

Philosophy As Anti-Sophistic

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by

Rezzan İlke Yiğit

Boğaziçi University

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ABSTRACT

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The present thesis is an attempt to give a definition of the philosophy by looking at the philosopher's definition of sophistry. My main goal has been to understand the conceptual framework in which sophistry and philosophy are positioned as polar concepts in order to question if there can be a theoretical basis for demarcating philosophy from false philosophy.

I tried to focus on two important characters in Ancient Greece. The first one is Plato, the first philosopher, and the other is Gorgias, the father of sophistry. The comparison between their thoughts is intended to see how the philosopher has constructed himself as the opposite of the sophist.

KISA ÖZET

Anti-Sofistik Olarak Felsefe

Rezzan İlke Yiğit

Bu tez çalışması, sofistin tanımından yola çıkarak felsefeciyi tanımlamaya yönelik bir girişimin ürünüdür. Çalışma boyunca başlıca amacım safsatanın ve felsefenin birbiriyle karşıt olarak konumlandırıldığı kavramsal çerçevenin mahiyetini anlamak ve bu yolla felsefeyi sahte felsefeden ayırdetmek için kuramsal zemin hazırlamaktır.

Sorunun cevabı Antik Yunan'da iki kişi üzerinde odaklandı. Biri felsefenin kurucusu Platon, diğeri de sofistiğin kurucusu Gorgias. Plato ve Gorgias'ın fikirleri felsefecinin sofisti neden felsefi alanın dışına attığına dair düşünsel bir zemin oluşturmak üzere karşılaştırmalı olarak tartışıldı.

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Introduction

What is it to engage in philosophical activity? This study aims to ask this question once more, but this time from the gaze of the wicked, the perverse, the false philosophy, that is, sophistic, which is known as the opposite of philosophy. In other words: what is it not to engage in sophistic but to engage in philosophy?

The addressee of the question is first of all the person who has formulated philosophy and sophistry as a binary opposition and the traces of the answer lie in how this person has theorized this opposition: the addressee is Plato and the trace is his *Sophist*.

However, Plato's *Sophist* can provide us with only a part of the answer for it is after all a secondary source about who the sophist is. So, the investigation should be deepened: is the sophist the way the philosopher depicts him to be? Is the sophist *really* the pseudo-philosopher? Although it is hard to give a definite answer to this question, since the evidence is *old* and deficient, we can at least observe the possible differences between the words of the philosopher and those of the sophist himself.

What if there is a difference? What does it display? I believe that there are three points that such a difference may depict. The first is that the philosophical reflection on the sophist does not match with the sophist's image of himself. The second is that the pseudo philosopher is nothing but an illusion, that is, it does not exist. The last and the most important is the effect of these two points on the philosopher: the identity of the philosopher who defines himself as the original as opposed to the false philosopher (the sophist) loses its transparency.

In the following chapters, I propose to elaborate an inquiry into the figure of the philosopher. Plato makes several distinctions between the sophist and the philosopher. I

think that one of the tensions between these figures is so fundamental that the rest turn out to be secondary to it. This is the distinction between their attitudes towards *aletheia*¹ and the function of *logos*². The philosopher views *logos* as a tool to discover and articulate *aletheia*, while the sophist, as presented in Plato's dialogues, denies such a function to *logos*, for according to him there is no such thing as *alethes logos*, i.e. true speech.³ There are only better discourses and weaker ones, but none is closer to *aletheia* than the other. In *Sophist*, Plato analyzes the relation between being and *logos*, which in turn illuminates the very relation between *aletheia* and *logos*. Therefore, I believe that *Sophist* provides a good groundwork to study how Plato demarcates the philosopher from the sophist.

What distinguishes the philosopher's *logos* from the sophist's *logos*? The following chapter is dedicated to the philosopher and his conception of *logos*. The subsequent chapter's aim is to analyze the sophist and his conception of *aletheia* and *logos* as presented by himself. However, there is an important limitation to this: the historical evidence will display that there is a plurality of sophistic, which cannot be reduced to a single, all-encompassing discourse. Therefore, I have found it more convenient to follow one specific sophist: Gorgias. Gorgias is the first sophist who developed an elaborate discourse on *non-being* and on the function of *logos* in his work called *On What Is Not*. In this work, he denies not only the relation between *logos* and *aletheia*, but also the

¹ *Aletheia* is a very complex Greek term that is mostly translated as truth and reality and refers to both at the same time.

² *Logos* is translated as speech, word, account, reason, language and argument. *Logos* derives from the verb *legein* which is 'to say'. However, the archaic, original meaning of *legein* is 'to pick up, to enumerate'. Then *logos* means that which is enumerated, that which is picked up –chosen among others. Here I prefer to use *logos* in order to cover all of these senses.

³ I owe Marcel Detienne the formulation of the difference between the sophist and the philosopher as a problem of *logos* and *aletheia*. See Detienne (1999) esp. the last chapter.

validity of a metaphysical approach such as Parmenides' that believes in the existence of an absolute, all-encompassing "being". For him, *logos* is not about *aletheia*. If there is no such thing as being, it is nonsense to talk about *aletheia* and any attempt to discover it is equally meaningless. This is a very critical assault on philosophical *logos*.

In the last chapter, I confront Gorgias and the pseudo-philosopher of Plato. It seems that reducing sophistic activity to pseudo-philosophy is not a legitimate move. The dichotomy between the philosopher and the sophist is a forced, artificial opposition, yet it is constructive: Any perversion from the way to truth is deemed to be sophistic, which motivates the philosopher in his search for *aletheia*. As Cassin argues, the sophist is the sub-conscious of the philosopher⁴, which must be held under control to keep him from falling into a void in which there is no absolute standpoint.

In order to see the philosopher more thoroughly, I find it crucial to disperse the fog on the side of the sophist. A fresh way to think about the status of philosophical activity may be by changing the scenario in which the Sophists are only footnotes to philosophy.

⁴ Cassin (2000) p. 957

I. The Philosopher

Who is *the* philosopher? Plato. He is the one who first identified himself as *philosophos* in Greek, that is, the ‘lover of wisdom’. Although Parmenides, Heraclitus, Thales and other Pre-Socratic thinkers are known as philosophers at the time, they were not called philosophers before Plato granted them this name⁵. Therefore, Plato is doubly important for he both honored the sophists with the medal of pseudo philosophy and named his activity and the tradition he attaches himself to ‘philosophy’. These two gestures are noteworthy regarding the process of constructing an identity: to discern who you are and who you are not.

The philosopher appears in Plato’s dialogues in the mask of Socrates, the most admired figure of Western thought. The contributors to the *dia-logos* are diverse, ranging from young Athenian men like Theaetetus, who is willing to practice philosophy, to Callicles, who thinks philosophy is not suitable for grown men. Of all these interlocutors, however, there is a group of them that are very special for they are so important to how Socrates distinguishes philosophical activity from other intellectual activities. These are the Sophists, who are mostly portrayed as ‘negative’ characters. To sketch some of these negative characteristics: they want to be paid for their service, which is highly doubtful in terms of the needs it fulfills and in terms of the benefits it promises; they are advocates of relativism, which relieves them from any obligation to be devoted to an absolute truth, and so on. Many young people around Socrates admire these *wise* men and try to become one of their pupils, but Socrates treats them with caution and advises

⁵Pierre Hadot claims that despite some controversial evidence to the contrary, it was not until 5th century BC that the noun *philosophia* and the words belonging to this family were invented and its definition as we know it today belongs to 4th century BC by Plato. See Hadot (2002) esp. ch.1. Michael Frede also notes that the first time we encounter the philosopher is in Plato’s dialogues and in their earliest uses, *philosophos* does not seem to refer to a distinct group of persons. See Frede (2000) pp.4-5.

the same thing to his friends. In *Protagoras*, for example, he asks Hippocrates to consider once more his expectations about Protagoras: "...what do you yourself hope to become by your association with Protagoras?" (312a) and "...whom do you think you are going to, and what will he make of you?" (311b).

The Sophists and Socrates are portrayed as two different standpoints, as two different life-styles. They are designated in extreme opposition. The sophist appears as a very necessary element in the dialogue, an indispensable actor on the scene, taking his place just near the leading character. The sophist is there for the philosopher to *see* himself: what kind of a character he will turn out to be if he leaves the noble way of philosophy. The philosopher defines himself upon the denial of the sophist. Philosophy is situated as the antithesis of sophistic, as the *pharmakon*, as the antidote of all that is relativistic; it is a concrete, solid basis against all that is fleeing and melting into air.

Plato makes several distinctions between the sophist and the philosopher:

i. The first of these distinctions divulges itself already in the etymology of the concepts that designate each. Unlike Socrates, who is introduced as a '*philosophos*', that is, a lover of wisdom, Gorgias, Protagoras, Hippias and the rest claim to be '*sophos*', that is, to be 'wise'. *Sophos* meant simply to be a master of something. It is in 5th century that it started to be used as the master of wisdom⁶. As Diogenes Laertius states⁷, the words *sophos* and *sophistes* were once synonymous. Guthrie says that *sophistes* was probably thought to refer to a teacher. It was used for the poets and for the Seven sages along with

⁶ Brisson (2000) p. 39

⁷ Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, I.12

the term *sophos*. Guthrie remarks that in neither of these senses was it a term of opprobrium.⁸

In Plato's dialogues the difference in the attitudes towards wisdom plays a crucial role. To be a lover of wisdom enforces one to partake in the dialogue for the sake of knowledge only. This is precisely what Socrates claims to do: Even if he may appear to attack his interlocutor from time to time, this is only an appearance; there is no victor in the dialogue. "Dialectic is not the art of out-arguing another but has precisely the opposite meaning, namely of bringing one's partner in the argument to open his eyes and see"⁹. Truth is not a commodity to be acquired; it is not at anyone's disposal. Therefore the sole aim in engaging in the dialogue is to come nearer to truth itself together with the interlocutor, it is not to be the victor of the debate. Interlocutors, in this sense, are partners. Socrates clearly demonstrates his attitude in *Gorgias*:

And what kind of a man am I? One of those who would be gladly refuted if anything I say is not true, and gladly refute someone who says what is not true... And I believe there is no worse evil for a man than a false opinion about the subject of our present discussion... (458b)

According to Socrates, truth by itself is all that matters. His aim is not to *acquire* truth to make use of it for some practical ends:

I assure you that in asking all these questions I have nothing else in view but my desire to learn the truth about virtue and what it is in itself. (360e)

⁸ Guthrie (1971) pp. 30-4

⁹ Heidegger (1997) p. 139

However, both Protagoras' and Gorgias' attitudes in the dialogues demonstrate their desire to be the victor of the debate, no matter what the consequences in terms of the search for truth are. They want to win the argument; the rest does not matter.

ii. The sophists do not only strive to be victors in the debates, they also want to be victors in life. Unlike the philosopher, they are so taken with earthly desires. They charge large amount of money from their students, they join the meals given in their honor and eat and drink much, and seek out political power.

iii. Another important point of distinction is about their styles. Socrates insists that his interlocutors give short answers or if they cannot succeed in this that they ask the questions. He praises the dialogue form and does not want to get involved in a discussion that is based on a reciprocal juxtaposition of long speeches. However, the latter is the form that the sophists prefer. They enjoy long answers that take the form of vivid oratories. Socrates in *Gorgias* asks Gorgias if he would try his method:

Would you be willing, Gorgias, to continue our present method of conversing by question and answer, postponing to some other occasion lengthy discourses of the type begun by Polus? (449b)

And again in *Protagoras* he asks for the same thing in a slightly ironical fashion:

I am a forgetful sort of man, Protagoras, and if someone speaks at length, I lose the thread of the argument. If I were a little deaf, you would recognize the necessity of raising your voice if you wanted to talk to me; so now since you find me forgetful, cut down your answers and make them shorter if I am to follow you. (334d)

What then is the reason that he insists on this dialogue form? Is it an important characteristic of the philosopher? What does this insistence on dialogue form entail vis-à-vis the distinction drawn between the Sophists and Socrates? We will deal with these questions in the following sections.

iv. Another opposition is drawn between the philosopher's and the sophist's *tekhnai*. In this respect, a scene in *Gorgias* where Socrates and Gorgias converse on the nature of rhetoric is very illuminating. Socrates makes a significantly long speech to explain his conception of rhetoric:

...Because it aims at what is pleasant, ignoring the good, and I insist that it (rhetoric) is not an art but a routine because it can produce no principle in virtue of which it offers what it does, nor explain the nature thereof, and consequently is unable to point to the cause of each thing it offers. (465a)

But this is not all that Socrates has to say, so he continues:

What cosmetics is to gymnastics, sophistry is to legislation and what bakery is to medicine, oratory is to justice. (465c)

Cosmetics and bakery are forms of deception and unlike gymnastics and medicine; they do not aim for the good of the body. Likewise, rhetoric and sophistry do not aim for the good of the soul, but they only *appear* to do so. Socrates does not consider rhetoric as a *tekhnē* for its methods do not stem from clearly reasoned principles. Unlike philosophy or politics, which are real *tekhnai*, rhetoric is not aimed at either the truth or the good. The sophist's art is not concerned with truth, but with what is accidental.

Nevertheless this distinction is not without qualification, for in *Phaedrus* Plato does not consider rhetoric itself as perverse; rather the sophist's usage of rhetoric is wicked. This

makes 'good rhetoric' possible, though it can only be realized by the dialectician:

Unless a man estimates the various characters of his hearers and is able to divide all things into classes and to comprehend them under single ideas, he will never be a skilful rhetorician even within the limits of human power.

And this skill he will not attain without a great deal of trouble...(273e)

All poets, orators, statesmen, whose *logoi* are based upon the principles above, are not only poets, orators, statesmen, but also philosophers. Therefore, *logos* is also granted to the philosophers only.

Although rhetoric is an art of enchantment, which makes things appear good and evil as the speaker pleases, it is not wholly devoid of truth. However, Plato thinks, the real art is always being confused by rhetoricians with the preliminaries of the art. One has to have knowledge of things in order to create approximate resemblances of them., but as we shall see, the sophists only have opinion about things. Accordingly, Plato maintains that probability (*eikos*), which the sophists believe to be stronger than truth, is a consequence of the likeness of the truth which can only be attained by the knowledge of it. True rhetoric is like medicine, and the rhetorician has to consider the natures of men's souls as the physician considers the natures of their bodies.

v. A related theme in Plato's dialogues is the critique of sophistic argumentation. The sophist's reasoning aims at confusion. Benjamin Jowett in his introduction to his translation of *Euthydemus* presents this dialogue as an attempt to satirize the new tendencies in the history of philosophy in which the Eleatic or Heraclitean philosophies

begin to pass away and sophistical, verbal, and eristic thinking start to reign.¹⁰ In *Euthydemus* Plato deals with a technique that the sophists use to puzzle their interlocutors. They ask several questions in order to set up contradictions which the interlocutor cannot escape no matter how he argues. Dionysodorous proudly says,

All our questions of this sort are designed to trap people. (276d) I can tell you now whichever answer the lad gives, he will be proven wrong. (275e)

This technique exploits the ambiguities in meanings of words. For example, the Dionysodorous and Euthydemus brothers make use of the ambiguity within the word 'to be', *einai*, which has both an existential and a copulative sense, in order to prove that one cannot lie. They say that it is impossible to lie for lying is to say what is not (what does not exist, nothing), which means to not say anything. Therefore, the sophists conclude, falsity is impossible, for either one is saying the truth or not saying anything at all.¹¹ All such arguments in the dialogue give the impression that the sophists have a store of prepared refutations and their verbal infallibility is ensured in this way.¹²

vi. Sophistic paideia is highly suspicious as again displayed in *Euthydemus* and other dialogues such as *Republic*, *Laches* and *Gorgias*. They claim to teach *arête* to their pupils and the best of human affairs, politics. The most important point here is that they promise to realize this aim in a very short time: their pupils will be an expert in politics

¹⁰ Jowett adds that "the fallacies which are noted by him (Plato) appear trifling to us now, but they were not trifling *in the age before logic*..." Jowett cannot help wondering how one could be deceived by these *evident* fallacies Plato had to fight, but "we must remember also that there was a time when the human mind was only with great difficulty disentangled from such fallacies." However, it seems that Jowett is highly influenced by some anthropological views of his day considering sophists as 'primitive' thinkers. See Jowett (1953), p.67

¹¹ *Euthydemus* 283e7 – 284a8

¹² Chance (1992) p. 42

in ninety minutes. De Romilly says that “there was no limit to their promises”¹³. On the other hand, Socrates’ method did not promise a rapid progress, and it did not aim to prepare the interlocutors for any practical action, whereas “the sophists knew everything and taught everything. In every case what they offered was not a slow meditation upon principles but immediate results.”¹⁴ Philosophy is rival to sophistry in the realm of education. This is best seen in *Euthydemus*, where Plato confronts Socrates with two masters of eristic and contrasts their teaching methods. Young Clinias is presented as the ideal student who stands in between progress and corruption. If the protreptic phase of his education is properly handled he will be persuaded to pursue virtue. Dionysodorous and Euthydemus treat their student as if he is a passive recipient of their knowledge, whereas Socrates treats him as an active companion in the dialectic process.¹⁵ It seems Plato is presenting two different ways of life: one treats knowledge as something that can be handed over to the other¹⁶ and the other seeks for a companion in his search for it. However, the real tension in the dialogue lies in the probability of mistaking the sophists’ activities with philosophy and thinking that philosophical and sophistic education are the same.

vii. Lastly, the sophist’s and philosopher’s attitudes towards being and *aletheia* differ. The sophistic stance is summarized in one sentence, which is stated by Protagoras: “Man

¹³ Romilly (1992) p. 35

¹⁴ Romilly (1992) p. 35

¹⁵ Chance (1992) p.25

¹⁶ In *Symposium* Agathon, the orator, asks Socrates to sit by him so that he may catch a bit of wisdom from him. He acts as if wisdom can be transmitted from one body to another.

is the measure of all things”¹⁷. Versions of this statement are repeated and discussed in many dialogues, the most thorough analysis taking place in *Theaetetus*, in which Plato likens the contrast between the sophist and the philosopher to the contrast between opinion and knowledge, between the accidental and the absolute. The sophist seems to have done with all transcendental principles whether religious, ontological, or ethical and replace the notion of truth with the purely practical idea of utility:

...I conceive that a good mind causes men to have good thoughts; and these which the inexperienced call *true*, I maintain to be only *better*, and not truer than others... and the wise and good rhetoricians make the good instead of the evil to seem just to states; for whatever appears to a state to be just and fair, so long as it is regarded as such, is just and fair to it... (*Theaetetus* 167b)

The sophist thinks that there are certain opinions that are more useful than others, but that does not have anything to do with truth. As Socrates notes these people only take delight from the objects of beauty but are not able to see the beauty that is the precondition of things’ being beautiful. The sophists are deprived of the capacity to see what distinguishes the beauty from the beautiful things. Whatever is beautiful, just or pious is what man decides to be so. As he discusses in *Republic*, the philosopher is the man who desires the knowledge, *episteme*, of the idea; the sophists believe that the beauty is identical with its manifestations, and are bound to the sensual world and live out a life of dreams like the men in the cave.

What then is the fundamental problem that Plato relates to sophistry? So far, I have

¹⁷ Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* I 216

deliberately avoided talking about *Sophist*, for I believe that the problem underlying all the tensions above is clearly articulated in this dialogue. Here, besides several definitions of the sophist, one of the main themes of the dialogue marks the basic divergence point between the sophist and the philosopher: the problem of *logos*, and its relation with being and *aletheia*. It is no surprise that Plato has named one of his most complicated dialogues that discusses being and the possibility of philosophical discourse as *Sophist*. The sophist is presented as the pseudo-philosopher. He speaks like a philosopher, but in reality he is only an imitator. However, he is not an innocent imitator for he plays with the meanings of concepts such as being and non-being, and thereby blurs the distinctions between truth and falsehood. Once these distinctions are abolished, the very possibility of a meaningful discourse -the most meaningful of which is philosophy- is undermined. I think this is the basic problem of Plato about sophistry.

Sophist is an attempt to resolve the following problems: What is the precondition for being? How can being be known? How can being and non-being be articulated? What is the nature of *logos*? Therefore, the main subject of *Sophist* turns out to be the ground on which being, our knowledge of it and the possibility of our articulation of this knowledge stand. The nature of non-being is detected in order to annihilate any metaphysical obstacle to meaningful *logos*, and specifically the philosophical *logos*. *Sophist* is thus a very fruitful dialogue that will provide us with the most accurate picture of the sophist as reflected by Plato and the reasons for the main dispute between the sophist and the philosopher.

What then is the relation between *logos* and *aletheia*? How does Plato develop his thoughts on *logos* and *aletheia*? Let us first try to follow his footsteps, on his way to *Sophist*. Then we may get a clear understanding of Plato's *Sophist*.

A. The Road to *Sophist*

Logos means word, sentence, speech, language, statement, account or argument. The relation between *logos* and *aletheia* is related with the problem of the articulation of truth, the possibility of falsehood and the limits to knowledge. These problems have always been Plato's favorite themes. Let us now see how he touches on this issue on the road to the *Sophist*. I think several dialogues such as *Phaedo*, *Republic*, *Cratylus*, *Phaedrus*, *Parmenides* and *Theaetetus* can be helpful for an analysis of Platonic *logos*.

1. *Logos* as Image

Plato explains the reason why he is so concerned about *logos* in *Phaedo*. In his last hours in the prison Socrates tells his friends the road he has walked through becoming a philosopher (*Phaedo* 96a). The first question he has asked and unfortunately never got the answer for is the cause for the coming to be and perishing (*genesis*) of things. He is not satisfied with the answers the previous philosophers have provided for they do not seem to go farther than a mechanical explanation. He assumes that they would "begin by informing us (him) whether the earth is flat or round; and would then proceed to explain the cause and the necessity of this by stating how and why it was better that it should be so" (*Phaedo* 97d). Nevertheless, Socrates' expectations are not fulfilled; no philosopher so far has assigned a definite cause to each being separately and then to the universe as a whole. They are stuck at a level of a mechanical account of becoming such as explaining walking with the movement of the bones and the muscles. Socrates believes that this is only a part of the story: there should be a metaphysical principle as the cause of the material change. However, he cannot explain why the world is constituted as it is, either:

...when I had wearied of investigating things, I thought that I must be

careful to avoid the experience of those who watch an eclipse of the sun for some of them ruin their eyes unless they watch its reflection in the water, or some such material. A similar thought crossed my mind, and I feared that my soul would be altogether blinded if I looked at things with my eyes and tried to grasp them with each of my senses. So I thought I must take refuge in discussions (*logos*) and investigate the truth of things by means of words. However, perhaps this analogy is inadequate for I certainly do not admit that one who investigates things by means of words (*logos*) is dealing with 'images' (*eikon*) any more than one which confines himself to facts. (*Phaedo* 99d-100a)

Socrates has discovered that *aletheia* does not permit itself to be understood directly, but only by means of discussions (*logos*). The passage recalls a Heraclitean formula: "The real constitution (*physis*) loves to hide"¹⁸. *Physis*, that is, the essence of things can only be understood through *logoi*. In Jowett's translation, *logos* is likened to a piece of dark glass that people use in order to look at the sun; *logos* and the dark glass are tools to encounter the sun or the truth; just as people use pieces of dark glass in order to look at the sun, Socrates may use *logoi* to search for *aletheia*, which does not easily let herself be known for she is so bright when she is looked at. However, one should never forget that the *logoi* can only provide us with distortions of the reality. It is true that one would be blinded if he did not look at the sun through a piece of dark glass; without this essential tool, one would not be able to even 'look' at the sun, let alone investigating it. Nevertheless, this tool only promises an imprecise image of the sun: it inevitably hides the sun for it is placed before it. It makes the sun seen by making it unseen in some

¹⁸ Kirk, Raven and Schofield (1988) p.192

respect. The situation is the same with the *logoi*; they make things known by hiding their real natures for they are only images of the things they denote. I think this reasoning explains why Socrates calls *logoi* a second best alternative (*Phaedo* 99d). The first best is looking at *aletheia* –in Plato’s case looking at the ideas- directly, which is an utter impossibility.

What kind of an image is, then *logos*? What is it that makes it a different image from the facts (*erga*)? And prior to it, what is an image? An image is an *eikon*, an *eidolon* or a *phantasia*¹⁹. Plato makes use of each interchangeably and these words are often translated as image, likeness or resemblance. Here, I will use the term image for all of these notions since slight nuances in their meanings do not affect the core of the matter we are to discuss. What an image is can only be understood within the ontological network in which Plato places it. The metaphysical framework is provided by the theory of ideas.

Ideas are superordinate metaphysical entities that exist by themselves. They are beyond the realm of perceptible things and they are the pre-conditions for both the existence and the knowledge of these perceptible things (*Phaedo* 74a). Plato’s main concern is to formulate how we perceive things, how we can grasp the distinctions between them, how we attribute some qualities to them and how we can make judgments about these objects and share these with other people. The theory of ideas is intended to provide both an epistemological and an ontological foundation for beings and our judgments about them. All individual phenomena are presented as the manifestations of ideas. Ideas

¹⁹ *Phantasia* is a typical word we use for appearances or images or likenesses. It is derived from the verb *phaino*, which means to appear, to disclose, and to bring to light.

are the pre-conditions for the relations between things. When two sticks are of equal size, this is a manifestation in the phenomenal world of the idea of equality.

In *Republic*, Plato further elaborates his theory of ideas. He draws a scale of beings ranging from the ideas to the visible things in the phenomenal world and corresponding levels of knowledge ranging from mere opinion to knowledge of truth. In the sixth book of *Republic*, Plato presents his simile of a line depicting these different levels of being and corresponding forms of knowledge (*Republic* VI 509d) in a hierarchical structure. By this analogy he proceeds to a further clarification of the notion of image, which will find full-fledged articulation in *Sophist*.

First, there is the intelligible realm (*ousia*) and the visible realm, the world of becoming (*genesis*). Each of these is again divided into two (unequal) parts. At the bottom of the visible world are the mirror images, and shadows. Things of which the images are images are set over them. Two different epistemological categories apply to these entities: imagination, *eikasia*, to the images and belief, *pistis*, to things, which as a whole form our opinions, *doxa*, about the world. In the intelligible realm, the objects are Ideas. At the lower section lie the objects of mathematical reasoning and at the higher section are the objects of philosophical knowledge. *Dianoia* (mathematical knowledge) and *noesis* (philosophical knowledge) are the related epistemological categories and both are forms of *episteme*.

An *eikon*, *eidolon* or a *phantasia*, whichever we choose to call it, then is a degree of being. For example, a 'bed' is a mode of being, and a manifestation of the idea of 'bedness' in the visible realm. Thus, an image has a double meaning: it is both something in itself and it also depicts something other than itself. Every rank in the line,

except the highest one, is both some thing and also the image of a more 'true' object that is in a higher position in the hierarchy. In this way every rank is deficient with respect to the higher one, just as the picture of Simmias is deficient with respect to Simmias, which is a higher order being. The ideas that *are* in their purest form at the highest level are only recognizable in a veiled form in the phenomenal world; they manifest themselves in another medium on the lower levels.

What about *logos*? Is *logos* an image just like shadows, or mirror images, or physical things? In *Phaedo* we have seen that Plato considers *logos* as an access to truth. Therefore, *logoi* must be different from physical objects, from particulars, the knowledge of which correspond to the level of opinion.

Some clues for the nature of *logos* are provided in *Cratylus* where Plato discusses the nature of names and their origins. According to Plato, the names, by which we compose speeches, have two important functions to perform: a) they inform about things and b) they do this by distinguishing them (*Cratylus* 388b). For Plato names need not be perfect imitations of things so as to reflect the natures of the things they represent; they need not be perfect echoes of their objects. For example it is enough if the name 'bed' distinguishes the object from 'red' or a 'wardrobe' and informs us that it is something to lie on. It need not be a precise identification of the thing it denotes. Socrates argues against Cratylus who holds that names are precise imitations of things:

What you say may be true about numbers, which must be just what they are, or not be at all; for example, the number ten at once becomes other than ten if a unit be added or subtracted... but this does not apply to that which is... represented under an image... the image, if expressing in every point the

entire reality, would no longer be an image. We will suppose, further, that some God makes not only a representation such as a painter... (but) in a word copies all your qualities... would you say that this was Cratylus and the image of Cratylus, or that there were two Cratyluses? (*Cratylus* 432a)

Therefore, names can perform their functions as long as they are distinct from what they name (*Cratylus* 430a, *Theaetetus* 177e), but this also means that names may be false.

Cratylus supports the idea that *logos* is an image. Names, which are the basic elements of *logos*, are images, they should not be equated with the things they represent, but this does not mean that they are arbitrarily assigned to things. For Plato, convention is a necessary, but an insufficient criterion to understand the relation between things and their names. There is a pre-linguistic basis that prohibits any arbitrary uses of names: the doctrine of ideas. It is no surprise that *Cratylus* ends up with a critique of Heraclitean theory of being. Such a theory of being, where everything is in a state of transition and there are no stable entities, destroys any possibility of knowledge for it would be impossible to grasp things which cannot maintain their identity.²⁰ Reference is impossible in a Heraclitean world for there must be some stability to name a thing. The conclusion of the dialogue seems to be that names do not refer to things, which obey the rules of becoming, but to their essences, which are stable. So, the names stand for the ideas, which are stable entities unlike things. However, the names are only images, hence they may be false.

²⁰ *Cratylus* 440a-d

Cratylus is helpful for a theory of reference, for a theory of names which are primary elements of speech, however it is far from formulating what *logos* is. This will be done in *Sophist*.

2. Philosophical *Logos*

Now let us have a look at some other aspects of *logos* for Plato. We said that one of the distinctions between the sophist and the philosopher is the philosopher's insistence on the dialogue form. Kahn believes the dialogue form to be an indispensable quality of Platonic philosophy, which represents a constructive, cooperative form of conversation as opposed to rhetoric and eristic.²¹ In *Phaedrus* *logos* is presented not as a tool to understand beings, but to understand one's soul. We can see an implicit version of this theme in *Phaedo* above, but it is made clearest in here. Heidegger argues that *Phaedrus* is first of all, a dialogue on the love for *logos* and *logos* in the sense of self expression. He shows Socrates' remarks on his passion for speaking as evidence. The most interesting of all these remarks is the following, which shows parallelism with Socrates' speech on *logos* in *Phaedo* where he tells that he stopped looking at beings directly but through *logos*:

Landscapes and trees have nothing to teach me; only the people in the city
can do that. (*Phaedrus* 230d)

Socrates prefers conversations, discussions rather than looking at nature and seeking material causes of things. Since *logos* is an important tool for learning things, Socrates discusses the qualities of a good speaker, that is, a good rhetorician in the second part of *Phaedrus*. He says that the speaker must know the nature of the soul, but cannot do so

²¹ See Kahn (1998)

without knowing the nature of the world (270c). Accordingly the true *logos* must follow the structure of reality, as it is discovered by the dialectical method (265d and 273e). At this moment true rhetoric and philosophy coincide. The dialectician sees one unifying idea in diversity, and on the basis of it he is able to proceed in the opposite direction: to divide into subordinate ideas. However, that is because his soul has retained a recollection (*anamnesis*) of the beyond or else he would not be able to discern the one idea in earthly plurality (249c). The dialectician is the one who tries to purify his soul through struggling with his appetite in order to free his mind from contingencies to think properly.

In *Phaedo*, *anamnesis* is stated is the pre-condition of one's understanding the relations between things, such as equality. Plato says that the notion of equality cannot have been attained by experience for the equal things are different from the notion of equality. We should have encountered this notion before –when we were not imprisoned in our mortal bodies- to recognize it in the relations of things. If philosophy aims at purification and if this is to be finalized with knowledge of the ideas, we may say that in *Phaedo* Plato formulates philosophical activity as an activity of recollection by which we try to 'pick up' bits and pieces of our lost memory. *Legein*, speaking, which also means 'picking up' is a very important activity for Plato in the search for truth. By conversing either with ourselves or someone else, that is, by entertaining our mind, *nous*, we may get rid of our bodily desires and come closer to what is real, the ideas. *Logos* is a tool to remember.

Nevertheless, I think that Plato's concern for *logos* takes its very special sense with *Phaedrus*. Socrates takes delight in any kind of *logoi*, but among them philosophical *logos* has significance for it is the only one that does not accept the world without

reflection like the ordinary man. The philosopher is aware of the existence of a different reality and he knows that if one has knowledge of ideas, he will recognize that sensory objects are only images, and he will have transformed *doxa* into *episteme*. Philosophical *logos* aiming to capture the one idea among plurality is the *logos* par excellence. Any other *logos* is subordinate to or needs the help of philosophical *logos*.

3. Threats to Philosophical *Logos*

However, in *Parmenides* philosophical *logos* faces the risk of losing its privileged status. Plato presents some serious threats to any meaningful *logos* which emerge due to some weaknesses related with the theory of ideas. In the dialogue young Socrates converses with Parmenides and Zeno. The problem discussed is a typical Eleatic problem: If there is a plurality of 'existing things', these will be both 'like' and 'unlike', which is a clear-cut self-contradiction. Socrates offers a solution by distinguishing between a world of appearances and a world of ideas (128e): The idea of likeness can never become unlike, but particulars may participate in likeness and unlikeness. However, Parmenides shows that Socrates' theory of ideas is ambiguous for it does not fully determine what type of entities ideas are and the relation between them and the particulars. Parmenides resists seeing the asymmetrical relation between the ideas and the particulars, that particulars are the copies of ideas (132c). It seems Plato needs more than what he has told in *Phaedo* and *Republic* about the nature of ideas and their relation to particulars. Parmenides' aim is not a total destruction of theory of ideas; rather he is concerned with strengthening it for the problems about the theory may make an untrained mind such as young Socrates' doubt that ideas exist. Yet, if one is to reject the

existence of the ideas, says Parmenides, the possibility of philosophical *logos* is destroyed for one cannot speak of a phenomenon without reference to an idea:

If someone...will not allow that there are forms for things and will not mark off a form for each individual thing he will not have anywhere to turn his thought, since he does not allow that for each thing there is a character that is always the same. In this way he will destroy the power of dialectic (*dialegesthai*) entirely. (*Parmenides* 135b)

The reasoning above is an enhancement of the reasoning in *Cratylus* and the explicit form of what is hidden there. *Logoi* refer not to things, but to ideas. Any use of language directly entails the recognition of ideas. *Logos* becomes a sufficient proof of the existence of the determinate entities which are always one and the same. If one does not accept this he will not be able to think and speak about things since things will cease to have any enduring characters, any identities that will distinguish them. Once again, it is told that ideas are entirely different from sensible things, which obey the rules of becoming. An idea is 'being one'; it is self-identical. The problem is now to demonstrate the reciprocal relations between these ideas, and their way of functioning in thought and speech. This task will be completed in *Sophist*.

Nevertheless, before we arrive at *Sophist* we need to take a look at *Theaetetus*, which is a very important dialogue for us in terms of the questions that trigger the analyses in *Sophist*. In *Theaetetus*, we meet the three characters, the sophist Protagoras, Parmenides and Heraclitus, that are examined in *Sophist* regarding the problem of non-being, which is stated here and in *Parmenides*. In *Theaetetus*, Plato makes an analysis of the concepts of perception, opinion, and knowledge. The analysis entails the same conclusion arrived

in previous dialogues: Ideas are necessary conditions for perception, opinion and knowledge. What would our judgments mean in a world where the objects of our perception are only things that exist? If man is the measure of all things, as Protagoras claims, then such a world would entail that the eye as perceiving eye and the thing as perceived thing only come to exist due to the act of perception.²² The general conclusion is that nobody can have the same perception twice, that the same object will not be perceived identically by two persons, and that perceiver and perceived cannot exist independently of each other. (*Theaetetus* 159)

However, says Socrates, this does not explain why Protagoras, claiming so, should be truer than others and why he should be wiser than a pig. In other words, if man is the measure of all, reducing existing beings to perceptible things leaves out any standard to make judgments and to evaluate the truth value of different statements about the world.

Plato combines Protagorean epistemology with Heraclitean ontology: If everything is in constant flux, there will be no moment when something 'is' and no moment when knowledge and speech are possible (*Theaetetus* 157b).

On the other hand, Parmenides dismisses false beliefs as non-belief. If a belief does not match with being, then it is about nothing, that is, it is not a belief at all. However, if we suppose so, there is no way to distinguish between a true and a false belief.

An epistemology founded on either Protagorean, or Heraclitean, or Parmenidean principles, destroys any criterion that can determine whether one is actually in possession of knowledge or non-knowledge.

²² See Kahn (1998), p.257

The last attempt to define knowledge as true belief accompanied by *logos* faces the same problem (201c). If *logos* is considered the linguistic expression of thought (206c), then it is impossible that *logos* can argue for itself. Any sort of question presupposes that one possesses knowledge that can be justified by *logos*, but no *logos* can in itself decide whether it is true and whether there is knowledge.

Theaetetus ends in a disconcerting way: they cannot define what knowledge is. However, there is an important positive aspect of the discussion for Plato. Once more it is proven that knowledge and any meaningful speech necessitate some standards beyond themselves. These standards are ideas, however, how they occasion speech or better to say, how they provide the conditions in which we can make meaningful sentences about the world is still blurred.

B. Plato's *Sophist*

There are two reasons why *Sophist* among other dialogues of Plato occupies a central place in this thesis. First, Plato explains what it is that really bothers him about the sophists. So far he has given many reasons for his uneasiness about the sophists and sophistry, some of which I have summarized in the previous section, but in *Sophist* Plato goes into the heart of the matter and clarifies the ambiguity underlying this phenomenon: the sophist is the pseudo-philosopher. Next, *Sophist* is a dialogue in which the preconditions for *logos* are laid down. The metaphysical setting that distinguishes the sophist from the philosopher also provides the grounds for *logos* and the most important of all, philosophical *logos*. The dialogue is not only an attempt to reveal the relations between ideas as a precondition for being and our knowledge of it, but also to answer what it is to philosophize and how philosophical discourse is different than any other discourse. The formulation of non-being as difference gives way to both the characterization of the sophist and the foundation of philosophical *logos*.

1. A General Picture of the Dialogue

The dialogue may be divided into three successive parts. In the first part the Stranger and Theaetetus converse about the sophist and they try to grasp the essence of sophistry as is usual in any Socratic dialogue, where Socrates and his interlocutor converse on the nature of love, courage, piety and so on. The second part of the dialogue rests on a discussion on semblance, *eidolon* and non-being. The sophist is an illusionist, a maker of images: *eidolou poietaes*. However, images are not real things but look like them and in some way, they lack reality, they are not true that is, in some way, they *are not*. Then, it becomes impossible to say the sophist is an illusion maker for then he produces what is

not, which is absurd. The philosophical discourse on the sophist encounters a serious threat. The nature of non-being is detected in order to annihilate any metaphysical obstacle which prevents the Stranger and Theaetetus from determining the real nature of the sophist. Finally, the Stranger focuses on the relations of ideas with each other: How can something partake of being and non-being? In order to answer this question that is raised in the previous part, it is necessary to investigate the realm of ideas, in which things participate. So, Theaetetus and the Stranger ask: how can being and non-being interweave? The formulation of non-being as difference makes the blending of ideas possible and helps to position the sophist as the illusion-maker. Why Plato discusses the sophist in a dialogue where he develops his ideas about non-being becomes obvious. The difference between the philosopher and the sophist can only be diagnosed if falsity, illusion, *eidolon*, or non-being can be shown to exist. The sophist will in turn help to identify the philosopher, drawing the limits of philosophy. Plato aims to answer all these questions and he will begin with the semblance, with what is not true to arrive at the idea, *eidos*, at what is and belongs to the realm of *doxa*.

The dialogue may be read in several ways, one of which may be by following the arguments and extracting the pure argumentation from it; another may be by reading it with a view to how the characters act and the subtext that leads to such actions and a third way may be by focusing on the concepts to which this dialogue introduces us to or makes use of by historicizing these concepts. My purpose is to work through this dialogue bearing in mind these three approaches.

2. An Invitation to Discussion

The problem that will be treated in this dialogue is stated at the outset while Socrates greets the Stranger coming from Elea. Not all the strangers are treated with such hospitality, for there are many who do not deserve to be. The Stranger may be one of the higher powers, like Athena or Apollo who show up in disguise among people in order to test them or he may be a deceiver pretending to be a god though he is not. Both *look* alike, but their essences are not the same. How are we to know whether the Stranger is one of those higher powers or not? In a broader context, the dialogue attempts to find a measure to distinguish the image, the copy, from the original; however it should, first of all, prepare the grounds to prove the idea that there is a distinction between the original and its copy, that these are two distinct categories and both of them exist, though in different ways.

...It is no easier to distinguish that kind of person (the philosopher) than it is to distinguish the gods. Certainly the genuine philosophers, who "haunt over cities," –by contrast to the fake ones- take on all sorts of different appearances just because of other people's ignorance. As philosophers look down from above at the lives of those below them, some people think they are worthless and others think they are worth everything in the world. Sometimes they take on the appearance of statesmen, and sometimes of sophists. Sometimes, too, they might give the impression that they are completely insane. (217c-d)

Socrates asks the Stranger to save himself and his company from the confusion. The three characters, the *sophist*, the *statesman* and the *philosopher* are the most important

figures of democratic Athens, each representing different values and different ways of life. Discerning one of them will help to illuminate the other two.

Guthrie believes that *Sophist* is the first dialogue of a trilogy, which is followed by the *Statesman*.²³ He thinks that the last but the lost work of the project is the *Philosopher*, which he claims is advertised by Plato in *Sophist* 217a, 253c and *Statesman* 257a.

Unfortunately, we only retain the first two characterizations, namely the sophist and the statesman that was announced to be three in the opening of *Sophist* and *Statesman*. Moreover, Plato's references may be ironic and such a work may not exist as Friedländer argues.²⁴ I believe that Plato makes an adequate representation of the philosopher *at least* via the Stranger.

The Stranger uses the method of question and answer instead of oration. He asks help from his companions on a subject which he cannot understand by himself for, like Socrates, he believes the journey to truth can only be realized by the help of the companions and by the impersonal method of *dia-logos*. The Stranger and Theaetetus present a good example of Socratic companionship. For instance, before they begin their inquiry about being they promise that they will follow the path to truth together. In addition, the Stranger admits that he is examining the question only out of regard for Socrates. He is not portrayed as a character after display or personal victories. Though he is a visitor just like the sophists in Athens, he is not one of them. The appearances may be deceptive, as the text will depict. The attitude of the Stranger throughout the dialogue, his speeches on the philosopher and the nature of philosophy op-positioning

²³ Guthrie (1971) p. 123

²⁴ Friedländer (1969) p.

sophistry and the sophist provide fruitful clues for a detailed picture of the third character, the *philosopher*.

3. Definitions of the Sophist

The Stranger accepts Socrates' demand for a clear definition of the sophist:

At present we are only agreed about the name, but of the thing to which we both apply the name possibly you have one notion and I another; whereas we ought always to come to an understanding about the thing itself by means of explicit statements rather than be content to use the same name without formulating what it means. (218c)

Socrates is not after an agreement between him and the Stranger on their notion of the sophist. He aims at an objective classification of the *tribe* of sophists among other classes. This request reveals an important characteristic of philosophical inquiry. It aims at definitions, universals rather than particulars or isolated instances; it is after a principle that will apply to all separate occurrences. The definition of the sophist who is likened to a hydra-headed animal is not easy for he has commonalities with many beings. To find out the definition that will apply to him under all his guises and to differentiate these guises which are not essential to him is the philosopher's enterprise as Plato puts it. It is necessary to 'strip away everything that the sophist has common with other things' to know who he really he is, his essence, *ousia*. For this purpose, the method of division is introduced, *diairesis*²⁵, which consists in distinguishing things "until one has found all the differences contained in it which form a distinct class", the

²⁵ The division requires that at every stage it must be exhaustive and exclusive, so that at each stage the division ideally should be binary. In *Statesman* (285b) Plato instructs the reader how the division should be made; it should be in accordance with nature and one should consider the differences that separate one class from another.

essence of the matter, *ousia*. For Plato the method is not practiced as a conceptual game; it is a means for the dialectician to come closer to truth. It is a basic characteristic of the philosopher to divide, for things are so intertwined with each other that, in order to see their essences and diagnose them accordingly, the philosopher has to know what intertwines with what.²⁶

The *diairesis* results in seven images of the sophist that may be reduced to five:

1. He is a hunter hunting in the lands of youth not with violence but with the art of persuasion²⁷ for the sake of virtue in return for money. (218e-31e)
2. He is a trader buying, selling and fabricating knowledge of virtue by either traveling from city to city or settling in his own town. (223c-24e)
3. He is specialized in eristic.²⁸ (225a-26a)
4. He is the alleged purifier of souls, who clears away notions obstructive to knowledge by instruction.
5. He is an illusionist, an imitator.

The first three definitions have been discussed in detail in other dialogues. It is the last two definitions and mostly the last one that *Sophist* is concerned with. The representation of instruction as purification of the soul is similar to the kind of treatment

²⁶ Of course, the whole idea of *diairesis* stands on the assumption that things intertwine with each other. If there is no such intertwining, the philosopher's effort is in vain.

²⁷ Gorgias does not believe in this categorical distinction between force and persuasion and in his *Encomium of Helen* he claims that the words may be as powerful as force.

²⁸ Plato places the art of controversy under the heading of combative arts. In *Euthydemus*, he presents two brothers who were once wrestlers and then decided to master eristic for it resembles wrestling. The sophist is claimed to provide only an image of dialectic, which basically aims to come closer to truth, by question and answer. Eristic is a private sort of controversy, which is cut up into questions and answers. Eristic is carried on at random, and without rules of art. It aims at pleasure and only that, whereas in the case of dialectic, pleasure is a by-product of the argumentation process. Also, dialectic unlike eristic tries to avoid fallacies in order to realize a healthier line of reasoning. Eristic is an art of creating fallacies.

that medicine carries out with the body and is one of the recurrent themes in Plato. We come across it in *Gorgias*, where Socrates proposes that rhetoric is false medicine²⁹.

The art of purification, which is a complementary process to *diairesis*, throws away the worse and preserves the better which *diairesis* has separated in advance. Kahn says that *diairesis* and *dialectic* are complementary processes.³⁰ Purification is also reserved for the philosopher alone. The reason why the sophist emerges as the master of dialectic as if he is capable of dividing the better from the worse or healing ignorance is because he is an imitator. He has a certain likeness to the philosopher, but there is a similarity “between a wolf and a dog, the wildest thing there is and the gentlest” (231a).

What particularly reveals the sophist’s character, the common element to all the definitions is that he is an imitator. The sophist appears to be everything without being anything. Again, we are faced with the central question of the dialogue: how can something “be” and at the same time “not be”? And what is a semblance?

4. On Non-Being, *Mimesis* and *Eidolon*

Plato locates sophistic among imitative arts. Sophistry is in between everything and nothing; it is an imitation, an approximation of something that is: it is an image. It is in the nature of an image that it is always deficient in some respects from its original. The resemblance relation is imperfect by nature for it would not be resemblance if two things matched in every respect, we would call that ‘identification’. Sophistry does not produce real things, but only semblances of them. However, it is impossible to claim that the sophist is an image-maker without contradicting oneself. Image is a slippery concept that

²⁹ *Gorgias* 464b

³⁰ Kahn (1998) pp. 296-300

has a direct affinity with what is and what is not at the same time. This necessitates an analysis of the nature of the image.

Mimesis in Plato

According to Theaetetus, this is not a hard task for one has only to look at a mirror or at a painting if he wants to *see* an image. Whereas Plato does not think that it is as obvious as Theaetetus claims, for Plato is not after explaining some particular instances of images but what it is to be an image, that is, image-ness. In *Sophist*, Plato presents a detailed analysis of this notion and the metaphysical framework it dwells in.

Gerald Else gives a detailed analysis of different meanings of *mimesis* in fifth century texts and he finds three uses:

1. Miming: direct representation of the looks, actions and utterances of animals or men through speech, song and dancing.
2. Imitation of the actions of one person by another, in a general sense.
3. Replication: an image or effigy of a person or thing in material form.³¹

Among these, Else notes, the first two uses are common, but the last one is not³².

Vernant comments that performance rather than the approximation to the model was a more important issue before.³³ It is by the fifth century that *mimesis* started to be used for the relation between the model and its representation. And it is with Plato that the relation between the original and its image is problematized around the question “what is the nature of semblance?” and the notion of *mimesis* is applied to all the domains that

³¹ Else (1958), p. 79

³² Else says he has comes across this use in only one text: Euripides' *Helen*.

³³ Vernant (1991), p.168

are related with fabricating images, *eidopoiike*.³⁴ These domains include poetry, painting, and sophistry: all the domains that have been subject to Plato's criticism of distortion of truth. They lack genuine knowledge (*episteme*) of things, but only have opinions (*doxai*) about how things are and they aim at pleasure and persuasion rather than truth. Havelock, Vernant and Detienne state that Plato's assault especially on poetry is related with his attempts to found a new type of thought and education, which is extremely at odds with the former thinking and teaching styles that are based on memory. Marrou states that besides two important education institutions in Greece, which are gymnastics and music, there were no other schools, but only traditional ways of education³⁵. Viewed in this way, Plato's strong refusal of mimesis is related with a new way of thinking and teaching, a new way of transmitting knowledge, that is, a new way of life.

Plato opposes the poetic, mythical, Homeric, whatever we may call, thinking in which the real knowledge was divine and transmitted through the poets and the oracles that were inspired by daemons. Havelock's detailed analysis of Homeric poems reveals that Homer was not a poet in the sense in which we understand a poet now. Homer and his descendants had an important function in society in the construction of everyday life for they supply names and underlying principles of different phenomena, describe social and ritual institutions and provide popular wisdom. The source of their knowledge, however, is not themselves, but the Muses, daughters of Mnemosyne, "memory". The

³⁴ Vernant (1991) p. 167

³⁵ *Laches* is about the two parents' worries about which type of education their children should have. This shows the absence of any institutionalized education structure. The appearance of this theme in most of Plato's dialogues points to the fact that 'proper education' was one of the most debated themes of the era and also that Plato is taking it most seriously. See also Marrou (1956) for a detailed analysis of the education institutions in Ancient Greece.

Muses “tell of what is, and what is to be, and what was before now”³⁶. In this setting, memory does not refer to a psychological function; it is a goddess who grants the poet the privilege to see and translate the invisible for the ordinary mortals³⁷. The poet’s function is to remind the mortals of the knowledge necessary for the survival and preservation of the culture and social life. Havelock emphasizes that the role of the epic in an oral culture is not “an act of creation, but an act of reminder and recall”³⁸. In this setting, the poet is the master of truth.³⁹ Once articulated by the poet, words gain an unquestionable power for he is the one who has the capability to see the beyond, to see the truth.

Plato rejects this mode of acquiring knowledge for it rests on a mimetic effect of communication. Two sides are involved in this feat; the performer and the audiences, who identify themselves with what the performer presents. Knowledge is thus transmitted through generations. Therefore, one of the most important issues that Plato dealt with was creating a new non-mythological paradigm of knowledge and truth and a new way of life formed around this paradigm. The special sense that he gave to *mimesis* is a way to reveal what he basically opposes in these modes of expression, ranging from

³⁶ Hesoid *Theogony* 32, 38

³⁷ See Detienne (1999) esp. ch. 2

³⁸ Havelock *Preface to Plato* p. 91

³⁹ Detienne stresses that truth, which is personified by the Goddess *Aletheia*, is not to be understood in its usual sense: as correspondence to reality or to logical principles. *Aletheia* is a 'narrated' truth, which founds the rules and origins of nature and society, and gives to the things their names as substantial and not as conventional. In this sense it forms a pair not with 'falsity' but with oblivion, with forgetfulness, which is represented by the Goddess Lethe. Just as the night surrounds the light, Lethe surrounds and by doing it, limits the realm of *Aletheia*. The poet can see only what is revealed to him and through his performances he transmits what he has seen to the people. See Detienne (1999) p.52

poetry to rhetoric.⁴⁰ Plato thinks that their rhythmic and formulaic aspects, which aim both to help memorization and to affect the listeners, can only reproduce what is only accidental in things. They cannot produce genuine knowledge, but only semblances and an effect of fascination that bewitches their audience.⁴¹ Plato likens the sophist to the painter who “produces things that have the same name as real things”⁴². These semblances aim at deception by showing what is not as if it is or by distorting what is real. Because the sophist and the painter lack knowledge, they can only produce false opinions in the soul of their audience. Therefore, the painter and the sophist can only “fool the more mindless young children”⁴³ for a clever person would see that they lack genuine knowledge of things. They use tricks such as the painter’s keeping his pictures at a distance from the spectator in order to awaken the belief that they have the absolute power of making whatever they like. The sophist produces simulacra in words (*eidola legomena* 234c) and this is what is most threatening about him for he acts as if he has the power to discourse on anything and persuade people on anything he wishes.⁴⁴ Referring to what Detienne says about the poet, we may clearly say that the sophist is the new master of truth, who does not derive his power from Muses, but from himself and his power of persuasion alone.

⁴⁰ Plato’s orientation towards education in his critique of sophistic is apparent from *Sophist* (234d-e) where he talks about pupils of sophists: “But as time goes on, and their hearers advance in years, and come into closer contact with realities, and have learnt by sad experience to see and feel the truth of things, are not the greater part of them compelled to change many opinions which they formerly entertained, so that the great appears small to them, and the easy difficult, and all their dreamy speculations are overturned by the facts of life... And the wish of all of us, who are your friends, is and always will be to bring you as near to the truth as we can without the sad reality.”

⁴¹ This is a common theme in Plato, which we come across in *Gorgias*, *Phaedrus* and *Theaetetus*. The sophists and the orators lack genuine knowledge, so they can only affect the emotions of their listeners.

⁴² *Sophist* 234b

⁴³ *Sophist* 234b. Emphasis on the education of the young again.

⁴⁴ This fear is articulated in *Gorgias* 459a-d

In order to argue that sophistic is not a genuine art Plato has to prove that there is a genuine art and more important to prove that sophistic is only a false reproduction of it: that sophistic is, but that it is not philosophy⁴⁵. Nevertheless, before that he has to show that something can be and not be at the same time.⁴⁶

Non-Being and Difference

The sophist acts like the dialectician, he looks like the philosopher but he is neither a dialectician nor a purger of the souls like the philosopher; he just appears to be so. How can a thing appear and not be? How can an image exist if it is non-being? The sophist creates false opinions and he forms false statements. But, if false opinion is the form of opinion which thinks the opposite of the truth, then false opinion thinks what is not! How is it possible to think when thinking nothing at all? Accordingly, if a false statement is a statement that does not say what is, then it says nothing, then it is not a statement at all, for a statement is intended to say something.

If Plato argues that sophistry seems like philosophy without really being so, he has to prove the being of non-being and non-being of being. If he argues that the sophist aims at deception and produces false opinions in the soul of the listener, then he has to show how falsity is possible. If he argues that sophistic *logos* is false, he has to show how a false statement is still a statement.

⁴⁵ The meaning of this project is understood better, if we bear in mind that Isocrates, who Plato and after him all history of philosophy claim to be a sophist argues that he is doing philosophy.

⁴⁶ We should bear in mind that Plato makes a categorical distinction between two different ways of *mimesis*; one is by way of *methexis* and this refers to the creation of the gods and the other is by way of *poiesis*, which refers to the creation of human beings such as the sophists or the poets. Sophistry is a semblance both partaking of philosophy, yet diverging from it for it is not true.

In order to make philosophical *logos* as opposed to sophistic *logos* possible, Plato should not only legitimize falsehood but also he has to formulate what it is to state something.⁴⁷ The problem, therefore, is not only about non-being but also about *logos* and what kind of qualities it should possess to state something and to state the truth. The sophistic paradox -that he who says that falsehood exists asserts the being of non-being- is challenged in *Theaetetus*, yet it is not brought to a conclusion. The significance of the problem becomes more apparent in *Sophist*. If there is no way to distinguish between the qualities of *logoi*, every discourse is reduced to same level. All *logoi* are true regardless of their relation to the way things are. In this context, any meaningful discourse including philosophy intending to understand reality loses its impact. There has to be a limit within discourse, a criterion to distinguish between the good and the bad discourse. Plato is after this criterion both in the case of beings and in the case of *logos*.⁴⁸

Parmenidean Thinking as an Obstacle to Logos

Plato develops an ontological-syntactical analysis which finally positions non-being as difference. Nevertheless, the first character that Plato has to attack in order to theorize on non-being and save philosophical *logos* is Parmenides, whom he calls a philosopher. It is also noteworthy that he fulfills this task through the Eleatic stranger.⁴⁹ The Parmenidean doctrine of truth rests on principles that strictly abandon even the thought

⁴⁷ Frede also states that Plato is dealing with two problems; one is the problem of falsehood and the other is the nature of statement. See Frede (1992), p.398

⁴⁸ In both cases, the problem is about *mimesis*: the bed that the craftsmen produce is different from the bed that a painter produces; likewise, the *logoi* that the philosopher produces are different than the sophists'. Both the craftsman and the philosopher produce according to the *eidos*. Craftsmen do not know, but the user knows. The philosopher knows. It is the same division when we talk about divine and human production.

⁴⁹ The Stranger asks Theaetetus not to consider himself as a parricide for in order to argue that the sophist is an illusionist, he must admit that non-being somehow *is*, and that being, on the other hand, *is not*, which is clearly at odds with the doctrines of the Eleatic School. (*Sophist* 241d)

of non-being and any enquiry admitting that non-being, in a sense, is. Unfortunately, the Eleatic stranger *has to* talk about non-being, if he is willing to track down the sophist, who takes refuge in non-being. If the Stranger follows his master, he is compelled to contradict himself as soon as he articulates “non-being”:

1. The predicate "non-being" is not applicable to any being. It is unthinkable, unutterable, unspeakable, and indescribable.
2. Speaking of something we speak of being, for to speak of something isolated from all being is impossible.
3. A man cannot speak and say nothing, he who says "non-being" does not speak at all.

The Stranger trying to trap the sophist finds himself trapped in the sophist's net.

It seems both the Stranger and Plato who owe Parmenides a lot for what he has added to philosophical thinking have to deny him in order to defeat their present enemy standing right in front of their way to truth and preventing them from doing philosophy. Parmenides is totally negligent about the phenomenal world; he reduces it to nothingness and abandons the possibility of *image*, which is something in-between being and non-being. Plato, on the other hand, notices this little gap in Parmenides, which amounts to huge problems: If one cannot think or speak about what is not, then one must either be saying what is and therefore the truth all the time or one must be saying nothing at all. In both cases, the impact of speech is undermined. Why deal with philosophy and seek after truth if whatever we articulate is true or how deal with philosophy if we cannot speak at all? In this framework philosophical *logos* is considered as any other discourse; it does not claim to be a ladder to climb up the way to truth. What is more problematic about the notion of *logos* is that one cannot distinguish

between different speeches for there is no real difference between them. We lack criteria to judge between different *logoi*; a meta-*logos*, philosophy, to tell which is closer to truth.

Plato has to develop a new ontology, different from that of Parmenides that will include non-being in a way. The discussion on non-being takes the form of an inquiry into the nature of being. Plato makes a categorical distinction between things and ideas just as Parmenides does. However, Parmenides' ontology does not allow things to exist; according to him there is no truth in things: he reduces them to nothingness. There is only being, it is one, and it is immovable, eternal, and so on. Plato's intervention to this line of thought is to remind us that we cannot speak and make philosophy if we are to reject images totally. On the other hand, the elimination of theory of ideas equally annihilates the possibility of philosophy for there will be nowhere "for the mind to turn if it is not accepted that the ideas of particulars remain the same".⁵⁰ In other words, if the 'character' of particulars is liable to any and every change, then all discussion of particulars will come to an end. Philosophy operates with general propositions, and if particulars cannot be classed, cannot be ranked under ideas, it cannot fulfill its task.

Parmenides claims that being is one. Then there are two ways that he can theorize the relation between the name and the thing:

1. He may suppose that the name and the thing are different; this implies duality.
2. He may suppose that the name and the thing are the same.

Then there are two further alternatives:

- a. The name is the name of nothing.

⁵⁰ Rist (1970) p. 227 (based on *Parmenides* 135 b-c)

- b. The name is the name of something, but in this case, the name will only be the name of a name.

Heidegger explains the issue in a striking way:

“*Logos* is always a *legein ti*, something what is said. This structure of *logos* hence provides with regard to the Eleatic thesis:

1. a *ti* which is the *legomenon*, the said, the meant: *being*
2. this *being* is *legomenon*, addressed, as *one*
3. *being* is uttered as *legomenon* in the *name*

Then, *being*, *one* and the *name*, following the sense of the thesis, must be one and the same.”⁵¹

Again, there is no room for meaningful speech if we think of being in purely monistic terms as Parmenides did. For even our first sentence about being, that it is one, creates a duality and we contradict ourselves. As Cornford says, Parmenides “had not distinguished clearly between what has, or is characterized by a quality and the quality itself... the hot denoted both a hot substance and the quality of heat.”⁵² Another way of putting this is that Parmenides does not discriminate between names as nouns, and the predicates, *rhema*, that apply to them as Plato does in *Sophist*. Plato draws a distinction that is impossible to Parmenides, by introducing the relation of predication and by revolutionizing the relation between the thing and its name, that is, by developing a theory on *logos*. How can we utter two names for one thing? Plato does not choose a dualist position instead. His solution is to develop a predication relation. However, we

⁵¹ Heidegger (1997), p. 314

⁵² Guthrie (1986), p. 122

cannot say that his solution is purely linguistic, for the solution stands on some metaphysical assumptions. An extended version of his theory of ideas provides the conditions for predication.

An Ontological Prelude to a Theory of Logos

One of the functions of the ideas is to provide conditions for predication. As we have stated in the earlier section, all things receive their names from the ideas they participate in (*Phaedo* 102b, *Parmenides* 133d).⁵³ For Plato, the phenomenal world and the realm of ideas are not two exclusive domains. Rather, the phenomenal world participates in ideas and ideas make themselves seen through things; things are instances of ideas. This is what Kahn calls Plato's dual explanation of the relation of ideas to phenomena⁵⁴. There is both:

1. "the transcendence of the idea (*chorismos*: separation)" and
2. "its immanence (*methexis*: the participation of the phenomenon)": it manifests itself through things.

A brilliant example of this dual relation is given in *Phaedo* (102a). The problem is if a thing may have properties that are contradictory. "Simmias is shorter than Phaedo but taller than Socrates". How can Simmias be both tall and short at the same time? The answer provided by Socrates here, is a predecessor to *Sophist*: these properties only *seem* contradictory. Socrates treats the particulars as substrata for changeable properties, which are themselves stable.⁵⁵ When I say, "Theaetetus is short", I mean that Theaetetus

⁵³ Rist (1970) p. 227

⁵⁴ Kahn (1998), p.244

⁵⁵ *Phaedo* 102d, 70d

participates in 'shortness' and when I say that he is tall, he participates in 'tallness'.

Thus, every predication expresses both:

1. Something relative and contingent in the phenomenal world and
2. Something absolute in the world of ideas.⁵⁶

The question is repeated in *Sophist*: How do we predicate many names of the same thing. On what grounds do we say that man is good and also that man is ugly? How can any thing, which we originally supposed to be one, show up under many names? However, this time Plato's aim is not to explain how the phenomena participate in ideas, but to explain how different ideas interweave with each other. Plato places a fundamental difference between these two levels: the relation between phenomenon and idea is contingent, whereas the relation between ideas is necessary.

Plato frees himself from the early ontologies which he believes to be repeating the same mistake by defining being as one or many, or as hot and cold or as at rest or in motion: they do not distinguish between the quality and thing. He says "all these add on a notion of being, some affirming that things 'are' truly in motion, and others that they 'are' truly at rest" (255b). However, motion and rest add on being; they are not identical with being, so they equally include and exclude being in their own way. Then, being must be a third entity (249d) while 'motion' and 'rest' are two other ideas incompatible with each other. Both participate in but are not identical with being. So there are two more entities that are fundamental which Plato calls 'sameness' and 'difference' that allow and describe the relation between these ideas. In this way, Plato introduces rest, motion, sameness, difference and being as fundamental ideas. Among these ideas, 'difference'

⁵⁶ Kahn (1998), p.243

permeates all classes, for they all differ from one another (256e). It is necessary that all differ from each other and keep their identity in order to be able to partake of each other. Any kind of blending requires being different as a pre-condition and ‘difference’ makes each of the ideas *different from* being, and so non-being. Let us see how Plato is able to equate non-being with difference by explaining how difference participates in the idea of motion:

1. Motion is different from rest.
2. Motion therefore *is not* rest.
3. Yet, motion *is*, for it partakes of being.
4. Motion is different from the same.
5. Motion therefore *is not* the same.
6. Yet, motion is the same, because all things partake of the same.
7. Motion is different from the different.
8. Motion therefore *is not* the different.
9. Motion is also different from being.
10. Motion, since it partakes of being, really *is* and also *is not*.

Therefore non-being necessarily exists in the case of motion and for all of them, in like manner, we may say that they *are not*. When we speak of non-being, we speak, not of something opposed to being, but only different (257b). Therefore, non-being necessarily exists in the case of every idea to make it different from the other ideas. This is how Plato proves the being of non-being and non-being of being. Nevertheless, this is only a prelude to his theory of *logos*. Plato has to tell on what conditions one can describe this

structure, that is, how different ideas blend with each other and on what conditions. He has to legitimize what he has said so far as a philosopher, how philosophical *logos* is different from the sophistic *logos* and why it is more precious than that⁵⁷.

5. Theory of *Logos* and Refutation of the Sophist

Plato considers *logos* as an important tool to access truth, yet *logos* is not a separate object of inquiry. Plato's linguistic analysis is dependent on the inquiry on the ontological categories, the ideas and their relation between themselves and with things. Plato considers *logos* among beings.⁵⁸ Therefore, if all beings are instances of ideas, the interweaving of ideas must be a pre-condition for *logos*.

Logos is made up of words that may depict truly or falsely *about* something. Yet, it is not a mere succession of words. Plato repeats the question he asked for the ideas this time for *logos*: Are all names connected with one another, or none, or only some of them? The words, which have a meaning when in sequence, may be connected, but those which have no meaning when in sequence, cannot be connected. *Logos* has a structure of its own just like the ideas. Not all combinations of words make up a statement, as is the case with the ideas for which not all combinations hold. *Logos* is not a compilation of words each designating an object; *logos* says something about a state of affairs.⁵⁹ How does it do it?

⁵⁷ *Euthydemus* is classified as one of the protreptic dialogues of Plato, where Socrates tries to persuade Clinias to choose philosophy rather than eristic as his education. Why may not the *Sophist* be written with a similar motivation?

⁵⁸ *Sophist* 260a

⁵⁹ *Cratylus* 433d

Logos is made up of names. In *Cratylus*, Plato claims that names stand for ideas.⁶⁰ If it was not so, if the names stood for the particulars, which are liable to any and every change, but not for ideas which remain the same⁶¹, names would not be able to refer, and then all discussion would come to an end. Therefore, *logos* necessitates a superordinate reality to realize its most primary task for Plato: reference. Interweaving of ideas is necessary for the second primary task of *logos*: to convey meaning. *Cratylus* only talks about the first, that is, on what grounds one can give names to things or how reference is possible and *Sophist* is needed for the construction of the second, how speech is possible. In order for a combination of words to form a sentence, two elements are primary: the noun and the predicate. The one who is making a statement not only names, but also does something, by connecting verbs with nouns. Thereby *logos* can state something about the world; about that which is that it is or that it is not and it can state something that is different from that which is the case⁶². The quality of the statement is, however, different from its linguistic status. It may be a meaningful combination of words, yet this meaning may convey something inconsistent with what is the case. The quality of the statement is determined from its correspondence with reality, so the problem is again a reference problem: whether the sentence refers to reality or not.

Non-being appears at the moment where quality of a statement is discussed: Does non-being, which is diffused over all being, mingle with *logos*, too? The Stranger says:

⁶⁰ *Cratylus* (385e)

⁶¹ *Parmenides* 135 b-c

⁶² *Sophist* 262e; *Cratylus* 385b

The true one (statement) says *those that are*, as they are, about you...And the false one says things different from *those that are*... so it says *those that are not*, but that they are. (*Sophist* 263b)

Non-being diffuses over *logos*, because a false statement, which speaks of things *differently* than they are, is a perfect instance of an admixture of non-being and *logos*. Then, when one makes a false sentence, he is not saying 'nothing', but only saying things other than what is the case. If false *logos* is possible, then false opinion is also possible⁶³, and sophistry can be defined as the art of deception, creating false opinions in the soul of its listeners. The sophist is the illusion-maker.

Plato determines two kinds of production: human and divine. Things which are made by man are works of human art and they are produced through imitation, *mimesis*, for it is only gods that can bring things into existence. Two further classes are attested for human art, which are discussed in *Republic* and *Cratylus*, too. The art of the craftsman is distinguished from the art of the painter. The second, which has affinity with sophistic since it also creates dreams for those who are awake, obviously does not reflect the essence of the model, but only its appearance. The second creation, however, is different with respect to its relation to ideas. In *Republic*, Plato argues that the craftsman "looks towards the appropriate idea in making the beds"⁶⁴, whereas the painter merely imitates the look. In addition, in *Cratylus*, Plato contrasts painting and name-giving: the first aims to imitate the sensible properties⁶⁵ whereas the latter aims to give the essence⁶⁶. I

⁶³ Thought and *logos* are the same, with the exception, that what is called thought is the unuttered conversation of the soul. (See *Sophist* 263e - 264c)

⁶⁴ *Republic* 596b

⁶⁵ *Cratylus* 434a

think thereby Plato distinguishes between two kinds of imitation, one aiming at imitating the appearance, the other aiming to imitate the essence or the idea of the thing. The sophist, who is classed with imitators, among those who have no knowledge, cannot be the philosopher, for he is ignorant of the essence of what he imitates. The philosopher deals with the ideas, whereas the sophist deals with appearances and images. Therefore their discourses are different from each other, but since the sophist “imitates the wise he will have a name which is formed by an adaptation of the word *sophos*, that is the sophist”⁶⁷.

6. Conclusion

I think that Plato's *Sophist* is a very important dialogue, not only because it provides some solutions to the problems articulated in *Parmenides* and *Theaetetus* that basically result from some gaps within the theory of ideas. I think *Sophist* is also important for its construction of the philosopher as opposed to the sophist. It is not surprising that the Stranger says they “have found the philosopher even though we (they) were looking for the sophist” (253c).

The sophist and the philosopher are introduced as two opposing characters, one living under excess light, the other in dim darkness, metaphors which are reminiscent of the cave and sun simile in *Republic*. One has only opinions, *doxai* about being, whereas the other is “always uses reasoning to stay near the idea of being” (254b). Yet, the problem is not that the sophist and the philosopher form two exclusive domains; it is that they look alike and they have things in common. Plato is decisive about holding the sophist,

⁶⁶ *Cratylus* 431d and 432d

⁶⁷ *Sophist* 268c

“until we have stripped him of all his common properties, and reached his difference”⁶⁸.

This is also a reminder to the philosopher about his most important task: dialectic, which aims to distinguish in order to see into the essence of the things, the reality underlying them. This is what philosophical *logos* tries to attain.

In Greek, *logos* is the noun form of the word *legein*, which means to speak, to pick up and to enumerate. Thus, *logos* is always associated with taking hold of and raising out of what is in a state of indistinctness.⁶⁹ Like the name-giver in *Cratylus* who tries to pick up the right words for the objects, speaking is picking up the right words and organizing them in the right way. It involves two actions, dividing things to discriminate between what to speak about and where to stay silent and bringing things together, synthesizing the words in a way that will convey meaning. After all, ‘walks, talks, sleeps’ does not mean anything. It is the task of the dialectician to know these grammatical rules and apply them accordingly and it is the task of the dialectician to sort out the diseased *logoi*. The disease may be about the syntactical structure of the statement, which prevents it from being a statement at all or about its quality. It may be perfect with respect to the grammatical rules, yet it may not convey what is. It is the task of the dialectician to see how things stand as separate entities, yet how well they are capable of blending and what can blend with what. Plato calls any attempt to separate all beings from one another a barbarism. This warning holds for those who do not believe in the existence of ideas or who misunderstand it and for those who formulate non-being as an unthinkable, unspeakable entity. *Logos* is on the condition that there is an admixture of natures –an

⁶⁸ *Sophist* 264e

⁶⁹ It is related with bringing to the front in order to make the others see.

instance of which is the admixture of nouns with verbs. If it was not so, we would be speechless, it would be the final destruction of all reasoning.

II. Who is the Sophist?

Apart from the image that appears in Platonic dialogues, we do not have much material in our hands in order to draw a perfect picture of the sophists. Their works have been lost or excessively damaged. However, the bits and pieces of information left can help us to reconstruct a non-Platonic image of the sophist which will contribute to our original inquiry: to derive the picture of the philosopher from the way he depicts the sophist.

This question forces us to go back to the 5th century BC in Greece for it is the time that the sophists such as Protagoras, Gorgias, Hippias, and Antiphon first arrived on the scene. This also marks the time that Socrates started his career as a philosopher. It is a time when philosophical activity was focused on ethical problems for the first time in its history gaining a character definitely different from the previous line of thinking.⁷⁰

Sophistic is a movement that involves thinkers having rather different views from each other. They do not form a school. Therefore, the first thing that we should have done in this chapter is to reject the title of this chapter. This title is misleading, for it gives one the idea that one could talk about a definite identity as *the* sophist. However, there are sophists, not *the* sophist as Plato imagines them to be: appearing in his dialogues under the mask of several people.

Therefore, it is important to take into account the differences between the sophists and avoid considering them as uniform. Here, I will not attempt a comparison between the sophists but rather choose one of the sophists among them in order to see the distortions

⁷⁰ Romilly believes that this is the reason why Plato tried to distinguish Socrates from the sophists: they were very similar. Both Socrates and the sophist proposed to teach virtue, yet the latter were not moved by a desire for truth. They had first and foremost a practical end. See Romilly (1992) p. 44

between the Platonic image of the sophist and the sophist as he is. For this purpose, Gorgias can be a brilliant candidate. However, I should admit that this choice is not arbitrary. First, Gorgias is accepted as one of the forefathers of sophistic: Diogenes Laertius calls him the father of sophistry. In addition, Plato has given him considerable attention by naming one of his dialogues where he discusses the art of rhetoric *Gorgias*. And the most important of all is that we retain the fragments of a treatise called *On What is Not* by Gorgias, which discusses exactly the same subject, non-being, as Plato's *Sophist*.

After all, the philosophers also display great differences and as Socrates shows us, not all of them form a school. However, we believe that there are some definite characteristics that naturally belong to philosophers. In the same way, though the sophists are not uniform, there are some commonalities or attested commonalities between them: their view on the relation of *logos* to *aletheia*; can the word depict the reality or the truth? The historical evidence shows that it is first Gorgias who articulated this problem. Then, whether we believe sophistic to be a definite line of thinking or not, the general attitude is to pack them together. So, Gorgias as a living, speaking sophist, not as the representative of a canon, may give some idea about the degree of misrepresentation if there is any. After all we should keep in mind that both Plato and Gorgias are constructed figures out of what has remained from them; one as the father of philosophy, the other as the father of sophistic.

In the following section, I will try to analyze the most peculiar work of Gorgias: *On What is Not or On Nature*. It is an unusual work, because for the first time in the history of Western thinking, as far as we know it, some thinker attempts to deal not with Being,

but with Non-Being, per se. An additional peculiarity is about its name, which suggests equating nature with what is not. This equation is at odds with the Pre-Socratic tradition that has always associated nature with what is, not with what is not. However, this peculiarity is not the only and the main reason for my preference. The text shows great affinities with Plato's *Sophist*, which is dealing with the very same question of Non-Being, albeit in a rather different manner.

A. Sophists: A Historical Overview

The history of the sophists can be traced back to 5th century BC when they came to Athens from different places of Greece proposing that they were teachers of effective speech. At the time democratic Athens was not the only but the most appealing center for such travelers who wanted to display their skills and make money out of them. Among scholars such as Romilly, Marrou and Kennedy the sophists are identified as representatives of a new way of teaching accelerated by the democratization process taking place in Athens. Romilly in her *Rhetoric in Pericles' Athens* attempts to describe the characteristics of this new teaching, which the sophists offered to the Athenian society. Unlike the pre-Socratics such as Eleatics and the Ionian physicists the sophists were not basically interested in the problem of being or nature; they were professional educators. Their lessons were not designed to produce sophists but brilliant orators, and competent citizens. Marrou believes that this is 'a great revolution in teaching' and that the sophists are the antecedents of today's professors, who likewise charge money for their service.

The sophists did not form a school, and in this simple fact lies one of the sources of shortcuts in judging sophists. It is believed that they did not develop a theory of speech or any distinguished ideas, for, if they had aimed to develop an elaborate line of thinking, like the other thinkers they would have had pupils, not customers.

Cassin stresses that the sophists possessed a dual mastery that was ingrained in their command of language: they were educators selling their wisdom and they were good in politics: "they knew how to convince judges, sway an assembly, lead a successful

embassy, give a new city its laws, build democracy”⁷¹.

The sophists put no limits on their *paideia* ranging from poetry to technical matters or even to medicine. Athens was a democratic city where politics occupied a central place. Thus, their teaching answers many existing needs of the new society. Romilly emphasizes that the skill of ‘clever speaking’ was essential for all the Greeks of the classical period. Speech was an important mode of action in a society where all major decisions were the outcome of public debates taking place in the assemblies. However, Athens, which became an extreme participatory democracy by the mid-5th century, lacked any institution that could provide such higher education for its citizens. Gymnastics and music were the two basic forms of education, but these were intended to meet the needs of a primary schooling, so there was a gap in education for older students.⁷² It was the sophists who filled this gap by teaching rhetoric.

If we take Dillon and Gergel’s classification as a reference, among the sophists of the First Sophistic, we can consider Protagoras of Abdera, Gorgias of Leontini, Prodicus of Ceos, Hippias of Elis, Antiphon, Thrasymachus of Chalcedon, Critias of Athens, Euthydemus and Dionysodorus of Chios, Alcidamas of Elaeia, and the unknown writer of the *Dissoi Logoi*. Unfortunately, only a small portion of their works have survived and for the rest we have to rely on the testimonies of Plato and Aristotle who were direct witnesses of the era, the doxographers of the later periods such as Diogenes Laertius, the members of the Second Sophistic like Isocrates, Philostratus and later philosophers like Sextus Empiricus. The original sophistic texts that survive are only “ruins of a

⁷¹ Cassin (2000) p. 958

⁷² See Marrou (1956)

tradition”⁷³ which amount to two full texts and a half text from Gorgias, two fragments from Protagoras, Antiphon’s tetralogies, sections from a text called *Dissoi Logoi*, and some other pieces. According to Cassin, “reconstructing these theses and doctrines resembles a kind of paleontology of perversion, since the same texts supply both reliable knowledge and distorted representations of sophistic.”⁷⁴

Nevertheless, these perversions do not create a problem for the current study; to the contrary, they are what this study aims to build on. By tracking down the lines that these distortions follow, it is probable that we will get a more accurate picture of the philosopher.

Another problem with the history of sophists is related with their *tekhne*, that is, rhetoric. Robert Wardy in his *Birth of Rhetoric* claims, “self-conscious reflection on the theory and practice of persuasion, which is named as rhetoric, is a Greek achievement, initiated in the fifth century BC”⁷⁵. Thomas Cole in his *The Origins of Rhetoric in Ancient Greece* argues that rhetoric is basically a fourth century phenomenon, and its originators are not the sophists, but Plato and Aristotle are who constructed it as we know it today. It was only in its very primitive form in fifth century. He believes that two necessary conditions should be met for the development of a theory of rhetoric:

1. “The habit of abstracting essential messages from verbal contexts, that is the isolation of composer's message from its verbal realization”

⁷³ Dillon and Gergel, J. (2003)

⁷⁴ Cassin (2000) p. 958

⁷⁵ Wardy (1998) p. 2

2. "The composition of "written" texts of eloquence, that is, leaving the oral tradition to pave the way for a written culture where a more precise analysis of the verbal medium could be conducted."⁷⁶

However, according to Cole this kind of change in language has not taken place until Plato and Aristotle. He believes that there was not a clear-cut distinction between rhetoric and other arts such as poetry and within rhetoric itself⁷⁷. The types of rhetoric were not clearly determined which points to the fact that a theory of rhetoric was absent in fifth century BC.

In this study I will not go into the details of this discussion by taking sides with any of the authors. Rather I will try to follow a middle path: Siding with Cole, I believe that rhetoric, as we know it today, is the product of the fourth century BC. It is undeniable that it is Aristotle who has set the rules for speech and made a detailed classification of the different kind of speeches. Moreover, we can think of Isocrates as an evidence for Cole's idea that rhetoric was not a specialized branch of study. Isocrates, who is a contemporary of Plato, is now surely considered to be a brilliant rhetor. However, what is interesting is that he does not prefer to use rhetoric in order to define his occupation, instead he calls it *philosophia*. He has a different conception of philosophy from that of Plato for he believes that philosophy should deal with practical matters and be able to solve the everyday problems of people.

However, allowing this thesis alone will preclude thinking of rhetoric in a broader context as Wardy does. Wardy, by making a looser definition of rhetoric as theory of

⁷⁶ Cole (1991), p.3

⁷⁷ There are three types of rhetorical speech; forensic, which is of defense or accusation before a law court, deliberative, which is political advice to a legislative and executive body and epideictic, which is praise or blame of some individual or institution. However, this classification is articulated by Aristotle.

persuasion, grants the opportunity to imagine different conceptions of rhetoric among which Platonic and Aristotelian rhetoric are no more than viable alternatives to that of the sophists.⁷⁸ Plato, in his *Gorgias*, makes a distinction between sophistry and rhetoric without making a detailed explanation for the reasons of this categorization and in his *Phaedrus* he dismisses sophistry and announces the true rhetorician as himself, the dialectician. This gesture reduces sophistry to false rhetoric and allows the subsequent criticisms of sophists as charlatans charging money for what they are not able to teach. Therefore, I think if we are able to use this opportunity to think of rhetoric in a broader context, it is probable that we will end up with a refreshed insight into Plato's and Aristotle's conceptions about philosophy and rhetoric.

⁷⁸ See Wardy, (1998) p. 2

B. Gorgias' *On What is Not*

Unfortunately, only three of the treatises that Gorgias has written have come down to us: *Encomium of Helen*, *On What Is Not* and *Defense of Palamedes*. In addition, we retain some fragments of a funeral oration reported by Dionysius of Halicarnassus and a few phrases, some of which help us to draw an approximate picture of Gorgias.

For this study, we will focus on *On What Is Not*, for this is the work in which Gorgias theorizes on non-being in general. Nevertheless, we will make use of the rest of his works and fragments whenever the study commands us to do so.

We do not have access to the Gorgianic original of *On What Is Not*. It is preserved in two versions; one is from the skeptical philosopher Sextus Empiricus' work titled *Against the Schoolmasters* and the other is from a work included in the Aristotelian corpus *About Melissus, Xenophanes, and Gorgias*. I will make use of both of them, but will not focus on the differences and the reasons for these differences if it does not directly affect the course of the thesis. The translations of these texts and others are available in John Dillon and Tania Gergel's *The Greek Sophists*, to which I owe a great deal for the accomplishment of this study.

1. Doing away with the *Kriterion*

Sextus Empiricus begins his testimonial on Gorgias by a classification:

“Gorgias of Leontini belonged to the same party as those who abolish the *kriterion*, although he did not adopt the same line of attack as Protagoras”

(*Against the Schoolmasters* vii. 65)⁷⁹.

⁷⁹Dillon and Gergel (2003) p.67

I think the first remark about Gorgias is very helpful to get to know him: he has done away with the *kriterion*. Dillon and Gergel note that *kriterion* is an important technical term in Hellenistic philosophy, which denotes the instrument or faculty that judges the truth-value of statements.⁸⁰ So, what does it mean to abolish the *kriterion*? In Sextus' *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, where he discusses Protagoras, we are presented with a more illuminating explanation of *kriterion*:

Protagoras asserts that "Man is the measure of all things (*khremata*), of things that are that they are, and of things that are not, that they are not" and by 'measure' he means the criterion of truth and by 'things', (physical) objects, so that what he is really claiming is that "Man is the criterion of all objects (*pragmata*) ..." And in consequence of this he postulates only what appears (*ta phainomena*) to each individual, and thus he introduces relativity... for all things that appear to men are the case, and things that appear to no man are conversely not the case. (Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* I 216-19)

Dillon and Gergel remark that there is no difference between *khremata* and *pragmata*, except that *pragmata* is a broader term and that *khremata* is out of date in Sextus' time.⁸¹ In addition, in Sextus' text, there is no remark about it, yet what is emphasized is things' (*pragma's* and *khrema's*) relation to *phainomenon*, that is to what appears. *Phainomenon* is derived from the verb *phaino*, to appear, hence *phainomena* are things that appear to the senses. Sextus says that both Protagoras and Gorgias deny that there is any criterion of absolute truth. Both deny making a categorical distinction between what *is* and what

⁸⁰ Dillon and Gergel (2003) p. 346-7

⁸¹ Dillon and Gergel (2003) p. 347

appears to us. They believe that how things appear to us is a good indicator of how things are. The appearances are the basis of truth.

Another remark about Protagoras and how he abolishes the *kriterion* comes from Plato, but Plato has a different understanding of the term. What he means by *kriterion* is a criterion of relative truth:

He (Protagoras) has the *kriterion* of these things within himself; so when he thinks that they are as he experiences them, he thinks what is true and what really is for him. (*Theaetetus* 158b)

Plato thinks that for Protagoras, truth is relative. People's perceptions about things vary and there is no way to judge which perception is better than the other. The truth is how things *are* with respect to me. Things *are* as one experiences them to be. They reject the "criterion in so far as it claims to be a test of absolute realities and to distinguish the true from the false"⁸². Each man must be trusted in respect of those that appear to him, for what a madman sees is what is real for him and he is a reliable criterion regarding what is the truth for him; there is no standard above himself so as to judge the truth-value of his beliefs. Yet, we do not have enough evidence here to argue if they also abolish 'being', if they also deny that things exist. It will be Gorgias who will dare to say that nothing *is*, but his statement is not without qualifications, as we will see. For the time being, let us only say that they deny an understanding of absolute truth and a distinction between how things *are* and how they appear to us.

⁸² Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Mathematicians* VII 64

2. *The Way of Truth*

The title of Gorgias' text, *On What Is Not or On Nature*⁸³, and the flow of the arguments within the text awaken the impression that Gorgias is not merely concerned with sharing his thoughts on non-being with the Athenian society; he has a cunning, hidden purpose. This is why this work has been considered as a spoof by many thinkers so far. There is even a great controversy about treating it as a mere joke or taking it as serious. I do not want to take sides in this discussion for it would be falling into a Gorgianic trap that is deliberately set for leading people to such controversies over his discourse. Gorgias aims to disappoint his listeners and his readers by pulling them into a drift created by different forms of speech he makes use of without justification. It becomes so hard to judge if he is serious or just joking and if he is philosophizing or making fun of philosophizing.

Nevertheless, it is obvious that Gorgias is challenging a way of thinking. This work is not a genuine treatise on being, but a 'secondary discourse' as Cassin prefers to call it. Who is he challenging, then? The most elaborate theorizing on being in his time, that is the Eleatics and their father, Parmenides. Since our analysis will remain incomplete without a proper understanding of Parmenides' thesis, let us begin with his *Way Of Truth*.

Parmenides in his *The Way Of Truth* tells his journey to the Goddess *Aletheia* and thereby formulates the relation between being, thinking, *noein* and speaking, *legein*. Parmenides' *logos* is highly mythical and he narrates his journey as if he has been to an

⁸³ Robert Wardy in *Birth of Rhetoric* mentions that "In the very title we confront our first paradox: it actually bears a disjunctive name, *On What Is Not, or About Nature* (Sextus, *Against the Professors* 7.65). Unfortunately the alternatives might both be later impositions, but they could preserve a significant Gorgianic joke. For an ancient philosopher or scientist, "nature" is what really is, so that *On Nature* became the standard designation awarded to Presocratic writings by Hellenistic librarians."p.12

initiation rite, where he has passed through several gates in order to reach the goddess. He has left the Night behind in the escort of the daughters of the sun. Detienne indicates that the journey is akin to the rites of the philosophico-religious sects⁸⁴, where one is to pass through the River of *Lethe*, that is the river of oblivion, in order to leave all that he has learnt so far behind. This step is crucial to get rid of all mortal opinions, to separate the soul from the body, to acquire the most complete knowledge. These themes are all familiar to us from Plato.

As the goddess welcomes Parmenides, she articulates his famous distinction between being and seeming, truth and opinion:

It is no ill chance, but right and justice, that has sent you forth to travel on this way. Far indeed does it lie from the beaten track of men. Now it is that you should learn all things, both the unshaken heart of well rounded truth and the opinion of mortals in which is no true belief at all. (frg. 1)

The goddess distinguishes between two roads to follow, which end up with two different destinations and she singles out one of them: the way to truth. The other road is false for it is only a semblance of what is. But she thinks Parmenides should also know about the second road, that is, the mortal opinions in order to keep himself away from those. So, she discourses on mortal opinions:

Here I end my trustworthy discourse (*piston logos*) and thought concerning truth; henceforth learn the beliefs (*doxai*) of mortal men, listening to the deceitful ordering (*apatelon kosmos*) of my words (frg. 8).

⁸⁴ Including Pythagoreans, orphics and others.

Again, we encounter a similar binary opposition: truth versus what is ambiguous, what is deceitful, that is, *apate*. There are two roads to follow: the way of *Aletheia* and the way of *Apate*. Parmenides investigates the ambiguous beliefs of people and finds out that they name everything surrounding them according to two principles: light and night. The mortals –mistakenly- believe that these two principles pervade all things and constitute the essence of them:

But because all things have been named light and night, and things corresponding to their powers have been assigned to this and that, all is full of light and of obscure night at once, both equal, since neither has any share of nothing. (frg. 8)

Kirk and Raven claim that here Parmenides makes an epistemological characterization of mortals' beliefs which he thinks are derivations of these principles. Mortals have given many names to things –as if there were many things- like 'fire' or 'water' that reflect the nature of the light and night pair. According to Parmenides, light and night do not, of course, reflect the truth; he thinks they are only poor products of human thought. People are far from seeing the unity, the one behind all that is seemingly changing, so they give each of these things, which are in fact non-existent, many names. However, the goddess's speech about human beings represents an inconsistency with the rest of her speech.

Parmenides formulates several dichotomies: Light/Night, *Aletheia/Doxai-Apate*, and Being/Non-being. Of these pairs the first constitutes what is positive and deserves to join the plane of *noein* and *legein*:

... The only ways of enquiry that can be thought of: the one way, that it is

and cannot not be, is the path of Persuasion, for it attends upon Truth; the other, that it is not and cannot be, that I tell you is a path altogether unthinkable. For you could not know that which is not (that is impossible) nor utter it; for the same thing can be thought as can be (the same thing exists for thinking as for being). (frg.2&3)

There are two ways of inquiry one of which is impossible and the other inescapable. Parmenides determines the legitimate contents of thought and it is only being that can be the content of thought. Later he adds that being and thinking are the same (frg. 6) and this leads to the inevitable conclusion that being is knowable by its nature, whereas non-being is not. One can neither think nor articulate that which is not, that is, all the opinions of mortals are impossible. By this move, he reduces all semblances of being, that which Plato will later call *eidola* and all opinions, *doxai* to nothingness. Parmenides rules out the idea of *degrees* of existence such as we encounter in Platonic ontology, where all earthly things are presented as images that partake of both being and non-being. Parmenides says:

It must either be completely or not at all. (frg. 8)

Then, how can the goddess speak about human opinions and how can the mortals have such thoughts as we have summarized above? If, as Parmenides argues, light, night and their manifestations *are not*, how is it possible for mortals to think about them? How can they give so many names to being, which is in fact one and undivided? The goddess obliges both thinking and speaking to be restricted to the realm of being, but she overrides this obligation by talking about mortal opinions, which are not true, that is simply, which *are not*.

Parmenides also introduces a third way of inquiry, which is in between the first two:

That which can be spoken and thought must *be*... This [i.e. Not Being] is the first way of enquiry from which I hold you back, and then from that way also on which mortals wander knowing nothing... persuaded that to be and to be not are the same, yet not the same... (frg. 6)

It seems there are two ways that the goddess tells Parmenides to beware of, the path that leads to non-being and the path that leads to confusion between non-being and being. It is hard to understand why Parmenides makes such a distinction here but not in the beginning of the poem. Claiming that being and non-being are the same and yet different is considered a failure that a man unable to use his rational faculty may fall into. Probably it is Heraclitus that Parmenides has in mind for he acknowledges change and thereby allows being to be and not be at the same time. However, this third way of inquiry is exploited by both Plato and the sophists, though in very different ways. We have seen that Plato stated the being of non-being and non-being of being to expand the realm of ontology to provide room for images. According to Parmenides, being is perfect, but Plato says that there are deficient beings among which all semblances ranging from shadows to craftworks are included. For Plato, sophistry and all other imitations can be said to exist if we grant that there is a realm of deficient things. Likewise, Gorgias holds the being of non-being, but this is in order to narrow down the realm of metaphysics to empty it from Parmenidean concepts such as being. Gorgias' project will be clearer as we proceed.

To summarize, Parmenides by restricting the domain of *legein* to what *is*, neglects our (also his) need to talk about the phenomenal world, which he reduces to non-being. The

phenomenal world, where the same thing may exist at one time and cease to exist does not in any way reflect reality. Parmenides positions being as the perfect opposite of non-being in his ontology: “it is or it is not (*éstin ê ouk éstin*)” (frg. 8). As Plato challenges in his *Sophist*, Parmenides says that being *is* and it is one, eternal and homogeneous, however he does not explain how we can speak about anything, how we can make a move in this thinking that does not allow any talk even on being itself- even our first sentence about being, that it is one, creates a duality and we contradict ourselves.

3. Gorgianic Non-Being

Having made a sketch of Parmenidean being we may continue with Gorgianic non-being, which is derived from the same premises from which the former has been developed. Gorgias, step by step, establishes the impossibility, inapprehensibility and lastly the incommunicability of being. Cassin believes that Gorgias is not behaving rhetorically but is making an internal criticism of Parmenidean ontology by pointing out a catastrophe internal to Parmenides’ thinking: if it is impossible to say what is not, then anything one says is true.⁸⁵ I do not find this plausible for I do not think that Gorgias is trying to develop ontology and improve reasoning as such. Rather he can be said to be making an immanent criticism, that is, criticizing the theory with its own premises, but that does not necessarily bring with it an improvement of the theory on a healthier basis. But I do not argue that he presents a rhetorical discourse, either. His procedure is similar to that of Plato’s sometimes, for example when he pushes Parmenidean ontology to its limits in order to show its absurdity just as Plato does to Heraclitean ontology in *Cratylus*. Gorgias forms a negative discourse. The only positive point about it is that as

⁸⁵Cassin (2000), p. 964

soon as it is a successful discourse, even if it may lack coherence and be disobedient to logical reasoning sometimes, it proves that *logos* is a powerful tool.

Now let us see how he first argues that nothing is. He says:

If [anything] exists, either the existent exists or the nonexistent or both the existent exists and the nonexistent. But... neither does the existent exist nor the nonexistent... nor the existent and [the] nonexistent... It is not the case then that anything exists. (Sextus Empiricus. *Against the Schoolmasters* vii. 66)

Gorgias begins with establishing a set of a priori distinctions and then evaluates the alternatives that these distinctions offer. Romilly points out that by this method Gorgias “gives the impression that he has not neglected a single possibility”⁸⁶. This makes the argument look like a rigorous demonstration. If one is to listen to reason, with respect to how things are, that is, how nature is, there may be three alternatives:

1. non-being *is*
2. being *is*
3. both non-being and being *is*

The basic assumption that Gorgias makes is that being and non-being are absolute opposites as Parmenides declares them to be. Therefore, the first alternative is an apparent contradiction for it is entirely absurd for something to exist and not to exist at the same time. The second alternative is harder to undermine, however, Gorgias refutes being on two grounds and again making use of a priori distinctions:

1. Being is either eternal or generated or both eternal and generated. (frg. 68)

⁸⁶ Romilly (1992) p. 61

2. Being is either one or many. (frg. 73)

The first set of alternatives is refuted based on a set of assumptions that seem so obvious to the reader at first sight:

1. The eternal is without limit. (frg. 69)
2. Any container is greater than the contained.
3. If the eternal is somewhere, it is in something other than itself.
4. Nothing is greater than the unlimited.

∴ What is eternal is not anywhere.

Gorgias makes a cunning move from *eternal* to *unlimited*; the former is related with time, whereas the latter is related with space. To say that something does not have a beginning does not express a quality about the space it occupies. The problem about the arguments presented here is that they confuse the reader about why they are called sophistry; after all, they look like genuine philosophical arguments. Gorgias is of course formulating some fallacious arguments and making logical mistakes, but how can they count as evidence to say that he is not philosophizing, at all? For it would mean that philosophers do not make fallacies whereas it is very likely that in this passage, Gorgias has the Eleatic Melissus in mind who also deduces spatial extension from temporal extension in his *On Truth*.⁸⁷ Nehamas argues that Socrates makes fallacies, too and that he should not be called a sophist for he does not do it willingly as for example Euthydemus and Dionysodorus do in order to puzzle Cleinias.⁸⁸ Then, how are we to judge Gorgias' intention? This shows why

⁸⁷ Melissus assumes that if being were generated, there would be a part of it, which is generated first in time and thereby in spatial position. So, being, if it is not generated should have an unlimited spatial extension, too. See Kirk, Raven and Schofield () p.394

⁸⁸ Nehamas, (1990) p. 112

the debate on whether Gorgias' work is a spoof or not has occupied that much space in literature. We want to know Gorgias' intentions to judge if he is philosophizing and thus should be taken into consideration as a philosopher, or not. Socrates in *Euthydemus* says that philosophy and those who practice it are two different categories and that one should judge if someone is a philosopher by looking at what he is doing:

Pay no attention to the practitioners of philosophy, whether good or bad.

Rather give serious consideration to the thing itself. (*Euthydemus*, 307c)

There are also some points on which Gorgias agrees with Eleatics such as that being cannot be generated. But Gorgias has a very different purpose, which we would be able to discern as sophistic if we had access to his *real* intentions. Being, he says, may be generated either from being or from non-being. The first is absurd: if being *is*, it cannot be generated from being, for it already *is*. And non-being cannot generate anything, because what is generative of something, of necessity, ought to partake of positive existence (frg. 71). The third alternative is equally absurd for being cannot be eternal and yet generated for these qualities are mutually exclusive of each other.⁸⁹ Thereby, Gorgias proves that being, which cannot be generated as the Eleatics rightly state, is not.

Gorgias' agreement with the Eleatics has a heavy burden: he agrees with them only to refute them. Gorgias reveals contradictions that cannot be avoided in Parmenidean ontology.

4. Gorgianic *Logos*

⁸⁹ Sextus Empiricus. *Against the Schoolmasters* vii. 72

Let us now leave Gorgianic ontology aside for a while and proceed with his thoughts on the possibility of human knowledge. Gorgias initiates a negative epistemology; even if being *is*, it is not knowable. Gorgias' reasoning again seems very solid, deprived of fallacy. However, his assumptions are not as firm as they look at first sight. First, he makes considerability an attribute of being and non-considerability an attribute of non-being and therefore constructs these two realms as two different and opposite sets, just as Parmenides does. Moreover, it does not follow that if something is not considered that it does not exist. There are many existing things that may not have been considered yet, for we have not been acquainted with them.

The *Ektos* versus Parmenidean Being

So far, we may have completely refuted Gorgias because his reasoning is inadequate. Gorgias may be too unsuccessful in persuading us that being *is not* and it is not knowable. However, this does not render the last section of his work groundless. For he does not build this part on his previous reasoning that will act now as premises for his third argument. This time he will deny *logos* in the proper sense that Parmenides understands and grants it to be.

For that by which we reveal, *menuo*⁹⁰, is *logos*, but *logos* is not substances and existing things, *onta*. Therefore, we do not reveal *onta* to our neighbors, but *logos*, which is something other than substances. (84)

By this last attack, Gorgias renders *logos* powerless in the Parmenidean sense: "That which can be spoken and thought must be" (frg. 6). Gorgianic *logos* does not depict being as Parmenides argues. This attitude has caused Gorgias to be considered as the originator of

⁹⁰ *menuo*: to disclose a secret, to make known

nihilism after Protagoras who expressed his doubts about the existence of gods. Does Gorgias really try to prove that *logos* is impossible or say that *logos* is not as Parmenides assumes it to be?

Firstly, Gorgias distinguishes *logoi* from *onta*, existing things. *Onta* are things, which are present outside, *ektos*, and they are perceptible either by sight or by hearing (frg. 83). Now, the crucial question is, says Gorgias, how can these things be revealed, *menuo*, to another person. It is problematic how these two different categories, namely *logos* and *onta*, can be converted to each other and how *logos* may explain something that is alien to its nature. How can the external, *ektos*, be transformed into *logos*? Foucault says that the sophists were the first thinkers who thought on the materiality of speech. Does a chariot come through my mouth whenever I say 'chariot'?⁹¹

Gorgias concludes that if we cannot reveal substances by *logos*, it is only *logos* that we reveal when we speak: "just as the visible cannot become audible, external things would not become our *logos*." (frg. 84) Then *logos* does not refer to anything except itself. It cannot reproduce the reality that stands external to it. *Logos* does not inform us about the external world. In this sense, *logos* ceases to be a tool that we can use to enquire into truth. It becomes autonomous for it can only reveal itself. Does this mean that it is by itself sufficient to produce (*poiesis*) truth? This is a difficult question to answer at the moment, so let us proceed with the text.

A remarkable argument follows the distinction made between *logos* and *onta*:

Logos arises from *pragmata* (perceptible things)⁹². From encounter with a flavor, *logos* is expressed by us about that quality, and from encounter with

⁹¹ Foucault (2000), p.265

⁹² in Diels and Kranz 'pragmata' is translated 'external things impinging on us'.

a color, an expression of color. But if this is the case, logos is not evocative of the external, but the external becomes the revealer of logos. (Sextus Empiricus. *Against the Schoolmasters* vii 85)

Logos does not reveal the external. Then what does he mean when he says that it is the external that is explanatory of *logos* and *logos* arises from *pragmata*?

Gorgias denies the kind of relation that Parmenides supposes to be between being and *logos* in which *logos* refers to being. However, it would be equally wrong to say that *logos* is autonomous. *Logos* does not refer to what *is* in the Parmenidean sense, that is, an absolute being. Parmenides never speaks about perceptible things (*onta* and *pragmata*) with respect to *logos* and *nous*. Things are detached from the domain of speech and thinking for they *are not*; it is only being that can be thought and articulated. Therefore, that Gorgianic *logos* does not function in Parmenidean terms does not mean that *logos* creates its reality out of the blue. Gorgias determines the necessary condition of the creation of *logos* as the external that impinges on us. It is not the perfect being of Parmenides that makes *logos* possible.

Before going into the details, I think we should first understand what Gorgias really means by the external, *ektos*. He equates the external with *pragmata* in fragment 85 and with *onta* in fragment 83: “existent things are visible and audible and generally perceptible, which means that they are external substances”. However, he does not make a distinction between the two but between these two and *logos*.⁹³ Gorgias says that *logos* and *pragmata* are categorically different, but here he does not make explicit if *logos* cannot convey or cannot *fully* convey perceptible beings, *pragmata*. Then, for Gorgias

⁹³ From now on I will use *pragmata* to refer to perceptible things.

the *ektos* is the realm of perceptible things, that is, the realm of *Apate* in Parmenides. Then, let us see how Gorgias thinks about our basic relation with the external, that is, our perception of the external.

In The Realm of *Apate*

Gorgias places doubts on perception. There is no guarantee that one lives the same experience whenever he looks at the same object. This is not because things are in a constant flux, thus not about the qualities of things but because of the nature of perception, itself: it is impossible that a thing may occupy two places at the same time.

But it appears that the objects which even one and the same man perceives at the same moment are not all similar, but he perceives different things by hearing and by sight, and differently now and on some former occasion; and so a man can scarcely perceive the same thing as someone else. (MXG 980b13-18)

Moreover, it is almost impossible that two people may perceive the same thing. Perceptions vary in accordance with the percipients and the different conditions that these percipients are in. As we have said before, what creates a multiplicity of perceptions is not the object itself, but the perceiver. Gorgias presupposes that the objects, which are the alleged causes of perception need not be as we perceive them to be, he just simply says that things are for me as I perceive them to be. The external world is simply what appears to us. Gorgias distinguishes between perceptible things, *pragmata*, which are not conceivable without the subject who conceives them and the Parmenidean being, which *is* independent of a perceiving, thinking, and speaking subject. It is from the former that *logos* arises. So, Gorgias says we cannot know and we

do not need the knowledge of the real natures of the objects of sensation in order to talk about them. However, it is still difficult to see how *logos* can convey our perceptions about things, which are so private to us. How can two people talk about one thing, which is both common to them, if that thing is perceived differently by them? Just as one cannot perceive the same thing at the same moment, Gorgias says that it is almost impossible that two people may perceive the same thing. Then, how can one express his convictions to another?

...How can the hearer have in his mind the same thing as the speaker? For the same thing cannot be present simultaneously in several separate people; for in that case the one would be two. (MXG 980b10-11)

One should admit that nothing can be adequately communicated for even if what is communicated could be same in all respects -since they occupied different places still they would not be identical. Does it mean that communication is impossible or that one cannot communicate perfectly?

Pseudo Aristotle tells us that Gorgias says,

And how could that which has been seen be indicated to a listener if he has not seen it? ... he who speaks, speaks, but does not speak a color or a thing. When, therefore, one has not a thing in the mind how will he get it there from another person by word... except by seeing it, if it is a color...? (MXG 980b1-5)

The lines may be interpreted in two ways:

1. It is impossible to communicate.

2. It is impossible to communicate if we are not acquainted with the external for if I have not seen color, then I cannot understand what it is.

The second reading is in line with what Gorgias says in 85th fragment in Sextus' text. It is impossible to tell someone what 'blue' is if she has never encountered a blue thing in his life and thereby formed a conviction of 'blue' her mind.

For he who speaks does not speak a noise at all, or a color, but a word; and so it is not possible to think a color, but only to see it, nor a noise, but only to hear it. (MXG 980b5-9)

Logos is not just sound. It is not experienced like color and noise during which our sense organs are at work. For *logos* to be understood it is not enough that we hear it for it is not a sound that is conveyed, but *logoi*. Gorgias assumes that the senses exclusively perceive their sense objects. Every object should be judged by its proper sense: sound by hearing, vision by sight. Therefore, it is impossible that color, which is a visible thing, is *fully* apprehended and communicated through words. It is impossible that *pragmata* may be fully communicated through *logos*.

It is the same with the perception for we can never hear or see the same thing. Then, let us once more ask how two people can talk about one thing, which is both common to them, if that thing is perceived differently by them and therefore different with respect to each? I think what is crucial here is that Gorgias does not say we see totally different things, so that there are totally different things existing for each of us. Rather, he says "a man can scarcely perceive the same thing as someone else". Then, it is possible that our perceptions are similar, which also means that things, if they are what we perceive, are not very different for each of us. There is external world which is more or less similar

for each of us. Then, are our ‘similar perceptions’ about things that form the basis of communication? Is what Gorgias means by “the *pragmata* give rise to *logos*” that the perceptible things determines how to use *logos* to talk about them? Does the *ektos* determine the limits of *logos*?

So far, we have seen that *logos* cannot reveal the *real* natures of beings in the sense that how things are in an absolute way, that is, the way which Parmenides supposes to be hidden from men. *Logos* cannot disclose the absolute truth underlying them. *Logos* can convey what is already obvious to men, what is perceptible by the agents. It is the external that reveals *logos*. It is by encounter with nature that we can speak about things. *Logos* is not a tool to depict ‘being’, but a tool to talk about *pragmata*. Gorgias’ ‘nature’ that is one of the titles of his work, is not equated with being (*on*) –as is usual with the cosmologists of his day- but with the external things that impinge on us. Therefore, it ceases to be something to be searched for, since it is not out there independent of our perceptions about it. In Parmenides, the goddess *Aletheia* does not consider people’s speeches as *logos* as long as they do not articulate the being, but their opinions about the world, which they think is real. In the Parmenidean scheme, *logos* is to reveal being, or it does not convey anything at all. In the Gorgianic scheme *logos* is practical since it is about our convictions, thoughts, experiences.

Then if we turn back to what we said above, it seems we can hold onto the second reading of Gorgias’ text, but with a little revision. It is possible to communicate, but communication is by its very nature open to misconception, for it is impossible that the same thing may be at two different places at the same time. Such an understanding of *logos* does not necessarily result in total destruction of communication. We may treat Gorgias’ text as a brave confession of our inability to create an ideal *logos* that will not

allow any misunderstandings. Gorgias places misunderstanding at the heart of speech, since it can never fully convey what one thinks to another.

If we try to relate these inferences to Gorgias' first statement that nothing *is*, the limits of *logos* becomes clearer. According to Gorgias, what Parmenides dismisses as deceitful from the genuine ways of inquiry, that is, the realm of *Apate* is the only domain that can be spoken about. On the other hand, the realm of *Aletheia* is beyond our perception, thus it *is not* for us. There is no way to know if a being as Parmenides supposes to be really *is*, for all there *is*, is what our perceptions are about. There is no way to know the underlying natures of the things or any reality beyond our perceptions of the things. For Gorgias, speech does not have the power to disclose being, to unveil truth, rather he believes that *logos* serves only for practical purposes. Parmenides has failed for he has developed a theory that reduces all mortal beliefs to nothingness since they fail to grasp the being beyond the deceitful multiplicity of things. Parmenides is very suspicious of common-sense. In contrast, Gorgias takes 'mortal opinions' into account: the world is as we see it. Sextus concludes with a remark on Gorgias:

Such being, in Gorgias' view, the problems, insofar as they are valid, the criterion is destroyed. For there would be no criterion if nature neither exists nor can be understood nor conveyed to another. (87)

It is now easier to see how Gorgias abolishes the *kriterion* as Sextus Empiricus asserts: he agrees with Protagoras in taking man as the measure of all things and by saying that nothing is or even if it was, it cannot be known, he spares us from any standards beyond people's perceptions. However, I do not think that Gorgias draws no limits to *logos*. I think that Gorgias puts a limit to the capacity of *logos*: this limit is not the *true being*, but it is

the *ektos*, the realm of perceptible things, our world. *Logos* is not autonomous for it can only reveal itself, it is not by itself sufficient to produce (*poiesis*) truth. There is a limit to the power of *logos*: the perceptible things. Gorgias says that it is absurd to consider ‘a man flying or chariots racing in the sea’ (frg. 79). The reason that I can say that this statement is absurd is not to be looked for in a criterion beyond our perceptions about things. It is simply about the way the things are which makes us conclude that.

Pseudo Aristotle concludes by a helpful comment:

...No one could indicate it to another, firstly because things are not words, and secondly because no one can have in his mind the same thing as someone else. (MXG 980b19-21)

So, Gorgias has made two problematizations about *logos*:

1. The relation of *logos* to things,
2. Communicability of *logos* between agents.

Accordingly, we have seen that *logos* cannot reveal things, for they belong to different categories and that *logos* is not fully communicable and that it is by nature open to misunderstanding. Now let us see what is the function of *logos* according to Gorgias, who refuses to consider it as a tool to search into truth.

5. Function of *Logos*: Persuasion

Gorgias is concerned with the effect produced on the listener, the magic inherent in *logos*.⁹⁴ He chooses his words carefully and makes use of a great variety of rhetorical techniques most of which he invented. Gorgianic *logos* may make use of any techniques

⁹⁴ Wardy, *The Birth of Rhetoric* p.73

that will serve its immediate purpose, which is always related with persuasion. He makes use of poetical effects as a means to awaken the power of words, the ability of words to work upon the emotions, the magic inherent in them. He believes that *logoi* have the power to affect people by irrational means arousing their emotions. According to Gorgias, *logos* aims at persuasion and creates an atmosphere that will win the hearts and minds of the multitude. Gorgias thinks that *logos* acts like drugs or magic on the soul of the listeners, yet he makes no “choice between *logoi* as meaningful, persuading by their meaningful content, and *logoi* as instruments, shaping by their quasi-magical impact”.⁹⁵ Gorgias does not discriminate between different types of *logoi*, as Parmenides does or as later Plato will do; he does not make a categorical distinction between science, philosophy, rhetoric or poetry; no discourse is superior to the other and they all aim at persuasion:

That persuasion, when added to speech,
 can impress the soul as it wishes,
 one may learn:
 first, the words of astronomers
 who, substituting opinion for opinion,
 taking away one but creating another,
 make what is incredible and unclear
 seem true to the eyes of opinion,
 then, second, compelling contests in words,
 in which a single speech,

⁹⁵ Wardy, *The Birth of Rhetoric* p.74

written with art but not spoken with truth,

may charm and persuade a large multitude

and third, the struggles of philosophic arguments,

in which the swiftness of thought is also shown

making the belief in an opinion subject to easy change. (*Encomium of Helen*

13)

All *logoi* by nature aim at persuasion and they only differ in the techniques they use. They substitute opinion for opinion while they claim that they reveal the truth. The fundamental function of *logos* is to persuade, but persuasion is not related with truth as the way Parmenides asserts in his poem:

The only ways of enquiry that can be thought of: the one way, that it is and cannot not be, is the path of Persuasion, for it attends upon Truth. (frg. 2)

In Gorgianic thinking, there is no room for *aletheia*. Having done away with *kriterion*, he does not consider the function of *logos* to be a way to know the truth. We can only have opinions, about how the world is. Gorgias is not after knowledge of things for they are destined to be subjective. We cannot know beyond what we perceive. Gorgias believes only *doxai* about things to be possible, for what I think to be true of a thing may not be true for another person. The persuasive function of *logos* becomes very important in this context, where it may be used to evoke and affect people's opinions about how things are.

Cassin uses the term *logology* as opposed to ontology, in order to take our attention to the power of *logos* in Gorgianic context: *logos* is a reality in itself –though there are

some limits that keeps us from saying that 'chariots are flying over the sea', *logos* has an enormous persuasive capacity . *Logos* is a great *dynasty*⁹⁶: it brings pleasure and heals pain and realizes things as though by magic⁹⁷ but never attempts to tell *aletheia*.

In his *Encomium of Helen*, Gorgias epitomizes his approach to *logos* by fabricating an innocent Helen to whom people who have thus far claimed the opposite owe an apology. Gorgias does not ever try to give a precise picture of Helen, for, he says, it is impossible –nothing can be fully conveyed- and it is not novel and pleasurable. In his encomium what Gorgias basically aims to do is not really to praise Helen but to praise *logos*. *Logos* has the power to *realize*; it has the power to create an innocent Helen and so many other stories including discourses on *being* and *non-being*. His encomium of *logos* as a lord that is capable of making truth, aims to reduce every discourse, including science and philosophy, to the same level in the hierarchy of knowledge. All replace one opinion with another by persuading their listeners that their story is better than the others.

Accordingly, Gorgias never claims to articulate truth, but what is probable, *eikos* and for him, this is the case for all other discourses. However, Gorgias' elevation of *eikos* and *apate* as opposed to *aletheia* may take some disconcerting tones: "he who deceives, *ho apatasas* is more just than someone who does not, he who is deceived, *ho apatetheis* is wiser than someone who is not". He appreciates anyone who is capable of making someone believe that something is the case and also those who have the capacity to make themselves believe that. This is, of course, problematic, but I do not think that the devaluation of *aletheia* in the face of *apate*, *doxai* and what is *eikos* results in a horrible

⁹⁶ *Encomium of Helen*, frg. 8

⁹⁷ *Encomium of Helen*, frg. 14

state in which there is no criterion of truth. Gorgias' *eikos* may have two meanings, among which we are not able to decide to be true of him: either he is welcoming any probability and saying that 'anything goes', or he is saying that there cannot be an absolute truth, rather there are multiple truths.

6. Conclusion

The ambiguous character of Gorgianic *logos* is hard to deal with for it does not affect its audience (reader) only by its content but also by using different rhetorical techniques that produce an overall effect. The special rhetorical technique that he applies for *On What Is Not* is *paradoxologia*, which consists in placing contradictory arguments side by side so as to show the audience how thoughts on an issue may be easily reversible. But Gorgias applies this technique to the overall reasoning of the text and by this way produces a message that totally refutes itself. He says that communication is not possible, but he communicates this message in a very clear way which enforces us a choice between two scenarios: he is making a joke or there should be more to this.

We have seen how Parmenides has chosen the way to *Aletheia*, whereas Gorgias has chosen the way to *Apate*. Gorgias has valued what Parmenides has devalued on every ground, that is, non-being, opinion, and falsity as opposed to being, knowledge and truth. I think the most important achievements of Gorgias' text is the appreciation of 'mortal opinions' and making the perceptible things the basis of our speech.

III. Pseudo Philosopher versus Sophist

Parmenides has defined three roads to follow: The first goes into the heart of well rounded truth, to the ultimate being and the second goes to the heart of non-being, the world of *apate* and the third way is in-between these two ways and here people are “carried along deaf and blind at once”⁹⁸. This thesis has attempted to show how the philosopher and the sophist have decided to go through this third path. Both declared the being of non-being, but developed different discourses for their understanding of the function of *logos* are different from each other. The philosopher came closer to Parmenides’ *aletheia* –also included him in the philosophical tradition- the sophist has gone through *apate*. In this sense, the thesis has shown these allegedly conflicting ways of thinking to be close to each other in a very important respect. They do not stand in a broad opposition, but they form a couple balancing each other.

In a broader perspective, the sophist and the philosopher stand side by side as the opponents of the same mode of thinking. Nevertheless, looking from today, these characters are very separated from each other. The origins of this understanding lie mostly in Platonic conception of philosophy and his construction of the sophist.

So far, we have seen that that the notion of ‘sophist’ has a double meaning: on the one hand we have Plato’s sophist, a cunning speaker whose words are like those of the philosopher, but they are to be regarded with suspicion for he is in fact a pseudo philosopher, a dog in the guise of a wolf; on the other hand, we have Gorgias, the *sophist*, who came to Athens in fifth century and composed speeches on any theme people asked. According to Cassin, the conventional image of the sophist as it appears in

⁹⁸ *The Way of Truth*, frg.7

Plato's dialogues produces a structural effect: sophistic as a “timeless entity that serves to designate one of the non-philosophical modes within the field of philosophy”⁹⁹. Therefore, the sophist besides being a historical character, representative of a movement initiated in the fifth century BC, is also an ahistorical category functioning as a shadow concept born out of philosophy, yet drawing the limits of it.

What if the sophist is not merely a structural effect but has a real being, articulating a *logos* apart from that of the philosopher? What if Gorgias is not joking? Does philosophy lose anything because of this? I believe that the answer is affirmative, for philosophy would lose *the other*, the shadow that marks its contours. This relation though perverse is productive for it constructs philosophy as it is: the love and search for truth.

What are the similarities and the differences between these two *logoi*? According to Plato, the sophist is nothing but a pseudo philosopher who acts as if he knows, as if he is wise, however he is only capable of creating illusions that look like the original. His *logoi* are deceptive and does not aim at truth.

Gorgias, however, does not consider this as a problem. He seems to have deliberately chosen to speak only about the possibilities, not about the truth for we cannot know if such things exist.

The problematic underlying these two works is the relation between the *aletheia* and the *logos*. One admits that *logos* is the way to *aletheia*; the other says that *logos* is there fso that we may speak about daily matters for the metaphysical realm is beyond our cognition.

⁹⁹ Cassin (2000) p. 957

Is Plato's point that the sophists are relativists and the relativists are not real philosophers, or that Sophists do not care even about the relative truth but appearing wise to us?

Plato seems to formulate the problem as the latter, that is, he claims the sophists to be charlatans who only appear wise, though in fact they are not. Therefore, the core of Plato's criticism seems to be the problem of pragmatism: the sophists are ready to object and admit any thesis that will earn them money, they do what is appropriate and do not care about the truth. However, if we just think of the share that Plato has reserved for the sophists in his dialogues and of the fact that he has named one of his latest dialogues that discusses the question of being the "Sophist", it seems highly doubtful if Plato's real problem with the sophists is only an ethical matter that would be solved if sophists had stopped taking money and had behaved honestly. Perhaps, the latter choice will be too superficial. Then, the first formulation seems more viable; or is it?

The sophists cannot be passed over with a simple condemnation of pragmatism. The sophist reveals an important dimension of the *logos-aletheia* relation and bases his conception of politics and ethics upon this.

The sophist seems uncanny to the philosopher. The philosopher attempts to deal with this uncanny thing by giving it a proper name and filling this name with a solid content and thereby hold this slippery thing with two hands not to let it go. Or it may be the other way round: The philosopher tries to give a meaning, a solid content to what the sophist points to, that is, to call the uncanny thing being or *aletheia*.

Nietzsche, in his *The Birth of Tragedy*, defines the philosopher, whom he identifies with Socrates as the theoretical man. This typical man can be distinguished from the other

contemporary characters such as the poet, the sage, and the tragedian with one significant attribute: he is completely unaware of or he totally neglects the dark side of life.¹⁰⁰ Socrates overlooks the inexplicable side of life that does not easily unfold itself when attempting a more intelligible life, in order to make life more comprehensible by the use of concepts (such as being, the ideas, the good and all other metaphysical presuppositions), in order to uncover the veil of truth by way of philosophical *logos*. The poets were in a direct relation with this zone, that is, with the unknown, with what is ambiguous, with what has no name. Nietzsche thinks that the poet has been able to grasp (not philosophically, but in a poetical way: by incantation) the dark side of the life.

I think we may also situate the sophist in this context. The sophist has accepted to live with this darkness. Socrates would probably say that that the sophist is happy living in his *cave* bound in chains. He is only able to see *shadows* of the real objects that appear on his cave's wall. He does not have the courage to escape from the cave for he is a conformist who does not want to bother himself with such heavy labor. Nevertheless, what is so thwarting for Plato about the sophist is not this attitude, for it is so common among ordinary man. Plato is more concerned with the following: the sophist does not only live this way but he offers this way of life to the others. He would not be an adversary of Socrates if he were not concerned with *paideia* of Athenian youth. The other reason, which is more philosophical, is the everlasting possibility that Gorgias articulates: there may be nothing but the cave. It is in no way possible to come to know the truth and it is probable that there is no such thing as truth except our reflections about it. Moreover, it may be totally nonsense even to think about and worry about such things since what matters is not to seek truth but be able to make (*poiesis*) and be the

¹⁰⁰ See Nietzsche (2000) pp. 89-93

master of truth. Man is the measure of all and is capable of creating a plurality of *aletheia* with his *logos*.

After all Plato has two important reasons to exclude sophistic from the philosophical realm. I will call the first reason historical and the other structural. It is not hard to find an example for the former reason: One of the most important rival schools to Plato's Academy is Isocrates' school. As we have mentioned before, Isocrates, who is a student of Gorgias, calls himself a philosopher and argues that philosophy should deal with daily matters. It is so likely that Plato differentiated himself from Isocrates and his followers by defining his philosophy as the original and theirs as the fake: sophistic.

The second reason is based on Plato's intention to position philosophy as the ultimate discourse capable of making distinctions between things and most of all, discerning the truth from the falsity. He bases philosophical discourse on his doctrine of ideas.

However, it is impossible that the ideas may be demonstrated; one should simply see them, grasp their necessity and believe their existence. It is the philosopher who can see the reality beyond the realm of things, images, *doxai* opinions. Therefore, the sophist who rejects the being of such entities is said to be unaware of the realm of *episteme* and the idea, for he does not *see*. Plato pictures the sophist as someone who lacks the capability of discriminating between levels, who continuously fails to differentiate the different levels of being, who cannot discriminate between what needs proof and what does not –the ideas do not need proof- between what can be demonstrable and what cannot. This negative picture of the sophist helps to declare any discourse doubting the existence of an absolute reality and metaphysical entities such as ideas as perverse, which in turn strengthens the position of Platonic philosophy and the tradition that comes after it.

As a conclusion, I believe every absolute victory to be also a defeat. Plato's positioning of sophistry as pervert philosophy is helpful for philosophy to found itself, to create a firm basis that will distinguish itself from other discourses. Nevertheless, it also carries the risk of a totalizing effect that can harm its very foundation: the search and love of truth.

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