main object of investigation should be the examination and definition of the true nature of the sophist. In the same context, the reader also receives preliminary information about our motivation for studying the "thing" (ἔργον, πρᾶγμα) called "sophist" (σοφιστής). This consists in deciding how to avoid the risk of confusing the philosopher with the statesman and the sophist, who appear to the ignorant people in all sorts of shapes. Some think, for example, that philosophers are of no worth, others again that they are worth everything, and still others take them to be completely insane (216c4-d2). An interesting observation in this context is that the way in which philosophers are perceived by the crowd here, is usually the way in which rhetoricians and sophists are perceived by the

ignorant people in Plato's dialogues.⁴⁹⁹ The inversion of the starting position is precisely what creates confusion in distinguishing the sophist from the philosopher. Nevertheless, the treatment of the figure of the sophist is not a new task, given the fact that Socrates deals with different representatives of the sophist in the early Platonic dialogues. Why, then, does Plato feel the need to deal with the same topic again? Most scholars tend either to overlook⁵⁰⁰ or to underestimate⁵⁰¹ the relevance of this question. Occasionally, the question is set aside for later or simply replaced by the problem of knowing whether the sophist, statesman and philosopher form one, two or three kinds (217a4-9).⁵⁰² The latter option is indeed prefigured by the opening scene of the dialogue and therefore qualifies to a certain extent as a sufficient answer. However, it is of no small importance that we plunge deeper into this issue, not least because this will enable us to shed light on the differences and similarities between Socrates' evaluation of the different sophists and the Stranger's handling of the *genus* of the sophist. We have already suggested in our analysis of the *Gorgias*, that while Plato speaks about a possible confusion between the rhetoricians and the sophists, he leaves open the question of why sophistry should be treated as belonging to the same field of fake arts as rhetoric. It was proposed that because sophistry potentially represents a greater danger than rhetoric, Plato must make further theoretical assumptions in order to catch and oppose the multifaceted figure of the sophist.⁵⁰³ The *Sophist*, therefore, fills this gaps by showing how sophistry can be overcome once and for all.

Another reason why Socrates is allowed to raise, but not further develop the topic of the nature of the sophist, is to be found within the context of the *Parmenides*. While, in the early dialogues about the sophist, Plato stresses the idea that only ignorant people confuse the philosopher with the sophist, in the *Parmenides*, he seems to suggest that even Socrates might be tempted to confuse the activity of a philosopher with that of a sophist, because of his

⁴⁹⁹ On this point, compare, for example, *Gorgias* 458e-459c.

⁵⁰⁰ Seligman 1974: p. 12, for example, feels no need for an explanation as to why Plato repeatedly addresses the topic of the nature of sophist.

⁵⁰¹ White (1993: p. x) supports the view that "some important ideas in the *Sophist* are the same as ones that we find in much earlier works." He then adds that "the thought that a sophist implants false beliefs is the motivation for the whole discussion of nonbeing that begins in 236d" (1993: p. xi). I believe that White is right in stressing the relevance of Nonbeing within the context of the *Sophist*. What is missing in his account, though, is an explanation as to why the theoretical discussion of Nonbeing was not brought into play already in the earlier dialogues, where the problem of false beliefs is no less present. In a similar vein, Cornford (2003: p. 173) maintains that contrary to the earlier dialogues, where "a variety of superficial characteristics" of the sophists are portrayed, Plato's aim in the *Sophist* is to reveal 'the spirit of Sophistry'." While this is true, Cornford provides no further information about Plato's impetus for changing his investigatory procedure.

⁵⁰² See, for example, Wolff 1991: pp. 17-52, and Narcy 2013: pp. 57-70.

⁵⁰³ To this point, see the last chapter of our analysis of Plato's *Gorgias*.

perplexing experience with Parmenides.⁵⁰⁴ In this dialogue, Parmenides is certainly portrayed as a philosopher, who offers his intellectual services to the youngsters Socrates and Aristotle, but as a philosopher who uses sophistic forms of reasoning. So, if the experienced reader already has trouble discovering the hidden meaning of the aporetic results in the second part of the dialogue, how much more must this be the case for the young and unexperienced Socrates, who despite his impulse towards dialectic lacks the truth (*Parm.* 135d) and, consequently, the capacity to distinguish the philosopher from the sophist.⁵⁰⁵

In this and the following chapters, I shall, therefore, suggest that the shift from Socrates to the Stranger mirrors Plato's metaphysical change in perspective. Confronting the different characterizations of the sophist will enable us to better understand that, as well as why Socrates' handling of sophistry in the *Hippias Maior*, *Hippias Minor*, *Protagoras*, *Gorgias* and the *Euthydemus*, has been not totally dismissed, although he delivers no final solution to the problem of sophistry, but rather further substantiated and accordingly justified.⁵⁰⁶

That said, this interpretation follows Rosen's reading of the prologue of the *Sophist*, in which he supports the view that "what holds true for the doctrines of Socrates also holds true for those of the Stranger".⁵⁰⁷ But while I agree with his reading the opening scene in a dramatic⁵⁰⁸ sense, I disagree with Rosen's distinction between Socrates and the Stranger in several aspects. Rosen thinks that the most important way in which Socrates contrasts with the Stranger is that the former "cares about the individual nature of the youths with whom he converses, whereas the Stranger is relatively indifferent to this consideration".⁵⁰⁹ Rosen, therefore, concludes that while Socrates' aim is "to give a political or ethical refutation of sophistry",⁵¹⁰ the Stranger's ambition is to counter Socrates' practical approach by opting for "a technical or 'theoretical' refutation of sophistry".⁵¹¹ The reason for which Rosen thinks that the Stranger is partially right in criticizing Socrates' procedure is that the latter "fails to arrive

⁵⁰⁴ This explains partially why Socrates's intellectual activities, described in the sixth definition of the sophist (226a-231b), also represent a failed attempt to define the sophist.

⁵⁰⁵ The risk of confusing the sophist with the philosopher, and vice-versa, casts a long shadow over the whole of the *Sophist*.

⁵⁰⁶ Cf. also Notomi 1999: p. 46.

⁵⁰⁷ Rosen 1983: p. 18.

⁵⁰⁸ For a more detailed description of the dramatic approach, see again Rosen 1983: p. 1: "The dramatic perspective regards the dialogue as a unity, and more specifically, as a work of art in which the natures of the speakers, as well as the circumstances under which they converse, all play a part in the doctrine or philosophical significance of the text." Compare also Lisi 2011: pp. 313-315 and Benítez 1996: pp. 27-39. Although Benítez is right in underlining the importance of reading the dialogue as a whole, I disagree with him about his conclusion that the figure of the Stranger shares characteristics with the sophist for reasons that need to be further explored. Cf. also Notomi 1999: p. 46.

⁵⁰⁹ Rosen 1983: p. 21.

⁵¹⁰ Rosen 1983: p. 23.

⁵¹¹ Rosen 1983: p. 24.

at a discursive account of knowledge, and so is not in a position to distinguish between epistemic truth and falsehood”.⁵¹² Conversely, Rosen also assumes that not only Socrates deserves to be adequately criticized, but also the Stranger: “It may be that the Stranger is guilty of the reverse of Socrates’ crime, namely, of technicism.”⁵¹³ As for my own views on this matter, I believe that the difference between Socrates and the Stranger is not that one of them provides political/ethical and the other technical/theoretical refutations of sophistry, but the point is rather to understand that both parties intend to lay hold of the essence of sophistry by providing the necessary philosophical explanations. The substantial difference between them consists in the fact that in the early dialogues, Socrates is only partially aware of the ontological roots of the rise of the sophistic movement, which are to be found within Eleatic thinking. His contribution for a better understanding of the sophistry is a step in the right direction, particularly because the sophist is indeed an imitator of the true statesman (or of the wise man) (*Gorgias* 465c). But how this is even possible is not made sufficiently clear. Put in another way: Socrates is able to show that the sophists contradict themselves regarding their particular theses, but he is not in a position to explain the main source of the contradictions,⁵¹⁴ namely the peculiar ontological status of Nonbeing.⁵¹⁵ It also remains unclear how the different portrayals of the sophists in other dialogues could be made to converge into one. It is only in the *Sophist* that Socrates finally acknowledges the promising connection between Eleatic ontology and sophistic ideology, asking the Stranger from Elea what people at Elea thought of the figure of the sophist (216d3-217a9). This strategy will be carried on and eventually result in a *unified*⁵¹⁶ picture of the sophist. Seen from this perspective, the placement of the different definitions of the sophist around the center of the dialogue, where the strategic importance of Eleatic thinking is made evident, is intended to fully reflect this interrelation.⁵¹⁷ Questions about the nature of this interrelation will not only bring us to the heart of the problem of sophistry, but also shed light on the peculiar interdependence between sophistic and Eleatic argumentation, on the one hand, and Plato’s dialectical thinking, on the other.

⁵¹² Rosen 1983: p. 24. Here, Rosen refers not to the early dialogues, such as the *Hippias Maior*, *Hippias Minor*, *Protagoras*, *Euthydemus* and the *Gorgias*, but to the *Theaetetus*.

⁵¹³ Rosen 1983: p. 25.

⁵¹⁴ Similar Kolb 1997: p. 62.

⁵¹⁵ With this, compare for example *Euthydemus* 286b8-c3 and our analysis of the dialogue in the first part of the study.

⁵¹⁶ The unification procedure is not only prevalent in the final definition of the sophist (cf. e.g. 232a1-6), but also at the beginning of the dialogue, where the Stranger, for example, describes the various types of speeches, such as forensic oratory, public oratory and conversation “all together as one” (ἐν αὐτῷ τὸ σύνολον, 222c10), namely as “expertise in persuasion” (πιθανουργικὴ τέχνη, 222c10-d1).

⁵¹⁷ Cf. also Ross 1971: p. 104.

3.2. What is the Thing Called ‘Sophist’?

At 218c1-5, the Stranger explains to Theaitetos, who is chosen by Socrates to take the role of the interlocutor, that determining the name of the object is a good beginning. But far more important is to agree upon the thing itself by means of arguments, than on the name alone without any arguments. The question of what a sophist is (τί ποτ’ ἔστι, 218c1, c6-7) thus signals that the answer requires a form of a definition. Yet the request to catch the essence of the sophist could, in fact, represent a stumbling block. Scholars, such as, for example, Lesley Brown, have argued that Plato has failed to define the sophist because “a sophist is not a genuine kind that possesses an essence to be discerned.”⁵¹⁸ The reason for this is, as Brown goes on to explain, that sophistry does not fulfil the conditions for being a *techne*, which, based on *Gorgias* 465a and 501a, are “the capacity to achieve a (worthwhile) goal”, to “understand the causes of success or failure” and “to teach the expertise to another.”⁵¹⁹ There is no question that the mission of catching the figure of the sophist represents an impossible undertaking if its various fields of activity are not bound to a capacity or form of knowledge. Brown’s sceptical⁵²⁰ attitude towards the problem of sophistry is, to a certain extent understandable, also because it ultimately mirrors Socrates’ refusal, in *Gorgias* 462b-463b, to ascribe “expertise” (τέχνη) to rhetoric and sophistry, calling them both mere “flattery” (κολακεία, 463b1). As our analysis of Plato’s *Gorgias* has shown, Socrates’ reasons for condemning the behaviour of rhetoricians and sophists and denying them the status of a τέχνη are that both professionals ignore the best and aim at “gratification and pleasure” (χάρις καὶ ἡδονή, 462c7) or at the apparent good for the human soul. And this is true despite the fact that Socrates acknowledges a certain braveness and cleverness in the way in which sophists and rhetoricians behave towards other people (463a6-8).⁵²¹ Why then does the Stranger assume that being a sophist includes the requirement that “he has a certain expertise” (τινα τέχνην [...] ἔχοντα, 221d5) if this presupposition obviously contradicts Socrates’ account of sophistry in the *Gorgias*? Now, it is hardly likely that Plato’s Stranger is unaware of the discrepancy between Socrates’ understanding of sophistry and his own. Instead of being incoherent, Plato draws a more complex picture of sophistry, speaking in the voice of the Stranger, by demonstrating that the destructiveness of

⁵¹⁸ Brown 2010: p. 153.

⁵¹⁹ Brown 2010: p. 164-165.

⁵²⁰ Other scholars, whom Brown also mentions as belonging to the group of scholars who refuse to believe that sophistry can be defined, are Cherniss 1944, and Ryle 1966.

⁵²¹ Note that Plato’s *Gorgias* presents himself as someone who possesses knowledge of oratory and who boasts of being able to teach his skills to others (*Gorgias* 449a-b, *passim*).

sophistic skills is not only an *apparent risk* for ethical, moral and political foundations but rather a *real power* (δύναμις, 219b9)⁵²² with far reaching consequences for private and public affairs. Socrates' limited comprehension of the destructive forces of sophistic rhetoric, as described in Plato's early dialogues, is nothing less than a tragedy, given the circumstances of his own death. Even though we do not have a historical report of Socrates' trial and death sentence, and cannot, therefore, precisely reconstruct the background of Meletus' charges,⁵²³ it is not an exaggeration to say that Socrates' philosophical and religious way of life was received by his compatriots with a great deal of mistrust and animosity. Taylor rightly says that "Socrates' personal religious behavior and attitudes were seen as eccentric".⁵²⁴ No less important is the problem that the majority of the citizens, who voted to condemn Socrates, were hardly able to distinguish between Socrates' tireless, albeit enervating commitment to philosophy and "his supposed influence on those of his associates who had become notorious for anti-Athenian and anti-democratic conduct, [...]".⁵²⁵ In a certain sense, Socrates ventured too far into the field of enlightenment and paid for it with his life. Surely Plato himself places Socrates among the sophists,⁵²⁶ i.e. among those thinkers whose unorthodox and threatening views provoked fear among the Athenians. But he does so by delivering a more differentiated account of Socrates' mission, delimiting him from other sophists.

Against this background, the question of what the core essence of the sophist is and the attempt to answer this question, does not represent a methodological failure,⁵²⁷ but rather an indispensable task for solving the problem of the many faces of sophistry. What is important to notice here is that our interpretative approach to the *Sophist* is not only endorsed by the Stranger himself – the seventh definition of the sophist is used here as evidence for a successfully, rather than unsuccessfully completed *dihairesis* because of its thematic link to Eleatic philosophy – who is described as a friend of Parmenides and Zeno (216a3), but also by Socrates, when he asks the Stranger of Elea what those in his country thought and said about these issues (217a1-2). Socrates, therefore, acknowledges that a new attempt to catch the sophist is indispensable and we need to explain in more detail why this is necessary and furthermore, why this task should be undertaken from an Eleatic perspective.

⁵²² At 219b4-9, the Stranger explains the term δύναμις as the ability to bring something into being, which did not exist before. That the sophist makes use of the productive art (ποιητική τέχνη) is made more explicit in the last definition (264b11-268d5). Regarding the relationship between δύναμις and the ποιητική τέχνη, see, for example, Lisi 2011: pp. 311-327.

⁵²³ *Apology* 24b8-c1; Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 1,1,1 and Diogenes Laërtius II, 40.

⁵²⁴ Taylor 1998: p. 13. Cf. also Aristophanes, *Clouds*, 362 ff. and Diogenes Laërtius II, 38.

⁵²⁵ Taylor 1998: p. 12.

⁵²⁶ *Sophist* 226a-231b.

⁵²⁷ Brown 2010: p.164.

3.2.1. Defining the Sophist: The Advantages and Limitations of the First Six Divisions

Before beginning with the proposed examination, the Stranger first explains that since “the kind of the sophist” (τὸ τοῦ σοφιστοῦ γένος, 218d3-4) is “hard to deal with and difficult to capture” (χαλεπὸν καὶ δυσθήρευτον, 218d4), the task should be carried out step-by-step, i.e. starting with a simple “model” (παράδειγμα, 218d9), namely that of the “angler” (ἀσπαλιευτής, 218e4) and then moving on to the bigger task⁵²⁸ of finding the sophist. The advantage of the chosen example is that it illustrates the “method” (μέθοδος, 218d5) to be used, as well as the form of the corresponding “explanation” (λόγος, 219a1). As the example of the chosen model shows, the method of definition is based on division. The Stranger proceeds by dividing each term into two parts, while eliminating the part that is not related to the object sought, until a suitable definition is discovered (219a4-221c5). In the case of the kind of the angler, the final explanation reads as follows: the activity of an angler belongs to the “acquisitive art” (κτητική τέχνη), because its goal consists not in producing something, which did not exist before, but rather in acquiring something, which, as such, did not belong to the angler before. The mode of acquisition is not that of an exchange, but that of a coercive force. More specifically, the activity of acquiring is identified with the hunting of animals, namely fishes. The fishes in turn are caught during the day, by inflicting a wound by means of a hook in order to pull them out of the water. The whole activity described here is called “angling” (ἀσπαλιευτική, 221c2).

The approach to finding the sophist should, then, follow the “model” (τὸ παράδειγμα, 221c6) of the angler, which as such has the function of showing the way towards the solution, by excluding those ways or parts of the division which do not belong to the object sought. Yet the peculiarity of the dihairetic method is that, while it is sufficient to explain the expertise of the angler, it fails to meet the requirements for defining the sophist. This is evident from the fact that the Stranger needs several attempts to get to the core essence of the sophist. As our analysis of the different definitions will soon show, one of the main reasons for the failed attempts to determine the essence of the sophist is that the required *genus* can be found not only within one branch of the proposed division, but also within the branch that was initially excluded. Exemplary for this procedure is the opposition between the “productive” (ποιητική τέχνη) and the “acquisitive art” (κτητική τέχνη) and the fact that, whereas, in the first five

⁵²⁸ On the utility of working with a small task in order to better understand a great one, see Notomi 1999: p. 77: “The contrast between a small and easy and a great and difficult object may correspond to that between the visible and the invisible. Only by analogy and using visible images are invisible things comprehended (cf. *Plt.* 285c4-286b3).”

definitions, the sophist is ascribed the acquisitive art, in the seventh and final definition, the sophist is defined as possessing a productive art.⁵²⁹ Scholars such as, for instance, Iber, have, therefore, been of the opinion that the *dihairesis* as such is insufficient for determining the essence of the sophist.⁵³⁰ Before entering into a discussion of the suitability of the dihairetic method, let us first begin by analysing and commenting the first six definitions of the sophist.

3.2.1.1. First Attempt

The transition from the example of the angler⁵³¹ to that of the sophist is mediated by the question of whether the latter should be called a “layman” (ιδιώτης, 221d1) or “truly a sophist” (ἀληθῶς σοφιστής, 221d2). Here the etymological root of the term σοφιστής is used, i.e. being “wise” (σοφός)⁵³² in terms of having knowledge or expertise. Theaetetus thus also clearly affirms that the sophist should in no way be called a layman and that he himself understands what the Stranger means by his opening question about the expertise of the sophist (221d3-4). The explicit reference to the word σοφιστής suggests, however, that Plato intends to do something more than to simply remind Theaetetus (and the reader) of known matters. Being a sophist means being wise, in terms of having knowledge or expertise. But since we also know

⁵²⁹ The sixth definition (226b-231b), with which Socrates’ elenctic method is usually associated (cf. e.g. Kamlah 1963: p. 13), enjoys a special status, because it is described neither as an acquisitive nor as a productive art. It occupies, therefore, an intermediate position between the other two *technai*.

⁵³⁰ Iber 2007: pp. 225-233.

⁵³¹ Against Cornford, who thinks that the example of the angler is “trivial” (2003: p. 170), I will argue that the model of the angler should not be underestimated because it provides a better understanding of the dihairetic method. More concretely, I will show that Plato’s aim is to contrast the simple, but not trivial example of the angler with that of the sophist in order to distinguish between a successful and a failed definition of the corresponding subject. Cornford’s tendency not to acknowledge the importance of the model of the angler also indicates his lack of interest in translating the classifications of the sophist, and correspondingly his limited understanding of the special status of the first part of the *Sophist* with its far-reaching implications for the interpretation of the dialogue as a whole. Other scholars, who tend to marginalize the importance of the discussion about the *genos* of the sophist, include Xenakis 1959: p. 31; Seligman 1974; De Rijk 1986 and Kahn 2015. See also Kamlah (1963: p. 13), who rightly points out to the danger of reducing the search for the *genos* of the sophist to a “literary clothing” (*literarische Einkleidung*). The unity of the *Sophist* is, for example, defended by Notomi 1999 and Ambuel 2007.

⁵³² In *Protagoras* 315e7, Prodicus is described as “all-wise and divine” (πάσσοφος καὶ θεῖος). Compare also Plato’s description of Protagoras as the “wisest” (σοφώτατος) in *Protagoras* 309d2 (cf. also 310d5-6 and e6-7). Other sophists, to whom Plato dedicates dialogues of the same name, are also called “wise” or “all-wise”; see the case of Hippias (in *Hippias Minor* 364a2, *Hippias Major* 281a1, b6, 282e9-283a1, *passim*) and of Euthydemus and Dionysodorus (in *Euthydemus* 271c1, c6). Cf. also Philostratus who, in his *Lives of the Sophists*, writes about the sophist Prodicus of Ceos that “he had a great reputation for wisdom” (ὄνομα τοσοῦτον ἐπὶ σοφίᾳ ἐγένετο, I 12). For a general overview of the word “sophist”, see, for example, Guthrie 1969: pp. 27-34.

that there is *a shift in meaning* of the term σοφιστής in Plato,⁵³³ we must attentively follow each argumentative step in order to better understand how and why this semantic change occurs. As I will argue in what follows, the intensive observation and evaluation of different types of sophists and their influence on private and public affairs causes Plato to continuously improve his strategy of argumentation, which often appears to be dangerously close to that of a sophist. Here one need only think of the dialectic exercise in the second part of Plato's *Parmenides*. A possible confusion between the philosopher and the sophist is, therefore, not only an inevitable result of ignorance, as was suggested with respect to the *Sophist*, but also, to a certain extent, a necessary educational step in order to become more experienced in doing philosophy, as the *Parmenides* teaches us. To avoid misunderstandings with undesired consequences and to learn to distinguish the aim of the philosopher from that of the sophist, Plato imposes rigorous exercises in dialectical thinking both in the *Parmenides* and *Sophist*. Regarding the latter, Plato's account of the sophist will ascribe other, i.e. mostly negative aspects, to the originally positively connotated term σοφιστής. It is, however, important to note that ascribing negative characteristics to the sophists is not Plato's primary aim. He is less guided by the idea of turning the sophists into a caricature than he is interested in showing the real danger behind sophistry, as merely apparent expertise. Plato's approach of detaching the "name" (ὄνομα) of the requested subject from the original "thing" (ἔργον or πρᾶγμα), i.e. wisdom, and providing it with new content that corresponds to the sophists' thinking, is, therefore, an important step towards a better understanding of this multidimensional problem.

How can the validity of this approach be confirmed more specifically? Before answering this question, we must first make a further remark. Although the Stranger shows how the process of division unfolds in the case of the angler, he does not explain how the division in the case of the *genus* of the sophist should be compared with that of the angler. To a certain extent, the Stranger assumes that the experienced philosopher must have "an ability to see similarities in kinds and analogies in structure"⁵³⁴ in order to be able to make use of the method of division. But how did Plato gain this ability? Given the fact that Plato wrote more than one dialogue about the sophists, it is obviously legitimate to conclude that the capacity to perceive structural similarities between different types of knowledge is not so much a matter of logical comparison or immediate insight, but rather the result of a careful observation of the

⁵³³ Notomi 1999: p. 44. For Xenophon's evaluation of the sophistic movement and the sophists, see, for example, Classen 1984: pp. 154-167. For Xenophon's and Isocrates' evaluations of the figure of the sophist, see again Notomi 1999: pp. 48-52.

⁵³⁴ Philip 1966: p. 342. Cf. also De Rijk 1986: p. 77.

experts' activities as well as an extensive analysis of the inner structure of the corresponding τέχναι. The individual activities of various sophists, as described in Plato's early dialogues, thus provide the necessary content that ought to be systematized in order to define the thing called "sophist".⁵³⁵

Philip's methodological approach, which was mentioned above⁵³⁶ and which is here used in order to better understand the procedure of defining the sophist, is further supported by Plato's *Phaedrus*, where Socrates explains that the speaker "must discern with precision the similarity and dissimilarity of things" (δεῖ [...] τὴν ὁμοιότητα τῶν ὄντων καὶ ἀνομοιότητα ἀκριβῶς διειδέναι, *Phaedrus* 262a5-7), if he wants to know the truth. Applied to the first definition of the sophist, this means that the Stranger must provide the required similarities and dissimilarities between the angler and the sophist in order to know how to divide the kinds in which the latter might be found. By contrasting the "expertise" (τέχνη) of the sophist with that of the angler, the Stranger observes that both professionals are "akin" (συγγενῇ, 221d9) to each other, because they have in common that they are "hunters" (θηρευτά, 221d13). As regards, second, the issue of dissimilarity, the Stranger again explains that both experts "differ regarding animal-hunting" (ἐκτρέπεσθον δέ γε ἀπὸ τῆς ζωοθηρικῆς, 222a5). While the angler hunts animals in the water, such as in seas, rivers and lakes, the sophist hunts land animals, thereby pursuing other sources, such as "wealth and youth" (πλοῦτος καὶ νεότης, 222a10). Once these motives are announced, it becomes clear that the sophist's object of hunting is not an animal in the strict sense of the word, but rather a human being, which the Stranger also calls a "tame animal" (ἡμερον ζῷον, 222b7).

The treatment of the sophist continues with the division of the "hunting of tame animals" (ἡμεροθηρικῇ, 222c3). From here the dihairetic method is used independently of the division of the angler, because the development of the first definition of the sophist requires a division of its own, beginning at that point where the angler and the sophist differ substantially from each other, namely regarding the hunting of human beings. The hunting of human beings or tame animals, whose existence is accepted by Theaetetus (222c1-2), is divided into two kinds. On the one side, we find "hunting by force" (βίαιος θῆρα, 222c6-7) and, on the other, the hunting through the "art of persuasion" (πιθανουργική, 222c10). Examples of the first kind

⁵³⁵ The observation that Plato's characters enjoy a special status and cannot directly be identified with historical figures is not an obstacle for our interpretation. For although many arguments that Plato's interlocutors present are different from those of their historical models, as far as we can judge, it is good to assume that from Plato's point of view the essence of the sophist can best be discerned if the sophistic way of arguing is contrasted with that of the philosopher. Plato's early works, in which Socrates argues against different types of sophists, therefore, provide illustrative material for discerning the sophists', as well as Socrates', practical and intellectual activities.

⁵³⁶ See note 162 above.

are “piracy” (ληστική, 222c5), “men-stealing” (ἀνδραποδιστική, 222c5) and “tyranny” (τυραννική, 222c5-6) and those of the second kind are “forensic oratory” (δικανική, 222c9), “public oratory” (δημηγορική, 222c9) and “conversation” (προσομιλητική, 222c9-10) as such.

The next division concerns the art of persuasion, which can be performed either “privately” (ιδίᾳ) or “in public” (δημοσίᾳ, 222d5). The Stranger then divides “private hunting” (ιδιοθηρευτική, 222d7) in two kinds, one of which concerns “receiving payment” (μισθαρνητική, 222d7-8), the other “bringing gifts” (δωροφορική, 222d8). By confessing that he does not know the art of making gifts, Theaetetus simultaneously shows his ignorance concerning the “art of love” (ἐρωτική τέχνη, 222e3), which lies behind the art of making gifts, because the “hunting of lovers” (τῶν ἐρώντων θήρα, 222d10) entails delivering presents to the beloved (222e1).

The importance of this latter branch of the division showcases the proximity and distance between the sophist and the philosopher.⁵³⁷ For the hunting of men by persuasive speeches is common to both the philosopher and the sophist. But their relationship to the object of the hunt, as well as to truth is different. While the sophist is unaware of the truth, but nevertheless insists on being able to educate men and hunts all young men independently of their predisposition to acquire virtue, the philosopher focuses his attention on the analysis of love for the sake of the good of the beloved object.⁵³⁸

In order to get closer to that part of the division in which the sophist will initially be located, the Stranger continues with his dihairetic procedure by dividing the private hunting, which requires a reward, into two parts. On the one side, we find the kind of expertise that collects money for the purpose of gratification (χάρις) and pleasure (ἡδονή, 222e6).⁵³⁹ The Stranger calls it the “art of flattery” (κολακική, 222e7-223a1) or “expertise in pleasing <people>” (ἡδυντική τέχνη, 223a1-2).⁵⁴⁰ On the other hand, we encounter the second type of

⁵³⁷ The discovery that the sophist and the philosopher have things in common, but also differ significantly from each other will gradually become evident the further the Stranger proceeds in his dihairetic method. With every additional determination of the image of the sophist, various characteristics of the politician and the philosopher are being revealed in parallel, as Wolff (1991: p. 44-52) also stresses.

⁵³⁸ Cf. also the different speeches about love in the *Phaedrus*. For more information about the relationship between the lover and the sophist in the *Sophist* and *Phaedrus*, see, for example, Ambuel 2007: p. 49-50.

⁵³⁹ See also *Gorgias* 462c7.

⁵⁴⁰ Note that expertise in pleasing people, with its characteristics of furnishing “gratification” (χάρις, 222e5) and using the “art of flattery” (κολακική, 222e7-223a1) in order to enchant the ears of its potential victims, is dismissed here as belonging to the kind of the sophist. In other dialogues, such as the *Protagoras* and *Gorgias*, the conduct of the sophist as pleasing others is, however, emphasized with particular clarity. For example, before Protagoras presents his Great Speech in *Protagoras* 320c-328d, he chooses for this the method of *mythos* over *logos*, explaining that the former is “more agreeable” (χαριέστερον, 320c6-7) than the latter. In a similar vein, Socrates calls Gorgias’ art of rhetoric a “flattery” (κολακεία, *Gorgias* 463b1), aiming at “gratification and pleasure” (χάρις καὶ ἡδονή, 462c7). Cf. also *Gorgias* 501d-503d. This and other observations continually bring to the fore the difficulty in capturing the kind of the sophist in one moment.

expert who demands a reward for transmitting “virtue” (ἀρετή, 223a4). At the end of the second division of the term τέχνη, Theaetetus believes he has found “the suitable name” (τὸ προσήκον ὄνομα, 223a10) that corresponds to the latter type of expert, namely the “sophist” (ὁ σοφιστής, 223a9). However, regarding the first definition or explanation of the “expertise of the sophist” (σοφιστική, 223b6), which is given in 223b1-6 (the sophist is a hunter of rich, young men, who uses the art of persuasion in order to approach his targets individually, while with the promise that he will teach virtue, the sophist then demands his salary), the Stranger hints that this explanation is not sufficient because of the idea that the sophist’s expertise does not truly consist in transmitting virtue, but rather in producing the “semblance of teaching” (δοξοπαιδευτική, 223b4). This will then lead the Stranger to make a second attempt to depict the core essence of the sophist.

What are we to make of the first definition of the sophist? The Stranger’s attempt to find a suitable definition of the thing called “sophist” ends in an impasse, and this despite the fact that he employed the dihairetic method that was exemplified by the model of the angler. Thus it is clear that, as far as identifying the essence of the sophist is concerned, we would be well advised to assume that the chosen method has a certain utility, not least because it showcases the heuristic value of the failed definition. We can recall that the Stranger began his analysis with the question of whether the sophist should be called a “layman” (ιδιώτης, 221d1) or “truly a sophist” (ἀληθῶς σοφιστής, 221d2) and that Theaetetus assumed that the sophist is certainly not ignorant. Once this is recognised, we can thus understand that the first attempt to grasp the essence of the sophist is not unsuccessful because he turns out to be a layman or a patron of knowledge. For in the latter case, the definition would have been proven right, as was the case for the definition of the angler. Rather the first definition of the sophist must fail, because the sophist stands between the ignorant man and the knowing man, possessing knowledge only in appearance. This is confirmed by the idea that, according to Plato, the sophist lacks true knowledge and appreciation of the goals of education and instead corrupts the Greek youth through bad incentives. As the Stranger explains, the sophist has only the “semblance of teaching” (δοξοπαιδευτική, 223b4) that he uses to sell his merchandise for monetary gain.

The idea that the lack of the real art of education harms the development of the human psyche is not explicitly developed within the first attempt to catch the sophist. But it is obvious that the division into kinds that belong to the *genus* of the sophist, presupposes knowledge about the modes of manifestations of the sophists that Plato acquired long before he wrote the

Sophist. The question which is therefore posed is that of the sources⁵⁴¹ for Plato's collection of the information about the different manifestations of the sophist. Wolff, for example, believes that the first definition of the sophist, where the sophist is described as being a hunter of rich, young men for the purpose of teaching virtue, corresponds to the description of the first generation of historical sophists, resting upon a popular image of public educators such as Protagoras.⁵⁴² In this context, Wolff cites Xenophon's *On Hunting* (Κυνηγετικός), where the latter describes the sophists in the following way: "the sophists hunt for wealthy and young men" (οἱ [...] σοφισταὶ πλουσίους καὶ νέους θηρῶνται, 13.9). Another author, whom Wolff also mentions in a footnote, is Philostratus, who in his *Lives of the Sophists* (Βίοι Σοφιστῶν / *Vitae sophistarum*) portrays the sophist Prodicus of Ceos as follows: "he used to hunt for young men who came from noble families and wealthy households" (ἀνίχνευε δὲ οὗτος τοὺς εὐπατρίδας τῶν νέων καὶ τοὺς ἐκ τῶν βαθέων οἴκων, I 12). A different point of view is, however, taken by Ambuel who rightly remarks: "In no other dialogue is the sophist directly compared to the hunter."⁵⁴³ This might be why Wolff finds himself constrained to look for alternative sources outside of Plato's dialogues (i.e. Xenophon: *On Hunting* 13.9 and Philostratus: *Lives of the Sophists*, I 12), as mentioned earlier, in order to explain Plato's description of the sophists as being hunters of wealthy, young men.⁵⁴⁴ What we observe in Plato's writings about the sophists is, instead, that it is not the sophists that hunt for young men, but rather Plato's Socrates.⁵⁴⁵ Moreover, since the young people often joined the entourage of the sophists, the latter are also chased by Socrates: for example, in the *Protagoras*, it is Socrates who, together with the young Hippocrates, goes to Callias' house, to meet Protagoras. In the *Gorgias*, it is once again Socrates who, together with other people, leaves the marketplace to encounter and to engage in a philosophical conversation with Gorgias. In the *Hippias Minor* and *Hippias Maior*, the reader can easily understand that it is Socrates who had to come to the venue for Hippias' public events, given the fact that Socrates is in the audience. The sole exception in this respect is the *Euthydemus*, as Ambuel points out,⁵⁴⁶ where Socrates suggests seeking the company of the sophists Euthydemus and Dionysodorus by bringing Crito's sons

⁵⁴¹ Against Notomi, who thinks that "theses definitions represent particular features or aspects of the sophist's art, rather than individual figures of historical sophists" (1999: p. 78, note 14), I believe that Plato does indeed rely on individual traits of the sophists, as he portrays them in the earlier dialogues. This is because the appearances of the sophists are used as constitutive branches of the *dihaireseis* in the *Sophist*.

⁵⁴² Wolff 1991: p. 32.

⁵⁴³ Ambuel 2007: p. 48.

⁵⁴⁴ It should be noted, however, that both Xenophon and Philostratus are dependent on Plato, since their descriptions of the different figures of the sophist are, to a great extent, based on Plato's writings.

⁵⁴⁵ See, for example, *Protagoras* 309a1-b2.

⁵⁴⁶ Ambuel 2007: p. 48.

as “bait” (δέλεαρ, 272d2). In addition to these observations, one could conclude that the motive of hunting is more reminiscent of Socrates than of Protagoras, Gorgias and Hippias, given that the former is frequently portrayed as a “lover” (ἐρωτικός) of young men.⁵⁴⁷ However, since Socrates, too belongs to the clique of the sophists,⁵⁴⁸ the motive of hunting, however minor for the final definition, constitutes an essential aspect of the appearance of the sophist.⁵⁴⁹ The difference between Socrates and all the other sophist is, however, that while Socrates hunts young men to take pleasure in their beautiful souls, the primary interest of all the other sophists is to hunt young men financial gain.

To return to the interpretation of the first definition of the sophist: surprisingly enough, Wolff seems not to feel the gravity of the term δοξοπαιδευτική, which is also part of the first definition of the sophist and which Plato introduces at the end of his account, in order to signal the starting point of the essential problem, namely that of the particular mode of being of appearances that will cast a shadow over the whole dialogue.⁵⁵⁰ This is all the more important since the end of the sixth definition of the sophist insist again on the irritation caused by the “vain conceit of wisdom” (ἡ μάταιος δοξοσοφία, 231b6). Although Wolff is right to assume that certain formulas describing sophistic practices used by Plato in the *Sophist* may have come from other sources, such as Xenophon, as mentioned before, Socrates, Aristophanes and the context of the Academy, he is wrong to ignore Plato’s earlier dialogues (with the exception of the *Euthydemus*),⁵⁵¹ where characteristic features of the sophists, including the practice of δοξοπαιδευτική, are depicted. Without taking into account Plato’s earlier dialogues as the main source for the dihairetic method of the *Sophist*, one would not understand why Plato ascribes the practice of δοξοπαιδευτική to the sophist, given the fact that the term is introduced quite abruptly and only at the end of the first definition. Moreover, without acknowledging that the practice of δοξοπαιδευτική is characteristic of the sophist’s intellectual activities – an

⁵⁴⁷ *Symposium* 212b, 216d; *Charmides* 153c ff., 154d-e, 155c-e; *Meno* 76b-c and *Alcibiades I* 131c-e. The references are taken from Dalfen 2004: p. 312.

⁵⁴⁸ On this point, see the sixth definition of the sophist in 226a-231c8. Cf. also *Protagoras* 314d3, where Socrates is addressed as a sophist. These references serve as counterexamples to Edmunds’ claim (1954: p. 414) that Socrates was not called a sophist in Plato. An interesting aspect of Edmunds’ detailed article is, however, that he discusses other names for Socrates, such as, for example, φροντιστής. Regarding other sources, Aristophanes does not directly call Socrates a sophist, but he makes it clear in his *Clouds* that Socrates’ form of reasoning can easily be compared with sophistic rhetoric. For a better understanding of Aristophanes’ portrayal of Socrates in the *Clouds*, see Erbse 1954: pp. 385-420. Other authors who treat Socrates as a sophist include Aeschines (*In Timarch.* 173) and Isocrates (*Helen* 2-3). The last two references are mentioned by Nehamas at the beginning of his instructive article on the challenging relationship between philosophy and sophistry (1990: pp. 3-16).

⁵⁴⁹ The upshot is that although the motive of hunting is part of the acquisitive art, it can also be attributed to Socrates, who possess neither an acquisitive nor a productive art, because hunting is part of the appearance and not of the essence of the sophist.

⁵⁵⁰ See also Seeck 2011: p. 33 and p. 35.

⁵⁵¹ Wolff 1991: p. 36.

observation which holds true for all earlier Platonic dialogues about the sophists – one would indeed come to the misleading conclusion that:

[Plato's] account does set the sophist in a suspicious light: he pursues the young and wealthy and claims to impart virtue (223a). The sophist is said to practice *δοξοπαιδευτική*, but the context of these claims is left undetermined; no grounds are given on which to follow the suspicions. The art of *δοξοπαιδευτική* recalls the distinction between knowledge and opinion. Like many of the arts named in the divisions, it is an invented word which appears nowhere else in Plato or Greek literature, and it is not explained.⁵⁵²

Ambuel is right to observe that the term *δοξοπαιδευτική* is not used in other Platonic dialogues, but from this it does not follow that Plato has not explained the term as such. To understand this, it is important to pay attention to the *practice* of *δοξοπαιδευτική* rather than to the explicit usage of the *word* itself. The following examples should support our interpretation that whenever Socrates clashes with the sophists in Plato's earlier dialogues, the practice of an apparent expertise in education and wisdom together with the necessity to stay vigilant and to adopt a critical approach to the sophists' promises, represents an essential aim of Plato's literary engagement. To begin with the *Protagoras*, Plato depicts the problem of the attainability of virtue in order to show that despite Protagoras' belief that virtue is teachable and attainable – Protagoras' mythical story of the development of a political society enjoys a special position in this respect (320c-328d) – he fails to provide any convincing arguments in order to refute Socrates' denial of the teachability of virtue (328d-362a). The same is true of Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, whose promise "to transmit virtue in a most excellent manner and most quickly" (*ἀρετήν [...] παραδοῦναι [...] κάλλιστα καὶ τάχιστα*, *Euthydemus* 273d8-9) has no lasting effect because of their unwillingness to engage in a serious and responsible dialogue with Socrates and Cleinias. This is all the more tragic as the young and inexperienced Cleinias, to whom the sophists Euthydemus and Dionysodorus give a lesson in education, is not given the ethical knowledge necessary to become virtuous, but is rather being misused for rhetorical entertainment purposes only. In the *Gorgias*, Socrates insist that rhetoric, in the field of which Gorgias claims to have an expertise,⁵⁵³ does not instruct people about the just and the unjust, but only makes them believe (455a2-5). This result leads to the problematic conclusion, that rhetoric, which, as such is never supposed to be unjust, can sometimes produce unjust

⁵⁵² Ambuel 2007: p. 50. Kolb (1997: p. 42) also wrongly assumes that Plato excludes a discussion about the *δοξοπαιδευτική τέχνη*. Rather, it would be more correct to say that Plato takes the relevance of the corresponding art for granted, because he describes its mode of operation in his earlier writings.

⁵⁵³ For more on the idea that Gorgias deserves to be called a rhetorician no more than a sophist, see our chapter on Plato's *Gorgias* in the first part of the study.

rhetoricians (457b5-c3). Regarding the *Hippias Minor*, the situation is again unfavourable for the sophist Hippias, who, after having given a sample of his epideictic speech about the heroes of the Homeric epics, fails to provide conclusive evidence for his position that Achilles is morally better than Odysseus. Moreover, Socrates manages to ensnare Hippias in a second trap, i.e. the ambivalent thesis that committing injustice voluntarily is superior to doing so involuntarily, thereby displaying Hippias' lack of ethical and educational expertise. Finally, in the *Hippias Major*, Hippias is portrayed by Plato as possessing a relative, rather than a well-founded account of the thing called "beauty" (καλόν). In this way, Plato, through the mouth of Socrates, shows that because Hippias possesses only apparent knowledge of beauty, through which everything else, including ethical and political aspirations, becomes beautiful and valuable, the reader is encouraged to take a more critical view of Hippias' rhetorical and educational skills.

So much for the Stranger's first attempt to define the figure of the sophist. In the following chapters, we shall see why the *dihairesis* of other manifestations of the sophist becomes necessary (with respects to the sophists' own self-perception), on the one hand, and is presented as a preparatory analysis for the discussion about the ontological grounding of the appearances (φαντάσματα), on the other.

3.2.1.2. *The Second, Third and Fourth Attempt*

At the beginning of the analysis of the second attempt to define the sophist, the Stranger draws attention to the fact that uncovering the sophist's distinctive expertise entails the acknowledgment that his τέχνη is not "plain" (φαύλη, 223c1), but rather "manifold" (ποικίλη, 223c2). In order to properly execute the main task by integrating into the analysis the many faces of the sophist, the dihairetic method must start from scratch. Keeping in mind the method of finding similarities and differences between different forms of expertise, we may now apply the same procedure to the examination of the second definition of the sophist. As we have already seen, what the angler and the sophist have in common is that they are both hunters. They differ from each other in that they have different prey: while the angler hunts fishes, the sophist hunts wealthy, young men. The situation is however different in the case of the second definition. Here, the common ground between the angler and the sophist is still the same: they both practice the acquisitive art. The difference is, however, that the sophist is not sought in

the branch of hunting, but rather in that of exchanging (ἀλλακτική, 223c7). Why is this so? The reference to the branch of exchanging makes us understand that the Stranger must again return to the *dihairesis* of the angler, because it serves as a model for finding the sophist. But what is the necessary condition for being a model? As the context of the attempt to catch the sophist shows, the model of the angler is suitable, because it represents a case in which the *dihairesis* is made correctly. In other words, with respect to the explanation in the *Statesman*, the division of the branches is made “at the joints” (κατὰ μέλη, 287c3), i.e. at the appropriate intersections, and that is why the definition of the corresponding object is successful. So, if the sophist is no longer to be sought in the branch of hunting, then this means that the initially postulated common feature between the angler and the sophist, namely “hunting”, was wrong and hence that another part of the *dihairesis* of the angler, which contains no failed divisions, must be chosen as a starting point for the renewed attempt to define the sophist. The next obvious step is, therefore, to choose an art that is situated above the art of hunting. Since the sophist is not a practitioner of the art of combat (ἀγωνιστική, 219e1), the part that is left over, is the art of exchanging. Again, the common ground between the angler and the sophist is that they both practice an acquisitive art, but they differ insofar as the angler is called a hunter and the sophist a salesman. Note too that the Stranger uses two different terms when referring to the art of exchanging: μεταβλητική (219d6) in the division of the angler and ἀλλακτική (223c7) in the second division of the sophist. This ambiguity is aggravated by the fact that the terms used within the different *dihaireseis* are not divided consistently. For example, while in the division of the angler (219d-221c) and, indirectly, in the first division of the sophist (221c-223b), the “art of exchanging” (μεταβλητική, 219d6) and the “art of coercive force” (χειρωτική, 219d8) are placed on the same level, as belonging to the “acquisitive art” (κτητική τέχνη), the situation is different when it comes to the second division of the sophist. Here, the art of exchanging (ἀλλακτική, 223c7) is placed on the same level as the “art of hunting” (θηρευτική, 223c7), that is, as descending from the “acquisitive art” (κτητική τέχνη, 223c4). What is worse, the term μεταβλητική is not used synonymously with the term ἀλλακτική, as observed before, but as a distant subgenre of the latter (223d3-4).⁵⁵⁴ Later we shall see that the main reason for which the divisions are executed incoherently and therefore incorrectly, is that they are made on the basis of appearances. For, if the various manifestations of the sophist cannot reveal his essence, then the search for the sophist within any branch of the acquisitive art must inevitably lead to

⁵⁵⁴ Cf. also Klein 1977: p. 17.

deadlock.⁵⁵⁵ For the moment, let us continue with the second division, in order to better grasp the anticipated failures, before concentrating on the art within which the division of the sophist will be successfully carried out.

The next step is to determine the two forms or kinds of the art of exchanging: these are called arts of gifting (δωρητική, 223c7) and of selling (ἀγοραστική, 223c10). The division continues on the part of the ἀγοραστική and within this scope, the Stranger names another pair of arts, namely “self-selling” (αὐτοπωλική, 223d2), which consists in selling one’s own products, and “exchanging” (μεταβλητική, 223d3-4), which involves selling other people’s products. Based on the observations that he has made about salesmen at the trading markets, the Stranger again divides the μεταβλητική into two parts: the first is called “retailing” (καπηλική, 223d7), which is conducted exclusively in one city (223d6-7), the second “merchandising” (ἐμπορική, 223d11), which occurs between different cities (223d10).

In naming the activity of merchandising, the Stranger has uncovered the second most frequent manifestation of the sophist. Although the following considerations about the branch of ἐμπορική will not yet uncover the essence of the sophist, they will nevertheless allow us to highlight the intimate connection between the different forms of social behavior, as presented in the first two definitions, i.e. the sophist’s high level of professionalism and trading skills disguised as the teaching virtue.

The criteria for the division of the art of merchandising are laid out on the basis of the human needs. One branch deals with the bodily needs (σῶμα), while the other is concerned with the condition of the soul (ψυχή, 223e2). Among other arts that belong to and/or are made for the soul we find “any art, over which the Muses presides” (μουσική, 224a1),⁵⁵⁶ “painting” (γραφική, 224a3) and “juggling” (θαυματοποιική, 224a4). The “trader” (ἐμπορος, 224a7), who deals in these types of products, does so either purely for pleasure or for a serious purpose (224a4-5). The focus on the soul’s needs leads the Stranger to introduce a new name for this particular type of trading, namely “soul-merchandising” (ψυχεμπορική, 224b4). In a further step that concerns the different ways in which souls-merchandising is usually done, the Stranger subdivides it into the “art of display” (ἐπιδεικτική, 224b4-5) and “traffic in knowledge” (μαθηματοπωλική, 224b9). The final division before presenting the second definition of the sophist concerns the μαθηματοπωλική. As the Stranger suggests, the latter includes the “selling of art” (τεχνοπωλική, 224c4), on the one hand, and the selling of things

⁵⁵⁵ Regarding Plato’s terminology within the *dihairesis*, cf. e.g. Seeck 2011: pp. 36-37.

⁵⁵⁶ For this translation, see Liddle and Scott’s Greek-English Lexicon.

that relate to virtue (ἀρετή, 224c1-2), on the other. The multifaceted vision of the “art of exchanging” (ἀλλακτική), with which the Stranger began his second *dihairesis* of the sophist, has as its result that the kind of the sophist should be sought within the branch of the μαθηματοπωλική. As the Stranger explains, the latter deals not with any type of knowledge whatsoever, as was the case for the τεχνοπωλική, but rather with those μαθήματα which are concerned with virtue. In addition to enumerating all of the different arts, which are attributed to the kind of the sophist at the end of the second *dihairesis* – κτητική, μεταβλητική, ἀγοραστική, ἐμπορική, ψυχεμπορική [...] πωλητική (224c10-d2) – the Stranger also adds “speeches” (λόγοι, 224d1) to the sophist’s sales inventory,⁵⁵⁷ which were not explicitly mentioned before.

Let us now recall the third and fourth definition of the sophist, which as such do not form independent *dihaireseis*, but are developed within the second division.⁵⁵⁸ As the Stranger explains in 224d4-e4, the third and fourth form of expertise belonging to the sophist are called the “retailing” (καπηλική) and “self-selling” (αὐτοπωλική, 224e2). They are first introduced in 223d2 and d7. Later, the Stranger uses the corresponding names “retailer” (κάπελος) and “self-seller” (αὐτοπώλης, 231e). Whereas the καπηλική – together with the ἐμπορική – is presented as being part of the μεταβλητική, the fourth definition, i.e. the αὐτοπωλική – together with the μεταβλητική – is described as part of the ἀγοραστική.

What should we make of the second, third and fourth definition of the sophist? Do they represent any progress in relation to the first definition? We have already mentioned that the second to fourth definitions illustrate the peculiar behavior of the sophist, who uses his saaviness to sell the idea of the teachability of virtue. What we now need to explain is how the constructions of the different definitions, including the sophist’s talent for moneymaking through merchandising, may be evidenced by Plato’s earlier dialogues. The sophist’s love for money, which was already mentioned in the first definition, is, for example, made the subject of discussion in the *Hippias Major*. Here, Socrates describes the sophists Gorgias, Prodicos and Protagoras as teachers of the Greeks, who not only won great fame by instructing people in public and private affairs, but who also earned large sums of money (282b1-d5). In the case of Hippias, Plato even has him boast that he earned more money than any other sophist (282e6-

⁵⁵⁷ The idea that the sophist “can make people clever at speaking” (ἐπιστάτην τοῦ ποιῆσαι δεινὸν λέγειν) is, for example, pronounced at *Protagoras* 312d6-7. We will come to this point later.

⁵⁵⁸ Cf. also Seeck 2011 p. 37-39, who, strangely enough, suggests that Plato’s distinction between the third and fourth division may be interpreted as an “interpolation of a copyist” (p. 37).

8).⁵⁵⁹ Regarding the different professional titles of the sophist (merchant, retailer, and self-seller), as developed in the second definition, Plato first introduces them first at *Protagoras* 313c3-214c2. In this section, Socrates explains to Hippocrates that the sophist is “a merchant or retailer” (ἐμπορός τις ἢ κάπηλος, 313c5), who deals with bodies of knowledge (μαθήματα, 313c7) that nourish the soul. The only professional title missing here is that of the self-seller (αὐτοπώλης). Yet the context of the description of the sophist’s activities as a businessman leaves no doubt that the sophist could also be called a self-seller. A better basis for attributing the profession of the self-seller to the sophist is, however, the *Hippias Minor*. Here, Socrates calls the sophist Hippias the wisest of men regarding most of the arts (368b1-2), describing Hippias’ ability to make different sorts of craft products on his own (368b5-e1). That said, Socrates’ explicit reference to the place, i.e. “in the marketplace at the money-changer’s counters” (ἐν ἀγορᾷ ἐπὶ ταῖς τραπεζαῖς, 368b4-5), where Hippias boasted that he possessed many different skills, suggests that Hippias also sold the resulting products to the interested parties.⁵⁶⁰ To come back again to the *Protagoras*, Socrates similarly mentions the sale of bodily sustenance (τὴν τοῦ σώματος τροφήν, 313c9) and observes further that the salesmen “move with their goods around the cities” (τὰ μαθήματα περιάγοντες κατὰ τὰς πόλεις, 313d5).⁵⁶¹ Both of these aspects are mentioned again at *Sophist* 223d6-10 and 223e2.

No less interesting is the Stranger’s last division of “traffic in knowledge” (μαθηματοπωλική) into the “selling of art” (τεχνοπωλική) and the art that is concerned with “virtue” (ἀρετή) and which corresponds to the second definition of the sophist. This move raises the question of the reasons for this distinction. The most probable explanation is that because the different sophists, as portrayed by Plato in his earlier writings, want to distance themselves from each other in order to compete more effectively on the educational market, they create the illusion that they possess different skills. This competitive nature of the sophists is therefore taken by the Stranger as a further point of reference for his dihairetic technique in the definition of the sophist. We have already seen above that Hippias claims to have earned more money than all of the other sophists, because he wants to emphasize his outstanding performance. By contrast, Protagoras insists that his educational method is less arduous than that of Hippias, who requires his pupils to learn various “arts” (τέχναι). In order to distance himself from Hippias’ polymathy, Protagoras therefore affirms that only one art is necessary

⁵⁵⁹ Cf. also *Protagoras* 328b3-c2, where Protagoras refers to his request to receive a “fee” (μισθός) for his educational services.

⁵⁶⁰ The explicit reference to αὐτοπώλης in *Statesman* 260c is noticed by Wolff 1991: p. 34, note 20.

⁵⁶¹ The sophists’ touring from town to town and frequently passing through Athens, is mentioned in *Protagoras* 309d3; *Euthydemus* 271c2-4; *Gorgias* 447b4-8; *Hippias Minor* 363c7-d4 and *Hippias Major* 281a1-b4.

in order to become virtuous, i.e. “good counsel” (εὐβουλία).⁵⁶² The case of Plato’s *Gorgias*⁵⁶³ could also be deemed proof of the need to distinguish between different kinds of traffic in knowledge. For example, if Gorgias’s desire to distance himself, as a rhetorician, from the sophists is taken as a reference point, then one might assume that the distinction between a sophist, who teaches virtue, and a rhetorician, who teaches rhetoric, is appropriate, such that the two professions belong to two different kinds of μαθηματοπωλική. Again, it is on this basis that the Stranger distinguishes the “selling of art” (τεχνοπωλική), such as that practiced by Hippias and Gorgias, from salesmanship concerned with “virtue” (ἀρετή), which is usually attributed to Protagoras.⁵⁶⁴ A notable exception in this regard is Socrates, whose lack of interest in financial matters⁵⁶⁵ and disinterest in travel⁵⁶⁶ makes him stand outside from other sophists.⁵⁶⁷

3.2.1.3. *The Fifth Attempt*

The Stranger’s insistence on paying attention again to the sophist’s resemblance to other kinds (224e6-7), reminds us that we should pursue the examination from a broader perspective. Because the sophist is able to take on many forms, the reader is urged to not stop his analysis too quickly, but rather to deal with all possible options before considering another domain of enquiry. Since the only branch remaining is the “art of combat” (ἀγωνιστική τέχνη), the Stranger makes a fifth and final attempt to catch the sophist within the κτητική τέχνη. The now-familiar procedure is therefore taken up again and the ἀγωνιστική τέχνη is divided into two parts, one containing “competition” (ἀμιλλητικόν) and the other “fighting” (μαχητικόν) (225a2-7). The branch of ἀμιλλητικόν is passed over in silence and the analysis continues with the division of the μαχητικόν.

Before pursuing the *dihairesis* further, let us note that the difference between competition and fighting does not appear to indicate any distinguishing feature of the sophists.

⁵⁶² *Protagoras* 318d5-319a7.

⁵⁶³ On this point, see the analysis of Plato’s *Gorgias* above.

⁵⁶⁴ Kolb (1997: p. 39) thinks that the Strangers’ division procedure follows no clear strategic direction, but rather mirrors the arbitrariness of the sophists. Against Kolb, I believe that Plato consciously relies on the sophists’ words, precisely because he wants to show that their tendencies toward differentiation lack a real foundation. The didactic aspect of the failed definitions of the sophist is emphasised by Seligman 1974: p. 12.

⁵⁶⁵ Diogenes Laërtius II, 27.

⁵⁶⁶ Diogenes Laërtius II, 22.

⁵⁶⁷ Narcy 2013: pp. 63-64.

As we pointed out earlier, the sophists place great value on being able to teach different kinds of arts. To be able to do so, however, they must fight *and* compete with other members of their profession for profit and to make a name for themselves. The sophists' conduct does not, therefore, allow for the separation of ἀμύλλητικόν from μαχητικόν, because both arts are practiced by them at the same time. For this and other reasons, which we shall address below, the Stranger's attempt to find the kind of the sophist will have to go beyond the limits of the acquisitive art and – no less important – without the aid of the appearances.

To return to the division of the μαχητικόν, the Stranger further distinguishes between bodily fighting, i.e. “violence” (βιαστικόν), and verbal confrontation, i.e. “disputing” (ἀμφισβητητικόν) (225a9-b1). Here again, one of the two branches is left aside, in this case the βιαστικόν, and the *dihairesis* continues on the opposite side of the ἀμφισβητητικόν. The two new arts are now called “forensic” (δικανικόν) and “disputation” (ἀντιλογικόν). While the latter represents a private question-and-answer style communication, the former includes long speeches about justice and injustice in public.⁵⁶⁸ The Stranger's main interest lies on the branch of the ἀντιλογικόν, which can be done either in an “unskilful” (ἄτεχνον)⁵⁶⁹ or in a competent and “skilful” (ἐντεχνον) way. In the latter case, the expertise is then called “eristic” (ἐριστικόν). The final division concerns the competent performer of the ἐριστικόν. If the speaker gives his speeches purely for pleasure, thereby neglecting his own affairs and wasting money, his performance is called “loquacity” (ἄδολεσχικόν). If, on the other hand, the speaker makes money with his speeches, he is ultimately called a “sophist” (σοφιστής, 225e5). This leads the Stranger and Theaetetus to the fifth definition of the sophist.⁵⁷⁰

The fifth *dihairesis* of the sophist sets up a similar situation as before. For the distinction between different branches suggests that the prey must be located on one side and not on the other. But the situation is less than satisfactory. As in the case of the separation between competition and fighting, which are only apparently mutually exclusive, the distinctions between “violence” (βιαστικόν) and “disputing” ἀμφισβητητικόν, and again between “forensic” (δικανικόν) and “disputation” (ἀντιλογικόν) are no less vague. To begin with the first difference: in *Euthydemus* 271b6-272b10, Socrates explains to his interlocutor Criton that

⁵⁶⁸ *Sophist* 225b5-11.

⁵⁶⁹ If all the branches within the *dihairesis* correspond to an “art” (τέχνη), then it is misleading for the Stranger to assume that the ἀντιλογικόν can be ἄτεχνον. Similarly Ambuel 2007: p. 55, and Rosen 1983: p. 113.

⁵⁷⁰ Note that the Stranger counts four definitions of the sophist up to this point (τέταρτον, 225e5). A closer look at the second division of the sophist though shows that the arts are paired differently. On this point, see our analysis of the corresponding *dihairesis* above and 231c9-e6, where the Stranger correctly enumerates the first six definitions. That the situation is to some extent confusing is rightly noticed by Ambuel 2007: p. 56, and Seeck 2011: p. 40.

the “new sophists” (καινοί σοφισταί, 271b9-c1) Euthydemus and Dionysodorus practice the “art of eristic” (ἐριστική τέχνη) as the crowning achievement of their distinguished career. Prior to that, however, he emphasizes that they can fight extremely well at the physical level⁵⁷¹ and attributes to them expertise “in the pancrastic art” (παγκρατιαστικῇ τέχνῃ, 272a5).⁵⁷² Hence, violence and disputing do not exclude each other, because they can both be practiced by the sophists. The same is true of the second difference between forensic speeches and disputation. If one considers the case of Gorgias, whose rhetorical writings are prime examples of δικάνικόν, i.e. lengthy speeches about justice and injustice delivered in public,⁵⁷³ and again the examples of Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, who are both able to conduct verbal attacks in the law-courts,⁵⁷⁴ then one cannot but notice that the activities of a rhetorician, whose practical skills are similar to those of a sophist, do not form an exclusive branch of the *dihairesis*. For the sophist is able to exercise both skills, if this is required. The small but important difference is that while the rhetorician usually⁵⁷⁵ limits his verbal manoeuvres to the judicial context – the difference between a rhetorician and a sophist is discussed in Plato’s *Gorgias* – the sophist’s ἀντιλογικόν and ἐριστικόν respectively, have no limits and can, therefore, be extended to all theoretical and practical fields. This was the core message of our analysis of Zeno’s rhetorical power in the *Phaedrus* and *Parmenides* and Parmenides’ dialectical exercise in the second part of the *Parmenides*. The fact that the sophist’s ἀντιλογικόν covers the whole field of knowledge will, however, be addressed only at the beginning of the seventh definition of the sophist.⁵⁷⁶

The other important observation is that the sophists’ various kinds of eristic games, such as those practiced by Euthydemus and Dionysodorus in the *Euthydemus*,⁵⁷⁷ represent the decisive factor in introducing the *dihairesis* of the sophist as an artist of disputes. For, eristic manoeuvres constitute nothing more than a play on words and an annoying waste of time. The Stranger rightly calls this way of arguing a “garrulous” (ἄδολεσχικόν, 225d10-11) eristic.⁵⁷⁸ However, we must also think here of Zeno’s ἀντιλογικὴ τέχνη, not only because it is applicable

⁵⁷¹ *Euthydemus* 271d2. See also Diogenes Laërtius II, 22, who says that Socrates did bodily exercise and was in good shape.

⁵⁷² Cf. also *Gorgias* 456c-d.

⁵⁷³ *Sophist* 225b5-6.

⁵⁷⁴ *Euthydemus* 272a1-2.

⁵⁷⁵ I say usually because, in the case of Gorgias, we know that he applied his verbal manoeuvres to the field of philosophy also. His treatise Περὶ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος ἢ περὶ φύσεως is here exemplary.

⁵⁷⁶ *Sophist* 232b11-d8.

⁵⁷⁷ Other potential representatives of dispute and/or eristic are, for example, Protagoras and the Megarics, as Wolff (1991: p. 34) and Cornford (2003: p. 176) confirm. The reference to Protagoras is explicitly mentioned in 232d9-10.

⁵⁷⁸ For Plato’s general use of the term ἄδολεσχικόν/-ς, cf. e.g. Wolff 1991: p. 34, note 22.

to all speaking – the same is true for Euthydemus’ and Dionysodorus’ eristic *logoi* – but, primarily, because it is tightly interwoven with the practice of philosophy. To be more precise, Plato suggests that Zeno’s rhetorical abilities must be considered in the context of Parmenides’ philosophy, as our previous evaluation of Zeno’s role in the *Parmenide* has shown, and this is the reason why the present examination of the sophist must be raised to a much higher level. For although the variety of *dihaireseis*, which the Stranger places in the foreground, suggests that we cannot arrive at a satisfactory definition of the sophist, the fifth classification is, however weak and incoherent, not completely useless. It not only presents us with a challenge, but also with an insight into a significant dependency: sophistry is dependent on the practical and theoretical virtues of philosophy. On the one hand, it develops its rhetorical abilities in order to meet certain theoretical requirements and, on the other hand, it brings its different forms of disputing to perfection in order to defend specific philosophical ideas.⁵⁷⁹ However, to better illustrate similarities and differences between sophistry and philosophy, the latter must also be made into a subject of discussion, not least because Socrates’ way of asking questions was sometimes also mistaken for eristic sophistry.⁵⁸⁰ Let us, therefore, first turn our attention to the Strangers’ description of Socratic philosophy before establishing a link between sophistry and Parmenidean philosophy.

3.2.1.4. *The Sixth Attempt*

The results obtained in the first five definitions of the sophist have demonstrated some similarities and differences between the sophists and the philosopher, as represented by Socrates, albeit only indirectly. Socrates’s name is never mentioned explicitly, and yet his presence is evident at all times and in all places. This is due to the fact that the sophists’ manifestations are based on Plato’s earlier writings, where the main focus of interest is Socrates and his interlocutor, who is usually a sophist. Hence the difficulty and necessity of

⁵⁷⁹ Cf. also Kolb (1997: p. 41), who, for good reasons, highlights the importance of the fifth *dihairesis*. I will come back to this point later.

⁵⁸⁰ On this point, see for example Cornford 2003, p. 181: “It is true that the negative *elenchus* of Socrates, pressing the respondent with questions, reviewing his beliefs and confuting them by exposing their contradictions, did superficially resemble the controversy practiced by Euthydemus, the Eleatics, and the Megarians ‘in the private exchange of question and answer’ (225B) – a style of ‘babbling’ which ‘most hearers do not find agreeable to listen to’, whereas the Socratic deliverance of men ‘from a lofty and stubborn conceit of themselves’ was ‘of all deliverances the most agreeable to listen to’.” See also Cornford 2003: p. 190, where he points out to the closeness between Socrates’ dialectic and the sophists’ form of disputation. Cf. also Seeck 2011: p. 40, note 28; Trevaskis 1955: p. 48 and Erbse 1954: p. 388.

distinguishing between the two. What are the most apparent characteristics of these people? First and foremost, Socrates and the sophists appeared as hunters of young men – the former was even portrayed as a hunter of sophists – who use either persuasive speeches, question and answer sessions or both in order to engage their interlocutors in a dialogue. Another peculiarity is that Socrates’ way of asking questions and the sophists’ form of reasoning often appear confusingly similar, such that one is tempted to overlook the main differences.⁵⁸¹ That makes it all the more important to have a clear understanding of the striking dissimilarities. For example, already in the first definition the key distinction in matters related to education is presented. While the sophists offer their services in the guise of transmitting virtue without being in the possession of the necessary knowledge, having only the “semblance of teaching” (δοξοπαιδευτική, 223b4), the same does not hold for Socrates, whose famous saying “I know that I know nothing” has become well-known as the Socratic paradox.⁵⁸² If we are to believe Plato’s testimony, Socrates never promised to educate people or accepted money for any of his activities. This stand in opposition to the practices of the sophists, who turned their engagements into a successful business. The call for more education, together with the sophists’ success in meeting the intellectual needs of young Greeks, led to an increase in travel between the most prosperous Greek cities. By contrast, Socrates rarely left Athens.

Let us now delve deeper into the sixth definition of the sophist in order to deliver a more nuanced account of the figure of Socrates. The Stranger begins his sixth division by explaining that the sophist, or rather the “beast” (θηρίον, 226a7), is “manifold” (ποικίλον, 226a6), which is why the hunting of the θηρίον requires the use of both arms (226a6-b2). This last suggestion may seem unclear at first, but the reader immediately realizes that the examination of the sophist deserves all our attention, if we are not to lose “his trace” (ἵχνος αὐτοῦ, 226b2). The reference to ἵχνος αὐτοῦ is indeed promising, as it suggests that we will not seek out the sophist only within one path, but rather within all of those paths on which he leaves a trace, thus receiving the appellation ποικίλον. In terms of the strategy of the argument, the Stranger does not concentrate on analyzing the figure of the sophist within the branch of acquisitive expertise (κτητική τέχνη), as was the case for the first five divisions, but rather comes up with the new idea of placing the sophist within the “art of separating” (διακριτική

⁵⁸¹ Another common feature between Socrates (Diogenes Laërtius II, 22) and some of the sophists – one might think here of Euthydemus and Dionysodorus (*Euthydemus* 271d2-272a5) – is that they are all physically fit. One exception to this rule is the case of Prodicus, who, in *Protagoras* 315c8-d6, is described as lying in a room, wrapped in fleeces and rugs.

⁵⁸² Cf. e.g. *Apology* 29d-30b. Regarding Plato’s dialogues on the sophists, Socrates’ task is often reduced to exposing the sophists’ contradictions. However, Plato portrays Socrates in many different ways and we shall delve deeper into Plato’s aims in attributing Socrates the specific role of a purifier in the *Sophist* in what follows.

τέχνη, 226c8).⁵⁸³ Prior to that, the Stranger explains the procedure to be followed in order to establish a distinction between the κτητική τέχνη and the διακριτική τέχνη, distinguishing between two classes of dividing (διαίρετικά, 226c3) that belong to menial occupations (οἰκετικῶν, 226b3): a. straining, sifting, winnowing, separating (226b5-6) and b. carding, spinning and combing (226b8-9).⁵⁸⁴ The new kind of expertise, i.e. the διακριτική τέχνη, is further divided into two branches, one of which is called “separation of worse from better” (χεῖρον ἀπὸ βελτίονος ἀποχωρίζειν, 226d2), and the other “like from like” (ὅμοιον ἀφ’ ὁμοίου, 226d2-3). Although the Stranger claims that he has no “common name” (ὄνομα λεγόμενον, 226d5) for the latter kind of separation and instead continues with the dihairesis of the former, the reader cannot rid himself of the suspicion that the preceding five divisions have been done in the manner of separating like from like. As our previous analysis has shown, whenever the Stranger tried to catch the sophist within one branch of the acquisitive art, excluding other branches, the sophist appeared again in those branches of the acquisitive art that were initially excluded. This raises the question of why the Stranger has no proper name for something that he has, in fact, been practicing. My answer is that the theoretical hunting of the sophist was done both according to his various manifestations and to how the sophists presented themselves to their audience and potential customers. By describing the sophists in their own terms – the sophists claim nothing less than being wise and possessing all kinds of knowledge – Plato can show how inadequate and untrustworthy their words are. The first five divisions are therefore an attempt to separate like from like, i.e. different and yet similar manifestations of the sophist. But since they do not deliver the *genos* of the sophist, the activity of division cannot have a common name. Thus, the first dihaireseis do not deliver definitions of the sophist. Instead, they only provide apparent descriptions or names that are to a certain extent introduced by the sophists themselves and are further used by the ignorant people. This is why the Stranger will later insist on being cautious regarding the *genos* of similarities (231a6-8). The first *dihaireses* add little or no significance to the essence of the subject itself, unless one begins to question the sophists’ doctrines and thus to consistently reach beyond apparent knowledge. This

⁵⁸³ It is therefore clear that if the sophist is a complex figure, he must not only be sought within the branches of the acquisitive art and the art of separating, but also within all the branches mentioned so far. The only missing art is the productive art, which will be analyzed later. That the sophist “can assume all looks” and can, therefore, be found everywhere throughout the seven *dihaireses*, is emphasized by Rosen 1983: p. 134. Later, the Stranger will put the sophist “into the darkness of Nonbeing” (εἰς τὴν τοῦ μὴ ὄντος σκοτεινότητα, 254a4-5). Cf. also Albury 1971: pp. 1-12.

⁵⁸⁴ Rosen (1983: p. 118) thinks that “this is the first diaeresis which begins with a collection of examples into the type to be divided.” Yet our analysis of the first five divisions has shown that Plato does not completely leave the collection of the sophists’ various appearances out, but rather presupposes it, because he has described the characteristic features in his earlier dialogues on the sophists.

requirement can be fulfilled, for example, by “separation of worse from better” (χειρόν ἀπὸ βελτίονος ἀποχωρίζειν).

With this we come back again to the sixth division of the διακριτικὴ τέχνη, which was divided into the separation of like from like and the separation of worse from better. The Stranger considers it necessary to focus in detail on the latter, which “is universally called a kind of purification” (λέγεται παρὰ πάντων καθαρμός τις, 226d10). The branch of καθαρμός is subject to a further subdivision into two types of purification, “one kind regarding the soul, which is separate from that of the body” (ἐν δὲ τὸ περὶ τὴν ψυχὴν εἶδος [...], τοῦ περὶ τὸ σῶμα χωρὶς ὄν, 227c8-9). Examining the case of the purification of the soul is an exercise that will soon become central to determining the function of the sixth *dihairesis*. However, the Stranger initially continues to tackle the analysis of the purification of the body, not least because the introduction of the distinction between “inside” (ἐντός, 226e8) and “outside” (ἐκτός, 227a2), on the one hand, and the distinction between “living beings” (ζῷα, 226e8) and “soulless bodies” (ἄψυχα σώματα, 227a3), on the other, is needed in order to better understand the far-reaching implications of both arts of purification. What are then the arts of bodily purifications? Regarding the purification of living beings, the Stranger explains that two types of cleansing are needed in order to get rid of the “ugliness” (αἰσχος) and “illness” (νόσος, 228a1) of the body.⁵⁸⁵ While “gymnastics” (γυμναστική) helps to remove the ugliness of the body, i.e. to heal the external parts of ζῷα, “medicine” (ιατρική) is the “appropriate” (ὀρθῶς) art “to be purged” (καθαίρεσθαι, 227a1) of illness, i.e. to heal the internal parts of ζῷα. Concerning the treatment of superficial impurities, the Stranger recommends “bathing” (βαλανευτική, 227a2). In the case of soulless bodies, the following kinds of purifications are proposed: “fulling” (γναφευτική, 227a3), the “whole art of dress and ornament” (σύμπασα κοσμητική, 227a4), as well as all of the other arts, which deliver small services and have many ridiculous names (227a4-5).

The analysis of the different sorts of bodily purification is not an end in itself, but is rather designed to pave the way for the discussion of “the purifications of the soul” (τῶν τῆς

⁵⁸⁵ Note that the terms “bodily illness” and “bodily ugliness” are first introduced in the context of the analysis of the purification of the soul (228a1-2, 228e6-229a2). Here they are approved tacitly. At first sight, this may appear a rather trivial, even irrelevant matter. Regarding the case of purification of the soul, where the explicit distinction between “internal” and “external” is missing, we might be tempted to assume the existence of a more complex dimension. For example, while the soulless bodies have only external parts and therefore require only superficial cleaning (filling and decorating), the situation is more difficult in the case of living beings, which also possess internal parts and therefore necessitate both external *and* internal purification. In the latter case, medicine can be purifying and ultimately useful if and only if the medical doctor is in possession not only of knowledge about physical complaints and illnesses, but also about psychological and/or psychosomatic disorders. The concept of a holistic approach to medicine and care is made a subject of discussion in *Charmides* 155b-157c.

ψυχῆς καθάρσεων, 227c3). If “wickedness” (πονηρία, 227d4) and/or “badness” (κακία, 227d9) are different from “virtue” (ἀρετή, 227d4) and need to be removed from the soul, then it is necessary first to identify the relevant kinds of badness. As in case of bodily purifications, the Stranger names two types of badness, namely “illness” (νόσος) and “ugliness” (αἷσχος, 228a1) in order to distinguish between “internal” (ἐντός) and “external” (ἐκτός) expressions of the soul. As already noted, while the terms “illness” and “ugliness” are not explicitly used in the context of bodily purification, but only those of “internal” and “external”, the situation is precisely the opposite in the present context. For the Stranger explicitly speaks about the illness and ugliness of both body⁵⁸⁶ and soul, and only implicitly about internal and external parts of the soul. Why is this so? Unfortunately, the Stranger does not provide any conclusive answers and we can only speculate about the reasons for this. It is, at any rate, clear that we cannot directly observe the internal disposition of the soul, but rather deduce its structure from its external forms of expression, i.e. from the thoughts expressed through language and from the observed behavior of a rational being. Put succinctly, a person is bad if he or she makes false speeches and/or behaves badly. This is probably why the Stranger does not locate the sophist within the branch of illness, but rather within that of ugliness, as the conclusion of the sixth definition will soon show. However, we shall immediately see that the distinction between illness and ugliness is not an absolute one, given the idea that both types of badness are closely related. Νόσος and αἷσχος are “akin to each other” (συγγενῆ, 228b6), insofar as they both represent bad conditions of the soul. They are, however, different insofar as their bad and ugly manifestations concern different parts of the body-soul composite: the inner structure of the soul, on the one hand, and the outer and discernable expressions of language and behavior, on the other. To better understand the various types of badness of the soul, let us again return to the *dihairesis* procedure with its corresponding καθαρμοί.

After naming the major types of badness, the Stranger provides further details about each division. While illness is identified with “discord” (στάσις, 228a4) and “dissension” (διαφορά), arising “from some sort of corruption” (ἐκ τινος διαφθορᾶς, 228a8), ugliness is defined as a “lack of measure” (ἀμετρία, 228a11). The Stranger again comes back to the notion of illness and describes several cases of inner restlessness, illustrated in each case by a dispute between two parties: opinions vs. desires (δόξαι vs. ἐπιθυμίαι), spiritedness vs. pleasures (θύμος vs. ἡδοναί), reason vs. pains (λόγος vs. λῦπαι, 228b2-4). At a later stage, the Stranger also enumerates three further examples of illness: “cowardice” (δειλία), “licentiousness”

⁵⁸⁶ See again 228a1-2, 228e6-229a2.

(ἀκολασία) and “injustice” (ἀδικία, 228e3).⁵⁸⁷ As a counterpart to illness, the ugliness of the soul, which is now examined under the aspect of ἀμετρία, is imagined as a part of the soul moving towards a fixed goal, which, however, deviates from its course and “misses” (ἀποτυγχάνη, 228c3) its target whenever it tries to hit it.⁵⁸⁸ The image of the soul gone astray is instructive insofar as it points to what the Stranger also calls “mental derangement” (παραφροσύνη, 228d2) and “being ignorant” (ἀγνοεῖν, 228c10) for which different types of purification are envisaged.

What kinds of purification does the Stranger propose for the ignorant soul? On the one hand, as a remedy for the numerous forms of illness, the Stranger recommends the “punishing art” (κολαστική, 229a5). On the other hand, as a remedy for all kinds of ugliness and ignorance, he proposes “teaching” (διδασκαλική, 229a10). As the context of the sixth *dihairesis* makes clear, the latter, in particular, deserves to be called “education” (παιδεία, 229d2) in the full sense of the word.⁵⁸⁹ Unlike the κολαστική, whose cleansing procedure is not further commented on, the διδασκαλική is once more subdivided into two branches: one is called “admonition” (νουθετητική, 230a3), the other “refutation” (ἐλεγχος, 230d1). With regard to the reasons for introducing this last division, the Stranger explains that there are two types of ignorance, the first of which is not further developed (we can assume that this type of ignorance deals with all those aberrations that were described above), while the second is now called “lack of learning” (ἀμαθία, 229c9). The peculiarity of ἀμαθία is that an ignorant person believes that he knows something that he or she does not really know (229c5). Contrary to the rougher type of νουθετητική, which is not particularly successful (230a5-9) when it comes to handling the “empty conceit of wisdom” (τὴν μάταιον δοξοσοφίαν, 231b6), the smoother method of ἐλεγχος, also called as the “greatest and most sovereign of all purifications” (μεγίστη καὶ κυριωτάτη τῶν καθάρσεων, 230d8-9), guarantees more efficiency. Its success depends highly on its ability to “cross-examine” (διερωτᾶν, 230b5) the inconsistent opinions and to detect contradictions. The desired effect is that the ignorant people lose their erroneous opinions and, given the emerging “shame” (αἰσχύνη, 230d2), that they stick with believes about

⁵⁸⁷ Again a little later, these three kinds of badness are mentioned once more; the term “licentiousness” (ἀκολασία) is, however, replaced by “insolence” (ὕβρις, 229a4).

⁵⁸⁸ It is interesting to observe that the Stranger’s repeated switching from the description of illness to that of ugliness, and vice-versa, is intended to mirror, to a certain extent, the constant back-and-forth movement of a disordered soul.

⁵⁸⁹ In 232a-233a, the Stranger doubts whether the “disputer” (ἀντιλογικός, 232b6) deserves the title of a “teacher” (διδάσκαλος, 232b8). Cf. also Meno’s confusion about whether the sophists deserve to be called “teachers” (διδάσκαλοι) of virtue in *Meno* 95c1-8.

things they know and nothing more (230b4-d4). To the purifying force of the elenctic method, the Stranger gives the title of “sophistry of noble lineage” (ἡ γένει γενναία σοφιστική, 231b8).

Having presented the structure of the sixth *dihairesis*, we may now address the previously stated danger of confusing Socrates’ elenctic method with eristic plays, as outlined in the fifth *dihairesis*. The necessity to clarify the peculiar relationship between the fifth and the sixth division becomes evident when bearing in mind that at the end of the sixth definition, the Stranger hesitates to identify the practitioners of ἔλεγχος with the sophists, so as not to offer them undeserved praise (230e6-231a1). The sentence μὴ μείζον αὐτοῖς προσάπτωμεν γέρας has often caused interpretative problems, because the referent of αὐτοῖς is unclear: whom does the Stranger really have in mind and in what sense might these people receive too much honor? At first, there seem to be only two options: either practitioners of refutation, such as Socrates,⁵⁹⁰ or the sophists themselves.⁵⁹¹ Although it cannot be excluded that the Stranger has only one party in mind, the rather vaguely formulated sentence, which is not further expanded upon, invites the assumption that the answer to this question is not intended to be straightforward. The context of the statement clearly suggests that the relationship between sophistry and philosophy is entangled and therefore demands careful scrutiny. Ultimately, this means that the search for the *genos* of the sophists should not be reduced to the examination of one type of thinker, but rather expanded to include all those who are rightly or wrongly termed as such. Hence the necessity to go beyond the first five definitions of the sophist to the practitioners of ἔλεγχος, whose status is in need of further clarification. As far as Theaetetus is concerned, he sees no unbridgeable gap between the practitioners of ἔλεγχος and the sophists, since he acknowledges a certain similarity between them (231a4-5). Precisely in order to avoid a confusion between the two – the comparison between the wolf and the dog is particularly telling here (231a6) –⁵⁹² the Stranger emphasizes that it is important to be vigilant “about similarities”

⁵⁹⁰ Cornford 2003: p. 180, note 2. Seeck (2011: p. 48) restricts himself to denying that the sophists have any capacity to purify one from sham knowledge, but he does not further speculate about whether Socrates’ elenctic method might be a good candidate for the subject of the sixth *dihairesis*.

⁵⁹¹ Kerferd 1954: p. 85; Trevaskis 1955: p. 37, who nevertheless undertakes a thorough criticism of Kerferd’s general interpretation; and Bluck 1975: p. 40ff. Robinson even suggest thinking of Plato and how he “regarded the elenchus at that time of his life [viz. when he wrote his earlier writings]” (1980: pp. 11ff.), which would correspond to a third possibility of identifying the practitioners of ἔλεγχος.

⁵⁹² This comparison has the following message: just as there are similarities between the wildest and the tamest of animals, so too there exists resemblances between the practitioner of *elenchos* and the sophist. Both parties communicate with the help of a question-and-answer dialogue, albeit in different ways. While the sophist argues that in order to emerge victorious in a battle of words, the purpose of the practitioner of *elenchos* is to purify from false “opinions” (δόξαι) that contradict each other. For an inexperienced observer, the distinction between the practitioner of ἔλεγχος and the sophist remains difficult to grasp or rather misleading. Where there is no possibility to detect differences between several different forms of reasoning, there remain only similarities, which can have nothing but a negative impact on the evaluation of the practitioner of ἔλεγχος. His verbal exchanges are wrongly though understandably identified as being mere sophistic distortions of words. Alternative interpretations of the

(περὶ τὰς ὁμοιότητας, 231a7), because “it is a very slippery kind” (ὀλισθηρότατον γὰρ τὸ γένος, 231a8).

To return to the possible confusion between the sophists and Socrates: why is the sixth definition of the sophist “doubtful” (ἀμφισβητήσιμον, 231e4)? In the following pages, I shall argue that the sixth definition is formulated in such a way as to emphasize the differences between Socrates and the sophists, on the one hand, and to specify the limits of the elenctic method for finding the *genos* of the sophist, on the other.⁵⁹³

Regarding the first point, we have already highlighted the main difference between Socrates and the sophists, which concerns education. Contrary to the sophists, Socrates does not deceive his interlocutors about the truth of their statements, by relying on the “semblance of teaching” (δοξοπαιδευτική). He shows, first and foremost, that the unfounded opinions in different domains, such as ethics, politics and rhetoric result in contradictions. In other words, Socrates reveals that the sophists are not experts in those things that they try to teach to others. To prevent people from being outsmarted by the sophists’ “conceit of wisdom” (δοξοσοφία), Socrates applies his elenctic method as a purification of false opinions, proposing only to accept true opinions.⁵⁹⁴ The sixth definition, therefore, casts Socrates as a cautious thinker, who separates the better from the worse, i.e. right beliefs from false opinions. What is known should never be abandoned on account of or confused with false promises.

Regarding the shortcomings of Socrates’ form of reasoning, it must first and foremost be said that the *ἐλεγχος* is substantially Socratic and accurately represents a sophistic, albeit noble, use of speeches.⁵⁹⁵ This latter observation is puzzling in some ways because, although Socrates’ philosophical mission is honorable – he is aware of the limits of his own knowledge and is not afraid to accept the negative effects of his general attitude – this does not always produce positive effects. As a matter of fact, Socrates’ elenchus often takes on a “negative and destructive spirit”.⁵⁹⁶ This is due not only to Socrates’ deliberate choice to provoke others by intrusively exposing their lack of knowledge, but also to his refusal and/or inability to deliver

comparison between the wolf and the dog are given by Cornford 2003: p. 182; Kerferd 1954: p. 85; and Trevaskis 1955: pp. 36-49.

⁵⁹³ With the second goal, I go beyond Larsen’s interpretation (2007: pp. 1-17), who reduces the function of the sixth *dihairesis* to the determination of the difference between the sophist and the philosopher.

⁵⁹⁴ Similarly Ambuel 2007: p. 61.

⁵⁹⁵ Cornford (2003: p. 178) makes a distinction between sophistry and Socratic *elenchus* and suggests that the sixth definition corresponds to the Socratic *elenchus*, but not to sophistry. He nevertheless admits having difficulties in understanding not only why the Socratic method should be considered within the other definitions of the sophist (p. 181), but also what the purpose of all of the six divisions “in the economy of the whole dialogue” could be (p. 184). We will address these issues in what follows.

⁵⁹⁶ Robinson 1980: p. 10. Cf. also Chappell 2011: p. 348.

a positive theory of moral, ethical and political principles. Socrates is a purifier of the soul, but “purification is a negative notion – the riddance of evil.”⁵⁹⁷ That said, Socrates can separate better from worse, but he cannot say what the best itself, i.e. the essence or “truth” (ἀλήθεια) of each thing, actually is. Socrates is neither able to define the *genos* of the sophist, nor to uncover the breeding ground of his different manifestations. Or, to put it differently, once the false opinions are removed, the correct ones do not come into being automatically, unless they are actively sought out and found by the purified soul. Socrates’ influence on his contemporaries and successors is, therefore, ambiguous and contradictory. On the one hand, we find the so called “Socratics” (Σωκρατικοί), who set out on the search of the good in the more or less Socratic tradition in order to fill the gap left by this lack of orientation. These include Plato, Xenophon, Antisthenes, Aeschines, Phaedo, Euclid of Megara and Aristippus, to name but a few.⁵⁹⁸ On the other hand, we find those people, who refused to acknowledge Socrates’ philosophical merits (here, one need only think of Callicles’ aggressivity towards Socrates⁵⁹⁹ or Hippias⁶⁰⁰ and Protagoras⁶⁰¹ criticisms of Socratic reasoning) and/or confused his philosophical practices in a call-and-response manner with the rhetoric of other sophists. In the latter respect, the prosecutors in the trial of Socrates come to mind. Taking these considerations into account, it comes as no surprise that the uncertainty about the question of whether the sixth definition corresponds to the figure of the sophist remains unresolved.

Even if the historical Socrates often adopted the role of a critical questioner, denying that he had any positive knowledge, it must however not be forgotten that Plato’s Socrates occupies an exceptional position. Among the earlier dialogues on the sophists, Plato’s *Gorgias*, in particular, deserves some further attention. Here, Socrates not only criticizes the opinions of his interlocutors Gorgias, Polos and Callicles, but he also puts forward various arguments in favour of his own vision of a good life and afterlife. In addition, there are many other dialogues, in which Socrates’ activity extends far beyond purely negative elenctic strategies. Several Platonic writings are worth mentioning here. For example, in Plato’s *Phaedo*, Socrates presents arguments in favour of the immortality of the soul; in the *Meno*, Socrates deliberates about the importance of recollection for the theory of knowledge; in the *Politeia*, one of the richest Platonic works, Socrates develops an account of the ideal political community, based on an

⁵⁹⁷ Cornford 2003: p. 178.

⁵⁹⁸ For more information about the most important manifestations of Socrates’ legacy, see for example Diogenes Laërtius II, 47; Taylor 1998: pp. 74-83; Döring 1998 (a): pp. 179–181.

⁵⁹⁹ See Plato’s *Gorgias*.

⁶⁰⁰ *Hippias Maior* 304a4-b6 and *Hippias Minor* 369b8-c8 and 370e5.

⁶⁰¹ *Protagoras* 350c6-351b2.

elaborated theory of justice; finally, in the *Phaedrus*, insights about rhetoric and erotic desires and pleasures are discussed at length. No less important is Plato's *Philebus*, where Socrates again plays a leading role, developing a complex theory of causes, genesis and the quality of different forms of pleasures. How should we then evaluate the problematic situation regarding the figure of Socrates? What can be said about the historic Socrates as opposed to Plato's Socrates? In his book on Socrates, Taylor comes to the following conclusion:

As far as Plato's portrayal of Socrates is concerned, there is no sharp line to be drawn between 'the historical Socrates' and 'the Platonic Socrates'. The Platonic Socrates is simply Plato's presentation of Socrates in his writings. [...] Some contemporary scholars, reviving the view maintained in the nineteenth century by Grote, suggest that there should be no greater expectation of consistency of doctrine or of the pursuit of common themes such as Sophocles. I believe, on the contrary, that Plato throughout portrays Socrates engaged as a philosopher in the search for truth and understanding, and that the individual works which make up that portrayal may therefore be expected to give a coherent picture of his philosophical activity. That is not, of course, to deny that Plato can represent Socrates as changing his mind, or to deny that his portrayal of Socrates changes to reflect shifts in his own philosophical standpoint [...]. All that I am maintaining is that Plato presents Socrates as seeking to work out a broadly coherent position, against the background of which changes and developments have to be seen and explained.⁶⁰²

Two points deserve further attention: the first concerns the impossibility of drawing a sharp line between "the historical Socrates" and "Plato's Socrates", while the second essentially concerns Plato's aims in presenting a consistent performance of Socratic thinking and living. As regards the first problem, I believe that the portrayal of Socrates in many aspects resembles Plato's general way of adopting historical figures for his own philosophical purposes. We have already seen in our analysis of the dialogues on the sophists that, from a philosophical point of view, merely reflecting on historical events would not allow Plato to write dialogues of profound meaning and value, which cause so many interpretative difficulties. Any reader of Plato's dialogues knows immediately that trying to understand Plato's emotional and argumentative depth is never an easy activity. Interpreting Plato's Socrates is therefore no less challenging than deciphering the portrayals of different sophists. As to the second problem, I believe that Plato's aim of delivering a coherent picture of the Socratic thinking plays a crucial role, not only regarding the whole *Corpus Platonicum*, but especially the *Sophist*. In contrast to the many manifestations of the sophists in the first five *dihaireseis*, the sixth definition is unitary, as it does not play with different manifestations of Socratic philosophy – Plato's

⁶⁰² Taylor 1998: pp. 39-40. Cf. also De Vogel 1955: pp. 26-35.

Socrates is certainly no less ποικιλός than the leading figures of the sophistic movement – but rather sticks to one particular form of Socratic thinking.⁶⁰³ One of the primary reasons for this is, as we will see in greater detail in the following sections, that even if Plato had portrayed Socrates in a different way, i.e. as a knowing philosopher, the knowledge which could be attributed to Socrates would not suffice for finding the *genos* of the sophist. Because what is needed here are deeper insights into Eleatic philosophy and its significant impact on the rise of the sophistic movement.⁶⁰⁴

3.3. Socrates' Ignorance Regarding the Problem of ψευδῇ λέγειν ἢ δοξάζειν

As we engage in a close reading of the beginning of the seventh definition of the sophist (231d-236d), which is interrupted, and thus enriched, by a long enquiry into Being and Nonbeing (236e-264b), we will see that the topics studied at the heart of the dialogue reflect an important literary strategy in the final steps of catching the “beast” (θήρ) called σοφιστής. Of decisive significance with regard to the present context, however, is that we attain a deeper understanding of why the transition from the sixth to the seventh definition is necessary, but by no means sufficient condition for progress towards knowledge.

After recapitulating the already identified epithets of the sophist at 231d3-e6, the Stranger alludes to the unfortunate situation concerning the figure of the sophist. The fact that the σοφιστής, who possesses different kinds of knowledge about different things, is labelled “with the name of *one* expertise” (μᾶς δὲ τέχνης ὀνόματι, 232a2)⁶⁰⁵ and appears with “*many* names instead of one” (πολλοῖς ὀνόμασιν ἀνθ’ ἑνός, 232a), is judged by the Stranger as “being unsound” (οὐκ ἔσθ’ ὑγιές, 232a3). The insistence on the dichotomy between one and many, on the one hand, and the problem of appearances, on the other, should remind us of the initial invitation to focus on the πρᾶγμα/ἔργον with λόγος rather than on the ὄνομα without λόγος. Of all possible failed definitions of the sophist, the Stranger chooses to come back to the fifth, where the activities of the ἀντιλογικός are defined. Why is this so? What is peculiar about the

⁶⁰³ An overview of the present state of research on the figure of Socrates is, for example, given by Döring 1998 (b): pp. 139-178.

⁶⁰⁴ See also Iber (2007: p. 233), who points out that the existing definitions of the sophist contradict each other and therefore have no general validity. Iber’s observation does not, however, speak against the Stranger’s definitions of the sophist, but rather against the sophists’ self-ascribed knowledge, on the basis of which the Stranger develops the existing characterizations.

⁶⁰⁵ The σοφιστική τέχνη is meant here.

account of the debater? In line with expectations, Theaetetus is invited to rethink the fifth *dihairesis* so as not to miss any place where the sophist might hide again. In contrast to the fifth definition, where the ἀντιλογικός is presented as a private debater regarding right and wrong and many other things, the whole range of his teaching subjects has not yet been addressed. In order to take this into account, the Stranger lists several areas of interest (divine things, visible objects, generation and being, issues concerning laws and private affairs, 232c1-d2), in which the ἀντιλογικοί are “terrific at debating” (ἀντειπεῖν δεινοί, 232c9), only to point out later that they are experts “in all and within each particular field” (περὶ πασῶν τε καὶ κατὰ μίαν ἐκάστην τέχνην, 232d5-6). We are reminded here of figures like Hippias, who was known for his polymathy,⁶⁰⁶ and, even more, of Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, who are called “all-wise” (πάσσοφοι) in *Euthydemus* 271c6,⁶⁰⁷ possessing all of the skills previously ascribed to the sophist (including the ability to teach virtue).⁶⁰⁸ Of course, Protagoras should not be excluded from this list, as he is the only person who is explicitly mentioned by Theaetetus in the context of the discussion about the art of disputation.⁶⁰⁹ Another competitor in the struggle for victory in the ἀντιλογικὴ τέχνη is Zeno, whose presence within the seventh definition of the sophist is also deemed appropriate.⁶¹⁰ One could go even so far as to count Plato’s Parmenides among the ἀντιλογικοί, because he applies the Zenonian form of argument to all conceivable things, as the second part of the *Parmenides* teaches us. The only sophist who seems not to fit perfectly into this account is Gorgias, whose expertise in debating is restricted to the practical application to justice.⁶¹¹ However, it might be legitimate to include Gorgias on the list of all-knowing debaters because of his ability “to speak against everyone and about everything” (πρὸς ἅπαντάς [...] καὶ περὶ παντὸς λέγειν, *Gorgias* 457a5-6).⁶¹² A minor, yet instructive difference between Hippias and the other six debaters – Euthydemus, Dionysodorus, Protagoras, Gorgias, Zeno and Parmenides – seems to be, however, that while

⁶⁰⁶ Cf. Xenophon’s *Memorabilia* IV.4.6. The enumeration of Hippias’ different skills are presented by Plato in *Hippias Minor* 368a8-e1 and *Hippias Major* 285b8-286c2.

⁶⁰⁷ Regarding the possibility of knowing everything, cf. the discussion between Socrates and Euthydemus in *Euthydemus* 293b-296d.

⁶⁰⁸ *Euthydemus* 271c-274d. Regarding all-round knowledge, cf. also *Dissoi Logoi* 8. <Περὶ τοῦ πάντα ἐπιστασθαι>, 1-13.

⁶⁰⁹ *Sophist* 232d9-10. Cf. also *Euthydemus* 286b8-c3. Concerning Protagoras’ knowledge in the field of the ἀντιλογικὴ τέχνη, see his writings Ἀντιλογίων α’β’ (DL III, 37 and IX, 55 (DK 80, B 5)) and Τέχνη ἐριστικῶν (Cic. *Brut.* 12, 46 (DK 80, B 6); DL IX, 55;).

⁶¹⁰ See our examination of Zeno’s role in the *Parmenides*. Note also that there is a small, but significant difference between Zeno and Plato’s Parmenides’ in their use of the ἀντιλογικὴ τέχνη: while the former restricts the application of this method to sensible things, the later extends it to the Forms themselves (135e2-3). Cf. also Cordero 1991: p. 113-115.

⁶¹¹ On this point, see our analysis of Plato’s *Gorgias* in the first part of the study.

⁶¹² In this sense, Gorgias’ Περὶ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος ἢ Περὶ φύσεως is a paradigmatic treatise of a talented debater.

the former prefers to compose general accepted speeches about a given subject rather than polemic pamphlets,⁶¹³ Plato portrays the latter mostly, though not exclusively, as debaters, who are either able to argue for or to refute any statement in any particular field of knowledge.⁶¹⁴ It is no coincidence, therefore, that the seventh definition of the sophist culminates in the figure of the ἀντιλογικός and in the ἀντιλογικὴ τέχνη, respectively, since the universally applicable form of argument represents the general validity needed for a definition.⁶¹⁵ Again, while the *formal ability to argue for and against a given assumption in private conversations* was highlighted in the fifth definition of the sophist, the Stranger insists on the *universal application of the ἀντιλογικὴ τέχνη* at the beginning of the seventh definition.

At the same time, this universal scope of the ἀντιλογικὴ τέχνη foreshadows the main challenge when dealing with the different sophists: the problem of ascribing omniscience to human beings (233a3).⁶¹⁶ Admitting that it is not possible for a human being to know everything, Theaetetus and the Stranger concentrate on the question of where the “astonishing power of the sophistic art” (τὸ τῆς σοφιστικῆς δυνάμεως θαῦμα, 233a8-9) lies. The relative seriousness of the sophists becomes clearer when the Stranger concludes that the only way in which one can assume omniscience is if “they [*scil.* the sophists] appear wise in all things to their pupils” (πάντα ἄρα σοφοὶ τοῖς μαθηταῖς φαίνονται, 233c6), “though they are not” (οὐκ ὄντες γε, 233c8). The problem of appearance, which was stressed throughout every stage of the division procedure, is now put in a broader context as it forms a dichotomy between “being” (εἶναι) and “seeming/appearing” (δοκεῖν/φαίνεσθαι). The significance of this dichotomy in terms of the epistemic dimension is that the sophist only possesses an “opinion-producing knowledge” (δοξαστικὴ ἐπιστήμη, 233c10), rather than “true knowledge” (ἀλήθεια, 233c11), as the Stranger explains to Theaetetus. In the first *dihairesis* of the sophist, the Stranger referred to the sophist’s “semblance of teaching” (δοξοπαιδευτική, 223b4), anticipating *the* (presumed) philosophical problem of semblances or appearances and thus, the ontological question of the notion of Nonbeing. In the same vein, we highlighted the fact that the notion of δοξοπαιδευτική was introduced by Plato on the basis of his earlier dialogues, where Socrates repeatedly exposes the sophists’ empty promises about the teachability of virtue. One of the most dissatisfying results with respect to Socrates’ method of enquiry was, however, that although he was able to

⁶¹³ See our analysis of the *Hippias Minor* and *Hippias Major*.

⁶¹⁴ Beside Hippias, the case of Protagoras is also instructive. Plato portrays the latter in the dialogue of the same name as a moral authority, writing speeches in an elegant rather than a polemical way. On this point, see once again the interpretation of Plato’s *Protagoras* in the first part of the study.

⁶¹⁵ Iber 2007: p. 233.

⁶¹⁶ Cf. also Ambuel 2007: p. 70: “The claim to know all things is like the claim to make all things [...]” The sophist’s ability to make all things will be discussed in what follows.

detect contradictions within the sophists' different accounts of knowledge again and again – a necessary and noble undertaking in itself – he failed to explain how these contradictions (or false opinions, for that matter) are even possible at all. This insight implies both a determination to avoid contradictions, and a reorientation of the investigation. We shall, therefore, observe the necessary introduction of a change in perspective more closely, by shedding new light on how the implications of this universal phenomenon of the ἀντιλογικός ought to be tackled, especially with regard to his δοξαστική ἐπιστήμη.

In order to further intensify the search for the sophist, the Stranger proposes to Theaetetus to focus on “a clearer example” (σαφέστερόν τι παράδειγμα, 233d3). This consists in choosing to examine the sophist as an “imitator of things that are” (μιμητής [...] τῶν ὄντων, 235a1-2), given the idea that no other kind is “more artful or charming” (τεχνικώτερον ἢ καὶ χαριέστερον, 234b1-2) than “imitation” (τὸ μιμητικόν, 234b2). Of special interest for introducing the persona of a μιμητής is the rational framework that has been omitted so far. The Stranger begins by describing the case of a sophist who denies having an understanding of “speaking” (λέγειν) and the “disputing” (ἀντιλέγειν, 233d9), and instead manages to “make and do all things by a single type of expertise” (ποιεῖν καὶ δρᾶν μιᾷ τέχνῃ συνάπαντα [...] πράγματα, 233d9-10). It is these notions of λέγειν, ἀντιλέγειν, ποιεῖν and δρᾶν of all things together with the idea that the sophist promises to teach his skills to others “cheaply and in a short time” (ὀλίγου καὶ ἐν ὀλίγῳ χρόνῳ, 234a9) that we shall emphasize, not least because they remind us of the discussion between Euthydemus, Dionysodorus, Cleinias, Ctesippus and Socrates in the *Euthydemus*. That said, recalling the context of the *Euthydemus* shall give us the possibility to answer the following questions: 1. Why does the Stranger describe the debater as someone who lacks understanding of λέγειν and ἀντιλέγειν, if these have so far been presented as his major activities? 2. Why and how do ποιεῖν and δρᾶν render the λέγειν and ἀντιλέγειν redundant? 3. What do debaters, such as Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, mean by the “quick teaching of all things” if the Stranger and Theaetetus deny the possibility of omniscience altogether? In answering these questions, we shall be able to understand why the Stranger decisively places the sophist within the branch of the ποιητικὴ τέχνη⁶¹⁷ and why Socrates's inability to successfully face the problem of falsehood leads him into the trap that was actually set for sophists like Euthydemus and Dionysodorus.

1. Why does the Stranger describe the debater as someone who lacks understanding of λέγειν and ἀντιλέγειν, if these have so far been presented as his major activities? As our analysis

⁶¹⁷ 265a4 ff.

of Plato's *Euthydemus* has shown, Euthydemus and Dionysodorus do not lack the ability to utter and to refute sentences. Quite to the contrary, their entire conversation with Socrates consist of nothing other than controversial speeches. But what they basically deny, is the possibility of "lying" (ψεύδεσθαι, 283e8) or "false speaking" (ψευδῇ λέγειν, 286c6). Paradoxically, then, the more Euthydemus and Dionysodorus refuse to believe that "refuting" (ἀντιλέγειν), "false opinion" (ψευδῆς δόξα, 286d4), "ignorance" (ἀμαθία, 286d6), or "ignorant men" (ἀμαθεῖς ἄνθρωποι, 286d6) are possible, the more difficult it becomes to evaluate their intellectual competences and the more impossible it becomes to determine the ontological status of true and false speeches. At this stage, therefore, we are left with the self-image of the debater, i.e. with his verbal skills to make and do all things, which we will discuss in the following.

2. *Why and how do ποιεῖν and δρᾶν/πράττειν render the λέγειν and ἀντιλέγειν redundant?* At 283e-286b, Euthydemus explains to Ctesippus why he is wrong in accusing Dionysodorus of telling lies. Assuming that words and/or language are something that is and not something that is not, and that a speaker cannot make out of things that are not (e.g. false statements) things that are (e.g. true statements), Euthydemus argues that whenever someone utters a (supposedly false) statement, he does not speak something that is not, but rather something that is. In other words, one who "speaks the things that are" (λέγει τὰ ὄντα), always "speaks the truth" (λέγει τὰληθῆ, 284a7). Consequently, "speaking is doing and making" (τὸ λέγειν [...] πράττειν τε καὶ ποιεῖν ἐστίν, 284c1-2), rather than a verbal engagement that triggers the process of ἀντιλέγειν. Contradicting each other is impossible, since one who speaks about things that are not, does not speak about them at all (286b5-6). He cannot, therefore, engage in controversial discussions.⁶¹⁸ That said, the explanations above make clear that λέγειν in the eyes of the debaters should not be seen as a purely verbal sparring match, which has ἀντιλέγειν as its counterpart, but rather as a form of "doing and making" (πράττειν τε καὶ ποιεῖν) of all things through speeches. Put more precisely, to speak is to do and make all things that are, i.e. to produce the truth about every aspect of the world. It is on this basis that the Stranger attributes the ποιητικὴ τέχνη to the sophist in the *Sophist*.

3. *What do debaters, such as Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, mean by the "quick teaching of all things" if the Stranger and Theaetetus deny the possibility of omniscience altogether?* This paradox is explained upon closer inspection by the fact that Euthydemus and Dionysodorus do not make any attempt to go into great detail about the extent to which they

⁶¹⁸ This conclusion was already laid out in the section on Plato's *Euthydemus*.

know all things and, associated therewith, how they can teach all things to others, but rather seek to mislead Socrates through a very specific form of reasoning. This consists in “demonstrating” (ἐπιδεικνύναι, 293b2) to Socrates that he already possesses the knowledge (of the good life) that he seeks. To return once again to the context of the conversation in the *Euthydemus*, Euthydemus explains to Socrates that he knows “everything” (πάντα), if he only knows “something” (τι). For, independently of whether Socrates admits that he has knowledge of all things or not – in the latter case, he would at least admit to having partial knowledge – he will necessarily be what he is in both cases, namely knowing. The difference between omniscience and partial knowledge thus becomes irrelevant, because of the idea that something that is, can never be something that is not. In other words, *knowledge of something* can never be reduced to *no knowledge at all*. The idea that this form of knowledge does not explain what constitutes a good life is evidenced by the fact that the initial raised question is completely undermined by Euthydemus’ line of argumentation. Instead, the sophistic pun is carried to extremes by Dionysodorus. In answer to Socrates’ question about how many teeth Euthydemus has, Dionysodorus replies simply: “Is it not sufficient for you to hear that we know everything?” (οὐκ ἔξαρκεῖ σοι, [...], ἀκοῦσαι ὅτι πάντα ἐπιστάμεθα; *Euthydemus* 294c6). All in all, the “quick teaching of all things” does not culminate in a complex theory of everything and a detailed program of education, but rather in a *quick epideixeis* of the irritating effects of sophistic games. The downside of this situation, however, is not so much *that* Socrates’ further attempts to engage his interlocutors in a serious conversation fail again and again – Euthydemus and Dionysodorus continually use verbal distractions and grammatical ambiguities to avoid being driven into a corner by Socrates’ objections (294c-303a) –⁶¹⁹ but rather *why* they fail. In order to answer this question, we may now return to our interpretation of the *Sophist*.

In calling the hunted sophist an “imitator of things that are” (μιμητῆς [...] τῶν ὄντων, 235a1-2), the Stranger makes a reference to the sophist’s ability to “produce imitations and homonyms of the things that are” (μιμήματα καὶ ὁμώνυμα τῶν ὄντων ἀπεργαζόμενος, 234b6-7).⁶²⁰ The term ἀπεργαζόμενος⁶²¹ stands here for the accomplishment of the previously

⁶¹⁹ On the debater’s ability to deploy arguments based on the similarity of words, see *Theaetetus* 164c8-9.

⁶²⁰ Cf. also Notomi 1999: p. 126, who, interestingly enough, observes “that to define the sophist’s art as imitative is original in this dialogue. The imitative artist usually means an actor or a poet, and later includes painters and sculptors, but no other dialogue nor any other writer’s work describes the sophist as an imitative artist before the *Sophist*.” The sole example, where the sophist’s ability to produce images seems to be evoked before the *Sophist*, is Plato’s *Gorgias*, where Socrates’ characterization of rhetoric and sophistry as an image of politics (*Gorgias* 463d2) is made subject of discussion. Notomi (1999: p. 126, note 5) explicitly points out to this exception.

⁶²¹ Regarding the process of painting, the Stranger uses the verb ἐναπεργάζεσθαι (236a6).

introduced activity of πράττειν τε καὶ ποιεῖν and reflects the dialogue's emphasis on the "thing" (ἔργον) called sophist. Hence the necessity of placing the sophist within the branch of the ποιητικὴ τέχνη. As to the precise nature of this productivity, the Stranger further explains that the sophist is able to "bewitch with words" (τοῖς λόγοις γοητεύειν, 234c5) by producing "spoken images of all things" (εἰδωλα λεγόμενα περὶ πάντων, 234c5-6). This expertise is compared with the "painter's art" (γραφικὴ τέχνη, 234b7), by means of which the "artists" (οἱ δημιουργοί, 236a4-5) display the verisimilitude of their artistic products. The function of this comparison is to recognize that both experts produce "images" (εἰδωλα). While the artists produce "likenesses" (εἰκόνες) which imitate reality (or the true and the beautiful, for that matter)⁶²² as closely as possible and therefore look like the "actual proportions" (τὰς οὐσας συμμετρίας, 236a5)⁶²³ of the corresponding objects of reference, the sophists imitate reality by means of words. That said, each expert has a different relationship to the true and the beautiful: one produces an image that is "like" (εἰκός, 236a8) the beautiful, the other makes a spoken image that "appears to look like the beautiful" (φαινόμενον [...] εἰκέναι τῷ καλῷ, 236b4-5). In their individual realms, then, both experts can claim to possess the "art of image-making" (εἰδωλοποιικὴ τέχνη), which the Stranger further divides into the "art of likeness-making" (εἰκαστικὴ τέχνη, 235d6) and the "art of appearance-making" (φανταστικὴ τέχνη, 236c4).⁶²⁴ This procedure of division comes to an abrupt end when the question of the sophist's corresponding τέχνη arises.

How then does the Stranger justify his renewed uncertainty concerning the sophist's expertise? As our discussion of the *Euthydemus* has shown, the sophist displays a cunning conception of the usefulness of language, one that completely undermines Socrates' endeavor to detect contradictions and purify from false opinions. The Stranger refers to this unfavorable situation by emphasizing that "appearing" (τὸ φαίνεσθαι, 236e1), "seeming but not being" (τὸ δοκεῖν, εἶναι δὲ μή, 236e1) and "saying things, but not true things" (τὸ λέγειν μὲν ἄττα, ἀληθῆ δὲ μή, 236e2) has always caused many confusions. As the Stranger goes on to explain, the stakes are high, because of the difficulty of supposing "false speaking and believing" (ψευδῆ λέγειν ἢ δοξάζειν, 236e4) without entangling ourselves in the greatest "contradictions"

⁶²² In this context, the "true" (τὸ ἀληθές, 236a4) and the "beautiful" (τὸ καλός, 235e6-7, 236b5) are mentioned repeatedly.

⁶²³ Cf. also 235e6-7: τὴν τῶν καλῶν ἀληθινὴν συμμετρίαν.

⁶²⁴ Following Schiller (1905: p. 105), Iber (2007: p. 239) distinguishes between "aesthetic appearance" (*ästhetischer Schein*) and "logical appearance" (*logischer Schein*): in contrast to the second kind of appearance, the first kind does not represent real deception, because we indeed know that the artist is playfully revealing his imitation of nature for the sake of the joy of the observer. See also Heidegger 1992: pp. 398-404. Compare also Cornford 2003: pp. 195-199, where he describes the relationship between the imagery of this passage and the allegory of the cave in the *Republic*.

(ἐναντιολογίαι, 236e5). In the Stranger's opinion, it seems that the verbal utterances of falsity and Nonbeing highlight the problematic relationship between language and the world. Seligman sums up the key question as follows: "how can we speak meaningfully when we say what is not true = what is false = what is-not?"⁶²⁵ An explanation of the strict and precise sense of the contradictions that emerge when dealing with the problem of false speaking and Nonbeing is given by the Stranger at 238d ff. We will go more deeply into this point in the following section. Here, we only emphasize that this difficulty is, in many respects, rooted in Socrates' sophistry (of noble lineage). As already discussed above, Socrates applies his elenctic method as a purification from false opinions, but his assumption that ψευδῆ λέγειν ἢ δοξάζειν is possible without any further ado, is precisely what dooms his project.

Of paramount importance for understanding and overcoming Socrates' intellectual limitations, as sketched out in the sixth definition of the sophist, is the observation that the Stranger (and before him Socrates)⁶²⁶ differentiates between imitations/images and things that are, although the sophist denies any such distinction (239c9-d6).⁶²⁷ For, the meaning of the word "imitation" (μίμημα), understood as something that *is not* the imitated object itself and thus *different from* it (240a-b),⁶²⁸ would fail to make sense⁶²⁹ in the eyes of the sophist, who refuses to believe that we can speak about things that are not.⁶³⁰ A prime example of this fallacy is the so-called *secundum quid*, which is, for example, discussed at *Euthydemus* 283c3-e6, and which arises when one shifts the meaning of "not being in a particular sense" to "not being absolutely". Applied to our example this would mean that the terms μιμήματα (and εἰδωλα, for that matter) are impossible to introduce into our speeches, because of the sophist is able to shift the meaning of μίμημα from "something that *is not* the imitated object itself" into "something that *does not exist at all*".⁶³¹ Seen from this perspective, speaking about imitations and/or images represents an impossible undertaking. In the same vein, Socrates' distinction between

⁶²⁵ Seligman 1974: p. 13.

⁶²⁶ On this point, see e.g. *Gorgias* 463d2, where Socrates calls rhetoric "an *image* of a branch of politics" (πολιτικῆς μορίου εἰδωλον). The same is true for sophistry, which together with rhetoric belongs to the fake arts.

⁶²⁷ Robinson 2001: p. 437.

⁶²⁸ Cf. also Robinson 1980: pp. 219-220. See also Notomi (1999: p. 142), who rightly points out that the distinction between imitations or appearances and reality forms the basis for Plato's so-called Plato's two-world theory. On the implications of the distinction between original and image for the theory of participation, see Ambuel 2007: pp. 75-81.

⁶²⁹ Cf. also Xenakis 1959: p. 38.

⁶³⁰ Similarly Rosen 1983: p. 137: "[...] the sophist denies the distinction between original and image. He therefore denies the existence of falsehood." See also Rosen 1983: p. 147: "What the Stranger calls an "inaccurate" image is from the sophist's standpoint an original." Cf. also Palmer 1999: p. 135.

⁶³¹ The analysis of "what is not at all" (τὸ μηδαμῶς ὄν) is carried out at 237b7 ff.

true statements and false statements,⁶³² as a preliminary step towards purification from false beliefs, turns out to be useless as long as the notions of “falsehood” (ψεῦδος, 237a4) and “Nonbeing” (τὸ μὴ ὄν, 237a3) are not dealt with.⁶³³ This dizzying change of perspective becomes much clearer when the Stranger turns his attention to Parmenides and his prohibition of speaking about the Nonbeing. In the next chapter, we shall, therefore, explore in more detail how the notions of appearing and seeming are associated with those of Being and Nonbeing and why a dialectical path towards solving the problem of falsehood is, at the same time, the prerequisite for finding the *genos* of the sophist.

3.4. Parmenides and the Problem of τὸ μὴ ὄν

Acknowledging the ongoing difficulties with the enquiry into the nature of the sophist (236d9-10), the Stranger suggests confronting the key challenge in order to effectively address the question of the enigmatic expertise of the sophist. This does not require us to concentrate on a further manifestation of the sophist (as was the case in the previous six *dihaireses*), but rather to determine the *condition of possibility* of “appearing”, “seeming but not being” and “saying things, but not true things”, i.e. “Nonbeing” (τὸ μὴ ὄν, 237a3). Precisely this *dizzying change of perspective* results from the Stranger’s ability to question the sophist’s method of reasoning in a more fundamental way than does Socrates’ use of the *elenchus*.

In the following two sections, I shall first present some difficulties arising from the transformation of Nonbeing into an object of thinking and speaking in order to defend the view that Socrates’ limited knowledge of the close connection between the sophist’s talent and ability to manifest itself in different ways and Parmenides’ verdict that Nonbeing is impossible represents the starting point for deepening our understanding of the notions of Being, Nonbeing and contradiction (ch. 3.4.1.). I shall then discuss the position of the refuters of Nonbeing and highlight the dialectical tension arising from the affirmation of Nonbeing in the context of the doctrine of the *megista gene* (ch. 3.4.2.).

⁶³² Regarding the notions of truth and falsity or true and false statements, see, for example, Seligman 1974: p. 13, note 4.

⁶³³ See also Rosen 1983: p. 140: “The crucial point is that, up until the present conversation, no philosopher, including Socrates, has successfully explained the nature of false statement.”

3.4.1. The Difficulties Involved in Making Nonbeing an Object of Thinking and Speaking

The overriding question in the following exchange between the Stranger and Theaetetus concerns the deeper meaning of the previously mentioned expressions “appearing”, “seeming but not being” and “saying things, but not true things”, as they all seem to presuppose that “Nonbeing is” (τὸ μὴ ὄν εἶναι, 237a3-4). In order to explain this connection in more detail, the Stranger takes up the problem of Nonbeing, by citing two lines from Parmenides’ poem:

Never shall this be proved – that “things that are not are” [εἶναι μὴ ὄντα];
but do thou, in thy inquiry, hold back thy thought from this way.⁶³⁴

If we now compare the two references to Nonbeing, we see that the Stranger introduces – almost unnoticed – a distinction between the singular term μὴ ὄν and the plural μὴ ὄντα. I say “almost unnoticed”, because if we are paying attention neither to this distinction nor to the context of the quotation from Parmenides, which the Stranger cites twice (237a8-9, 258d2-3), we might come to the erroneous conclusion that the overarching aim is to criticize Parmenides’ notion of Nonbeing, which is understood as the opposite of Being and corresponds with the second path of inquiry (DK 28 B 2). But the two lines cited above belong to another part of the poem, namely fragment 7, in which Parmenides refers to the erroneous path of inquiry of mortals, resulting in the expression: “Nonbeings are” (εἶναι μὴ ὄντα).⁶³⁵ As O’Brien rightly observes, rather than rejecting Parmenides’ second path of inquiry, Plato wishes to subject the opinions of mortals to rigorous examination. For these opinions concern visible objects that sometimes are and sometimes are not.⁶³⁶ That said, the Stranger will have to show how the notion of Nonbeing (and Being, for that matter) must be approached if the mortals’ opinions are not to be left unquestioned, in other words, if the sophist’s “appearing”, “seeming but not

⁶³⁴ Translation Cornford 2003: p. 200. *Sophist* 237a8-9: Οὐ γὰρ μή ποτε τοῦτο δαμῆ, φησὶν, εἶναι μὴ ὄντα· ἀλλὰ σὺ τῆσδ’ ἅφ’ ὁδοῦ διζήμενος εἶργε νόημα (DK 28 B 7, 1). This expression appears once more at 258d2-3, albeit with the difference that διζήμενος is replaced by διζήσιος. For the sake of completeness, it should be noted that, in the *Sophist*, Plato cites Parmenides three times. In addition to the already mentioned references, there is also a citation of Parmenides’ poem at 244e3-5: πάντοθεν εὐκύκλου σφαίρης ἐναλίγκιον ὄγκῳ, μεσσόθεν ἰσοπαλὲς πάντῃ· τὸ γὰρ οὔτε τι μείζον οὔτε τι βαιότερον πελέναι χρεῶν [χρεόν: cod. BT and D] ἐστὶ τῇ ἢ τῇ (DK 28 B 8, 42-44).

⁶³⁵ The interpretation of passages 237a-239c rest upon O’Brien 1995: pp. 10-13. My method of contextualizing Plato’s *Sophist* more broadly leads, however, to another overall evaluation of Plato’s philosophical *modus operandi*.

⁶³⁶ O’Brien 1995: pp. 12-13.

being” and “saying things, but not true things” should not escape our scrutiny once again.⁶³⁷ Yet, the complexity of the problem of communication between Being and Nonbeing will soon make clear why the Stranger needs to constantly take into account Parmenides’ poem in its entirety.

The first task is to examine whether τὸ μὴ ὄν can be made into an object of speaking (237b7-e6). As a starting point, the Stranger assumes that we allow ourselves to express, in some sense, “absolute Nonbeing” (τὸ μηδαμῶς ὄν, 237b7-8). The identification of τὸ μὴ ἔόν with τὸ μηδαμῶς ὄν seems surprising at first. As will soon transpire, the Stranger is, however, right to make this move, because he is basing his argument on Parmenides’ doctrines of absolute Being – which has as its opposite absolute Nonbeing (i.e. the second path of inquiry) – and the opinions of mortals (called the “third” path in O’Brien’s account).⁶³⁸ Moreover, the examination of Nonbeing will not be presented as a “quarrel” (ἔριδος) or a “joke” (παιδιᾶς, 237b10), but rather as a serious reflection (σπουδῇ [...] συννοήσαντα, 237c1). Apparently alluding to *Euthydemus* 283c3-e6, Plato is suggesting, through the Stranger, that the following inquiry shall by no means be regarded as similar to Dionysodorus’ eristic games constructed around the notion of Nonbeing.⁶³⁹ Does the Stranger manage to make Nonbeing into an object of speech? The answer is no – or rather, not yet – because in the opposite case, “Nonbeing” (μὴ ὄν) would have to be brought together with “Being” (ὄν). To be more precise, Nonbeing cannot be uttered not only because it is completely separate from Being (237d2-4) and therefore cannot enter the realm of language, but also because it cannot be conceived as a “something” (τι, 237c10). For in the latter case, someone who says “something” would have to say “one thing” (ἓν, 237d7) and this would again make Nonbeing a part of Being. In addition, the Stranger explains that just as “something” (τι) is a “sign” (σημεῖον, 237d9)⁶⁴⁰ of “one being” (ἑνός, 237d9), “some/both” (τινέ) is a sign of “dual” (δυοῖν) beings and “many” (τινέες) of “multiple” (πολλῶν, 237d10) beings. Against this background, the Stranger concludes that a person who does not say *something*, must “say absolutely nothing” (παντάπασι μηδὲν λέγειν, 237e2). This conclusion aggravates the situation, because it entails that we shall not accept that a person *speaks*, when they *say nothing*. We must rather deny the possibility of speaking altogether if they try to utter Nonbeing (237e4-6). In short, what the Stranger is showing here

⁶³⁷ The identification of the opinions of mortals with those of the sophists was already highlighted in the first part of our study. On this point, see, for example, my interpretation of Plato’s *Protagoras* and the chapter “1.6.3 Following the Traces of Origin of Hippias’ Moral Reasoning”.

⁶³⁸ See the first part of O’Brien’s study, and especially 1995: p. 12.

⁶³⁹ On this point, see chapter “1.4.3.3. The Ambiguity of the Term ‘Becoming’”.

⁶⁴⁰ See also Parmenides, who writes about “signs” (σήματα, DK 28 B 8, 2) of Being.

is that Nonbeing cannot be made into an object of speech, because Nonbeing, as conceived by Parmenides in fragment 2, stands in absolute opposition to Being.

The second task is to consider whether τὸ μὴ ὄν can be made into an object of thought (238a1-239a12). Acknowledging, first, that it is possible to add to a thing that is another thing that is, the Stranger asks Theaetetus whether it is also possible to add *something that is to that which is not* (238a5-9). Theaetetus refuses to believe that this is possible and the Stranger goes on to explain that since “all number” (ἀριθμὸν [...] τὸν σύμπαντα, 238a11) belongs to things that are, those things that are not correspondingly lack “plurality of number” (ἀριθμοῦ [...] πληθος, 238b2) as well as “unity” (ἕν, 238b3): hence, the necessity of denying the idea that a person “could utter” (ἂν [...] φθέγγατο, 238b6) things that are not or Nonbeing in general, let alone that he “could grasp them at all in thought” (ἂν καὶ τῇ διανοίᾳ τὸ παράπαν λάβοι, 238b6-7), “apart from number” (χωρὶς ἀριθμοῦ, 238b8). As long as the reference to numbers is missing, “it is impossible to rightly utter or to say or to think Nonbeing all by itself” (οὔτε φθέγγασθαι δυνατόν ὁρθῶς οὔτ’ εἰπεῖν οὔτε διανοηθῆναι τὸ μὴ ὄν αὐτὸ καθ’ αὐτό, 238c8-9). The Stranger emphasizes this idea again, describing Nonbeing as “unthinkable and unspeakable and unutterable and irrational” (ἀδιανόητόν τε καὶ ἄρρητον καὶ ἄφθεγκτον καὶ ἄλογον, 238c10-11). Expressed succinctly, in cases where τὸ μὴ ὄν stands in no relation to any plurality or unity of number, hunting it degenerates into a wild goose chase. Against this background, it slowly becomes clear that the Stranger is showing the lines along which he will develop his ideas about Being and Nonbeing: the possibility of thinking and uttering Nonbeing presupposes not only a doctrine of communication between Nonbeing and Being, but also a theory about the constituent elements of Being itself. Before we delve more deeply into these issues, let us first concentrate on the intermediate stages.

3.4.2. The Refuters of Nonbeing

The greatest alleged difficulty, i.e. the problem of thinking and uttering Nonbeing, also appears urgent in relation to the dilemma of the rejection of Nonbeing. The Stranger explains that the crucial issue is not how to affirm Nonbeing, because we allow ourselves to utter Nonbeing in our speech, without recognizing any error in reasoning or speaking. Only when we explicitly devote ourselves to the question of the essential preconditions for rational thought and speech about Nonbeing – as was the case for the discussion between the Stranger and Theaetetus at

237b-238c – do we become aware of the problems involved. The most important and greatest *aporia* for the present discussion is that of valuing the explicit rejection of Nonbeing (238d). As the Stranger forcefully emphasizes, the opponent of Nonbeing, i.e. the so-called “refuter” (ἐλέγχων), who sets himself the task of “refuting” (ἐλέγχειν, 238d7) Nonbeing, “is compelled to contradict himself about it” (ἐναντία αὐτὸν αὐτῷ περὶ ἐκεῖνο ἀναγκάζεσθαι λέγειν, 238d7-8). This emphasis on the danger of producing contradiction leaves Theaetetus perplexed and he urges the Stranger to clarify his position. The latter then explains that it is problematic to deny any participation (μετέχειν) of Nonbeing in unity and plurality, on the one hand, and to still “speak of it as *one*” (οὕτως ἐν αὐτὸ εἶρηκα, 238e2), on the other. The same problem arises if one calls Nonbeing “unutterable” (ἄφθεγκτον, 238e5), “unspeakable and “irrational” (ἄρρητον καὶ ἄλογον, 238e6), as was done above, because here again, we are treating it as if it were a *one* (238e5-239a6).

In a sense, the Stranger is echoing here Parmenides’ warnings in his poem. There, Parmenides urges the reader to refrain, in thought, from going down the road of Nonbeing, because “it is a path that cannot be inquired into at all”⁶⁴¹ (τὴν δὴ [...] παναπευθεῖα ἔμμεν ἀταρπὸν, DK 28 B 2, 6). Furthermore, Parmenides negates the possibility of thinking and speaking rationally about Nonbeing, addressing his reader as follows: “For you could not know that which is not (for this is impracticable), nor could you show it”⁶⁴² (οὔτε γὰρ ἂν γνοίης τό γε μὴ ἔδν (οὐ γὰρ ἀνυστόν) οὔτε φράσαις, DK 28 B 2, 7-8). Parmenides’ firm conviction is that no other thing can stand beside Being,⁶⁴³ let alone Nonbeing, because there only is *One Being* (DK 28 B 8, 6).

At this stage, one might be tempted to assume that Plato is, through the Stranger, criticizing Parmenides’ notion of Nonbeing, because of the striking parallels regarding the problem involved in making Nonbeing an object of speaking and thinking. Nonetheless, bearing in mind that the Stranger subsequently presents a more elaborate account of Nonbeing, distinguishing between Nonbeing, as the opposite of Being, and Nonbeing, as something other than Being (257b-258e) and that he had previously asked Theaetetus not to accuse him of parricide (πατραλοίας, 241d3), we should rather look for an alternative interpretation. Our previous observations and reflections permit us to draw the following conclusion: the Stranger does not want to appear to be a critic of his spiritual father Parmenides, because he agrees with

⁶⁴¹ Translation Laks & Most 2016: p. 39.

⁶⁴² Translation Laks & Most 2016: p. 39.

⁶⁴³ This stands in contradiction with the Stranger’s claim that it is possible to add to a thing that is another thing that is (238a5-6).

Parmenides that Nonbeing, understood as the “opposite of Being” (τὸναντίον τοῦ ὄντος, 258e6), is unthinkable and unutterable.⁶⁴⁴ Rather, the Stranger aims at putting to the test the sophists’ manner of thinking about Being and Nonbeing and, more specifically, the refutation of Nonbeing (and false speaking, for that matter).⁶⁴⁵ This suggestion is supported by the fact that the discussion about the rejection of Nonbeing is followed by a discussion of the modes of Being of an image (εἶδωλον), an image-maker (εἰδωλοποιός) and the sophist’s “art of appearance-making” (φανταστική τέχνη) (239b-241b). The beginning of the seventh definition of the sophist, according to which the sophist appears as a deceitful manufacturer of imitations of Being, inevitably leads to the question of how imitations (or images) can exist at all, if they do not participate in “truth” (ἀληθινόν), i.e. in “what really is” (ὄντως ὄν, 240b3). The Stranger feels, therefore, a need to respect the conclusion of Parmenides’ arguments, rejecting the sophistic appropriation of Parmenides’ thinking, which culminates in the negation of Nonbeing and false speaking: when Parmenides talks about the “much-disputed refutation” (πολύδηριν ἔλεγχον, DK 28 B 7, 5), he does not have in mind the refutation of Nonbeing, but rather the ἔλεγχος of the *mortals’ erroneous conclusions* that a) “*things that are not are*” (εἶναι μὴ ἔόντα, (DK 28 B 7, 1) and b) *Being and Nonbeing are the same and not the same* (DK 28, B 6, 8-9).⁶⁴⁶ That said, the Stranger develops his own account of ὄν and μὴ ὄν on the basis of Parmenides’ condemnation of the opinions of the mortals, who combine Being with Nonbeing (understood as the opposite of Being) and/or treat both terms as being the same and not the same.⁶⁴⁷

Before we go into detail regarding the Stranger’s doctrine of Nonbeing, let us conclude this section by making a few remarks about Socrates’ traditional role as a refuter. The sixth definition of the sophist, which we have introduced as representing Socrates’ elenctic method,

⁶⁴⁴ 258e6-259a1. In this respect, I concur with O’Brien 1995: p. 11. See also *Parmenides* 163b7-164b4, where the sixth hypothesis is discussed, with Parmenides concluding that *the one that is not* lacks all properties, including the possibility of thinking and speaking the subject itself, if it does not partake of Being. In this context, where *the one that is not* is considered exclusively on its own, the negative predicate “is not” is taken to mean “absence of Being” (οὐσίας ἀπουσία, 163c3). The situation is, however, slightly different in the fifth, seventh and eighth hypothesis because there, *the one that is not* is examined in relation to other subjects or, conversely, other subjects are reflected upon in relation to *the one that is not*. The connection between the discussion about Nonbeing in *Sophist* 238c10 and the examination of Nonbeing in the sixth hypothesis of Plato’s *Parmenides* is also observed by Kahn 2015: p. 33.

⁶⁴⁵ However, it should be noted that Plato’s criticism of Parmenides is more evident regarding Parmenides’ doctrine of Being. As the Stranger explains himself, the argumentative strategy consists in shifting “back and forth” (ἄνω καὶ κάτω, 242a11-b1): instead of continuing to examine the notion of Nonbeing (misleadingly used by the sophists), the Stranger proceeds to examine various doctrines of Being, including that of Parmenides, before drawing final conclusions regarding an enhanced doctrine of Nonbeing.

⁶⁴⁶ To a certain extent, Parmenides’ account of the opinions of mortals is echoed in Plato’s *Euthydemus*: the sophists’ ability to refute any statement (including those regarding Being and Nonbeing), no matter whether true or false, represents the *practical application of the idea that things are the same and not the same*.

⁶⁴⁷ Cf. also Palmer 1999: pp. 145-147.

stands on its own as it does not belong either to the acquisitive or the productive art, but rather forms a branch of its own, i.e. the “art of separating” (διακριτική τέχνη). The latter is concerned with the “separation of worse from better” (χειρόν ἀπὸ βελτίονος ἀποχωρίζειν), using the procedure of division called “refutation” (ἐλεγχος). Taken on its own, the Socratic elenctic method is not a value-neutral enterprise, since it seeks to ascertain whether a given statement is affirmed correctly or not and, if not, it follows that it must be excluded in whole or in part from the belief system of the person who voiced it. If we now compare the conversations between Socrates and the sophists, as they are presented by Plato in his earlier dialogues, with those between Socrates and Plato’s Parmenides in the *Parmenides*, we cannot help but notice that the superiority of Socrates is only ensured vis-à-vis the different figures of the sophists, but not vis-à-vis Plato’s Parmenides. Why is this? Given the arguments about the refuters of Nonbeing made above, we are now in a better position to suggest a plausible explanation for the sense of inferiority that Socrates feels with respect to the Platonic Parmenides (as well as to the Stranger from the *Sophist*). One might, for example, reproach Socrates for naively engaging in discussions with the sophists, allowing them to think and speak about Being and Nonbeing – in the way that they want to – without ever critically reflecting upon the preconditions for rational thought and speech about these issues. If he had done so, he would not only have been in a position to radically question and define the sophist’s art of argumentation, but also to defend his theory of Forms (which would include Being and Nonbeing) against Parmenides’ attacks in the *Parmenides* (yes, he may have even been able to develop the dialectical exercise about the one and the many instead of Plato’s Parmenides). In short, Socrates would be best prepared *to refute the refuters* (of Nonbeing and false speaking) and to perfectly fulfill his traditional role as a refuter. Precisely because he lacks basic knowledge about Being and Nonbeing and their mutual interdependence, however, he not only fails to meet the expectations of the Platonic Parmenides, but he also refrains from taking a leading role in the *Sophist*. In any case, it is telling that, at the beginning of the *Sophist* (217c1-7), Socrates himself alludes to his own inferiority with respect to Parmenides and the Stranger from Elea. In the following sections, we shall therefore devote our attention to the latter, and see which of the two is *the real refuter* of the refuters of Nonbeing.

3.5. A Sketch of the Dialectic of Nonbeing

The problematic situation regarding the deniers of Nonbeing, whom we previously identified with the sophists, leads the Stranger to finally make a decisive step in that regard. By casting the sophist “into the darkness of Nonbeing” (εἰς τὴν τοῦ μὴ ὄντος σκοτεινότητα, 254a4-5), the Stranger develops a dialectical theory of Forms in order to show how Forms combine with and separate from one another.⁶⁴⁸ On this basis, the Stranger will be able to make Nonbeing into an object of thought and speech – defining it as one of the most important kinds – refute the sophist’s erroneous ideas about Nonbeing and false speaking (3.5.1. and 3.5.2.) and address the problem of the *genos* of the sophist (3.6.).

3.5.1. Nonbeing as Difference

With regard to the theory of the so-called “most important kinds” (μέγιστα γένη), such as “Being” (ὄν), “Rest” (στάσις), “Motion” (κίνησις), “Sameness” (ταυτόν) and “Difference” (θάτερον) – the Stranger explains that the “science of dialectic” (διαλεκτική ἐπιστήμη, 253d2-3), understood as the “science that belongs to free men” (τὴν τῶν ἐλευθέρων [...] ἐπιστήμην, 253c7-8), deals with the division and combination of Forms or kinds.⁶⁴⁹ That said, a dialectician must be able both to distinguish between different types of Forms and to discern to what extent these Forms combine with each other or not, i.e. how one Form partakes of

⁶⁴⁸ In that sense, it can be rightly said that Plato’s doctrine of the μέγιστα γένη is in great part motivated and substantiated not only through the reconstruction of Parmenides’ ideas, but also through direct engagement with different sophistic positions.

⁶⁴⁹ As several scholars have observed (see, for example, Cornford 2003: p. 261, note 1; Brown 2010: p. 155-156; Bluck 1975: p. 133; Moravcsik 1973: pp. 158-180 and Cohen 1973: pp. 181-191), in the *Sophist*, Plato makes no distinction between the terms “Form” (εἶδος) and “kind” (γένος). Dividing “according to Forms” (κατ’ εἶδη) is identical with dividing “according to kinds” (κατὰ γένη). Sometimes, Plato even divides the different branches of a dihairesis “according to parts” (κατὰ [...] μέρη, 220b9-10). On the difference between Forms and kinds, on the one hand, and parts, on the other, see again Brown 2010: p. 156. A different perspective on the question of the status of Forms and kinds is proposed by De Rijk 1986: p. 144.

another Form and vice-versa.⁶⁵⁰ Only then will he be able to “give an account” (λόγον διδόναι)⁶⁵¹ of the issue at hand.

In order to determine as clearly as possible the “nature” (φύσις or οὐσία)⁶⁵² of the kinds relevant to our purpose – we will refrain here from considering Motion and Rest in more detail and will instead focus on Being and Nonbeing – the Stranger first points to the major difficulty encountered in the discussion of the greatest kinds: if we are to avoid calling *one* thing (i.e. Being, Nonbeing or any other Form or sensible thing)⁶⁵³ by *many* names and thus, making a sport out of saying things, but not meaningful things (251b6-c6) – as is the case with the sophists, who in this context are called “youngsters and old men who have come to learn late in their life” (τοῖς τε νέοις καὶ τῶν γερόντων τοῖς ὀψιμαθέσι, 251b6-7)⁶⁵⁴ – one must reflect upon whether and how kinds combine with each other. Rejecting the possibility that 1) nothing combines with anything else⁶⁵⁵ and that 2) everything combines with everything else,⁶⁵⁶ the Stranger proposes to consider as a third option, that 3) some but not all kinds “are capable of combining with one other” (δυνατὰ ἐπικοινωνεῖν ἀλλήλοις, 251d9). As the further discussion between Theaetetus and the Stranger will soon show, the third option is considered appropriate

⁶⁵⁰ The idea of participation (μέθεξις) is notoriously difficult to apprehend. A detailed analysis of μέθεξις in Plato is given by Fronterotta 2001 and Mouroutsou 2010. Cf. also Frede 1967: p. 38. One of the most difficult problems related to this term is that Plato does not give an explicit definition of what these “most important kinds” are. For example, are they principles of reality, Forms of thinking, or structures of language or all of these at the same time? Cornford 2003: p. 265 proposes the following solution: “The science of Dialectic does not study formal symbolic patterns to which our statements conform, nor yet these statements themselves. Nor does it study our thoughts or ways of reasoning, apart from the object we think about. It is not ‘Logic’, if Logic means the science either of *logoi* or of *logismoi*. What it does study is the structure of the real world of Forms.”

⁶⁵¹ See 246c7, where the Stranger demands an “account of Being” (λόγον ὑπὲρ [...] τῆς οὐσίας) of those who posit certain things as existing.

⁶⁵² Here, Plato uses the term “nature” as indicating what each kind is according to itself, i.e. independently of the nature of other kinds. Cf. also 255e3-6.

⁶⁵³ Regarding the example of sensible things, the Stranger mentions the case of a human being, who is labelled with various names, according to the colour, shape, size, vices and virtues that are attributed to him (251a8-b4).

⁶⁵⁴ By “youngsters” is meant all those people who surround and/or imitate sophists, such as Hippias, Protagoras, Gorgias, Euthydemus and Dionysodorus. The allusion to “the old men, who have come to learn late in their life” is meant as a reference to *Euthydemus* 272b7-c1. Here, Socrates explicitly says that Euthydemus and Dionysodorus learned the art of disputation only in old age. Regarding the late-learners’ use of the expression “...is...”, see Frede 1967: pp. 61-67. Frede rightly draws attention to the fact that Plato not only criticises the sophists’ use of the expression “...is...”, but also that of the Presocratics, whose theories of Being are discussed at 242c4-243c9. However, it should be clear from the previous arguments that Plato’s primary object is to counter the sophists’ misuse of language. See also Kahn 2015: p. 109, who assumes that the late-learners are reminiscent of Antisthenes and his followers.

⁶⁵⁵ 251e8-252b7. This reasoning is directed against all those who define Being either as mobile (the pluralists) or as immobile (Parmenides). For in both cases, we obtain an insufficient result if we assume a total separation: either Movement or Rest will not partake of Being. As the Stranger further explains, both parties would be speaking nonsense if no “intermingling” (σύμμεξις, 252b6) between Forms was presupposed (252b5-6).

⁶⁵⁶ 252b8-d11. This option is easily dismissed, because, as Theaetetus objects, in the case of absolute blending, opposite Forms, such as Being and Movement, would come to partake of each other. This possibility, which is rejected here, will later be assumed hypothetically (256b6-8).

for the specific conditions of the “science of dialectics” (διαλεκτική ἐπιστήμη).⁶⁵⁷ To anticipate some of the results regarding the combination of Forms, the Stranger explains to Theaetetus that while Being, Difference and Sameness mingle with each other, Motion and Rest do not, as they form opposites (254d4-256b5).

As is evident here, the transition from the first part (249d5-251a4) to the second part of the analysis of the μέγιστα γένη (254b8-259b8) occurs with the discussion about the conditions of possibility of combination and separation of kinds (251a5-256b5). This procedure, therefore, delivers additional information for a deeper understanding of the μέγιστα γένη, anticipating certain essential operating principles of the Forms of Nonbeing, i.e. Difference, Sameness, Being, Motion and Rest. Moreover, in the transition from one text section to the other, the Stranger also anticipates the important insight that in the absence of an appropriate account of how Forms combine and separate, one would ultimately end up thinking and speaking like the sophists, mixing everything together without providing any rules or conditions for communication (e.g. calling the same the other, the other the same, the great small and the similar dissimilar) and, thus, constantly churning out “contradictions” (τάναντία, 259d5) (259b9-d8).⁶⁵⁸ That said, the Stranger’s *main motivation*⁶⁵⁹ for elaborating a doctrine of the μέγιστα γένη is to counter the sophist’s cunning conception of the usefulness of communication, and thus to distinguish the sophist from the dialectician, i.e. the philosopher.

Let us now look at our key issue, i.e. the kind of Nonbeing, in order to identify some of its essential features and functions within the realm of the greatest kinds (254b-8-259b8). The central statement regarding the kind of Nonbeing is that the Stranger defines it not as “something contrary to Being” (οὐκ ἐναντίον τι [...] τοῦ ὄντος, 257b3-4) – since in that case, Nonbeing would be identical with “absolute Nonbeing” (τὸ μηδαμῶς ὄν, 237b7-8) and thus become “unthinkable and unspeakable and unutterable and irrational” (ἀδιανόητόν τε καὶ ἄρρητον καὶ ἄφθεγκτον καὶ ἄλογον, 238c10-11)” – “but only different” (ἀλλ’ ἕτερον μόνον,

⁶⁵⁷ A few pages later, the Stranger will present a refined frame of the aim of a dialectician that reads as follows: to determine 1) which of the kinds will “harmonize” (συμφωνεῖν, 253b12) with one another and which will not, 2) whether there are kinds which are responsible for the “mixing together” (συμμείγνυσθαι, 253c2) and, 3) regarding the separation, whether there are kinds which represent “causes of separation” (τῆς διαιρέσεως αἰτία, 253c3).

⁶⁵⁸ What is of special interest here is the implicit reference to the sophists, who turn everything upside down in their speeches, calling, *inter alia*, “the similar dissimilar” (τὸ ὅμοιον ἀνόμοιον, 259d4). This is reminiscent of Zeno, who, in Plato’s *Parmenides*, figures as a debater. To this point, see chapters 2.2.; 2.2.1. and 2.2.2. in the second part of this study. See also *Sophist* 231a6-8, where the kind of resemblance is described as an extremely dangerous kind.

⁶⁵⁹ The fact that Plato also criticizes the doctrine of Being of Parmenides (244b6-245e5) and of the pluralists (242c4-243c9) therefore results from his intensive preoccupation with the sophists. On this point, see also 251a5-d3.

257b3-4). On this basis, Nonbeing enters the realm of Being and becomes thinkable, speakable, utterable and rational. Moreover, the rational status of Nonbeing is raised up to that of Being itself, becoming one of the greatest kinds, called “Difference” (τὸ θάτερον). The nature of Nonbeing is now identified with “the nature of Difference” (ἡ θατέρου φύσις), which, as such, is not the opposite of Being, because Being has no opposite Form or kind whatsoever, but rather it represents another Form that is.

What further characteristics does the nature of Difference have? Or, to put the question in a different way: how does the entry of θάτερον, as a kind, into the realm of Being determine its relation to the other greatest kinds? To avoid a potential conflation between Being and Nonbeing or Difference, we must first say a few words about how Being itself is introduced into the group of the μέγιστα γένη. As the Stranger explains in a passage running from 242b to 249d, Being cannot be taken to mean a) “One Being”, as in the case of the historical Parmenides, b) corporeal being, as in the case of the earthborn or c) the Being of the friends of the Forms. In other words, instead of talking only about Being itself, one must take into account “real Being” (παντελῶς ὄν), i.e. the totality of the things that are.⁶⁶⁰ The true problem is to discern the difference between Being itself and real Being. In our case, this means that we need to discern how the greatest kinds stand in relation to each other, and, more particularly, how Being and Difference differ from one another. The Stranger introduces Being and Difference as relational terms, explaining that whereas “among the things that are, some are said to be themselves by themselves and others always in relation to others” (τῶν ὄντων τὰ μὲν αὐτὰ καθ’ αὐτά, τὰ δὲ πρὸς ἄλλα ἀεὶ λέγεσθαι, 255c13-14), Difference is “always in relation to another thing” (ἀεὶ πρὸς ἕτερον, 255d1). The interpretation of this passage is one of the most controversial points in the analysis of Plato’s doctrine of the μέγιστα γένη.⁶⁶¹ In order not to exceed the scope of this study, I will not be able to discuss all of the relevant problems put forward by Plato’s scholars,⁶⁶² but will only make a few general remarks about the terms αὐτὰ καθ’ αὐτά and πρὸς ἄλλα/ἕτερον and the kind of Difference in relation to the other μέγιστα γένη.

⁶⁶⁰ Regarding the problematic notion of παντελῶς ὄν, which has caused many difficulties in interpretation, I agree with the interpretive approach proposed by Karfik 2011: pp. 120-145, who thinks that the Form of Being and the παντελῶς ὄν are not the same.

⁶⁶¹ On this point, see, for example Frede’s remark that the sentence at 255c12-13 is “perhaps the most ambiguous sentence of the whole dialogue” (*wohl der vieldeutigste Satz im ganzen Dialog*, 1967: p. 19). The complete sentence reads as follows: ἀλλ’ οἶμαι σε συγχωρεῖν τῶν ὄντων τὰ μὲν αὐτὰ καθ’ αὐτά, τὰ δὲ πρὸς ἄλλα ἀεὶ λέγεσθαι.

⁶⁶² For more information on Being and Nonbeing in the *Sophist*, see, for example, the illuminating studies by Frede 1967, O’Brien 1995 and Kahn 2015, upon which my interpretation rests. Regarding the relationship between Sameness and Difference, see, for example, Beierwaltes 2011.

In Frede's account, αὐτὰ καθ' αὐτά is described as s_1 and πρὸς ἄλλα/ἕτερον as s_2 .⁶⁶³ Drawing on Frede's study of the *Sophist*, Meinwald presents her interpretation of Plato's *Parmenides* (1991), introducing αὐτὰ καθ' αὐτά and πρὸς ἄλλα as predication *pros heauto* ("in relation to itself") and *pros ta alla* ("in relation to the others"), labelling both terms as the "in-relation-to-qualifications".⁶⁶⁴ Kahn (2015), , for his part, speaks about predication *per se* and *per aliud*. The concrete idea here is not that Beings (i.e. Forms) have their own nature independently of any other Being (i.e. Form). For this would produce contradictions that we have encountered in Parmenides' account of "One Being" and in the first hypothesis of Plato's *Parmenides*. Rather, each Form has its own nature precisely because of this mutual interdependency between them. For example, all Forms depend upon Being and Difference, because these two Forms permeate each other, as well as all of the other Forms.⁶⁶⁵ Consequently, Kahn's assertion that "Plato distinguishes between what is true of a Form in virtue of its own nature (*phusis* or *ousia*) and what is true of it in virtue of its link to another Form"⁶⁶⁶ means that the difference between Being and Difference is not, an absolute but relative. Hence, to cite Kahn once again, "Not-Being" (construed as being different from others) is an attribute of Being itself, just as it is an attribute of all other forms, in their distinction from one another".⁶⁶⁷ To determine whether and how these and other Forms combine with one other, i.e. how different attributes are assigned to the Forms, is thus the principal function of the dialectician, i.e. the philosopher.

The important thing now is to see that while Plato's *Parmenides* uses the αὐτὰ καθ' αὐτά- and πρὸς ἄλλα/ἕτερον-predication in a sophistical way – i.e. the result is the production of various contradictions – the Stranger uses them in the philosophical way. The latter differs from the former in that it provides an "explanation" (λόγος), albeit one that is somewhat difficult to understand, for the combination and separation of the Forms, thus eliminating contradictions that are produced by the sophists, such as the late-learners and Plato's *Parmenides*. This ensures under what conditions something is predicated of a Form, i.e. how,

⁶⁶³ For the sake of precision, I will cite Frede's German translation (1967: p. 29) of the terms αὐτὰ καθ' αὐτά and πρὸς ἄλλα/ἕτερον. αὐτὰ καθ' αὐτά (= s_1) "...ist' wird von Dingen in bezug auf sie selbst ausgesagt." πρὸς ἄλλα/ἕτερον (= s_2): "...ist' wird von Dingen in bezug auf etwas von ihnen Verschiedenes ausgesagt." Frede's main thesis says that Plato does not distinguish between different meanings of Being, i.e. between the existence, predication and identity senses of "...is", but rather introduces two different uses (*Verwendungen*) of "...is" (as well as of "...is not").

⁶⁶⁴ Meinwald 1991: pp. 46-75.

⁶⁶⁵ 259a4-6.

⁶⁶⁶ Kahn 2015: p. 24.

⁶⁶⁷ Kahn 2015: p. 119.

for example, Motion is said to be *the same* and *not the same* (256a10-b4) and thus how this way of speaking contrasts substantially with the sophist's misuse of language.

3.5.2. Nonbeing and Falsehood

What are the consequences of the above explanation of the Nonbeing as Difference for the problem of falsehood? How does the Stranger refute the sophist's idea that "false speaking" (ψευδῆ λέγειν) or rather that "saying what is not" (τὰ μὴ ὄντα λέγειν) is impossible? So far, the problem of falsehood has always made an appearance in connection with the notion of Nonbeing, i.e. Difference, though without a further clarification of their mutual interdependence. On the basis of the general insight that the truth about a given subject has *one* form and, by contrast, that the falsehood takes on *many* forms, the question then arises as to how the plurality of falsehood is made possible. In order to answer this question, one must call attention to the expression of negation (ἀπόφασις, 257b9). In his expanded presentation of the Form of Nonbeing, the Stranger first claims that "regarding each of the Forms, Being is many, and Nonbeing unlimited in quantity" (περὶ ἕκαστον ἄρα τῶν εἰδῶν πολὺ μὲν ἐστὶ τὸ ὄν, ἄπειρον δὲ πλήθει τὸ μὴ ὄν, 256e6-7). The Stranger explains in more detail that because Being itself is different from the others, it is itself "one" (ἓν, 257a5), and not the other Beings, which are "unlimited in number" (ἀπέραντα δὲ τὸν ἀριθμόν, 257a6). In other words, there are many Forms of Being, each of which has its own unity. But the ways in which we miss the truth, i.e. incorrectly combine Forms with each other in speech, are infinite.⁶⁶⁸ The rejection of the truth is expressed in the "negation" (ἀπόφασις) of a name (ὄνομα) or a thing (πρᾶγμα, 257c2). The negation is not, however, the opposite of Being, but rather something which is different from it.⁶⁶⁹ The nature of Difference therefore becomes even more subtle as it is cut up into pieces (κατακεκερματῖσθαι, 257c7-8). For the Form of Difference is not only said to be *different from the Form of Being itself*, but also *different from all of the other things that are*.⁶⁷⁰

In order to explain false statements, the Stranger must go a step further by raising up the notion of speech (λόγος) into the ranks of the greatest kinds (260a5-6). With a view to the

⁶⁶⁸ The plurality of the sophists' false opinions is expressed to no small degree by Plato in his earlier dialogues on the sophists.

⁶⁶⁹ According to Frede (1967: pp. 92-94), Plato has, therefore, introduced negative Forms in the *Sophist*, an observation which seems, however, not to hold of the *Statesman*.

⁶⁷⁰ Following Frede's theory of *s*₁- and *s*₂-predication, Kahn concisely explains how the negation of, for example, Largeness should be understood: "They [*scil.* the Large itself and all large things] will be distinguished precisely as 'what is *per se* large' for the Form, and as 'what is *per aliud* large' for everything else" (2015: p. 120).

further analysis of the λόγος, the Stranger uses the procedure of combining the greatest kinds with each other in order to draw a parallel to the combination of words, i.e. “nouns” (ὀνόματα) and “verbs” (ῥήματα, 262a1) that is used to form a sentence. For example, the sentence “Theaetetus sits” (Θεαίτητος κάθεται, 263a2) is a complete sentence, because, here, we have a combination of a noun (i.e. Theaetetus) with a verb (i.e. sits). The sentence is also “true” (ἀληθῆ, 263b3), because what “is said about” (εἰρηκα περί, 263c1) Theaetetus is truly said, since Theaetetus is indeed sitting. By contrast, the sentence “Theaetetus flies” (Θεαίτητος, [...], πέτεται, 263a9) is also a complete sentence, though “false” (ψευδῆ, 263b3). For what is said about Theaetetus is not true, i.e. the sentence refers to something which is “different” (θάτερον, 263d1) from the truth about Theaetetus. Furthermore, since “thought” (διάνοια), “opinion” (δόξα) and “imagination” (φαντασία, 263d6) “are said to be akin to speech” (τῷ λόγῳ συγγενῶν ὄντων, 264b3), the Stranger affirms that they can also be true or false (263d1-264b4). Therefore, on the basis of the existence of “falsehood” (ψεῦδος, 260c6, *passim*), the Stranger can further affirm that “deception” (ἀπάτη, 260c6), “images” (εἰδωλα, 260c8), “likenesses” (εἰκόνα, 260c8) and “appearances” (φαντασίαι, 260c9) also exist, i.e. that the sophist’s ability to deceive and to produce deceitful images is no longer to be considered impossible.

A particular difficulty with this account is that the Stranger does not clarify the relationship between the combination of words and the communication of Forms. As Kahn rightly observes, “we do not immediately recognize a weaving of forms in the truth of *Theaetetus sits*, or a separation of Forms in the falsity of *Theaetetus flies*”.⁶⁷¹ As a result, however, it is also clear that true and false sentences exist only if they reflect the relationship between positive and negative predications of Forms. But how sentences should be evaluated, in which nouns and verbs refer to sensible things, is not clear from the Stranger’s account of falsehood. Exemplary for the problem of determining the truth and falsehood of sentences about sensible things, i.e. the problem of knowing whether there are Forms of particular sensible things (and if so, how the sensible things participate in these Forms),⁶⁷² is the discussion between Socrates and Parmenides in *Parmenides* 130b1-d9, where Socrates, after being questioned by Parmenides about the population problem, admits to not knowing whether there are Forms of man, fire, water, hair, mud and dirt. Once again, Plato’s Parmenides, whom

⁶⁷¹ Kahn 2015: p. 129.

⁶⁷² This supplementary question is not raised in the corresponding passage about the population problem, but rather in the second part of the dialogue. It is also addressed in Plato’s *Timaeus*, as Karfik (2005: p. 163) points out. See also Kahn, who thinks that “Plato’s systematic clarification and extension of the concept of Form” (2015: p. xiv) in the so-called “Post-Socratic dialogues” is meant to be understood as the “emergence of a new theory of nature and change within the framework provided by a revised metaphysics of Form” (2015: p. xv).

we have identified as *the* debater par excellence, plays devils' advocate, formulating key questions, which Socrates needs to answer if he truly wants to beat his opponent. That Socrates is not able to compete with Plato's Parmenides, is not surprising for reasons that we explained in chapters 3.2.1.4. and 3.3. More important, however, is the evidence that the Stranger, whom we have so far portrayed as a dialectician, i.e. a philosopher, is only partially revealing his knowledge of the theory of Forms.

Before we now turn to the final definition of the sophist, let us make a summary of the results obtained. In response to Socrates' incapacity to effectively deal with the problems of $\psi\epsilon\upsilon\delta\eta\lambda\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\epsilon\iota\nu$ and the associated notion of Nonbeing, i.e. to counter the sophist's deceptive use of language, the Stranger proposes to take a closer look at Parmenides' conception of Nonbeing. The analysis shows that what looked at first like a criticism of Parmenides, turned out to be rather a denunciation of the mortals' (i.e. the sophists') way of thinking and speaking about Nonbeing. The Stranger therefore asks Theaetetus not to accuse him of parricide. Yet, the *Sophist* teaches us that the situation is – and who could expect otherwise – much more complicated, because the Stranger does indeed criticize Parmenides' philosophy: he *indirectly* puts Parmenides' conception of Nonbeing to the test by *directly* questioning Parmenides' conception of Being. This is because, in the Stranger's eyes, Nonbeing belongs to real Being (i.e. the totality of things that are) no less than Being itself. Consequently, knowing what Nonbeing is, requires knowing what Being itself (and the real Being) is and vice-versa. And herein lies a further reason for the dialectical unfolding of the *megista gene*, to which both Being and Nonbeing belong. The introduction of Nonbeing as the Form of Difference, and the explanation of the structure of the $\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$, and, *a fortiori*, of true and false opinions, serve to identify the precise target group: from criticizing the mortals' opinions about Nonbeing in Parmenides' poem, whom we identified with the sophists, we moved to assessing the use of language by the so-called "late learners". Surprisingly perhaps, the major adversary of the Stranger turned out to be not the sophists, in general, or the late learners, in particular, but rather the philosophical $\alpha\upsilon\tau\iota\lambda\omicron\gamma\iota\kappa\acute{o}\varsigma$, namely Plato's Parmenides. This is expressed by the fact that the philosophical discussion about the relational terms $\alpha\upsilon\tau\grave{\alpha}\ \kappa\alpha\theta'\ \alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{\alpha}$ and $\pi\rho\acute{o}\varsigma\ \acute{\alpha}\lambda\lambda\alpha/\acute{\epsilon}\tau\epsilon\rho\omicron\nu$, in chapter 3.5.2., is presented as a counterpart to Parmenides' sophistical use of these terms in Plato's *Parmenides*. In addition, from the analysis of Nonbeing and falsehood, in chapter 3.5.3., we saw that the Stranger is, to some extent, refraining from giving a full description of the truth and falsehood of sentences that deal with sensible things, although Plato's Parmenides has explicitly set the task of determining whether there are Forms of sensible things. This is vital not least because the extended knowledge of Forms would permit

us to fully counter the sophists' misuse of language, which is not limited to a particular field of communication, but rather governs all speaking.

3.6. The Final Definition of the Sophist

The unexpected encounter with Plato's Parmenides is the culmination of the dialectical development of the conception of Nonbeing that we have been examining, in order to show that both "false opinion and speech" (ψευδὴς δόξα καὶ λόγος, 264b6-7) exist. However, the close relationship between Plato's Parmenides and the sophists indicates that the subject of discussion must be defined with particular care if we are to avoid the risk of confusing the sophist with the philosopher and vice-versa. To better understand the similarities and differences between Plato's Parmenides and the various sophists, we shall now turn to the final definition of the sophist, which the Stranger had already begun to articulate in the passage running from 231d to 236d.

The renewed *dihairesis* starts from 264b11 and continues until 268d5, rounding off the whole dialogue. After a brief review of the results obtained so far, the Stranger once again takes up the distinction between the productive and the acquisitive art in order to continue his division on the side of the former. The productive art is now explicitly⁶⁷³ divided into two branches, one is called "divine" (θεῖον), and the other "human" (ἀνθρώπινον, 265b6) expertise of production. As the Stranger continues to explain, divine and human expertise have in common the "art of making the thing itself" (αὐτοποιητικόν, 266a9) and the "art of image-making" (εἰδωλοποιικόν, 266a10). While divine products include living and non-living creations, as well as different types of images (e.g. the appearances that occur in dreams and during daytime),⁶⁷⁴ human products comprise, for example, houses along with drawings of houses. A detailed analysis of the branch of the divine arts is omitted, and the Stranger instead focuses on the human τέχναι. To be more precise, the division continues with the branch of the "art of image-making" (εἰδωλουργικὴ τέχνη, 266d9), which is split into the following two kinds: the "art of likeness-making" (εἰκαστικόν) and the "art of appearance-making"

⁶⁷³ At the beginning of the seventh division of the sophist, the Stranger did not explicitly introduce the distinction between "human" and "divine" productions, but only talked about "things that are", on the one hand, and the "imitations of things that are", on the other (234b-235a).

⁶⁷⁴ The elaboration of a philosophy of nature is Plato's aim in the *Timaeus*, where the creation of the whole world by the Demiurge is understood as a product of divine reason.

(φανταστικόν, 266d10). At the beginning of the seventh definition of the sophist, the *dihairesis* ended at this point, because the Stranger and Theaetetus were not sure, to which of the two branches the sophist belongs. In that context, the Stranger had placed the “artists” (δημιουργοί, 236a4-5) within the branch of the εικαστικόν and the sophist only indirectly within the branch of φανταστικόν by describing the former as producing “likenesses” (εικόνες) which imitate reality, and the latter as imitating reality by producing “spoken images of all things” (εἰδωλα λεγόμενα περὶ πάντων, 234c5-6).

How, then, does the Stranger develop the last part of the final *dihairesis*? What entitles him to continue his division with confidence is the idea that “falsehood truly exists as falsehood” (τὸ ψεῦδος ὄντως ὄν ψεῦδος, 266e1) and that it “appears by nature as one among the things that are” (τῶν ὄντων ἓν τι φανείη πεφυκός, 266e1-2). That said, if falsehood is as real as any other thing that is, then not only the φανταστικόν, but also the εικαστικόν, are no longer impossible. While the latter is passed over in silence, the Stranger continues with the division of the φανταστικόν, which is broken down into subordinate parts. These include one kind, through which appearances are produced “by instruments” (δι’ ὀργάνων, 267a3) – no additional name is given to this branch – and another kind, through which the corresponding expert produces appearances by making himself into an instrument, that is, using his own body or voice in order to imitate other characters or voices (267a3-7). This second branch is now called “imitation” (μίμησις, 267a8). How is this imitation carried out? The answer to this question is once again twofold: the imitators are either “knowledgeable” (εἰδότες, 267b7) or “not-knowledgeable” (οὐκ εἰδότες, 267b8) when they proceed to imitate things. The difference between “ignorance” (ἀγνοσία) and “knowledge” (γνῶσις, 267b11) is expressed in another division, containing the following two parts: “opinion-imitation” (δοξομιμητική, 267e1) and “scientific imitation” (ιστορικὴ μίμησις, 267e2-3). Apparently alluding to the practice of the δοξοπαιδευτική, that we encountered at the end of the first division, one might be inclined to think that the sophist should now be placed within the branch of the δοξομιμητική. Yet the Stranger does not end his analysis at this point, but adds two more divisions. Passing over the ιστορικὴ μίμησις, he first divides opinion-imitation into two branches, calling the corresponding practitioners a “simple imitator” (ἀπλοῦν μιμητήν, 268a7) and an “ironic imitator” (εἰρωνικὸν μιμητήν, 268a8). Finally, the Stranger then divides the branch of ironic imitation into two and arrives again at two practitioners corresponding to the two branches, namely the “demagogue” (δημολογικός) and the sophist, whom the Stranger also calls the “imitator of the wise man” (μιμητὴς τοῦ σοφοῦ, 268c1). The sophist is ultimately defined as possessing “the art of making contradictions” (ἐναντιοποιολογική) that is derived from the

following kinds: ironic imitation, imitation, the art of appearance-making, the art of image-making and human expertise (268c8-d5).

Does the Stranger deliver a sufficiently accurate picture of the *genos* of the sophist? Despite the difficulties that we encounter, I believe that the final *dihairesis* is not an aporetic⁶⁷⁵ definition, but rather concludes with an adequate definition of the sophist.⁶⁷⁶ The reason for this is that the conclusions so far have shown that the sophist's activities are intrinsically linked to those of the philosopher. That said, what began as a mere description of the many manifestations of the sophist – in the first six *dihaireseis*, the sophist appeared as a hunter of young men, a merchant, a retailer, a seller of his own products, a debater and a purifier of false beliefs – transformed itself into a dialectically guided analysis of the similarities and dissimilarities between the sophist and the philosopher. Among all the manifestations described, the Stranger chose to concentrate on the sophist as a “debater” (ἀντιλογικός). As was explained in chapter 3.3., the primary reason for defining the sophist as an ἀντιλογικός is that his method of debate is universally applicable. In contrast to “the wise”, who possesses knowledge about all things, the sophist, using his ἀντιλογική, is able to designate himself as wise, without however being wise. His knowledge is not real knowledge, but only apparent. His imitation is not a real imitation, but only an “opinion-imitation” (δοξομιμητική). His spoken images are false, because he has no conception of spoken images that are true. In other words, he has no criteria for distinguishing between a true *logos* and a false one. Even if the Stranger does not deliver a full account of the *logos*, he gives us an adequate criterion for distinguishing the sophist's false utterances from the philosopher's true speeches. Simply put, false utterances are false insofar as they refer to something which is different from the truth about the relevant subjects. In sum, the *genos* of the sophist is real, though slippery. He is not only different from the philosopher, but also different from all the other people with whom he competes on the educational market. And because he is competing with everyone, he must make use of every trick at his disposal.

Does the definition of the sophist apply to Plato's Socrates then? Considering that the Stranger called the purifier of false beliefs a sophist, despite acknowledging that the sixth division of the sophist is “doubtful” (ἀμφισβητήσιμον, 231e4), one might think that this question has no conclusive answer. If, however, the subsequent line of reasoning is taken into

⁶⁷⁵ On this point, see, for example, Ambuel's critical verdict (2007: 175): “Thus the *Sophist* does not conclude in doctrine, but in *aporia*.” Similar Brown 2010: pp. 151-171.

⁶⁷⁶ See also Notomi 1999: pp. 296-301, who also takes a positive view of the end of the *Sophist*, though for slightly different reasons.

account, then we might adopt the following interpretation: the main reason for not calling Socrates a sophist is the fact that, in the sixth *dihairesis*, his purifying activity is introduced as belonging neither to the acquisitive nor to the productive art, but rather to the “art of separating” (διακριτική τέχνη). However, the Stranger did not clearly affirm that Socrates, or rather the purifier of false beliefs, does not belong to the *genos* of the sophist, because during the discussion of the sixth *dihairesis*, neither the possibility of false speaking nor the ability to produce contradictions was secured. Consequently, without this important intermediary step, the comparison between the sophist – i.e. the refuter of Nonbeing and producer of false speeches – and Socrates could not lead to satisfactory results. The idea that Socrates is different from the sophist, since he does not possess the “art of making contradictions” (ἐναντιοποιολογική), which is characteristic of the sophist, can, therefore, be assessed only after the dialectical demonstration of the existence of Nonbeing, falsehood and/or contradiction.⁶⁷⁷ A valid reason for denying that Socrates possesses the ἐναντιοποιολογική is that although he collects the sophist’s opinions and compares these with one another in order to examine whether they are “contrary” (ἐναντία, 230b8), he does not *sensu stricto* produce these contradictory opinions himself.⁶⁷⁸ Socrates simply detects them, and we could, therefore, ascribe to him *the art of detecting contradictions*.⁶⁷⁹ The most important kind with respect to a comparison between Socrates and the sophist, however, is that of the ironic imitator. The Stranger describes the ironic imitator as someone who constantly wallows in arguments so as not to reveal his lack of knowledge about the things he speaks. The ironic imitator is further distinguished from the simple imitator, whose fatuity consists in believing that he knows the things about which he has formed himself an opinion (267e11-268a4). Exemplary for a simple imitator, i.e. a superficial patron of knowledge, are Protagoras, Gorgias and Hippias. That Socrates is both similar and dissimilar to the ironic imitator, can be shown in two ways: first, Socrates is similar to the ironic imitator, insofar as both parties know that they lack knowledge; second, Socrates is, at the same time, dissimilar to the ironic imitator, insofar as Socrates does not try to hide his ignorance, but rather openly admits it. Recalling that the sophist constantly makes use of his ἐναντιοποιολογική and that not only Protagoras, Euthydemus, Dionysodorus,

⁶⁷⁷ The possibility that Socrates does not fall under the category of the productive art is often overlooked by many scholars (see, e.g., Notomi 1999: pp. 270-301 and Iber 2007: pp. 340-350) when making concluding remarks about the final *dihairesis*.

⁶⁷⁸ The situation is, however, different than in other Platonic dialogues, where Socrates presents his own or rather Plato’s arguments and theses. We can think here of *Hippias Major*, where Socrates critically discusses his own definitions of beauty, that result in various *aporiai*.

⁶⁷⁹ My interpretation of the figure of Socrates comes as a response to Ambuel’s conclusion (2007: p. 174), that “[...], the Eleatic Visitor appears unable to state why the description captures the sophist but not Socrates.”

Gorgias and Hippias were classified as debaters, but also Plato's Zeno and Parmenides, we may ask whether these last two deserve the title of sophist in the same way as the other representatives of this class? Bearing in mind the results obtained in the second and the third part of the study, we may come to the following conclusion: Plato's Zeno is surely a sophist, because he produces spoken images that leave the truth about things in abeyance. That said, although he does not use his method of debate for financial gain, as is the case for Protagoras, Euthydemus, Dionysodorus, Gorgias and Hippias, but rather to support the philosophy of his teacher Parmenides, his ἀντιλογική is the fullest expression of deceptive rhetoric, because it governs all speaking. Regarding Plato's Parmenides, the case is more complicated though not insoluble. That is, if one limits the scope of inquiry to Plato's *Parmenides*, one must conclude that Plato's Parmenides is no less a sophist than Plato's Zeno, Protagoras, Euthydemus, Dionysodorus, Gorgias and Hippias, for the simple reason that he too, produces contradictions. However, considering the context of the *Sophist* and the *Parmenides*, the answer may finally take the form of a dialectical solution. Bearing in mind that the nature of the sophist and the nature of the philosopher are mutually related like Being and Nonbeing or Difference, we can say that the more the philosopher knows about the sophist, the more he knows about himself. To put it more precisely, the more contradictions in the *Parmenides* the reader detects and resolves, the more is he able to come to know about a) the Being of the philosopher and the Nonbeing of the sophist and about b) the Nonbeing of the philosopher and the Being of the sophist. Finally, putting Zeno and Parmenides at the service of his own philosophy, Plato fulfils the aim of freeing the Eleatics from a mere sophistical appropriation.

Synopsis

What is the relationship between sophistry and Eleaticism in Plato? In earlier dialogues about the sophists, this relationship is found in embryonic form. The motive of the inquiry, namely Socrates' wish to learn about various topics from Protagoras, Euthydemus, Dionysodorus, Gorgias and Hippias is the strong desire to pursue the truth. Instead of focusing on the deeper reasons for the many unsuccessful attempts to arrive at truth – i.e. the sophistical appropriation of Eleatic thinking – Socrates simply confines himself to detecting contradictions. Therefore, neither Protagoras' reevaluation of the term δόξα, nor the conditions of possibility of engaging in eristic games, nor the value of counterfeit arts (i.e. rhetoric and sophistry), nor Hippias' spurious reasoning can be properly addressed. Socrates' procedure of detecting contradictions at least has the merit of acknowledging that the sophists possess no real knowledge about the relevant issues, but only false opinions.

In the *Parmenides*, the relationship between sophistry and Eleaticism becomes clearer, the contours sharper. This is due to the fact that, in the *Phaedrus*, Zeno's art of arguing from contradictory premisses is revealed as the fullest expression of deceptive rhetoric. Plato uses this result in order to show, in the *Parmenides*, that Zeno's ἀντιλογικὴ τέχνη is folded up inside Parmenidean philosophy. For Parmenides' doctrine of unity allows for no plurality. The final step is when Plato crowns his Parmenides "father of the sophists": by extending the application of Zeno's ἀντιλογικὴ τέχνη, Plato's Parmenides produces a greater series of contradictions and concludes the dialogue in *aporia*.

In the *Sophist*, the idea that there is a close connection between sophistry and Eleaticism reveals its full potential. The richness of the manifestations of the sophist, as presented in the earlier dialogues, is often under-appreciated. I hope to have sufficiently shown that they lay the groundwork for Plato's elaboration of the various *dihaireseis*, including the final definition. The decisive step in finding the *genos* of the sophist, however, consists in determining the nature of Nonbeing and the possibility of falsehood. By developing a dialectical account of the *megista gene*, Plato shows, through the arguments of the Stranger, that the sophist and the philosopher stand in a similar relationship to each other as Being and Nonbeing. As a result, the various contradictions in the *Parmenides* are created in a constructive spirit and are designed to achieve two goals: 1) by detecting and resolving the contradictions, the philosopher can learn more about his own nature and about that of the sophist and, 2) Plato can, in so doing, counter a mere sophistical appropriation of Eleatic thinking.

Determining the relationship between sophistry and Eleaticism means revealing the relationship between the sophist and the philosopher. It corresponds to a dialectical exercise that requires perseverance and patience, as it mirrors the ongoing activity of the philosopher directed to the pursuit of the truth.

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