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Tushar Irani

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ABSTRACT

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Tushar Irani

This dissertation consists of three self-standing essays, each of which focuses on a dialogue from Plato's later period. Together, they touch on some of his well-known views in metaphysics and moral psychology, from his theory of forms to his theory of the tripartite soul. But the topic that unifies these essays is philosophical method rather than philosophical theory. In each case, I argue that methodological concerns regarding the point and possibility of philosophy came to dominate Plato's attention in later dialogues following the *Republic*, and that the views he develops in these works are best understood in terms of his interest in advancing the practice of dialectic.

The bulk of the dissertation is motivated by a claim I argue for in Chapter 1: that Plato is more interested in identifying the conditions that enable dialectic in the *Theaetetus* than he is in solving the question of knowledge. Plato famously refrains from defining knowledge in this work. Instead, he shows us what makes dialectic impracticable: a Heraclitean view of the world according to which all things are in flux, and a Protagorean epistemology devoid of rational activity, according to which all truth is relative and things are just the way they appear to be. We're left with unanswered questions by the dialogue's end. First, what kind of stability in the world and what kind of activity are required for dialectic? Second, why is pursuing dialectic even worthwhile?

The remaining essays in the dissertation seek to answer these questions by turning to Plato's more positive views in the *Sophist* and *Phaedrus*. In Chapter 2, I examine his arguments in the *Sophist* against the so-called "Friends of the Forms" to show how the claims he makes in this work for the interrelatedness of the forms are similarly concerned with the point and possibility of philosophy. In Chapter 3, I show how the *Phaedrus* grapples with the same concerns, but from the standpoint of moral psychology, where Plato's conception of eros serves to inform his understanding of dialectic as an "ensouled" activity that ensures our flourishing. The purpose of dialectical activity on this reading is ultimately found in its ethical significance in making us better. Fostering such character involves considerable work, yet it is a running theme throughout Plato's dialogues that to live in a society that valued such activity above all would be our greatest good fortune.

PREFACE

One of the distinctive features of human beings is that we typically (though not always) look to work out our differences with one another through inquiry and argument. There are, however, better and worse ways of engaging in this activity. When we ask others to account for their views on an issue, we expect them at a minimum to state what they actually believe. If we determine that these beliefs rest on mere prejudice or hearsay, we tend to consider this a defect in their views and seek further justification from them. Likewise, when we encounter those who aim to convince us of a particular position or policy through argument, we expect them to address our critical faculties rather than manipulate our beliefs or feelings merely in the service of their own ends.

Plato should be regarded as the first thinker in history to self-consciously reflect on and promote the place of reason in such inquiry and argument. He even coined a term for the practice, which he called "dialectic," and a chief aim of my dissertation is to clarify the conditions that enable us to engage in this activity. The dissertation itself consists of three self-standing essays, each of which focuses on a work from Plato's later period. Together, they touch on some of his well-known views in metaphysics and moral psychology, from his theory of forms to his theory of the tripartite soul. But the topic that unifies these essays is philosophical method rather than philosophical theory. In each case, I argue that methodological concerns regarding the point and possibility of philosophy came to dominate Plato's attention in later dialogues, and that the views he develops in these works are best understood in terms of his interest in advancing the practice of dialectic.

On a reading of any philosophical text, an author will typically present us with particular convictions or beliefs that he or she has reached. That much is true of Plato no less than any other philosopher. Due in some part to this truism, however, there has been a tendency to regard Plato's interest in methodological issues as peripheral to the overall conclusions he seeks to advance in his dialogues. According to this view, philosophical method is subordinate to philosophical theory: dialectic serves as the scaffolding that supports a more complex system of Platonic doctrine; but once the main elements of that system are suitably in place, the scaffolding is dispensable.

I think this view gets things the wrong way round. Plato's commitment to dialectic should be seen as occupying a more central place in his system, instead of a mere means to reaching particular philosophical conclusions. The conclusions that he arrives at in the course of certain dialogues may be regarded alternatively as providing the *conditions* for dialectic: the basis on which reasoned inquiry and argument are worth pursuing. On the reading that I develop in this dissertation, the claims that Plato makes for his various theories reveal an ongoing interest in the practice of dialectic and the virtues that this practice cultivates, such as the consistency of one's beliefs, a love of truth, and even, I shall argue, a concern for others.

The bulk of the dissertation is motivated by a claim I argue for in Chapter 1: that Plato is more interested in identifying the conditions that enable dialectic in the *Theaetetus* than he is in solving the question of knowledge. Plato famously refrains from defining knowledge in this work. Instead,

he shows us what makes dialectic impracticable: a Heraclitean view of the world according to which all things are in flux, and a Protagorean epistemology devoid of rational activity, according to which all truth is relative and things are just the way they appear to be. We're left with unanswered questions by the dialogue's end. First, what kind of stability in the world and what kind of activity are required for dialectic? Second, why is pursuing dialectic even worthwhile?

The remaining essays in the dissertation seek to answer these questions by turning to Plato's more positive views in the *Sophist* and *Phaedrus*. In Chapter 2, I examine his arguments in the *Sophist* against the so-called "Friends of the Forms" to show how the claims he makes in this work for the interrelatedness of the forms are similarly concerned with the point and possibility of philosophy. In Chapter 3, I show how the *Phaedrus* grapples with the same concerns, but from the standpoint of moral psychology, where Plato's conception of eros serves to inform his understanding of dialectic as an "ensouled" activity that ensures our flourishing.

A note, finally, on the bearing of this dissertation on the current state of Platonic scholarship. There has been a longstanding conflict among Anglophone scholars over how best to interpret Plato's dialogues. To borrow one of his images, we might consider this a battle between gods and giants. (Although I won't hazard a guess about who represents the gods and who represents the giants.) The issue concerns whether or not we should take Plato to be advancing positive views in his works, and as a testament to its endurance, each side in the debate has acquired a distinctive moniker. In the one camp, "dogmatist" readings take Plato to be presenting positive doctrine in his dialogues, typically in the voice of Socrates. In the other camp, "literary" readings deny that Plato advances his own views in the dialogues; according to these readings, by employing a mode of writing that concealed his authorial voice, Plato sought to distance himself from the arguments of his characters, and we cannot infer that any particular character acts as his spokesperson through an analysis of these arguments.

The work I've begun in what follows aims to effect a reconciliation between these two readings. The problem here basically involves the form of Plato's works and the fact that he chose to write dialogues rather than treatises in which he never figures as an explicit speaker. Commentators who stress this point are apt to consider the theoretical content of the dialogues extraneous and to find little or no commitment in Plato to the doctrines traditionally ascribed to him. They are likely to locate significance instead in the more dramatic features of Plato's works, such as the interplay between characters and the juxtaposition of argument with allegory. I have tried in my dissertation to do justice to these literary interpretations by meeting them on their own terms. But by focusing in this way on philosophy as a practice, the Plato who emerges in these essays is an author more deeply committed to philosophical doctrines—doctrines concerning the nature of reality and human motivation that, as it happens, are the same views we often find Socrates advancing.

If the essays in this dissertation hold good, what Plato seeks to show in his later writings is that participating in reasoned inquiry and argument in fact commits us to substantive positions on how the world must be and how we should live. A benefit of this approach for dogmatic readings of Plato's dialogues is that it enhances our understanding of his positive views by making sense of what might otherwise look like discrepancies in the Platonic corpus, such as the Eleatic Visitor's claim in the *Sophist* that the forms can be attributed with change, or Socrates' contention in the *Phaedrus* that, at a certain level, reason and madness converge. Far from bizarre anomalies, my dissertation suggests that we gain a better appreciation for Plato's views in metaphysics and moral psychology by considering how these claims might be taken to support the practice of dialectic.

For My Parents and Teachers

CONTENTS

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THEORY AND PRACTICE IN THE *THEAETETUS*: THE QUESTION OF KNOWLEDGE AND THE PRIMACY OF DIALECTIC

1. Preliminaries

Most studies of the *Theaetetus* focus on Plato's examination of Protagoras's "man is the measure" doctrine—and rightly so. The bulk of the dialogue is after all devoted to an exhaustive critique of this doctrine and its consequences, and in order to understand Plato's views it is important to determine what position he sets up in contrast to his own. Commentators differ, however, when it comes to the finer points of Protagoras's position—particularly concerning the validity of Plato's infamous self-refutation argument against the Measure Doctrine at 171A6-C7—and its relation to Heraclitean flux. After some preliminaries on the overall structure of the *Theaetetus*, I'll single out in this chapter two interpretations of the Measure Doctrine: Myles Burnyeat's relativist reading and Gail Fine's more recent infallibilist reading.

These interpretations require close investigation and comparison to determine which better fits Plato's arguments in the dialogue. Nonetheless, one of my aims here is to suggest that Plato allows both these readings of the Measure Doctrine: Protagoras's position is inherently ambiguous, and by distinguishing between theoretical and practical objections to his doctrine, I'll argue that the *Theaetetus* provides a fitting response to both relativism and infallibilism. Furthermore, once Plato's critiques of the Measure Doctrine and Heraclitean flux are read together, the consequences of Burnyeat's and Fine's interpretations turn out to be compatible. Plato's goal in this first part of the dialogue is to show how Theaetetus's empiricist theory of knowledge ultimately fails because it makes the shared agreements that are the hallmark of philosophical argument either pointless or impossible. Before inquiring into the conditions for knowledge, therefore, he must first determine the conditions that make projects such as rational inquiry and argument possible. Focusing on this latter demand assigns a theme to the *Theaetetus* that has yet to be fully appreciated: a concern with the practice of dialectic. As we shall see, it also yields some distinctly Platonic conclusions.

The word "agreement" occurs frequently throughout the *Theaetetus*.[1] At the outset of the work, Socrates forces his young interlocutor to engage in discussion by holding him to a point they have both agreed upon (ὡμολογημένα, 145C3). Theaetetus has just granted at 145B1-5 that it is important to consider how alike he and Socrates are—as Theodorus, his teacher, maintains earlier on in the work. Having secured this point Socrates compels him to engage in dialectic, asserting that "now is the time for you to show yourself and for me to examine you" (145B6-7). Theaetetus is forbidden, subsequently, from retreating from argument and instructed to have the courage (θαρρῶν) to stick by his agreement (ὁμολογίᾳ, 145C5).

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[1] The term and its cognates appear over forty times during the dialogue. See Leonard Brandwood, *A Word Index to Plato* (Leeds: W.S. Maney and Son, 1976). Translations in this chapter are from *The Theaetetus of Plato*, translated by M.J. Levett and revised by Myles Burnyeat (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1990). All references to the Greek are to John Burnet's *Platonis Opera*, vols. I-V (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1900-7).

It's on this basis that Plato's most sustained investigation into the question of knowledge takes place, and the importance of reaching and sticking to agreements in argument will be stressed throughout the *Theaetetus*—most potently in Plato's famous refutation of Protagoras's "man is the measure" doctrine at 171A6-C7. The doctrine ends up refuting itself, in fact, precisely on account of the agreements that Protagoras makes.[2] But the issue I wish to focus on here is the way in which Plato considers such agreement even possible. Another way of phrasing this issue which is more clearly in tune with the stated theme of the *Theaetetus* is to ask what conditions are needed, for Plato, for the question "What is knowledge?" to be a meaningful one—a question that can be answered.

In tackling this problem, my strategy will be to reorganise somewhat the way in which this dialogue has traditionally been read. On most interpretations, the *Theaetetus* is divided into three parts, in line with the three major conceptions of knowledge that are developed in the work.[3] Myles Burnyeat's seminal commentary on the dialogue is a case in point—an analysis that is especially valuable for the thorough account provided of the development of Plato's argument. Nevertheless, for reasons that will soon be clear, I find it just as valuable to consider the dialogue in an alternative way.

As I see it, the *Theaetetus* falls quite naturally into two parts that develop differing approaches to the question of knowledge.[4] On this reading, there are two lines of argument pursued in the dialogue,

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[2] The emphasis that the self-refutation passage places here on agreeing has also been noted by Sarah Waterlow, "Protagoras and Inconsistency: *Theaetetus* 171A6-C7," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 59 (1977), pp. 29-32 and by Ruby Blondell, *The Play of Character in Plato's Dialogues* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 268-70. Socrates takes Protagoras to agree (ὁμολογῶν, 171A8) that all men judge what is. As a consequence, Protagoras is compelled by his doctrine to agree (ὁμολογεῖ, 171B2) to the falsity of his own opinion, since he also has to agree (ὁμολογεῖ, 171B6) to the truth of other people's opinions who judge his doctrine to be false. It will therefore have to be agreed (ὁμολογήσεται, 171B10) by Protagoras that no one is the measure of anything at all. There are of course some problems with interpreting this argument, depending at least in part on how Protagoreanism should be understood in the *Theaetetus*. Compounding the difficulty is the fact that we are dealing in this dialogue with Plato's portrayal of Protagoras, which may not be an accurate depiction of the *historical* Protagoras. Be that as it may, I won't be concerned here with whether or not Protagoreanism is accurately represented in the *Theaetetus*. Plato's portrayal of the doctrine remains a contentious enough issue as it is, and invites a number of differing interpretations, as we shall see.

[3] Strictly speaking, four definitions of knowledge are put forward in the *Theaetetus*: "knowledge is knowledge of a craft" (146C7 ff.); "knowledge is perception" (151E1 ff.); "knowledge is true judgement" (187B5 ff.); and "knowledge is true judgement with an account" (201C9 ff.). The second of these is usually taken to be Theaetetus's first thesis in the dialogue (the text refers to it explicitly as his "first-born child" at 160E3), but the initial conception he submits at the start of the work, that knowledge is simply *knowledge of a particular craft*, is an intuitive one that deserves some attention. We cannot dismiss it so hastily as circular when the last conception of knowledge put forward in the dialogue remains as circular: knowledge is true judgement together with *knowledge of the differentness* (210A4). Still, in this chapter I focus by and large on the first thesis that Theaetetus proposes, since it is this one that receives extensive development in the dialogue, and which helps clarify the two different pictures of knowledge, mind, and world that Plato proceeds to develop.

[4] This arrangement of the dialogue is hardly novel. Nicholas White provides a similar two-part account in his *Plato on Knowledge and Reality* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987), pp. 159-83. The account I offer in this chapter differs from White's mainly in that it's crucial on my view to see how the two differing approaches to the question of knowledge that Plato considers result in opposing conclusions.

positioned neatly before and after Socrates' digression on the philosopher at 172B-177C.[5] The first line adopts what is at least broadly-speaking an *empiricist* argument: all knowledge is located in experience or, more specifically, in perception. And together with this account of knowledge comes a particular portrait of the soul. The soul (ψυχή) acts as a passive receptor of a great welter of experience that is ever-changing and unstable in this part of the dialogue. Thus knowledge, too, turns out to be unstable.

In opposition, the second part of the dialogue pursues what I shall refer to here as an *anti-empiricist* argument: knowledge is located in a soul that's actively engaged in the world. The slogan here, after the digression, is summed up succinctly at 186D2-3: "knowledge is found not in the experiences (παθήμασιν, 186D2) but in the process of reasoning (συλλογισμῷ, 186D3) about them." On this view, the soul is an active participator in the practice of acquiring knowledge—Plato's inquiry shifts at this point from the tangible empirical world to the more intangible workings of the mind. The focus here is on processes of reasoning, calculation, and thought, which are described as activities of the mind or soul "when it is busy by itself about the things which are (τὰ ὄντα)" (187A5-6). According to this argument, moreover, our knowledge of things is assumed to be stable.

On this reading of the *Theaetetus*, 186D2-3 is clearly the most important turning point in the dialogue. Socrates suggests as much, in fact, when he asks Theaetetus soon after to "[w]ipe out all that we have said hitherto, and see if you can see any better from where you have now progressed to" (187B1-2).[6] I do not take this interpretation to be controversial.[7] All the same, it is crucial to see how Plato sketches two different approaches to the question of knowledge in the *Theaetetus*, which lead to starkly different results.

One of my aims in what follows is to spell out in detail some of these results in the first part of the dialogue, drawing attention to the salient features of Plato's arguments against empiricism, as well as the constructive lessons he leaves us with. I shall argue that Plato's problem with the definition "knowledge is perception" in the first part of the *Theaetetus* is that it gives rise to intolerable absurdities and inconsistencies. This differs importantly, however, from the problem we are left with at the very end of the dialogue, since here it's the fact that Theaetetus's final definition of knowledge—true judgement with an account—remains intolerably circular.[8] To be sure, the second

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[5] Hence, one of the notable features of this arrangement of the *Theaetetus* is that it's also consistent with the formal arrangement of the work, since the digression on the philosopher, as Burnyeat (1990) observes, "is situated almost exactly at the midpoint of the dialogue" (p. 35).

[6] I know of no other dialogue in which such a claim is made. Taken at face value, it's almost as though Socrates is saying here that the entire first part of the *Theaetetus* is worthless. But if this is the case, why does Plato go to such lengths to work out an empiricist view of knowledge in the dialogue? Why does he not begin instead at 186D2-3? As I'll argue here, the first part of the dialogue is by no means worthless—Plato draws our attention to what an empiricist theory of knowledge commits us to, and in this respect there are some clear lessons to be learned.

[7] John Cooper holds a comparable view in "Plato On Sense-Perception and Knowledge (*Theaetetus* 184-186)," in *Plato*, edited by Gail Fine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 357-78.

[8] The circularity here is the last problem we are left with in the dialogue: Theaetetus's final definition of knowledge as "true judgement with an account" (201C9 ff.) is found to be wanting since no other definition of "account" can be given by Socrates except "knowledge of the differentness" that distinguishes the

part leaves us with difficult questions and formidable worries. Even so, this second anti-empiricist approach overcomes the important defects of Theaetetus's original definition. The question of knowledge is left *unresolved* at the end of the dialogue, but it is not *incoherent*: we have been provided with space for further inquiry and discussion, and this is no mean feat.

This last point in particular has been largely overlooked, and I'll try to flesh it out more clearly in this chapter by addressing three central concerns. First, what are the defects of an empiricist approach to knowledge for Plato? Second, how are these defects brought to light in the *Theaetetus*? And third, what does Plato's own approach offer us in response? I remarked above that the first part of the dialogue generates "absurdities" and "inconsistencies." But these are subtly different criticisms. So then: how does the view that knowledge is perception turn out to be absurd? How is it inconsistent? Socrates connects this thesis from the start with Protagoras's Measure Doctrine (151E8-152A4). Protagoras's theory is then connected with another "secret doctrine," namely, Heraclitean flux (152C8-E1). It will be important, therefore, to consider each of these theories to see why Plato believes they are connected and why he thinks his own view outshines them.

2. Three Doctrines of Empiricism

How, then, do these three empiricist theories hang together? Plato develops an argument in the first part of the dialogue that connects a Protagorean theory of judgement with a Heraclitean theory of the world, which together are assumed in some way to support Theaetetus's definition of knowledge as perception. But it is not at all clear, first, how we should understand these theories and, second, whether they are in fact connected. I shall examine them here in the same order that Plato does after Socrates' digression (178B2 ff.), where he provides us with a recap of the three doctrines before dispelling them and developing a new approach to the question of knowledge.

(PM) *Protagoras's Measure Doctrine.* "Man is the measure of all things: of the things which are, that they are, and of the things which are not, that they are not" (152A1-4). Protagoras's well-known doctrine makes an early appearance in the *Theaetetus* and is significant enough to merit Socrates' consideration for almost half the dialogue—no other theory, as a matter of fact, preoccupies him to the same extent.[9]

(HF) *Heraclitus's Flux Doctrine.* "[T]here is nothing which in itself is just one thing: nothing which you could rightly call anything or any kind of thing. . . . What is really true is this: the things of which we naturally say that they 'are', are in process of coming to be, as the result of movement and change and blending with one another. We are wrong when we say they 'are', since nothing ever is, but everything is coming to be" (152D3-E1). This doctrine is associated with PM many times in the *Theaetetus*, and invoked specifically for support together with its guiding principle that "everything is change (τὸ πᾶν κίνησις), and nothing else" (156A4-5).

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unknown object from other objects (210A4). The final definition thus cashes out to: "knowledge is true judgement with knowledge of the differentness."

[9] There is good reason for this. As stated here, the quote Plato attributes to Protagoras can be interpreted in several different ways: it seems to be a feature of the doctrine that it cannot be pinned down easily. Moreover, in light of the many interpretations of Socrates' argument against Protagoras that commentators have offered, it is safe to say that Plato does not provide us in the *Theaetetus* with a clear reading of PM.

(KP) *Knowledge is Perception.* Theaetetus's "first-born" thesis receives a provisional formulation at 151E1-3 and is thrashed out until 160D5, at which point Socrates submits the doctrine in its entirety. Protagoras's and Heraclitus's theories come to supply Theaetetus here with the conditions required for his thesis to stand up to scrutiny, and it is on this basis that Socrates proceeds to refute empiricism. In particular, by spelling out the conditions that Theaetetus needs to support his definition of knowledge as perception, Plato suggests that the empiricist's argument amounts to a *reductio ad absurdum*.[10]

That Plato believes these three theories are connected in the *Theaetetus* is apparent from the dialogue's many "stage directions," as Burnyeat terms them. At 160D5-E3, for instance, Socrates states emphatically that "the various theories have converged to the same thing: that of Homer and Heraclitus and all their tribe, that all things flow like streams; of Protagoras, wisest of men, that man is the measure of all things; and of Theaetetus that, these things being so, knowledge proves to be perception." It will therefore be important to keep track of the manoeuvres at work in the *Theaetetus* that link PM, HF, and KP together.[11]

Before reviewing these doctrines in further detail, however, it is worth affirming at the outset what I take to be Plato's underlying concern in this part of the dialogue. Most readers, I presume, will agree that Theaetetus's empiricist account of knowledge is understood by Plato to be committed to and supported by a Protagorean epistemology which, in turn, is committed to and supported by a Heraclitean ontology. But as I shall claim here, these doctrines also have something to say about the possibility of rational inquiry and argument. Specifically, based on PM and HF, the prospect of reaching agreements in argument is thrown into doubt. On this view, not only is the question of knowledge an empty one, but all philosophical investigation is deemed either pointless or (worse) meaningless. Much more, then, is at stake in this dialogue than the theoretical question of knowledge alone. By refuting the three empiricist doctrines that comprise the first part of the *Theaetetus* and staking out his own anti-empiricist position, Plato makes a case for philosophy: dialectic will be rendered possible and the agreements we reach will be meaningful.

3. Protagoras's Measure Doctrine: A Dark Saying

Protagoras's Measure Doctrine is a claim about human judgement: it asserts that things are only what they appear to be and that no one person's truth is more correct than another's. But stated in

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[10] I take this point from Burnyeat (1990), who argues that Plato's refutation of Theaetetus's thesis in the first part of the dialogue is an indirect proof, whereby KP supplies the materials for its own refutation independently. Burnyeat credits Bernard Williams primarily with this view (p. xiii), and expands upon it at length in "Idealism and Greek Philosophy: What Descartes Saw and Berkeley Missed," in *Idealism Past and Present*, edited by Godfrey Vesey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 21-4.

[11] This fulfills what Gail Fine terms the "connection criterion," by which she means that Protagoras's, Heraclitus's, and Theaetetus's theories should be interpreted so that they are all committed to and supported by one another. See Gail Fine, "Protagorean Relativisms," *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* 10, edited by J.J. Cleary and W. Wians (Lanham: University Press of America, 1995), pp. 216-7 and reprinted in *Plato on Knowledge and Forms* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003), pp. 132-59. Many passages in the *Theaetetus* connect the three theories in this manner. At 151E8-152A4, KP and PM amount to the same thing; at 152C8-10, HF is considered the "secret doctrine" of PM; and at 156A3-5, Socrates argues to the effect that HF implies PM. For more of these "stage-directions" see Burnyeat (1990), p. 9.

this way his thesis is notoriously hard to interpret. To begin with, does it apply to perceptual appearances alone or to any appearance at all?[12] Plato interprets PM in both ways: at 152A6-165E4, the thesis is applied solely to the perceptual realm, while at 170A3-172B7, it is construed more broadly to cover ethical and political questions. (In an attempt to give Protagoras a fair hearing, Socrates adopts his argument at 166A2 ff. and defends the doctrine by applying it to both perceptual and non-perceptual appearances.) For our purposes, this is a minor issue and we can take PM in its broadest sense to be a claim about human judgement as a whole. It is clearly this wide-ranging application of the doctrine that commands Plato's attention in the *Theaetetus*.

Things get trickier, though, when it comes to saying anything more about Protagoras's theory. In particular, debate has centred around the conception of truth that is at issue or implicit in Plato's reading of PM. Should the doctrine be interpreted as propounding a relativist or a subjectivist conception of truth? The difference between these interpretations turns on whether Protagoras is making a claim about judgement in which an appearance is merely true with regard to each individual, or a more global claim in which all appearances are absolutely true.[13] If Protagoras maintains the former, he is a relativist; if he maintains the latter, he is a subjectivist. These interpretations have been defended, respectively, by Myles Burnyeat and Gail Fine.[14] Since both of them are furthermore rather credible readings of PM, they are useful for us here as we examine the defects that Plato locates in this empiricist doctrine. For if some common criticism of Protagoras can be gleaned from these two analyses, then it may reasonably be claimed that we have unearthed something essential about Plato's argument in this part of the *Theaetetus*.

Why PM is explicated so ambiguously to invite such diverse interpretations is another matter. My own view is that Plato represents Protagoras's thesis in an obscure fashion simply because the doctrine itself, as quoted at 152A1-4, is clouded in obscurity.[15] We are given just one sentence of

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[12] The verb "appears" (φαίνω) conveys the same ambiguity in Greek as in English. How things appear to me can refer to a sensory judgement (sweet, green, cold) or to any judgement at all (beautiful, equal, just). Fine (2003), pp. 134-5 labels these views "Narrow Protagoreanism" and "Broad Protagoreanism" respectively.

[13] Following Burnyeat and Fine, I shall henceforth use "absolutely true" and "true (period)" interchangeably.

[14] Burnyeat considers a subjectivist reading of PM in "Protagoras and Self-Refutation in Later Greek Philosophy," *Philosophical Review* 85 (1976), pp. 44-69 but argues that Plato provides a "more authentic" relativist reading of the doctrine in "Protagoras and Self-Refutation in Plato's *Theaetetus*," *Philosophical Review* 85 (1976), pp. 172-95. This argument is implicit in Burnyeat (1982), p. 25 where the relevant "states of affairs" that PM describes should be "understood relativistically," and is presupposed in Burnyeat (1990), pp. 19-31. Fine argues against this reading in "Relativism and Self-Refutation: Plato, Protagoras, and Burnyeat," in *Method in Ancient Philosophy*, edited by Jyl Gentzler (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), pp. 137-63 and in Fine (2003), pp. 132-59. She maintains, in contrast, that Plato portrays Protagoras as a subjectivist, and develops this interpretation (which she terms "infallibilism") extensively in "Plato's Refutation of Protagoras in the *Theaetetus*," *Apeiron* 31 (1998), pp. 201-34, reprinted in Fine (2003), pp. 184-212. Other commentators have disagreed with Burnyeat's reading while still interpreting PM as a relativist doctrine. The most convincing of these include Mohan Matthen, "Perception, Relativism, and Truth: Reflections on Plato's *Theaetetus* 152-160," *Dialogue* 24 (1985), pp. 33-58 and Richard Ketchum, "Plato's 'Refutation' of Protagorean Relativism: *Theaetetus* 170-171," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 10 (1992), pp. 73-105. But Fine's account is unique in arguing for a totally different (subjectivist/infallibilist) reading of PM, and so acts as the best foil to Burnyeat's account.

[15] This is surely related to the fact that Protagoras's dictum existed for Plato in the form of a *text*, rather than in propria persona. Protagoras would have been dead for about twenty years by the dramatic date this

Protagoras's text, and it's an open question whether Plato himself had anything more substantial than this fragment to work with. Socrates refers to the dictum at 152C9-10 as a "riddle" or dark saying (ἠνίξατο) delivered to the masses, while its hidden meaning must be teased out. Likewise at 155D9-E1, he claims that the "veiled truth" (ἀλήθειαν ἀποκεκρυμμένην, 155D10) of Protagoras needs to be revealed, and at 156A2 he speaks of the concealed "mysteries" (μυστήρια) of the doctrine. Anything attributed to Protagoras beyond the sentence Plato quotes explicitly at 152C1-4 will therefore be speculative. Yet such speculation seems unavoidable if PM is to be interpreted as making a contribution to the empiricist's argument in the *Theaetetus*, and to see what position Plato sets up in contrast to his own. Both Burnyeat's and Fine's interpretations of the doctrine supply Protagoras with a strong case in this regard, although they differ on what exactly he is saying and thus what Plato himself is arguing against. The point I wish to press here is that whether Protagoras is taken to be a relativist (as Burnyeat argues) or a subjectivist (as Fine argues), at least one implication of his thesis remains clear. In either case, the doctrine entails grave consequences for the pursuit of dialectic.

4. Protagoras as Relativist: Burnyeat's Reading

Let us begin with Burnyeat's reading. Protagoras is widely regarded as the father of relativism. His declaration "Man is the measure of all things: of the things which are, that they are, and of the things which are not, that they are not" certainly has a nice relativistic ring to it. And Socrates' paraphrase of this principle as a claim that "as each thing appears to me, so it is for me, and as it appears to you, so it is for you" (152A6-8) seems to corroborate such a reading. It is natural, consequently, to interpret PM along with Burnyeat as the theory of "a relativist who maintained that every judgment is true *for* (in relation to) the person whose judgment it is."[16]

Now, the problem with reading PM in this way is familiar. At many stages in his arguments against the doctrine, Plato crucially drops the relativising qualifiers that Protagoras would demand for his thesis. In these cases, Socrates presents Protagoras as saying that all judgements are true (period), rather than true *for* so-and-so. This objection has been made often in reply to Plato's self-refutation argument against PM at 170A ff. in the dialogue. There, Socrates contends that even if Protagoras himself believes that his theory is true, most people believe that PM is false. And for this reason

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conversation between Socrates and Theaetetus is said to have occurred (shortly before Socrates' death), and for at least fifty years by the time the dialogue was composed (shortly after Theaetetus's death). In the *Phaedrus*, Plato depicts the written word famously as something unable to answer questions and be examined, because "it always needs its father's support; alone, it can neither defend itself nor come to its own support" (275E3-5). The *Theaetetus* describes PM in line with this metaphor as a hapless "orphan" without its "father" (164E2-3), and highlights the written nature of the doctrine often (see 152A4, 162A2-3, 166C8, 166D1-2, 169D10-E2, 170E9-171A1). The best analysis of this subject that I have found is Andrew Ford's "Protagoras' Head: Interpreting Philosophic Fragments in *Theaetetus*," *American Journal of Philology* 115 (1994), pp. 199-218.

[16] Burnyeat (1976), p. 172. A complete interpretation of Protagoras's view cannot stop with his quote itself, but must also draw on other passages in the *Theaetetus*, as Burnyeat proceeds to do. The chief sections in this regard are found at 152A2-160E3, where the three empiricist theses are elaborated in detail; 161C2-164B12, where Socrates begins to express some qualms concerning Protagoras's doctrine; 164E2-168C5, including an important passage where Socrates attempts to "rescue" the doctrine; 169D3-172B7, including the critical argument at 171A6-C7 where PM is found to refute itself; and 177C6-179B9, after the digression, where all that's been said is reviewed and Protagoras is finally laid to rest.

alone, Socrates suggests, the doctrine is self-refuting: if all judgements are true, then the judgement that PM is false must also be true. On the face of it, the contradication here seems to be a neat way of undermining Protagoras. But Plato has disregarded the relativisation of truth that's ostensibly at the heart of his theory. Protagoras might be making a craftier point—not that all judgements are absolutely true, but that they are true *for* the individual who holds them. Previously, Socrates had stuck to this principle with deliberate care. Hence, as Burnyeat remarks, it is puzzling that Plato drops the relativising qualifiers at the "climactic moment" of his argument by "foisting" on Protagoras the unrelativised premise that all judgements are true (period).[17] In this passage, as well as others, Socrates seems to beg the question against relativism.

The issue here is whether the lesson Plato wants to draw—that PM is false not merely *for* someone or the other but *absolutely* false—can be derived without the illicit omission of these relativising qualifiers.[18] Burnyeat affirms that this can be done once the qualifiers are restored appropriately at 171A6-C7 and that Plato's self-refutation argument against relativism is as a result valid. But other commentators have been less optimistic about the validity of this argument. First of all, if Plato is serious about refuting relativism, why does he drop these truth-qualifiers to begin with? In the preliminary stages before the self-refutation passage, Socrates is quite eager to keep them in place (see, e.g., 170A3-4). Yet as we have noted, they are omitted afterwards at important junctures in his argument. There are, moreover, other periods in the dialogue where PM is stated or purportedly refuted and the qualifiers we would expect on a relativist reading are missing.[19] Second, Burnyeat argues for an assumption couched in the self-refutation passage that Socrates takes as a given in his argument, namely, "if relativism is not true for someone, it does not hold of that person's judgments and beliefs."[20] Once this assumption is granted, the argument indeed turns out to be sound—it validates a move from "true *for* so-and-so" to "true *of* so-and-so's judgements," which means that Protagoras, as a relativist, must concede that since there is at least one person (Socrates, say) who judges PM to be false, his doctrine fails to hold of that person's judgements/beliefs. That is to say, PM does not describe at least one person's judgements. Therefore PM is absolutely false, even for Protagoras, since it claims to describe something about *all* human judgement.

This is a resourceful account of the self-refutation passage, for when Burnyeat's assumption is accepted and the relativising truth-qualifiers are restored at 171A6-C7, Plato's argument works splendidly. But *would* a stubborn relativist accept this assumption?[21] Burnyeat remarks in connection

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[17] Burnyeat (1976), p. 174.

[18] That Plato wants to derive this strong a claim is clear from Socrates' conclusion to the self-refutation argument, where he affirms that Protagoras's theory "is not true for anyone at all," not even for Protagoras himself (171C5-7). This latter contention is remarkable: Plato seems to be hinting that Protagoras disbelieved his own doctrine, that he wrote it insincerely. (Cf. 152C9-10 where Socrates asks if PM was issued "as a riddle for the common crowd of us," and 161E3-4 where he asks whether Protagoras was perhaps "just playing to the crowd" in devising his theory.)

[19] In addition to the self-refutation passage, Fine (1998) lists 152C1-2, 158D4, 162A1, 166D1-2, 167A7-9, 167C1, 169D-170C, and 179C1-2 (p. 162n. 54).

[20] Burnyeat (1976), p. 179. Fine (1998) concludes that this is the central assumption on which Burnyeat's reading of Plato's argument depends (pp. 162-3).

[21] Several critics weigh in on this question. David Bostock, *Plato's Theaetetus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), pp. 90-1 states that while Burnyeat's defence of Plato's argument here is an "ingenious reconstruction," Protagoras need not accept the assumption on which it relies: "On [Burnyeat's] account, a claim is taken to be

elsewhere that "what it means for the Measure doctrine to be false for someone is that he is not a Protagorean measure: which is to say that his mere belief in a proposition is neither a sufficient nor a necessary condition for the proposition to be true in some relativistic sense."[22] But this surely begs the question against relativism. For Protagoras would insist here that his "mere belief" in something—how it appears to him—is in fact both a necessary and a sufficient condition for it to be true (for him). This is exactly what PM should be saying when interpreted relativistically. By negating this claim in an *assumption* of his argument against PM instead of deriving the negation from premises that Protagoras might agree to, Plato is (on this view) sidestepping the issue. Protagoras would hence challenge and, I imagine, doggedly reject the assumption that "if relativism is not true for someone, it does not hold of that person's judgments and beliefs." And it is easy to see why, for if he permitted this point he would be giving the game away to Plato at the outset of their argument. Without the assumption, however, the line of reasoning at 171A6-C7 is invalid.[23]

5. Protagoras as Infallibilist: Fine's Reading

So how can we rescue Plato's arguments against PM? Recall that our reading of Protagoras has until now been pretty much in line with Burnyeat's relativist interpretation. That is, we have understood PM to deny the existence of absolute truth and regarded Protagoras instead to be saying that all judgements are true *for* (in relation to) each individual.[24] But PM does not have to be read in this

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'true for *x*' if and only if it is a description of *x*'s world which is true (of that world) in an absolute and objective way. It simply states *the truth* about that world, not specially *for x*, or indeed *for anyone*, but absolutely." Yet a relativist would certainly dispute a move from "true for" to "true of" in this way. To be fair, Burnyeat's account is more nuanced than my portrayal of it (and, I think, Bostock's as well) allows. What the move from "true for" to "true of" is intended to spell out is the fact that PM is committed to describing something about the world(s) of each person, which connects the doctrine to an ontology of private objects or Heraclitean flux. But even here there's a problem, as Fine argues, for this view of PM (which she dubs "private absolutism") conflicts with Burnyeat's previous view of the doctrine as a strictly relativist thesis. A strict relativist would not be committed to any ontology at all. Furthermore, on either of these two views, Burnyeat's argument turns out to beg the question against relativism (see Fine [1998], pp. 157-9). Ketchum (1992), pp. 85-6 also objects to Burnyeat's key assumption. On the other hand, Waterlow (1977), pp. 32-5 seems to maintain something like Burnyeat's second view of PM, although she differs from Burnyeat in suggesting that Plato doesn't aim to refute this kind of relativism.

[22] Burnyeat (1976), p. 188. Derived from 171C1-3; although see Fine (1998), pp. 162-3.

[23] For the sake of concision, I'm unable to consider other relativist readings of the self-refutation passage. Perhaps there are alternative interpretations of relativism that vindicate Plato's argument. Matthen (1985), pp. 56-7 gestures at one of these. Fine (2003), pp. 132-59 considers and rejects other relativist approaches.

[24] An interesting question arises here about whether PM should be read as promoting a theory of truth at all. Burnyeat (1976) clearly thinks so: "Protagoras' theory is, after all, a theory of truth and a theory of truth must link judgments to something else—the world, as philosophers often put it, though for a relativist the world has to be relativized to each individual" (p. 181). It is for this reason, Burnyeat affirms, that PM is committed to a Heraclitean ontology of flux. But note that nowhere in Socrates' statement of the doctrine at 152A1-4, nor when he paraphrases it at 152A6-8 and elsewhere (e.g., 170A3-4), is there a mention of truth as such. This has lead many commentators to doubt that PM should be interpreted as a theory of truth at all. Ketchum (1992), pp. 74-6 is particularly good here and stresses that Plato often formulates PM simply in terms of *being*: "If *X* seems F to *S* then *X* is F for *S*." In this sense the locutions "true for *X*," "cold for *X*," "good for *X*," etc. would all be on a par with one another. Matthen (1985), p. 57 likewise claims in his analysis of

way, and Gail Fine has offered a convincing reading of the doctrine that does not require restoring the qualifiers when they are missing in the self-refutation passage and in Plato's other arguments against PM, such as 179C1-2 above. On this view, Protagoras is not a relativist but an *infallibilist* who holds that all judgements are absolutely true. (This is a position we labelled "subjectivism" earlier, but because Fine prefers the term "infallibilism," I shall henceforth stick to her expressions.[25])

The first thing to notice about this infallibilist reading of PM is that the qualifier "for so-and-so" is not required after "true" when Plato reiterates Protagoras's position. The way things appear to be are the way they truly are (period). In conjunction with this thesis, Fine also attributes to Protagoras the converse rule that things truly are the way they appear to be.[26] One implication of her reading is thus instantly obvious: Plato drops the qualifiers in his arguments against PM because he thinks that Protagoras does not require them, and if this is the case we need not object to their absence. On Burnyeat's interpretation, we found that Plato cannot drop these truth-qualifiers without begging the question against relativism. In contrast, Fine maintains that PM does not proffer a revisionary theory of truth (as Burnyeat supposes), but rather "an account of the conditions under which statements are true: they are true if and only if believed."[27] As a result, Protagoras on this interpretation holds that all judgements/beliefs/appearances are guaranteed to be true—they are infallible, and so absolutely true or true (period). The move that Plato frequently makes from "*p* is true for so-and-so" to "*p* is true (period)" in expounding PM is, along these lines, justified.

There are further benefits of Fine's reading. Historically, Protagoras has not been portrayed as a relativist by other ancient commentators (notably, Aristotle and Sextus Empiricus), but as someone who regarded all judgements to be absolutely true—that is, as an infallibilist. In addition, these commentators often employ arguments to refute PM that are strikingly akin to the self-refutation passage we find in the *Theaetetus*. It is thus of some historical benefit that on Fine's analysis Plato is, as she says, "not the odd man out."[28] But by far, the principal advantage of this interpretation is that Plato succeeds in refuting Protagoras on an infallibilist reading of the Measure Doctrine. Fine's arguments here are in general compelling, especially with regard to the self-refutation passage.[29] For

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Protagoras's Heraclitean strategy that PM is "primarily about being, not truth." To be sure, Protagoras is said in the *Theaetetus* to have written a work titled *Truth* with PM as its opening sentence (161C3-7), but as Ketchum observes, this title could just as well have been meant to describe its subject matter rather than promote a complex semantic theory (p. 76n. 7). See also Fine (1998), p. 140n. 10.

[25] Fine (2003), p. 158n. 58. Fine remarks here that her reading of PM is the same view Burnyeat calls subjectivism, but she favours the term "infallibilism" since "subjectivism" has been used in a variety of ways. E.g., a subjectivist is often assumed to hold that all objects and properties are mental entities, but an infallibilist does not make this claim. An infallibilist, rather, claims that "(i) all beliefs are absolutely true, and (ii) there are no truths that are not believed: *p* is true if and only if it is believed" (Fine [1998], p. 205).

[26] Note that although Fine (1998) argues against this biconditional (see p. 140), she retracts the claim later in Fine (2003), p. 188n. 12.

[27] Fine (2003), p. 188. In saying that Protagoras does not have a theory of truth or any "novel understanding of the truth predicate," Fine appears to be in basic agreement with Waterlow (1977), pp. 32-3 and Ketchum (1992), pp. 74-6. See also n. 24 above.

[28] Fine, "Plato's Refutation of Protagoras," p. 186. For more on the historical Protagoras, see Burnyeat (1976), pp. 44-7 and Fine (1998), p. 137n. 3.

[29] A thorough account of Fine's reading is beyond the scope of this chapter. She divides, rightly I think, the self-refutation passage into a series of interrelated arguments: (i) 170A-C; (ii) 170C5-E6; and (iii) 170E7-171D8,

instance, on an infallibilist interpretation of PM we see clearly how Plato can argue without begging the question against Protagoras that (i) if PM: all judgements are true (period), then (ii) the judgement "PM is not true" must be true (period), in which case (iii) PM is false. As an infallibilist, Protagoras must accept premises (i) and (ii), and come to the conclusion that his theory is inconsistent. Plato's argument is valid. And upon examining other passages in the dialogue that are problematic on a relativist reading of PM, we find that in each case Plato succeeds in refuting Protagoras once he is understood as an infallibilist.

On the face of it, this is a rather banal conclusion. For isn't an infallibilist interpretation of PM bound to be self-refuting? In the case of conflicting appearances, it would seem to be patently inconsistent for Protagoras to claim that, say, my feeling that the wind is cold and your feeling that the wind is not cold are both *absolutely* true accounts of the way things are. Burnyeat, accordingly, describes infallibilism as a thesis that no one would be likely to defend, since it obviously flouts the law of non-contradiction."[30] If this really were the view of Protagoras, it's hard to see why Plato should dwell on the Measure Doctrine so arduously. A relativist reading of PM, on the other hand, seems to be a far more sophisticated thesis. Along these lines, Protagoras would claim that my feeling that the wind is cold remains true for me, while your feeling that the wind is not cold remains true for you. And we have already seen the difficulties that arise in refuting this version of PM.

Fine argues in reply, though, that infallibilism isn't in *clear* violation of the law of non-contradiction. The subtlety of Protagoras's doctrine is that it appeals for support to a Heraclitean ontology wherein the world consists of objects that are constantly undergoing change. In this sense, infallibilism turns out to be a more plausible theory: Protagoras would claim here that our judgements of the world do not really conflict because *the world itself* is in constant flux. The reason the wind feels cold to me and not to you is simply because we're experiencing different winds.[31] With this response, Fine can assert that her reading of PM has yet another advantage over Burnyeat's version. For if Protagoras were a relativist, he would not be committed to any ontology at all: relativism denies that there's a way the world really is and that there are absolute truths. Such a thesis would not therefore reconcile the problem of conflicting appearances by appealing to an ontological principle but, as Fine notes, "by interpreting the truth predicate in a novel way, or by denying that any propositions are flat-out true."[32]

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in which the well-known "exquisite" argument is a part. Fine analyses these arguments in detail on the assumption that Plato is challenging an infallibilist interpretation of PM and each is found to be a valid refutation of Protagoras's doctrine. She also explains at many stages in her analysis why Plato's arguments succeed on an infallibilist interpretation of PM, while being either invalid or question-begging on a relativist interpretation (see Fine [2003], pp. 190-212).

[30] Burnyeat (1976), p. 46. Burnyeat's target in this article is Sextus Empiricus's "subjectivist" interpretation of PM, which is essentially the same interpretation that Fine terms "infallibilism" (see n. 25 above).

[31] Note the different strategies employed here by a relativist and an infallibilist in justifying conflicting appearances. The relativist appeals to something peculiar about *human judgement*: I perceive the wind one way and you perceive it in another way. The infallibilist, however, appeals to something peculiar about the *world*: the wind itself has undergone a change, so we are not in fact talking about the same appearance. This difference will prove to be of key importance when we turn to examine Heraclitus's flux doctrine.

[32] Fine (2003), p. 190. An infallibilist interpretation of Protagoras's doctrine, on the other hand, "does not have an unusual understanding of the truth predicate, nor does it deny that any propositions are flat-out

In allowing for the presence of absolute truths, then, an infallibilist reading of PM has an additional plus-point over a relativist reading. For the *Theaetetus* frequently presents PM in association with HF, a doctrine which takes it to be an absolute truth that the world is in constant change.[33] If Protagoras were a relativist, however, he would be making use of a certain *standard* here—in this case a standard of flux, but a standard nevertheless—and this would go against his renunciation of all independent standards, truths, norms, and measures. That is to say, a strict relativist should deny that there's an objective way in which things are, but this is just what Heraclitus's doctrine purports to describe.

Again, I find this argument persuasive. It is a virtue of Fine's reading of PM that it can spell out the connection between Protagoras's thesis and Heraclitus's doctrine of flux, which we shall examine in more detail shortly. But before doing so, a lingering concern remains. Our first objection to Burnyeat's relativist interpretation of PM was that it couldn't account for Plato's exclusion of the relativistic truth-qualifiers in his arguments against Protagoras. An objection to Fine's infallibilist interpretation asks the opposite: why are these qualifiers present at all? At numerous points in the self-refutation passage, Plato employs the clause "true for so-and-so" in a way that is quite congenial to a relativist reading of the Measure Doctrine. Socrates in fact stresses to Theodorus at 170D5-6 that while examining PM he will "assume with Protagoras" that Theodorus's judgment is true for him.[34] It seems odd that Plato should draw our attention to these qualifiers so conspicuously.

This issue leads to a more general problem. One reason I have dwelt at length on Burnyeat's analysis of PM is to highlight how natural it is to interpret Protagoras as a relativist. Could Plato really have been so blind to this interpretation? Based on Fine's analysis, we have to assume that Plato was either unaware of a relativist reading of PM or, if he was aware of it, that he didn't feel confident in his abilities to refute relativism. Two questions thus arise: first, does a relativist interpretation of Protagoras's doctrine occur to Plato? Second, why can't he refute relativism? To wrap up our examination of PM, I shall suggest that a relativist reading of the doctrine does in fact occur to Plato. I shall argue further that the reason he does not prove this theory inconsistent in the way he refutes infallibilism is because a relativist reading of PM does not admit of being a theory at all. Rather, Plato rejects relativism for practical purposes.

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true," which commits it more clearly to an ontology of flux in explaining conflicting appearances. See also Fine (2003), pp. 157-8.

33 Recall how, right at the beginning of his exposition of Protagoras's thesis, Socrates describes Heraclitean flux as its "secret doctrine" (152C8-E1).

34 See also 170A3-4 and 170E4-5. Fine (2003) pp. 199-201 admits that this might appear a problem for her reading, but counters that "whether the qualifiers support relativism depends on how they are understood." On her understanding, the qualifiers do not invoke an unusual conception of relative truth, nor do they preclude the suggestion that any propositions are absolutely true. "Rather, to say that *p* is true for A but false for others is only to say that *p* is true in A's view, but false in the view of others; that is, A thinks that *p* is true, whereas others think that it is false." The dative case (σοὶ . . . ἀληθὲς, 170D5-6) should thus be read as the dative of "person judging," i.e., as simply expressing the judgement of a person. Fine cites Waterlow (1977), p. 34 as sharing this view, at least with regard to 170D5-6. But as I note below, there are other descriptions of Protagoras's thesis in the *Theaetetus* that Fine does not consider which are blatantly relativist-sounding. In these cases it is difficult to see how such a reading of PM did not occur to Plato.

6. Protagoras Laid to Rest

At 152A-160D, Socrates elaborates on PM and HF in great detail to clarify Theaetetus's definition of knowledge as perception. In particular, the passage is concerned with developing Protagoras's account of judgement by connecting it to Heraclitean flux. Plato comes to expound an intricate theory of perception in which "all things become relatively to something" (157B1) between an active world in flux on the one hand and a passive agent on the other. Towards the end of the passage, the following is proclaimed:

> . . . whether you apply the term "being" to a thing or the term "becoming," you must always use the words "for somebody" or "of something" or "relatively to something." You must not speak of anything as in itself either being or becoming nor let anyone else use such expressions. That is the meaning of the theory we have been expounding. (160B8-C2)

And to round things off, Socrates associates this theory explicitly at 160C8-9 with Protagoras's thesis that "I am judge . . . of things that are, that they are, for me; and of things that are not, that they are not." Now it's hard in light of such passages to see how Plato could not in some way consider PM a relativist thesis. Yet we have already noted that when it comes to disproving the doctrine, the *Theaetetus* is read most convincingly as arguing against infallibilism. Why doesn't Plato devote himself equally to refuting relativism when such an interpretation of PM is clearly implied above?

To get a handle on this question, we should reflect on what it is exactly about relativism that might give the theory an air of hocus-pocus for Plato. Consider: what would it mean to *assert* a relative truth? Say I have a belief that I claim to be true. On a relativist reading of PM, all I can assert about this belief is that it's true *for me*. If I am debating with someone my belief that the earth is flat or that war is preventable, the Protagorean's retort would presumably be: "Well, that's just true for you." There is no fact of the matter in our debate and hence (importantly for Plato) nothing objective that we can argue about or say that will help us arrive at some shared understanding on an issue.

To assert a relative truth, accordingly, comes to much the same thing as making no assertion at all.[35] Each time I attempt to claim something with sincerity or conviction, the spectre of Protagoras will pop up and allege that my claim is only true for me. But then he will have to retreat, since the allegation that he makes here—his own claim—will likewise only be true for him. On this view, the practice of rational inquiry and exchange seems futile. Relativism gives us an excuse to withdraw from such inquiry, an escape clause; since everything is relative, there may perhaps be no agreements we can come to during the course of an argument. It's better, then, not to engage in discussion at all and assert nothing: to remain passive.

A crucial point to observe here is that this critique of relativism does not focus on a theoretical flaw in the doctrine but a pragmatic or practical flaw—if PM is understood relativistically, Protagoras's view ought to be rejected because he cannot participate in meaningful debate.[36] Indeed, it is difficult

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[35] Cf. Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, translated by J.N. Findlay (London: Routledge, 1970), p. 139: "The content of such assertions rejects what is part of the sense or content of every assertion and what accordingly cannot be significantly separated from any assertion." The quote is in Burnyeat (1990), pp. 30-1.

[36] Cf. John Passmore, *Philosophical Reasoning* (London: Duckworth, 1961), p. 67: "The fundamental criticism of Protagoras can now be put thus: to engage in discourse at all he has to assert that something is the case."

to comprehend how a relativist interpretation of PM can be a theory at all. Articulating a theory involves discussion and engagement with others—it entails putting some claim or another up for approval or disapproval that can be understood on independent grounds and analysed from different points of view. As a relativist, however, Protagoras forbids such discussion through a disengagement from inquiry: each of us lives in his or her own solipsistic bubble, with no common basis between us for understanding and analysis. But when construed in this way, how is Protagoras articulating anything worth considering? His mantra "That's just true for you" is, at best, a distraction or escape from argument. And if this is the case, we can have no reason even to debate PM. A relativist interpretation of the doctrine must thus be abandoned for practical purposes.

This, I believe, provides Plato with just cause to ignore a relativist reading of PM. But did he see it? I think he did, and on examination there are moments in the *Theaetetus* where he highlights this practical flaw in the doctrine. Just after the passage above, in fact, when Socrates has at last brought Theaetetus's "first-born child" to light, he begins to express qualms with Protagoras's theory as it has been developed:

> . . . If whatever the individual judges by means of perception is true for him; if no man can assess another's experience better than he, or can claim authority to examine another man's judgment and see if it is right or wrong; if, as we have repeatedly said, only the individual himself can judge of his own world, and what he judges is always true and correct . . . Can we avoid the conclusion that Protagoras was just playing to the crowd when he said this? I say nothing about my own case and my art of midwifery and how silly we look. So too, I think, does the whole business of philosophical discussion (διαλέγεσθαι πραγματεία, 161E6). To examine and try to refute each other's appearances and judgments, when each person's are correct—this is surely an extremely tiresome piece of nonsense, if the *Truth* of Protagoras is true. (161D2-162A2)

Again, it is difficult not to regard this passage as an indication that a relativist reading of PM occurred to Plato. Furthermore, we have here a clear statement of why he does not attempt to refute this version of the doctrine: it's not practically feasible. Socrates affirms that if Protagoras was a sincere relativist, the examination of other people's judgements through patient inquiry and analysis would be ridiculous. Not only this, but his art of midwifery (described at 150B6-151D6) and the practice of dialectic (διαλέγεσθαι πραγματεία) seem quite futile. So the method we used above to reject relativism is validated. Plato cannot argue against such a position since it doesn't allow for argument to begin with. Hence, he has no reason to consider it at all and must for practical purposes disregard this reading of PM.

That just about completes my analysis of Plato's arguments against Protagoras in the *Theaetetus*. On the one hand, I have maintained against Burnyeat that Plato does not (indeed cannot) seek to refute a relativist interpretation of PM, that all judgements are true *for* (in relation to) each individual. Rather, I agree with Fine that Plato's arguments in the dialogue work best when he is understood as arguing against an infallibilist interpretation of PM, that all judgements are true (period). On the other hand, I have also suggested that PM in its blunt form is an obscure doctrine that can be read as both a relativist thesis and an infallibilist thesis, and that Plato was mindful of both interpretations. Henceforth, I'll refer to these as PM_r and PM_i respectively.

Burnyeat (1976), p. 190 considers this view and concurs that "Passmore's criticism is essentially correct," although he hesitates to say how clearly Plato saw this practical flaw in the doctrine (p. 195).

The lesson to draw here seems to be the following: in order for the agreements we reach with one another through reasoned inquiry and argument to be possible, there must (for Plato) be an objective way in which things are that is independent of us. This is the principal difference between the relativist and the infallibilist. PM_r *denies* that there is an objective way in which things are, and asserts that all appearances are merely true for each individual. In contrast, PM_i *accepts* that there is an objective way in which things are, with the added proviso that things are the way they appear to be. It is because of this additional claim that Plato can engage in debate with Protagoras at 170A ff. and refute PM_i by proving the doctrine inconsistent. In this case, Protagoras *must agree* as a result of certain premises that his theory contradicts itself.

This is emphasised repeatedly just before and throughout the self-refutation passage. Socrates regrets early on that Protagoras isn't around to defend his claim and agree (ὡμολόγει, 169D10) with him. He informs Theodorus that they will have to come to closer grips with the doctrine and not reach agreements (ὁμολογίας, 169E3) on behalf of Protagoras, but wrest an agreement (ὁμολογίαν, 170A1) directly from his thesis. Subsequently, in Plato's famous "exquisite" argument at 171A6-C7, Socrates asserts that since Protagoras agrees (ὁμολογῶν, 171A8) that all men judge what is, he is forced by his own lights to agree (ὁμολογεῖ 171B2) that his theory is false. For he must also agree (ὁμολογεῖ, 171B6) that when others judge his doctrine false, they speak the truth. Hence, it will have to be agreed (ὁμολογήσεται, 171B10) by Protagoras that no one is the measure of anything at all. This argument only works (as we have seen) when Plato is read as arguing against PM_i rather than PM_r because it is only on an infallibilist reading of the Measure Doctrine that such rational exchange is possible: more precisely, PM_i allows for independent and objective grounds between us for inquiry and argument, while PM_r denies that such grounds exist.

In this respect, the image that follows the self-refutation argument at 171C10-D5 is stunning. Plato conceives of Protagoras (literally) turning in his grave and emerging from the earth to denounce Socrates for arguing foolishly (ἐλέγξας ληροῦντα, 171D2) and to reprimand Theodorus, his erstwhile disciple, for agreeing (ὁμολογοῦντα, 171D3) with Socrates' conclusions. Having done so, however, Protagoras runs off without another word. To save his doctrine, he appears to resort here to the guise of a relativist, and we can well imagine his riposte to Socrates: "That's just true for you!" Yet note that by relying on PM_r at this point he has no choice but to withdraw from argument. It is a striking feature of Plato's image that Protagoras runs off after reproaching Socrates and Theodorus. He has no grounds to stand by his theory and defend it through reasoned argument.[37]

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[37] Burnyeat (1967), pp. 191-2 puts this point eloquently: "If Protagoras does not speak to the human condition, does not put forward his claim that each of us lives in our own relativistic world as something we can all discuss and, possibly, come to accept, but simply asserts solipsistically that he, for his part, lives in a world in which this is so, then indeed there is no discussing with him. His world and his theory go to the grave with him, and Socrates is fully entitled to leave them there and get on with his inquiry." Note, however, that at this point in his article (pp. 190-5) Burnyeat focuses on what I've termed a *practical* flaw in PM_r. He also reads the entire preceding passage in terms of this relativist reading and thinks that Plato's self-refutation argument works for *theoretical* reasons (pp. 172-89). In contrast, I have suggested (following Fine) that the self-refutation passage is directed against PM_i and that Plato's arguments against Protagoras only work on this reading of the doctrine. That is to say, PM_r cannot be proven inconsistent theoretically, although Plato can (and, I have suggested, does) reject this version of the doctrine for practical reasons. I am not sure that Fine would agree with this latter claim—I suspect she would say it violates her "univocity criterion," which

Thus we see again how Plato remains well aware of a relativist reading of Protagoras's doctrine, and we also see why he rejects relativism. In foreclosing the possibility of disagreements Protagoras also, crucially, prevents us from reaching agreements. (Note how he rebukes Theodorus at 171D3 simply for *agreeing* with Socrates.) On this view, the activity of rational inquiry and argument at the heart of Plato's philosophy is prohibited. Protagoras advocates instead a passive model of human judgement in which critical thinking and understanding are useless endeavours. For if there is no objective way that things are independently of each of us, as the relativist says, then it seems we have no basis on which to reach agreements with one another.[38] Our use of discourse to engage with and understand each other appears absurd. But if this is the case, it's worth asking whether Protagoras himself, as a relativist, can assert anything meaningful. Plato suggests that he does not, and although PM_r cannot therefore be refuted on a theoretical basis, it can and should be rejected for practical purposes.

7. Heraclitean Flux

So far, I have argued that Plato's key arguments against Protagoras in the *Theaetetus* are directed against an infallibilist version of the Measure Doctrine, which states that the way things appear to be are the way they truly are (period) and that things truly are the way they appear to be. I've argued further that when read in this manner, the self-refutation passage at 170A ff. succeeds in proving that PM_i is an inconsistent thesis. This is a theoretical flaw in Protagoras's doctrine: on account of certain premises, the infallibilist must concede that his thesis is false. However, we have also touched on one of the more subtle features of PM_i in its commitment to a Heraclitean ontology of flux. On these grounds, Protagoras tries to claim that all judgements are absolutely true descriptions of the world—even conflicting judgements—because the world itself is in constant change. The reason the wind appears cold to me and not cold to you is because we are experiencing two different winds. So it's important for us to analyse this "secret doctrine" more closely. Can such an ontology provide the infallibilist with means to save his theory?[39]

Heraclitus's thesis that everything undergoes change is a claim about the world: it asserts something about how things are or (more precisely) become. Plato returns to the doctrine at 179D1-4 after

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requires PM to be construed in a univocal way throughout the *Theaetetus* (Fine [2003], p. 137). However, in this case it seems we have to conclude that Plato didn't think there was a way he could reject relativism. On my reading, he is absolved of this chariness.

[38] I have found Waterlow (1977) helpful here. She claims that based on PM_r "it becomes impossible to see how Plato can legitimately say that Protagoras *agrees* with his opponents" (p. 31). Like Burnyeat, Waterlow believes that the entire self-refutation passage should be interpreted as an argument against PM_r. Unlike Burnyeat, however, she claims that Plato's arguments do not succeed in refuting PM_r. The point Plato is stressing at 171A6-C7 on her reading is "[n]ot that Protagoras' position ought for reasons of logic to be rejected by those who accept it; but that those who reject it can have no reason even to consider accepting it. Protagoras rejects nothing that they assert in opposition. . . . Thus an opponent confronting Protagoras' position confronts, so to speak, a dialectical nothing, offering no resistance" (pp. 35-6). Although I disagree that Plato's target at 171A6-C7 is relativism, I'm basically in agreement with Waterlow's suggestion here that Plato's rejection of PM_r appeals (though she doesn't use this term) to a practical flaw in relativism: to assert a relative truth is to assert nothing. Cf. Burnyeat (1990), pp. 30-1.

[39] We have already seen above why a relativist interpretation of PM cannot draw on an ontology of flux for support. For HF is an objective principle that takes it to be an absolute truth that the world is in contant change, whereas PM_r denies the existence of such truths and principles.

introducing it at 152D3-E1 and analyses it carefully at 181B8-183B5. For Protagoras was imagined earlier in the dialogue as challenging Socrates to reject two claims: first, "that all things are in motion" and, second, "that for each person and each city, things are what they seem to them to be" (168B4-6). Having analysed PM in depth, Plato turns his attention to examining this "first principle" of the Measure Doctrine in greater detail (179E1). And the reason, Socrates suggests, is to prevent Protagoras from exploiting a possible escape route for his thesis: "We shall have to consider and test this moving Being, and find whether it rings true or sounds as if it had some flaw in it" (179D2-4). If this flaw in HF can be found, Plato will presumably have a stronger case against PM.

Everything, Heracliteans claim, undergoes change, and when Plato tackles this principle at 181D5-6 he singles out two kinds of change: alteration (things undergoing change in character) and spatial movement (things undergoing change in place). For the Heraclitean, all things suffer change in both these ways simultaneously (181D9-182A1). Moreover, the experiences we have occur only as a result of such change—through the association of a passive factor that becomes percipient in the soul and an active factor that becomes such-and-such in the world.[40]

For instance, the experience of eating an apple might result in the claim: "It tastes sweet." The percipient or passive factor here would be "tastes." The such-and-such or active factor would be "sweet." Specifically, the passive factor *becomes* percipient, but is not in itself a perception ("tastes" not the perception "taste"). Likewise, the active factor *becomes* such-and-such but is not in itself a quality ("sweet" not the quality "sweetness"). The theory is subtle, but the gist is that perceptions like taste, hearing, touch, and sight do not exist in isolation of their active factors, just as qualities like sweetness, loudness, warmth, and whiteness do not exist in isolation of their passive factors: "it is by the association of the two with one another that they generate perceptions and the things perceived" (182B4-7). Hence, according to HF, we are caught in a world of flux that is ever-changing and becoming. There is no world of unchanging being.

How might Protagoras avail himself of this doctrine? Well, he can now boil all experience down to immediate perceptual judgement and invoke HF as an ontology of extreme flux that is not restricted to the perceptual sphere. Socrates had anticipated at 179C2-4 that it's harder to refute PM in this case. For now Protagoras can say that all judgements are true (period) because the judgement that something's the case at one moment is different at another moment: *everything* undergoes continual change. In point of fact, as subjects we no longer even possess identity over time.[41] On this view, all judgements are guaranteed to be infallible because we, as judgers, and the things we form judgements about are indefinite and unstable.

But if this is the case, Socrates contends, then we might as well say that the things we judge and our judgements don't exist at all. For recall that there are two motions in the world occurring together

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[40] The features of Plato's argument that I focus on in this part of the *Theaetetus* are discussed especially well by David Sedley in *The Midwife of Platonism: Text and Subtext in Plato's Theaetetus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), pp. 89-99. For different accounts, see McDowell (1973), pp. 179-84 and Allan Silverman, "Flux and Language in the *Theaetetus*," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 18 (2000), pp. 109-52.

[41] This is the sort of riposte Socrates imagines Protagoras making at 166B1-C1: "do you expect someone to grant you . . . that the man, who is in process of becoming unlike, is the same as he was before the process began? Do you expect him even to speak of 'the man' rather than of 'the men,' indeed of an infinite number of these men coming to be in succession, assuming this process of becoming unlike?"

according to HF: alterations in character and changes in place. When I perceive an apple as sweet, then, even this active factor is in a process of alteration, and I cannot as a result ascribe any fixed quality to it. The same goes for the passive factor: if nothing abides and everything alters, then even my experience of tasting will be in a state of flux. I might as well claim that I am not tasting rather than I am tasting.

Inquiring into whether something is of a certain type or has a certain value would be impossible on this view. For in response to any question I am asked (or, indeed, I ask myself) about some state of affairs, I would have no more reason to say that things are one way rather than another: both "thus" and "not thus," as Socrates observes, would be equally suitable replies (183A6). In fact, it's doubtful whether we could even get this far with a staunch Heraclitean, for whom the object of any hypothetical inquiry would itself be fleeting and hence incapable of being pinned down long enough to form a coherent question.[42] All attempts at explanation or definition—to determine either why something is the particular way it is or what the essential features of a particular object are—would be disallowed on this view, and it is for these reasons alone that HF must be rejected. For once the flux theorists are forced to admit such consequences, they are left without any grounds to defend themselves in argument; that is, no ability to justify their position or spell out their views. As Socrates affirms, to preserve their theory, they must be provided with some other ability to speak (τιν᾽ ἄλλην φωνὴν), since as matters stand they are bereft of words (ῥήματα) that accord with their thesis (183B2-4). Unable to affirm anything positively, their arguments are devoid of meaning.[43]

Now, the issue I want to underscore here is that this again indicates a *practical* flaw in HF. Based on an infallibilist interpretation of PM, then, we come to a conclusion that is compatible with the one we reached earlier based on a relativist interpretation of the doctrine. Burnyeat's relativist and Fine's infallibilist readings can accordingly be summarised as follows:

(PM_r) Denies that there's an objective way in which things are, and claims that all appearances are merely true *for* each individual. If Protagoras relies on an ontology of flux to explain this thesis, his doctrine is inconsistent—for HF is a principle that describes an objective way in which things are. He would resort instead to asserting something peculiar about *human judgement*: all judgements are relatively true because each individual experiences the world in a special way. But to assert a relative truth is to assert nothing. In this case, Protagoras must retreat from argument (171C10-D5). Dialectic on this view is pointless. Upshot: PM_r is practically flawed.

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[42] This would include, as a paradigmatic case, typically Socratic "What is F?" questions about the virtues. Plato's arguments in middle-period dialogues for the flux of the sensible world are examined by T.H. Irwin, "Plato's Heracleiteanism," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 27 (1977), pp. 1-13. (For the bearing of these arguments on Socratic inquiry, see pp. 9-13.) I shall have more to say about Irwin's article in Chapter 2.

[43] Cf. Theodorus's condemnation of HF at 179E2 ff.: "these views—whether Heraclitean or, as you say, Homeric and even more ancient—conversing (διαλεχθῆναι) with the people around Ephesus who allege to be experienced in them is no more possible than conversing with maniacs . . . as for sticking to an argument or a question, or steadily answering and asking questions in turn, there is less than nothing of that in them. . . . You will never accomplish anything with any of them. Nor indeed do they accomplish anything with each other." I consider this passage and other Heraclitean flux theorists further in Chapter 2, where I connect it to Plato's rejection of the giants in the *Sophist*.

(PM_i) Accepts that there's an objective way in which things are, and claims that things truly are the way they appear to be. Yet Protagoras's doctrine is again inconsistent—for if (PM_i) all judgements are absolutely true, then the judgement "not-PM_i" is absolutely true, which means that PM_i is false (170A3-171C7). Protagoras's only recourse here is to assert something peculiar about the *world*: all judgements are absolutely true because (HF) all things are in flux. Each of us experiences different states of affairs. But in this case, our attempts to give an account of the world are futile. Dialectic on this view is impossible. Upshot: PM_i is practically flawed.

The fact that the line of reasoning in the first part of the *Theaetetus* proceeds in accordance with this latter argument is a good indication that Fine's infallibilist reading of PM is correct. Plato can only engage in debate with PM_i as it's only this reading that, at least on the surface, permits the pursuit of dialectic. That is to say, PM_i admits at first of an objective basis on which we can engage with one another in shared analysis, whereas PM_r rejects at the outset the possibility of any such basis.[44]

Still, we can see above that there are theoretical flaws in each version of the doctrine, and that when pushed to their limits PM_r and PM_i must be rejected for practical reasons. Namely, if PM_r were correct, we would not have grounds to reach agreements with one another through reasoning. If PM_i were correct, on the other hand, we are left with the more devastating conclusion that there would be no agreements possible in judgement, between mind and world. On either view, Protagoras cannot be read as asserting anything meaningful. What's more, the rational exchange of arguments that is a staple of Plato's philosophical method is considered by PM_r and PM_i to be either pointless or impossible.

8. Making Inquiry Meaningful

At 184B4 we reach a turning point in the *Theaetetus*. Without warning, Socrates commences a second refutation of Theaetetus's "knowledge is perception" thesis—this time, however, by drawing on the nature of the soul rather than experience.[45] But how are PM and HF as we have read these

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[44] It would however be remiss of me not to remark that Fine would disagree with the extra argument I make here against PM_i. The sticking point is that I see Protagoras drawing on an *unrestricted* version of HF outside the perceptual sphere, while she sees HF applying only to perceptions, not judgements. Fine (2003) considers something like my argument, but rejects it because she believes that Plato's arguments at 181B8-183B5 do not countenance an expanded role for HF. On her reading, rather, HF "is still restricted to the perceptual sphere" (p. 201n. 45). But I'm not sure why she holds this. First, when restating HF Plato is clear in saying that *all* things are in flux (τὸ πᾶν κίνησις, 156A5), not that all *perceptual* things are in flux (see also 168B4-5 and 182A1). Second, the main implication of Plato's argument at 181B8-183B5 is that based on HF dialectic becomes impossible. But if Heraclitus's thesis is restricted only to the perceptual sphere, it's not clear to me why *all* the accounts we provide of the world would be incoherent; at best, the terms we use to describe perceptual experience would be meaningless. However, this leaves open the possibility of, say, ethical and other non-perceptual discourse. Dialectic as a whole can only break down if HF is taken in an unrestricted sense. At any rate, Fine grants that if one assumes as I do that Plato *does* allow Protagoras an unrestricted version of HF, then the practical flaw I've stressed in PM_i is justifiably maintained. For in this case, "Protagoras can't even articulate, let alone defend, his position" (Fine, [2003], p. 201n. 45).

[45] See Burnyeat (1990), p. 53. This is a direct proof proceeding from premises that Plato himself believes to be true, in contrast to the indirect proof that we've been examining until now (see also n. 10 above.)

doctrines related to Theaetetus's initial empiricist thesis (KP)? On this issue, I agree with Burnyeat that an account of knowledge based solely on experience results for Plato in a *reductio ad absurdum*.[46] Two conditions are needed to validate the empiricist's KP thesis: one must specify something about human judgement; the other must specify something about the world. The first condition is met with Protagoras's Measure Doctrine; the second condition is met with Heraclitean flux.

But both are deemed inadequate. As we have seen, absurdities and inconsistencies abound for PM and HF. Protagoras, whether he's understood as a relativist or as an infallibilist, must resort to either a radical view of human judgement or a radical view of the world. Plato indicates, however, that there's a deep problem with the picture of knowledge, mind, and world that Protagoras's view represents. What picture is this? Plato need not be arguing here that experience has no role whatsoever to play in knowledge—all he claims is that perception cannot constitute knowledge of its own accord. The problem here, it seems, is that based on KP alone we are left with a picture of the human being as a passive consumer, so to speak, of experience: the mind is inert and acted upon by a world that is only ever in a process of change. Knowledge from this vantage point is wholly unstable. Furthermore, and perhaps most importantly for Plato, rational inquiry and argument is emptied of meaning on this empiricist view. The outcome of the *reductio*, therefore, is that the definition "knowledge is simply perception" (151E1-3) is both impossible and incoherent. There must be something more to knowledge than perception alone.

So what does Plato's alternative picture look like? I have claimed in this chapter that the principal arguments of the *Theaetetus* are concerned with challenging a Protagorean epistemology that stresses the passivity of human judgement, in which the way things are judged to be are the way they really are. I've also shown how theoretical issues in the dialogue give way to issues of practice, in which the search for an answer to the question of knowledge quickly provokes the need to make dialectic itself a possible endeavour. Plato tackles these concerns further in the second part of the *Theaetetus* by adopting a more anti-empiricist argument. Here, in submitting an alternative view of judgement, he provides a response to the Protagorean view while providing a basis on which the agreements we arrive at through rational inquiry are meaningful. If, in spite of all this, the question of knowledge remains unsettled, we can at least say that Plato affords us grounds for further investigation.

The pivotal moment comes at 186D2-3, where Socrates claims that "knowledge is found not in the experiences (παθήμασιν, 186D2) but in the process of reasoning (συλλογισμῷ, 186D3) about them." Presumably, in focusing on processes of reasoning rather than experiences, Plato believes that agreements are arrived at only on the basis of such processes. But how? Recall that agreements couldn't be reached on the empiricist view because Protagoras's thesis provided either an escape from argument (if PM_r), was self-refuting (if PM_i), or incoherent (if PM_i + HF). Hence the

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[46] Burnyeat (1990) offers this reading as a rival to the standard interpretation of the *Theaetetus* ("Reading A") that Plato is endorsing PM and HF as acceptable accounts of *perception*, but denying that they yield *knowledge*. On his interpretation ("Reading B"), Burnyeat claims that Plato makes a much more anti-empiricist argument: "Plato does not accept the theories of Protagoras and Heraclitus. Theaetetus is made to accept them because, having defined knowledge as perception, he is faced with the question, What has to be true of perception and of the world for the definition to hold good? The answer suggested is that he will have to adopt a Protagorean epistemology, and that in turn will commit him to a Heraclitean account of the world" (p. 9). Note, though, that Burnyeat takes Plato to be arguing against a relativist thesis here, whereas I take him with Fine to be arguing against an infallibilist thesis.

advantages of Plato's anti-empiricist view will be that, on the epistemological side, the mind plays an active role in experience and, on the ontological side, the world has an element of stability existing independently of us rather than an ever-changing nature that depends on our perception of it.

To secure the possibility of dialectic, it is important to see that both these conditions must be satisfied for Plato: we must have active minds so as to grasp being and truth and reach agreements with one another (in language); and we must have a stable world so as to have anything to talk *about*, so that our thought agrees with the way things are (in judgement). Now, disagreements are certain to arise on this view. We might disagree, for example, that the wind is cold or that the earth is round. In matters of ethics, we might disagree that justice is more beneficial than injustice or that stealing is wrong. We might even disagree that 2 + 2 is 4 or that murder is never justified. It does not strike me that disputes such as these are out of keeping with Plato's project in the *Theaetetus*. What is crucial for him is that we have an arena within which to resolve such disagreements, whereas we aren't provided with this in the first part of the dialogue. By appealing to processes of reasoning as the seat of knowledge, then, Plato implies that these processes are capacities we share *in common*. Mere appearances, by contrast, are variable and indefinite. What you and I experience at a certain time may naturally differ, but our capacities to reflect on these experiences should remain the same. And Plato suggests that it is ultimately these common practices of reasoning that enable us to reach agreements with one another, through which shared inquiry is found to be a valuable enterprise.

This offers an outline, at least, of what Plato's alternative picture looks like. A full analysis of the second part of the dialogue must be shelved for another time, but I've provided here a few salient features of his strategy in the *Theaetetus*. In conclusion, we can say that the dialogue lays down two requirements that any serious theory of knowledge must recognise: an epistemological one and an ontological one. The epistemological requirement stresses that the mind must be actively engaged in forming judgements and not completely passive.[47] The ontological requirement—barely alluded to in the dialogue, but implicit nonetheless—stresses that there must be something objective about the world itself independently of us that makes it correct to judge things to be one way rather than another. It is on these grounds alone, Plato implies, that the practice of dialectic is possible.

In what follows, I'll fill out this picture in a little more detail. Plato's arguments against Heraclitean flux suggest that for dialectic to be possible, the world must have an element of stability to it. We might assume that this condition is satisfied by his theory of forms. In particular, if it's not the case that being is in flux as we learn in the *Theaetetus*, it's tempting to take the contrary view that being is at rest and unchanging. But any conjecture of this sort must reckon with the fact that Plato submits arguments to the effect that the nature of being cannot be completely unchanging in the *Sophist*. That view is attributed to a group the Eleatic Visitor famously labels the "Friends of the Forms," who subscribe to an ontology aligned with the thinking of Parmenides rather than Heraclitus. Plato's project in this stretch of the *Sophist* is therefore once again negative: he argues for why we cannot accept a Parmenidean ontology of complete stability, just as in the *Theaetetus* he argues for why we cannot accept a Heraclitean ontology of complete flux. It's his rejection of the former position that will be my focus in the next chapter, but as we shall see, by clearing the ground of two conflicting pictures of the world in this way, the *Sophist* may also be read as providing the space for a more positive ontology that Plato endorses.

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[47] Frede (2000), pp. 381-4 makes this point in noting the emphasis that Plato places on the amount of mental activity involved in judgement-formation rather than a very restricted notion of perception.

2

FORMS, KINDS, REST, CHANGE: REJECTING THE FRIENDS OF THE FORMS IN THE *SOPHIST*

1. Two Puzzles

The unchangeability of the forms has traditionally been considered such a cardinal principle in Plato's metaphysics that surrendering it would seem to involve forsaking his theory of forms altogether. In a classic article on the topic, Gregory Vlastos maintains that denying this principle "would have blockbusting consequences for the metaphysical foundation of [Plato's] whole system: the absolute unalterability of the Ideas."[1] It is unsurprising, then, that the apparent rejection of this principle in the *Sophist* has met with some consternation among scholars.

The puzzlement stems from two portions of the *Sophist*, one of which appears to contain an explicit argument against the unchangeability of the forms. The view that the forms are completely stable and unchanging is clearly ascribed in this dialogue to a group Plato dubs the "Friends of the Forms," and presented against the backdrop of a "battle between gods and giants" who disagree about the nature of being (246A-B). In what is arguably the first recorded dispute in the history of philosophy between materialists and immaterialists, the giants here stand in for the former camp, stubbornly insisting that everything that exists is corporeal, while the Friends of the Forms maintain to the contrary that true being consists in a world of incorporeal forms.

Plato's analysis of this dispute, and his own position within it, are peculiar. In the voice of the Eleatic Visitor, his spokesperson in the dialogue, he rejects the materialism of the giants as we would expect. What's puzzling, however, is that instead of aligning himself with the Friends of the Forms, the Visitor proceeds to reject their view as well, and advocates an intermediate position between gods and giants: a position he later depicts as a compromise between Parmenideans and Heracliteans (249C-D). On this view, although the forms retain their traditional sense of stability, Plato also seems to grant them a qualified sense of change. But it is difficult to make out what this adds to our understanding of the forms, for he leaves unexplained in this part of the *Sophist* how objects that are by nature immutable can additionally be said to change.

The problem crops up again during the longest stretch of the dialogue, where the Visitor embarks on a sustained examination of the interrelations among forms. The lesson we are supposed to draw here is that it's the nature of forms to blend or associate with one another as "kinds" (251D-253C). Such associations are made possible thanks to a group of five "greatest kinds" that blend with all forms to produce discourse, just as vowels of the alphabet blend with letters to produce words. These greatest kinds are being, difference, sameness, rest, and change (254B-255E). But this presents a second puzzle for the traditional reading of Plato's theory, for while it's fairly clear how being, difference, sameness, and rest pervade every form, the idea that all forms change is quite mysterious.

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[1] Gregory Vlastos, "An Ambiguity in the *Sophist*," app. I in *Platonic Studies*, 2nd edition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), p. 311.

These two portions of the *Sophist* are connected, and I'll spend most of this chapter showing how Plato's reasons for rejecting the Friends of the Forms are continuous with his arguments later on in the dialogue for the interrelatedness of the forms. Taken together, these passages show that two fateful results would follow for the pursuit of dialectic if the forms were completely unchanging: first, the forms would be unknowable, making dialectic pointless; second, the forms would be unable to blend or associate with one another in discourse, making dialectic impossible.

I begin in Section 2 by situating these passages in context. In order to understand why Plato rejects the Friends of the Forms, it is helpful to consider his reasons for dismissing the extreme materialist thesis that he ascribes to the giants. I claim that the *Sophist* provides little argument against these giants because Plato associates their position with the Heraclitean ontology of flux he has already examined carefully and rejected for pragmatic purposes in the *Theaetetus*. In that work, the practice of asking and answering questions with such characters ultimately becomes a lost cause—the kind of inquiry typical of dialectic becomes impossible—and it is for just this reason that the Visitor rejects the initial formulation of the giants' view in the *Sophist*.

In Section 3, I extend this point to the Visitor's rejection of the Friends of the Forms by arguing that an ontology according to which everything is at rest makes dialectic equally impracticable for Plato, and in two ways. First, I take the Visitor's controversial argument at 248A ff. to claim unequivocally that the forms, as exemplars of being, are affected when known, and if this is the case, it follows that the nature of being and the forms themselves must be attributed with change. This is an epistemological objection to the Friends of the Forms, whereby the forms undergo a relative change in coming to be known.

But the *Sophist* also contains a deeper metaphysical objection to the Friends of the Forms, based on Plato's special understanding of forms as kinds in this dialogue, and his claim that the forms blend with one another in discourse. In Sections 4-6, I explore this claim in some detail to show how it provides a further reason why he must reject the Friends of the Forms. Plato's point here, I take it, is that if the forms were completely unchanging, they would be incapable of associating with each other in the manner he clearly wants them to in later works, which would make speech or discourse, and so dialectic, impossible. By focusing on the nature of forms as kinds, therefore, his positive project in the *Sophist* is to expound a sense in which the forms are affected (and so changed) by their interrelatedness without thereby undergoing a change in their essential nature.

This suggests that our standard understanding of Plato's most famous doctrine is in need of review. Far from being founded on a prejudice against the sensible world or some prior dogma about the nature of reality, his arguments for forms in the *Sophist* arise from a more basic commitment to the practice of philosophy. It is natural to ask whether this signifies a revision of his metaphysical views in dialogues such as the *Republic*. I conclude with some considerations in Section 7 that suggest why we need not take this understanding of the forms to signal a major innovation in Plato's thinking.

2. Gods and Monsters

Towards the end of the *Theaetetus*, having dispatched an ungainly mob of Heraclitean flux theorists, Socrates is urged to critique an opposing view held by a band of Parmenideans, according to whom all things are at rest (183C8-184B1). The Heraclitean view, that all things are in constant flux, receives lengthy treatment in the *Theaetetus*, as we have seen. But Socrates quickly begs off discussing Parmenides, claiming that he holds him in too high esteem to give his doctrine anything

less than a thorough assessment. That project is left to the Eleatic Visitor in the *Sophist*, who picks up the discussion with Theaetetus the next day.

Socrates' reticence is on the one hand understandable. He has just dismissed not only a Heraclitean view of the world, but a Protagorean view of judgement on which "man is the measure of all things" and even a lover of argument with Socrates' renowned stamina must pause to catch his breath sometimes. In an apparent allusion to the *Parmenides*, furthermore, he believes it would be uncouth of him to critique the views of a figure he still reveres. On the other hand, such discretion at this point in the *Theaetetus* is curious. This is after all a dialogue about knowledge, and having argued that knowledge cannot be supported by a Heraclitean ontology of flux (cf. 182E8-183C3), we would expect Plato to provide us with a more stable ontology in the *Theaetetus* that appeals to his cherished theory of forms. Indeed, it remains a topic of debate why he fails to refer to the forms in this work when in other dialogues that tackle the issue of knowledge, such as the *Meno* and *Republic*, we find a central place for forms.

The *Sophist* thus presents us with something we expect but never find in the *Theaetetus*: a stable ontology through a careful analysis of forms. But as Socrates suggests in the prequel, this requires substantial work. For Plato isn't content here with a Heraclitean view according to which the world is entirely in flux (HF) or a Parmenidean view according to which the world is entirely stable (PS). The *Theaetetus* provides arguments that give us reasons to reject HF. In what follows, we should consider Plato's reasons for rejecting PS. I shall do so by first reviewing the way in which he frames this issue in the *Sophist*, but it will be useful to keep in mind two questions from the start that will structure the bulk of this chapter:

1. What's wrong with the thesis that everything's at rest or unchanging (PS)?
2. What alternative ontology does Plato recommend in place of HF and PS?

The Visitor attributes the view that everything's unchanging in the *Sophist* to a group he calls the "Friends of the Forms," who are said to be locked in a pitched battle between gods and giants (γιγαντομαχία, 246A4).[2] On the one side of this disagreement, the giants are represented as

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[2] The allusion is to a battle in Greek mythology between a race of giants sprung from the earth who challenged the reign of the Olympian gods. References to this battle in contrast to conflicts solely among the gods, such as the Titanomachy, are rare in fifth- and fourth-century literature, and absent before Xenophanes. (Hesiod's *Theogony* does not distinguish between the Titanomachy and the Gigantomachy.) Pindar alludes to the battle in his Eighth Pythian Ode (ll. 12-20) and First Nemean Ode (ll. 67-9), but it is not until the second century that we find a comprehensive account of the Gigantomachy in Apollodorus's *Library* (1.6.1-2). Interestingly, besides the *Sophist*, the only other explicit mention of the Gigantomachy in the Platonic corpus is found in Book II of the *Republic* (378C3-6), where the same myth is identified as a story that must not be told to those raised in the ideal city. Did Plato perhaps change his mind about this issue by the time he wrote the *Sophist*, and could it be connected to other ways in which this dialogue signals a departure from his earlier writings? I am inclined to think not. Rather, the suggestion in the *Republic* is that the Gigantomachy must be kept from those in the first throes of their philosophical pursuits. The myth is censored during an immature stage of the city's development, and there is no reason to think that it might not be drawn on at a later stage. Or to put it differently: there is a sense in which Theaetetus is "ready" for the story, in a way that Glaucon and Adeimantus are not in the *Republic*.

"dragging everything down to earth from the heavenly (οὐρανοῦ) and invisible (ἀοράτου), simply grabbing rocks and trees with their hands (ταῖς χερσὶν ἀτεχνῶς πέτρας καὶ δρῦς περιλαμβάνοντες)." And in holding fast to their worldly roots, they contend that "only what provides for touching and contact exists, by defining being (οὐσίαν) and body (σῶμα) as the same" (246A7-B1). On the other side stand the gods or Friends of the Forms who "defend themselves very cautiously from an invisible place (ἀοράτου) by contending that true being (τὴν ἀληθινὴν οὐσίαν) consists in certain intelligible and nonbodily forms (νοητὰ . . . καὶ ἀσώματα εἴδη)" (246B6-8).[3]

To begin with, then, the battle is set up straightforwardly as a clash between materialists and immaterialists. But the terms of the debate are soon recast. The original view of the giants is quickly modified to permit the existence of some incorporeal entities, so that when the Visitor and Theaetetus turn to the Friends of the Forms, the issue is no longer one about the *corporeality* of being, but the extent to which it is insusceptible to change.

Why does Plato dismiss the initial materialist view of the giants without argument? He ascribes this position to a group of "earthborn" giants at 247C4-5, and it's often thought that he fails to give them a fair shake in the *Sophist*.[4] The key tenet of their view, that being is simply body apprehended through perception, is immediately rejected by the Visitor, and the only justification he gives for treating them this way is that it's more difficult (χαλεπώτερον, 246D1) and practically impossible (ἴσως δὲ καὶ σχεδὸν ἀδύνατον, 246D1) to question them, whereas the Friends of the Forms are easier (ῥᾷον, 246C8) to deal with. The Visitor and Theaetetus thus proceed to make the earthborn giants "better" (βελτίους, 246D4) than they are, by imagining that they will "answer in a more standard (νομιώτερον) manner than they're now willing to" (246D6-7). This involves fine-tuning the giants' view to admit a class of immaterial things such as justice, wisdom, and the other virtues (247A2-C2), after which they must accept a new definition of being (247C9-E6).[5] But in doing so, it seems Plato evades tackling the original formulation of the giants' position head-on.

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[3] All translations from Plato are my own, although in quoting from the *Sophist* I have regularly turned for guidance to Nicholas White's translation and *Plato's Sophist: The Professor of Wisdom*, translated by Eva Brann, Peter Kalkavage, and Eric Salem (Newbury Port, MA: Focus Publishing, 1996). In referring to the *Theaetetus*, I have benefited from the translations of John McDowell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973) and M.J. Levett (revised by Myles Burnyeat). White's and Levett's translations can also be found in *Plato: Complete Works*, edited by John Cooper and D.S. Hutchinson (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997). All references to the Greek are to John Burnet's *Platonis Opera*, vols. I-V (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1900-7).

[4] Mary Margaret McCabe gives voice to this complaint in *Plato and His Predecessors: The Dramatisation of Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 76-9. My defence of Plato differs from hers (pp. 85-9) by drawing on the *Theaetetus* for primary support, but our motives are similar in spirit.

[5] The new definition that the reformed giants are made to accept is the proposal that being is nothing other than the power (δύναμις, 247E4) to affect (ποιεῖν, 247E1) or to be affected (παθεῖν, 247E1) by something. I take this definition, while significant, to be provisional and supplanted by the account offered at 249C10-D4. The Visitor implies as much when he notes at 247E7-248A2 that another definition may appear later on that replaces the suggestion that being is any power whatsoever to affect or to be affected. For a reading of the Gigantomachy that depends more heavily on this proposal, see Lesley Brown, "Innovation and Continuity: The Battle of Gods and Giants, *Sophist* 245-249" in *Method in Ancient Philosophy*, edited by Jyl Gentzler (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), pp. 181-207.

I believe it's wrong, however, to conclude from the above that Plato's not giving the giants their due in the *Sophist*. The reason he dismisses their view so unceremoniously in this dialogue is because he has already investigated its theoretical underpinnings carefully in the *Theaetetus*. A nice piece of evidence for this can be found in Theaetetus's initial reaction to the giants' position at 246B4-5, where he instantly declares his familiarity with them: "These men you speak of are certainly terrible," he tells the Visitor, before adding that he's come across many of them already. This stands to reason textually, since he's just spent the previous day duking it out with Socrates in the *Theaetetus*, and in that work we find an array of arguments against figures who hold beliefs that are remarkably consonant with the beliefs that Plato ascribes to the giants in the *Sophist*.[6]

For instance, at the start of the *Theaetetus*, in outlining the position of those who are committed to an ontology of flux, among whom are included Protagoras, Heraclitus, Empedocles, and Homer, Socrates refers to a group of "uninitiates" (ἀμυήτων, 155E3) who contend that nothing exists except what "they are able to grasp tightly in their hands" (δύνωνται ἀπρὶξ τοῖν χεροῖν λαβέσθαι, 155E4-5), and who claim that neither actions (πράξεις, 155E5), nor comings to be (γενέσεις, 155E5), nor any invisible thing at all (πᾶν τὸ ἀόρατον, 155E6) have a part in being.[7] The fetish of this group for all things tactile is one they share with the earthborn giants, who are introduced similarly in the *Sophist* (ταῖς χερσὶν . . . περιλαμβάνοντες, 246A6-7), and who are described later on as denying the reality of "whatever they are unable to squeeze in their hands" (ὃ μὴ δυνατοὶ ταῖς χερσὶ συμπιέζειν, 247C5-6). Both groups, in addition, share an aversion to the "invisible" and to processes that require anything more than observation and contact for understanding. Since Plato associates these attitudes with a picture of the world according to which everything is changing in the *Theaetetus*, he expects us to do likewise when we see the same attitudes expressed by the earthborn giants in the *Sophist*.[8]

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[6] In claiming this, I do not mean to suggest that the giants of the *Sophist* should simply be identified with the flux theorists of the *Theaetetus*. The point is rather that in holding certain views about being, the giants are (perhaps unbeknownst to themselves) committed to a doctrine that their more sophisticated Heraclitean cousins put into words. They are at any rate committed to an empiricist view of the world, and part of Plato's project in the *Theaetetus* is to show how such a view requires a Heraclitean ontology of flux. As we shall see, this parallels the way in which the Friends of the Forms are (again perhaps unbeknownst to themselves) committed to a Parmenidean ontology of complete stability. The problem of the giants' identity is nicely discussed by Brown (1998), pp. 187-9. She also draws a link between their view and the flux theorists of the *Theaetetus* (p. 205), but does not connect Plato's rejection of the latter group with his rejection of the former. My interpretation of the Gigantomachy differs considerably from hers, according to which Plato endorses an "all-inclusive ontology" (p. 204) that grants the existence of both material and immaterial objects. For more on whether the *Sophist* should be read to admit the reality of the sensible world, see nn. 22 and 26 below.

[7] It is difficult to tell what's meant by labelling such figures "uninitiates" (ἀμυήτων). The word has its roots in the verb μυέω ("to initiate"), but at 493A1 ff. in the *Gorgias*, Plato uses the same term with a pun on μύω ("to close") to characterise the "leaky" and insatiable nature of those who are governed by their appetites alone. (See especially 493B3-7, where Socrates suggests that this is also the most wretched life.) In that case, the label could have less to do with a set of doctrines that these figures may or may not believe, and more to do with their state of character. However, since the latter topic goes beyond the scope of this chapter and, what's more, we *are* interested in the beliefs of these uninitiates, I leave this proposal as food for thought.

[8] A possible objection to this claim is that Plato doesn't treat these uninitiates fairly in the *Theaetetus* either. Socrates asks Theaetetus at 155E3-6 to make sure that no one from this group is listening to what they say, and so appears to exclude them from the conversation, just as the giants are excluded in the *Sophist*. But right

In clarifying why Plato dismisses the original position of these giants, then, we should return for a moment to the arguments he marshals against Heraclitus's flux doctrine in the *Theaetetus*. Plato only gets around to dealing with HF earnestly at 179D1-183B6, and his reasons for rejecting the doctrine are complex, but the point to note for our purposes is that they operate on a higher-order level of argument.[9] That is to say, Plato rejects HF not because of any inconsistency in the theory itself, but because it is an unacceptable consequence of the flux theorists' view that they are incapable of engaging in meaningful inquiry, even in defence of their own position. This amounts effectively to a practical flaw in their doctrine, which is encapsulated well in the blistering critique that Plato puts in the mouth of Theodorus at 179E2-180B3. The passage is worth quoting in full:

> Indeed, Socrates, as for these views—whether Heraclitean or, as you say, Homeric and even more ancient—conversing (διαλεχθῆναι) with the people around Ephesus who allege to be experienced in them is no more possible than conversing with maniacs. For in keeping simply with their writings, they are always on the move; but as for sticking to an argument (λόγῳ) or a question (ἐρωτήματι), or steadily answering and asking questions in turn (ἡσυχίως ἐν μέρει ἀποκρίνασθαι καὶ ἐρέσθαι), there is less than nothing of that in them. Actually, "not even nothing" overstates the issue, as there isn't the slightest bit of steadiness (ἡσυχίας) in these men. Should you ask any of them something, they'll pull out enigmatic little phrases from their quiver, as it were, and shoot them off. And should you seek to grasp an account (λόγον λαβεῖν) of what's said, you'll be struck by another freshly-spun expression. You will never accomplish anything with any of them. Nor indeed do they accomplish anything with each other. Rather, they guard well against there being anything at all stable (βέβαιον) either in any argument or in their own souls (μήτ' ἐν λόγῳ μήτ' ἐν ταῖς αὑτῶν ψυχαῖς), for they believe this to be a thing at rest (στάσιμον), it seems to me. And this is what they are completely at war with (πολεμοῦσιν), and what they expel from all places to the extent that they are able.

The depiction of these Heraclitean aficionados always on the move, who allow nothing to be stable (βέβαιον, 180A8), and who are "at war" (πολεμοῦσιν, 180B2) with what's "at rest" (στάσιμον, 180B2) is at least partially suggestive of the way in which Plato conceives of the battle between gods and giants in the *Sophist*.[10] In fact, shortly after Theodorus unleashes this tirade against the flux theorists, Socrates claims that they have got themselves involved in a tug of war between two opposing camps: on the one hand, those who assert that everything changes and nothing's at rest, and on the other, those who assert that everything's at rest and nothing changes (180C7-E4). Again, this seems to

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after he isolates the uninitiates' position in the *Theaetetus*, Socrates refers to what he calls the more "subtle" view of Heraclitean flux theorists. I take Plato to be indicating here that, although they may deny it, the views of the uninitiates depend at least implicitly on a Heraclitean account of the world, in the same sort of way that he takes this account to be at the heart of Protagoras's measure doctrine and, it seems rather more peculiarly, the poetry of Homer (cf. 152E4-9). Note, moreover, that unless the giants are seen as standing in for the flux theorists whom Plato has already dealt with in the *Theaetetus*, it is hard to explain why he recasts the conflict between gods and giants later on as a debate between Parmenideans and Heracliteans (cf. 249C10-D2).

[9] The features of Plato's argument that I focus on in this part of the *Theaetetus* are discussed especially well by David Sedley in *The Midwife of Platonism: Text and Subtext in Plato's Theaetetus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), pp. 89-99. For different accounts, see McDowell (1973), pp. 179-84, McCabe (2000), pp. 102-28, and Allan Silverman, "Flux and Language in the *Theaetetus*," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 18 (2000), pp. 109-52.

[10] Note that the Friends of the Forms' initial criticism of the giants in the *Sophist* is that the bodies that the latter group identify with being are just some sort of "moving becoming" (γένεσιν . . . φερομένην, 246C1-2). The connection is also drawn by McCabe (2000), p. 97n. 18 and p. 127.

resonate well with the way in which the Visitor eventually frames the debate between gods and giants in the *Sophist*.

We should therefore take seriously the Eleatic Visitor's reasons for rejecting the giants' original position in the *Sophist*—that they are too unruly to answer questions (246D6-7). For being unable to ask and answer questions is something Theodorus explicitly faults the Heracliteans for above in the *Theaetetus*. We should also pay more heed in this regard to the Visitor's claim at 246C8-D1 that it's too "difficult" (χαλεπώτερον, 246D1) and "nearly impossible" (σχεδὸν ἀδύνατον, 246D1) to engage with the earthborn giants. The "difficulty" here reflects no shortcoming on the part of those who seek to understand their position: as Plato makes quite plain, the difficulty consists in the fact that the Visitor and Theaetetus must "grasp an account" (λάβωμεν λόγον, 246C5-6) of the giants' view, but as Theodorus suggests above, an "account" isn't the sort of thing that figures like the giants take themselves to be in the business of giving.

In assuming that the original position of the giants is supported by a Heraclitean ontology of flux, we can see better why Plato feels entitled to set aside their position when it crops up in the *Sophist*: to put it simply, the giants don't deserve argument because they don't make room for argument. And as Socrates' efforts in the *Theaetetus* show, it's not for lack of trying on Plato's part. One of his abiding concerns in both dialogues is to stake out the grounds for dialectic; but to hold in principle, as the flux theorists do, that no one can ever be wrong about anything is to make the kind of inquiry typical of dialectic altogether impossible.[11] When it comes to dealing with their view in the *Sophist*, accordingly, it is not to facilitate any preset Platonic agenda that the giants are compelled to "better" themselves. Rather, as the Visitor stresses at 246D4-9, it is primarily to make them *better in argument* (βελτίους . . . λόγῳ, 246D4-5) that Theaetetus must modify their view.[12] As for those earthborn giants who stick to their guns, they of course remain accountable to no one, but once the full extent of their position is revealed, we have just cause not to take them seriously. For such characters allow nothing to stay in one place that may be taken up for serious and methodical examination, neither in any argument nor in their own souls: they are beyond the pale of reason.[13]

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[11] For the importance of taking HF to bring about a collapse of dialectic rather than (as is often thought) a collapse of language, see Sedley (2004), pp. 97-9. Plato's rejection of a Heraclitean ontology is connected here in the *Theaetetus*, not accidentally, to his rejection of a Protagorean epistemology. See especially Socrates' conjecture at 161D2 ff. that if Protagoras's measure doctrine is accepted as true, both his art of midwifery and "the practice of dialectic as a whole" (σύμπασα ἡ τοῦ διαλέγεσθαι πραγματεία, 161E6) look rather absurd: "For to inspect and to try to refute (ἐπισκοπεῖν καὶ ἐπιχειρεῖν ἐλέγχειν) each other's appearances and beliefs when each person's are correct, isn't this a long and immense load of drivel if the Truth of Protagoras is true, rather than a joke he was uttering from the sanctuary of his book?" (161E7-162A3).

[12] The same aim is noted in a different connection by McCabe (2000), who concludes her discussion of the flux theorists in the *Theaetetus* by remarking that one of Plato's objectives in this dialogue is to get his readers "to reflect on the conditions for participating in argument" (p. 126). The kinship I have stressed between the views of the flux theorists and the giants suggest that this is a project we are meant to continue in the *Sophist*.

[13] Theodorus's portrait of the flux theorists in the *Theaetetus* as those who abhor stability "in their own souls" (ἐν ταῖς αὑτῶν ψυχαῖς, 180B1) amounts to an ethical charge against them. McCabe (2000) connects this to Plato's concerns with the good life in the *Philebus* (see pp. 128-38). I am also reminded of the "uninitiates" in the *Gorgias* (see n. 7 above), and Socrates' depiction of the appetitive part of their souls at 493A1-5 as having a tendency to "waver" (μεταπίπτειν, 493A4) up and down.

3. Forms and Knowledge

Framing Plato's rejection of the giants in the terms above—so as to make dialectic possible—offers us an important clue in understanding his later rejection of the Friends of the Forms in the *Sophist*. Recall that in the *Theaetetus* Plato deliberately abstains from examining a Parmenidean account of the world according to which everything's at rest or unchanging (PS).[14] In the *Sophist*, however, he's prepared to take on this view, and as I shall now argue, his reasons here for rejecting PS run in concert with his reasons for rejecting HF. So let us turn at last to the gods.

In order to get a handle on the metaphysical picture that Plato himself endorses, it is necessary to consider what he takes to be the defects in this Parmenidean view upheld by the Friends of the Forms. Specifically, I asked in question (1) above what's wrong with their contention that real being (τὴν ὄντως οὐσίαν) must be identified with immaterial and unchanging forms that always remain in a self-same state (248A11-12). It is important to observe at the outset that the Eleatic Visitor does *not* dispute the connection drawn here between being and an imperceptible world of intelligible forms.[15] Nor does he take issue with the stronger claim that the forms are the only objects that can truly be said to exist (cf. 246B7-8). Instead, what he expressly targets in this view is the suggestion that the forms are incapable of change. Plato finds an ontology of complete stability just as problematic as an ontology of complete flux, and in keeping with our analysis of the giants above, we should read his rejection of PS along the same lines as his rejection of HF: such an ontology makes dialectic impossible. That is why the Friends of the Forms must be opposed, and much light can be shed on Plato's more positive account of being by unpacking this criticism.

How, then, does PS make dialectic impossible? I will suggest in the remainder of this chapter that if being (that is, the forms) were incapable of undergoing change, two unacceptable results would follow for Plato: (1a) the forms would be unknowable, making dialectic pointless; (1b) the forms would be unable to "blend" or associate with one another in discourse, making dialectic impossible. Notice that (1a) is an epistemological objection to PS, while (1b) is chiefly a metaphysical objection. (1a) may also be considered a consequence of (1b), since an activity that cannot be pursued is for that very reason pointless, whereas we can think of many pursuits that have no point, but which we nevertheless engage in, albeit often against our better judgement. The bulk of my argument in what follows will thus hinge to a significant degree on how PS entails (1b). However, since the Visitor directs his attention initially to the way in which PS entails (1a), we shall begin there as well.

Plato takes dialectic in general to be a practice through which we attain knowledge of how things are. But in the *Sophist*, he presents an argument suggesting that to know something is to change it. According to this line of reasoning, if the forms were without change, we wouldn't be able to know

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[14] McDowell (1973) remarks in his commentary that this passage doesn't anticipate the *Sophist* in much detail, since "[w]hat Socrates refuses to do here is to discuss Parmenides' argument against the possibility of change; whereas the *Sophist* concentrates, not on that, but on his more fundamental argument against the possibility of not being" (p. 185). But this requires an unduly narrow reading of Plato's aims in the *Sophist*. Socrates plainly states at 184A1-4 in the *Theaetetus* that his main fear in tackling Parmenides is that this will involve confronting many other theories—including, I take it, the views held by the Friends of the Forms, who are best understood as committed to PS. This, together with Socrates' comment to Theodorus at 180E5-181B4 that both HF *and* PS must be investigated, clearly foreshadows the concerns of the *Sophist*.

[15] This is an insight that was first brought home to me by Jonathan Beere.

them—we wouldn't be able to know how things are. Dialectic would be pointless. This argument against the Friends of the Forms amounts to an epistemological objection to their doctrine and is made explicit by the Visitor at 248A7-E4. Whether Plato expects us to infer from it that the forms are capable of changing, however, is an issue of much debate. The key passage, which is one of the most contested in the *Sophist*, is found at 248D10-E4:

> If to know (γιγνώσκειν) is to affect (ποιεῖν) something, then it follows in turn that a thing that's known (τὸ γιγνωσκόμενον) is necessarily affected (πάσχειν). Now, on this account, when being (οὐσίαν) is known by an act of knowing, to the extent that it's known (καθ' ὅσον γιγνώσκεται), it is to that extent changed (κατὰ τοσοῦτον κινεῖσθαι) by being affected (διὰ τὸ πάσχειν), which we say wouldn't come to pass for a thing that's still (τὸ ἠρεμοῦν).

The first thing to observe about this argument is that it's inconclusive.[16] All that can be inferred from it is that being cannot be both unchanging *and* known, if to be known is to be affected and to be affected is to be changed. Commentators on the passage have accordingly disagreed on whether Plato intends to deny here that: (i) the forms are without change; (ii) to be known is to be affected; or (iii) to be affected is to be changed.[17]

Controversy swirls mainly around (i), which is seen as a principle so crucial to Plato's theory of forms that rejecting it would leave his theory unrecognisable.[18] Moreover, right after the Visitor submits this argument, he presents what appears to be a different argument against the Friends of the Forms at 248E6-249B6 that, some have claimed, does not demand that the forms undergo any sort of change, and which is in fact followed by an affirmation at 249B8-C8 that being must be considered at rest (στάσεως, 249C1) if it is to be credited with intelligence and rational order.[19]

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[16] A point emphasised by W.D. Ross, *Plato's Theory of Ideas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), pp. 110-1 and also by David Keyt, who provides a careful analysis of this passage in "Plato's Paradox that the Immutable is Unknowable," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 19 (1969), pp. 1-14.

[17] The idea that the forms are incapable of being known has, quite rightly, been held by no one. Those who take Plato to deny (i) include J.M.E. Moravcsik, "Being and Meaning in the *Sophist*," *Acta Philosophica Fennica* 14 (1962), pp. 37-41, G.E.L. Owen, "Plato and Parmenides on the Timeless Present," *The Monist* 50 (1966), pp. 336-40, and C.D.C. Reeve, "Motion, Rest, and Dialectic in the *Sophist*," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 67 (1985), pp. 47-64. Ross (1951), p. 111 and Brown (1998), pp. 193-203 suggest that Plato could be denying (ii). Vlastos (1981), pp. 309-17 disputes whether he would have endorsed (iii). Keyt (1969), pp. 2-7 supplies a good overview of several interpretations of this difficult passage, although I disagree with his own view that Plato is "wedded" (p. 7) to a paradox he recognises but is somehow unable to resolve in the *Sophist*. My debt to Reeve's paper here and in other respects will become especially clear in Section 4.

[18] Brown (1998) refers to (i) as the "cherished immutability" of the forms (p. 197), while Vlastos (1981) takes Plato's entire philosophical system to depend on "the absolute unalterability of the Ideas" (p. 311).

[19] I use "intelligence and rational order" together as a translation of νοῦς. Owen (1966), pp. 337-8 labels the two legs of argument against the Friends of the Forms (A) and (B), running from 248A7-E4 and 248E6-249B6 respectively. Since (A) is more central to my concerns, I won't have much to say about (B), but the passage has unfortunately not received the attention it deserves in the secondary literature, and it's worth remarking on here. In general, I agree with Owen that (B) is a "reinforcing argument" to (A) that supports the view that the forms cannot be completely unchanging (p. 339). Keyt (1969), pp. 4-5 and Brown (1998), pp. 201-2 take (B) instead to admit changing bodies (rather than changing forms) into the class of things that are, but I find no proof of this in the text. What (B) argues for explicitly is the presence of νοῦς (249A1-2), life (249A4),

Now, if Plato meant to suggest by this latter point that being must be considered *completely* at rest, then it would indeed be difficult to interpret the above passage as an argument against the unchangeability of the forms. But the Visitor nowhere makes this strong a point. Having argued at 248E6-249B6 that PS rids the world of intelligibility, all he does at 249B8-C8 is remind us that a view on which "everything is moving and changing" (φερόμενα καὶ κινούμενα πάντ᾽ εἶναι, 249B8) does the same thing. What's called for, then, as Plato soon makes clear, is an intermediate position between PS and HF: a picture of the world according to which there are elements of both rest and change.

We should therefore feel no reluctance in reading the Visitor's argument against the Friends of the Forms at 248D10-E4 to support a straightforward denial of (i) by accepting (ii) and (iii). That is, we should conclude from this passage that Plato's claiming in all seriousness that to know something is to change it and that being, insofar as it's known, is changed. What's more, since there is no point at which Plato takes issue with the contention that the forms are exemplars of being in the *Sophist*, we should infer that the forms, too, are capable of changing. Most commentators resist making this move, I think, because they assimilate claims about the changeability of the forms with claims about their mutability or alterability.[20] It is the second set of claims here that they justifiably oppose, but if

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soul (249A6-7), and thus change (249B2-3) in "entirely complete being" (τῷ παντελῶς ὄντι, 248E7-249A1). Keyt and Brown take this argument to be restricted to bodies based on the fact that it is directed exclusively at things that are "ensouled" (ἔμψυχον, 249A10), and "it is only to bodies that the word ἔμψυχος can sensibly be applied" (Keyt [1969], p. 4). But Plato, rather famously, held that the soul is separable from the body, and there is nothing in his other works to suggest that the term ἔμψυχος should be applied to bodies alone. On the contrary, he implies in the *Laws* that the "nature of the ensouled" (τῆς τε ἐμψύχου . . . φύσεως, 902B4-5) consists of much more than only corporeal life, including all actions (904A6-8) and virtues such as justice and moderation (906A8-B3). A less weighty reading of ἔμψυχος as that which has an internal principle of κίνησις, suggested by Socrates in the *Phaedrus* (245E4-6), makes better sense of what the Visitor is saying in (B) when he takes being to possess "soul." (This is also how Lewis Campbell interprets the term in his commentary on the passage in *The Sophistes and Politicus of Plato* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1867], p. 130.) Note, furthermore, that even if Keyt and Brown's reading of ἔμψυχος were accepted, (B) does not support the strong materialist conclusion they draw from it; for the text only secures the existence of *living* bodies on this reading—not the sticks, stones, tables, and chairs that should populate the world of any self-respecting materialist. I see no evidence, then, that the Friends of the Forms are forced to give up their anti-materialist stance in the *Sophist*, nor that Plato intends them to. What they must concede in (B) is that if their chosen candidates for being (sc., the forms) possess νοῦς, they must have life and soul, and so experience κίνησις as well. Brown rejects this as a Neoplatonic mystical view (p. 201), but this should not count against the idea that it is Plato's view. For he has no qualms about arguing along roughly similar lines in the *Philebus* (28D5-30E3) that all things that exist possess νοῦς together with "soul" (cf. *Laws*, 894C10-896B3). If claims such as these smack of mysticism, they should be understood in terms of the way I have glossed νοῦς above as a paradigm of intelligible and rational order. While (A) is an argument from knowledge that focuses on how the forms are affected by us, (B) may be read conversely as an argument from νοῦς that focuses on how we are affected by the forms.

[20] See the quotes from Brown (1998) and Vlastos (1981) in n. 21 above. I find Vlastos's attempt to uphold (i) by rejecting (iii) because it is expressed in indirect discourse unconvincing, for reasons aptly stated by Reeve (1985), p. 53 and Brown (1998), p. 198. Vlastos's insistence that the forms cannot undergo change depends crucially on the assumption that κίνησις here necessarily involves ἀλλοίωσις or alteration (see p. 310n. 3), but he provides no argument for this claim. Brown's rejection of (ii), although resourceful, is also problematic. She locates a hidden premise in the passage: that the forms affect us in being known, instead of the other way

Plato could be read to hold that the forms change in some way without thereby changing in their essential nature, these grounds for adhering to (i) would presumably disappear.

To propose that a form changes in coming to be known is to claim that it undergoes a particular sort of relative change: something becomes true of the form (its being known by someone) that was not true of it previously.[21] But can Plato be read to have a conception of relative change? In my view, this is the issue on which all accounts of the argument at 248D10-E4 stand and fall, yet few scholars have tackled it directly.[22] The place to start in considering it ourselves is the general lesson that the Visitor draws from this stretch of the dialogue, where he submits a solution to the battle between gods and giants. To recap, he has provided reasons to suggest that a picture of the world according to which everything is at rest makes the forms unknowable, and I take this to be part of his general strategy to show how PS creates problems for dialectic—for dialectic is concerned essentially with what's knowable. But neither can it be the case that everything is changing, for that would lead us back to the giants' position. (This is one reason why the Visitor advances a supplementary argument against HF at 249B8-C8.) We appear, therefore, to be stuck in between two conflicting world views, just as Socrates had pronounced in the *Theaetetus* (cf. 180C7-E4). In the *Sophist*, however, Plato offers us a solution at 249C10-D4 designed to end this standoff:

> For the philosopher, the one who values all these things [sc., knowledge, wisdom, and intelligence] most of all, it seems necessary (because of them) not to follow those who speak of everything resting (τὸ πᾶν ἑστηκὸς) as one thing or even as many forms—nor again to listen at all to those who speak of being changing in every way (πανταχῇ τὸ ὂν κινούντων)—but rather to claim with the wishfulness of children that being (τὸ ὄν) is everything (τὸ πᾶν) that is unchanging and changed (ὅσα ἀκίνητα καὶ κεκινημένα) both together (συναμφότερα).[23]

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around. But beyond the grammatical awkwardness of this idea, the line of reasoning in the text reads more naturally as a proposal that being is affected (πάσχειν, 248E4) insofar as it's known (γιγνώσκεται, 248E3). This isn't to say that the forms might not affect us in some other way (see n. 22 above), just that the knowing relation is one in which we come to affect them. Further, even on Brown's account, it's not clear to me why someone who wished to deny (i) could not assert that in affecting us, the forms change: once our grammatical prejudices are set aside (see pp. 199-201), what reason do we have for thinking that a ποίημα isn't a κίνησις?

[21] This way of putting things fits with Bertrand Russell's definition of change in the *The Principles of Mathematics* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1903) as "the difference in respect of truth or falsehood, between a proposition concerning an entity and the time T, and a proposition concerning the same entity and the time T', provided that these propositions differ only by the fact that T occurs in the one where T' occurs in the other" (§ 442). In modern jargon, this sort of change has come to be labelled "Cambridge change," following Peter Geach, *God and the Soul* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), pp. 71-2. However, as I'll argue in Sections 4-5, Plato's conception of relative change extends wider than mere Cambridge change, since it does not involve an implicit reference to time: there is a sense in which the forms exist in a state of perfect change.

[22] As far as I can tell, the only exception is Reeve (1985). Moravcsik (1962), p. 40 and Owen (1966), p. 338-9 assume without argument that Plato appeals to a notion of relative change at 248D10-E4. Keyt (1969), p. 6, Vlastos (1981), p. 310n. 3, and Brown (1998), pp. 197-8 assume the opposite. Although his focus is restricted to the flux of the sensible world, it seems to me that Irwin (1977) leaves open the possibility that Plato has a conception of relative change in his discussion of "aspect-change" (see especially pp. 4-5).

[23] As Owen (1966) notes (p. 339n. 16), this crucial passage has been widely interpreted, and I depart from the translations of both White and Brann, et al. in several respects. The positive account of being at 249D3-4 is especially important: ὅσα ἀκίνητα καὶ κεκινημένα, τὸ ὂν τε καὶ τὸ πᾶν συναμφότερα. The lines are often

Note, first, that the battle between gods and giants is explicitly recast in this passage as a conflict between Parmenideans and Heracliteans. Plato pulls together both doctrines, "everything's at rest" (τὸ πᾶν ἑστηκὸς, 249D1) and "being changes in every way" (πανταχῇ τὸ ὄν κινούντων, 249D2), and finds each of them lacking. Second, contrary to those who claim that earlier arguments against the Friends of the Forms do not suggest that the forms change, the text above affirms that being cannot be understood simply at rest, whether spoken of as the Parmenidean "one" or even as many forms (ἢ καὶ τὰ πολλὰ εἴδη, 249C11-D1).

What should we make of Plato's positive account of being here? This is presumably part of his response to question (2) I raised above: to provide an alternative ontology that replaces PS and HF. As it stands, however, this response is incomplete. The philosopher should maintain that reality is unchanging and changing both at once—like a child begging for both views.[24] But as we all know, beggars can't be choosers, and it seems as though Plato's taking the easy way out here by opting for a position between PS and HF. For he hasn't provided us yet with a clear idea of the middle ground we are supposed to occupy. In particular, if being cannot change "in every way" (πανταχῇ, 249D2), but must nevertheless change to an extent, in what way can it change?

We can begin to answer this question by reconsidering Plato's argument against the Friends of the Forms at 248D10-E4, and the way in which a form might change incidentally in being known: that is, just to the extent (καθ' ὅσον, 248E3) that it's known. The crucial thing to observe is that this would be a *relative* change that the form would undergo—not an *intrinsic* change. So the form would not be changing in its essential features.[25] The epistemological objection to PS that I labelled (1a) above thus stands, for according to this argument, to claim that the forms cannot undergo any sort of change—even incidentally—is to make them unknowable, rendering dialectic pointless.

It is reasonable to presume that Plato has in mind at least a background conception of relative change when he argues that to know something is to change it in the *Sophist*. But if this is the only sort of relative change he ascribes to the forms, we have a problem. For his account of being at 249D3-4 implies that change is a necessary property of being, and if the knowing relation were the sole way in which to attribute change to the forms, their existence would be entirely dependent on

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taken to assert that being consists of two different sets of objects, those which are unchanging (ἀκίνητα) and those which are changing (κεκινημένα), and from here it's a short step to the idea that Plato at this point in his writings capitulates to the demands of the sensible world and admits material objects into his ontology. Thus White's translation: "*that which is*—everything—comprises both *the unchanging* and *that which changes*." But no such demarcation is mentioned in the text to suggest that being "comprises" two different sets of objects. (In the same translation of this passage in Cooper [1997], the term is removed.) I follow Owen's reading, according to which the participles ἀκίνητα and κεκινημένα are taken together to modify τὸ ὄν and τὸ πᾶν: "Reality is all things that are unchanged and changed." Keyt (1969) rejects this reading because he believes the relative pronoun ὅσα should be read quantitatively to generate "reality is as many things as are unchanged and as many as are changed" (p. 6), but this isn't the only way in which that pronoun can be construed.

[24] This is White's wonderful translation of κατὰ τὴν τῶν παίδων εὐχήν at 249D3, which I have rendered "with the wishfulness of children." Socrates often asks in the *Republic* whether the realisation of the ideal city might be a εὐχή (cf. 450C8-D2, 499C2-5, 540D1-3).

[25] Cf. n. 24 above and Reeve (1985), p. 53n. 23.

being known by someone at some point in time.[26] The text tells against such dependence, since the positive ontology that the Visitor promotes here is one according to which being is "changed" in the perfect tense (κεκινημένα, 249D3). And far from suggesting that the forms spring magically into being once someone comes to know them, this suggests (however odd it sounds) that they are rather in a permanent state of having been changed.

Plato must accordingly have deeper reasons than (1a) to ascribe change to the forms, and in the next three sections I shall argue that the *Sophist* also provides metaphysical grounds for rejecting the Friends of the Forms. This will require investigating Plato's understanding of forms as kinds at 251C8 ff., especially his analysis of the "greatest kinds," among which he classes the forms of change and rest. For through this analysis, the dialogue supplies us with all the necessary resources to credit Plato with a robust conception of relative change, which lends support to the second reason I have maintained he must reject the Friends of the Forms: (1b).

4. Forms and Kinds

One of the most central claims in the *Sophist*—if not the most central claim—is that there are certain determinate relations that hold between the forms. This conception of the forms as "kinds" (γένη) that are naturally interwoven or blended with one another underwrites the general project of the dialogue, in that it makes possible the hunt for an account of the sophist and the method of division that brings this account to light by the dialogue's end. For to engage seriously in the practice of dividing according to kinds by sorting out the various relations that hold between them, it must be presupposed that they are *already* related in discriminable ways.

Plato's arguments for the interweaving of forms may thus be viewed as a natural denouement to all previous investigations into being in the *Sophist* and an elaboration of his sketch at 249C10-D4. That sketch was incomplete, recall, because the Visitor neglected to make clear at the time how the forms may be "changed" (κεκινημένα, 249D3), not just insofar as they are known, but independently of us. To resolve this problem, we should consider the extent to which the forms may also be attributed with change in virtue of their *own* nature: in terms of their interrelatedness.

The view that reality is both unchanging and changing is certified at 249D6-7 as pretty much "encompassing being in an account" (περιειληφέναι τῷ λόγῳ τὸ ὄν), and it is surely this view that the Visitor reminds Theaetetus of at 251C8-D3 when he recommends that they address their account (λόγος, 251C8) to all those who have ever conversed (διαλεχθέντας, 251D1) about being in any way.[27] With this sweeping proposal, the Visitor anticipates the most comprehensive inquiry into their topic

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[26] This is an objection that Keyt (1969) raises against Owen's reading of 249C10-D4, on which Plato would "be excluding from reality anything that is completely at rest such as a Form that no one apprehends" (p. 6).

[27] It seems to me that Jean Roberts overlooks the importance of this reminder in "The Problem about Being in the *Sophist*," *History of Philosophical Quarterly* 3 (1986), pp. 229-43. Rather than taking Plato to endorse the view at 249C10-D4 that being both changes and rests, Roberts argues on the strength of the aporia following this passage that being neither changes nor rests (pp. 232-5). But as Reeve (1985), pp. 56-7 emphasises, the aporia at 249D9-251A3 depends on the assumption that change and rest are incapable of blending with one another (see 250A8-10). If Plato expects that assumption to be rejected, or at least qualified (cf. 256B6-C3), the aporia is dissolved. W.G. Runciman provides an excellent analysis of the passages on change and rest that bear on this issue in *Plato's Later Epistemology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), pp. 93-8.

so far, and the stipulation that it will be directed only at those who have "conversed" about being is significant, for his primary interest here concerns the way in which being functions in discourse. It would be a mistake, therefore, to think that what Plato has in mind at this point in the dialogue is some abstract metaphysical inquiry. Rather, his aim is to determine what must be true of the world in order to engage in any meaningful discussion about it at all.

This can be clearly seen from the Visitor's arguments for the ways in which the forms blend with one another as kinds. Theaetetus is given three distinct options: either (i) no kinds blend in any way; or (ii) all kinds blend indiscriminately; or (iii) some can blend with one another, while others cannot (251D5-E1). The issue from the outset concerns which of these views is presupposed in giving an account of being (251D7-8). Some of these accounts are familiar to us, such as HF and PS, but in keeping with the panoramic sweep of this project, the Visitor also considers accounts put forward by those who talk about being rather differently: theorists who speculate about the number of beings, who were discussed at 242C8 ff., as well as a group of so-called "late-learners" cited at 251B6-C6, who disallow statements in which one thing is predicated of another, such as "man is good," and permit only tautologous statements, such as "man is man" or "good is good."[28]

The Visitor's arguments against (i) all turn on the fact that anyone in the business of theorising about being is committed to the kinds blending with one another in some way.[29] Those Heracliteans and Parmenideans who provide accounts of their views are forced to attribute either change or rest to being (252A9-10), and in so doing they concede the blending of kinds at least implicitly. Likewise, those who take all things to be integrated into one or segregated into many depend on the notion of things intermixing (σύμμειξις, 252B6) in spelling out their views. Most absurd of all, however, is the view of the late-learners who uphold (i) and refuse to allow the association (κοινωνίᾳ, 252B9) of one thing with another by appealing to the inherent differences between things. For when pressed to support these claims, they end up refuting themselves by arguing that each thing remains "separate" (χωρὶς, 252C3) from everything else and detached "by itself" (καθ' αὑτὸ, 252C4). That is, they are compelled to form subject-predicate expressions in their accounts (συνάπτειν ἐν τοῖς λόγοις, 252C5) in contending, for instance, that "man is different from good" or "good is the same as itself."

Plato's strategy is once again evident. Those who deny that the kinds blend or associate with one another owe us an account of their view. Insofar as they are willing to give such an account, they draw on certain relations that they take to exist between things. In arguing for these relations, they must take them to hold independently of what anyone happens to believe or think about them, as

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[28] The position of the late-learners may be even stronger than this if they deny statement-making altogether, as argued by Moravcsik (1962), pp. 58-9. (Cf. Verity Harte, *Plato on Parts and Wholes: The Metaphysics of Structure* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002], p. 141n. 41.) Nevertheless, it is generally agreed that the late-learners must at least deny the making of subject-predicate statements, and that is all I need for my argument here. Their position has frequently been ascribed to Antisthenes, based on the few surviving fragments of his writings and Aristotle's references to his views in the *Metaphysics* (see 1024^{b}32-4 and 1043^{b}23-8). Since Antisthenes' status as the founder of Cynicism is arguable, however, the link sometimes drawn between the late-learners and the Cynics is more suspect. Cf. Ross (1951), p. 112 and D.W. Hamlyn, "The Communion of Forms and the Development of Plato's Logic," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 5 (1955), pp. 290-1.

[29] A similar interpretation is developed by Allan Silverman, *The Dialectic of Essence: A Study of Plato's Metaphysics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), who locates in these passages "a requirement on metaphysical theorizing that one's proposed ontology be consistent with the statement of that ontology" (p. 159).

part of a consistent system. (It would be hard to argue that "man is different from good" if this were inconsistent with "good is the same as itself.") Such a system is just what the interrelatedness of forms represents.[30] Hence, a basic prerequisite in giving an account is that the forms blend with one another as kinds. An account of being that denies this point must consequently be self-refuting. Just as he did against the flux theorists in the *Theaetetus*, Plato here uses a higher-order argument to specify the conditions for engaging in argument—particularly the type of dialectical argument that affords us knowledge of how things are. His target this time, however, is not an ontology of flux, but a sort of ontological atomism according to which each thing exists by itself and unrelated to anything else. And the upshot is that for dialectic to be possible, at least two ontological conditions must be met: not only must there be a class of independently-existing and stable objects, but there must also exist certain relations or associations between these objects.

Now, to claim that the kinds must blend with one another is not to claim that they blend with one another indiscriminately. That would be the view suggested in (ii), which Theaetetus takes it upon himself to argue against. The kinds cannot blend together in an arbitrary manner, he maintains, because then "both change itself (κίνησίς . . . αὐτὴ) would be altogether at rest (παντάπασιν ἵσταιτ'), and rest itself (στάσις . . . αὐτὴ) would in turn be changing" (252D6-7). But it seems change and rest are contrary to one another: they are kinds that are incompatible. Hence, (ii) must be rejected.

Theaetetus's central assumption in this pithy argument is that the kinds "change" and "rest" are incapable of blending with one another in any way. This assumption, however, must be called into question.[31] A limiting condition on two kinds being contraries is that neither one can be predicated of the other. Theaetetus obviously believes that change and rest are incompatible in this way. When the Visitor asks him somewhat incredulously whether it is "by the greatest necessities impossible (ταῖς μεγίσταις ἀνάγκαις ἀδύνατον) that change should rest and rest should change," he responds in the affirmative (252D9-11). Yet there a number of reasons why Plato ought to reject such an idea.

To begin with, as we have had cause to observe in other connections, it is a bedrock principle of Platonic doctrine that all forms are immutable. Insofar as this implies that their essential features remain fixed, there is an uncontroversial sense in which all forms may be considered at rest.[32] Now

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[30] Cf. R.E. Heinaman, "Communion of Forms," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 83 (1982/1983), pp. 178-9, who claims that Plato's arguments in this part of the dialogue promote an independent communion of forms.

[31] I find it significant that the assumption is made by Theaetetus rather than the Visitor, who is more circumspect about the idea. It is the same assumption sanctioned at 250A8-10—that change and rest are "most contrary" (ἐναντιώτατα) to each other—which gets Theaetetus and the Visitor into an aporia about being after resolving the battle between gods and giants. The problem there is that it's hard to see how reality can be changing and resting both at once (250C3-4) on the basis that change and rest are incompatible. Against Roberts (1986), I believe Reeve (1985) is exactly right in arguing that the various problems about being in the *Sophist* turn on this faulty assumption (cf. n. 30 above). Other concerns about the implications of Theaetetus's argument are raised by Runciman (1962), pp. 93-6 and by Silverman (2002), p. 344n. 46, who believes that Plato is "setting things up for a fall" in these passages.

[32] Here it is fitting to remark with Vlastos (1981), p. 272n. 5 that the Greek στάσις, which I have rendered "rest" throughout this chapter, is a term that denotes invariance in its broadest sense, as its application to being in the Gigantomachy reveals (see 249C1). Plato's use of its counterpart κίνησις to denote all sorts of variation is in large part why I have used "change" rather than the standard "motion" to translate this term.

the mention of "change itself" (κίνησίς . . . αὐτὴ, 252D6) and "rest itself" (στάσις . . . αὐτὴ, 252D7) in Theaetetus's argument suggest that they, too, must be understood as forms. Any misgivings about this point are soon dispelled when the Visitor subsequently speaks of change and rest as two of the "greatest forms" (τῶν εἰδῶν . . . τῶν μεγίστων, 254C3-4). Thus we have a prima facie reason to doubt that change and rest are contraries in the way specified above, for there is a sense in which "change itself" should indeed rest according to standard Platonic doctrine. And if the two kinds can blend with each other in this sense, we might ask what prevents Plato from countenancing another sense in which "rest itself" may be attributed with change.[33]

There are in fact grounds located elsewhere in the *Sophist* to claim that rest and change should be mutually predicable of each other somehow. For by classifying them as two of the "greatest kinds" (μέγιστα . . . τῶν γενῶν, 254D4), Plato signals that they are predicable of every kind, and therefore each other. Like vowels in the alphabet that enable letters to blend into words, the greatest kinds are all-pervading (διὰ πάντων, 253A5): along with being (τὸ ὂν), sameness (τὸ ταὐτὸν), and difference

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[33] The puzzle over why Theaetetus denies the blending of change with rest when all forms may be said to rest is raised by Richard Robinson, *Plato's Earlier Dialectic*, 2nd edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), pp. 260-2 and Moravcsik (1962), p. 44. It is raised more pointedly by I.M. Crombie, *An Examination of Plato's Doctrines, Vol. II: Plato on Knowledge and Reality* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), pp. 401-10 and outlined in detail along with other puzzles about change and rest in the *Sophist* by Reeve (1985), pp. 47-9. Vlastos (1981) proposes a solution to this puzzle by detecting an ambiguity in Plato's use of "Ordinary predications" and what he terms "Pauline predications" (pp. 270-6). According to this distinction, which Vlastos concedes is not made explicit anywhere in the Platonic corpus (see p. 281), what Theaetetus means when he denies the blending of change with rest is that no class of things that participate in change may be attributed with rest. This is a Pauline predication reading of the argument that focuses on relations between *instances* of forms, rather than relations between forms as such. What Plato forgets to disambiguate at this point, Vlastos asserts, is another Ordinary predication reading of the argument on which "change itself" as a form may truly be said to rest. This solution seems to have won acceptance among some scholars (see, e.g., Mary Margaret McCabe, *Plato's Individuals* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994], pp. 225-7), but it faces significant difficulties. First, despite Vlastos's alternative interpretation of the reflexive pronouns at 252D6 and 252D7, I find it hard to see how Plato can refer to change and rest here using his favourite locution for forms without it occurring to him that they might be read in that way, especially when he has the Visitor recall this section of argument at 254D4-5, where he clearly conceives of change and rest as forms. Second, we are left having to draw the rather uncharitable conclusion on Vlastos's reading that Plato is simply mistaken in thinking that change and rest are contraries, since to allow even an ordinary sense in which "change itself" may rest, we must deny that change and rest are completely incompatible. (For further difficulties with this and other interpretations of Theaetetus's argument, see Reeve [1985], pp. 49-54.) The possibility of "rest itself" changing is also brought up by Vlastos, but to draw a quite different moral from the one I do here. On his view, although there is a sense in which rest may truly be predicated of the form "change," there is no sense in which change may be predicated of the form "rest," which points to a disanalogy between these two forms that he takes to further support his distinction between Ordinary and Pauline predications (p. 283n. 39). But if, as Vlastos notices, there is no indication in the text that Plato recognises this disanalogy, why posit one in the first place? It can only be because of the presumption that all forms are without change, which I have suggested is unwarranted. Again, what's called for to assuage these sorts of concerns is a sense in which change may be predicable of all forms without endangering their precious immutability.

(τὸ θάτερον), it is in virtue of these kinds that all the kinds can blend with one another in discourse. But if rest and change are to be ranked among the greatest kinds, they cannot be incompatible.[34]

This evidently returns us to our original problem, since it implies not only that change must be independently predicable of the form "rest," but that change must be so predicable of *every* form, and it is the more general claim that has occupied our interest in this chapter. Nonetheless, the fact that it has arisen out of an investigation into the greatest kinds suggests that a solution might be found in considering these kinds more closely. The lesson we are meant to draw from this part of the dialogue is that it is the nature of forms as kinds to associate with one another, not arbitrarily, but in certain determinate ways, and Plato indicates that it is through the greatest kinds that such associations are made possible.[35] He does not state explicitly how each of the greatest kinds has this "all-pervading" capacity, yet if we could identify a sense in which change may be classified as one of these greatest kinds, our problem would be resolved.

5. The Greatest Kinds

How should the greatest kinds be considered able to associate with all the kinds? The Visitor restricts his inquiry into these kinds at 254B7-D2 by asking, first, what sort of thing each of them is (ποῖα ἕκαστά ἐστιν, 254C4) and, second, how they are capable of associating with one another (κοινωνίας ἀλλήλων πῶς ἔχει δυνάμεως, 254C5).[36] The initial kinds to make the cut here are being, rest, and change. It is not made immediately obvious why they are accorded such importance, but in exploring this issue, C.D.C. Reeve has proposed that what distinguishes the greatest kinds in pervading all the kinds is their relational character.[37]

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[34] Vlastos (1981) does not tackle this problem explicitly, although it spells particular trouble for his reading. One way to sidestep the problem is of course to deny that change and rest are greatest kinds, which is a line that some scholars have taken. (Vlastos does not assert that change and rest are among the greatest kinds, but he does not deny it either.) F.M. Cornford pursues something like this line in *Plato's Theory of Knowledge* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1935) in stating that "[t]he whole purpose of what follows is to elucidate the nature of Existence, Sameness, and Difference (not of Motion and Rest)" (p. 277) and "[t]he nature of Motion (as such) and Rest (as such) is not in question at all" (p. 278). But as Reeve (1985), p. 57 notes, the text itself could not be clearer in classifying change and rest among the greatest kinds (254D4-5). Cornford is happy to grant this status to being, sameness, and difference, since they are more obviously predicable of all kinds. Surely, then, the challenge here is to discern a way in which change and rest may also be all-pervading.

[35] For the importance of taking the greatest kinds to enable, rather than to effect, the interweaving of kinds, see Harte (2002), pp. 152-3.

[36] I do not find the three concerns that McCabe (1994), p. 224 locates in the text: first, the identification of the greatest kinds; second, the attribution of properties to them; and, third, the analysis of their associations with one another. The passages that follow fall naturally into two parts, not three, in which the Visitor first enumerates five greatest kinds (254D4-255E7) and then investigates particular relations that hold between one of them (change) and the others (255E8-256D10). The relation between being and not-being is then gradually clarified until an account of not-being emerges at 258C6-E5 as the form of difference. This is of course what the Visitor and Theaetetus have been after all along, and it is just what 254B7-D2 foresees on my reading.

[37] See Reeve (1985), pp. 58-9. A predecessor of this view is found in Gilbert Ryle, "Plato's *Parmenides* II," *Mind* 48 (1939), pp. 312-13, where the greatest kinds are taken to be "syncategorematic" in nature. The significance of Ryle's article in occasioning a linguistic turn in the study of Plato's dialogues is discussed well by Silverman (2002), pp. 141-8.

The addition of sameness and difference to this group at 254E2 ff. strongly supports such a view, since both of these kinds serve a relational function. The kind "sameness" is distinguished for its role in relating every kind uniquely to itself. Were it not for this kind, no kind would be identifiable as the self-same thing that it is. The kind "difference" has a rather more elaborate introduction that is prefaced with a now well-known distinction at 255C12-13 between two ways in which things can be said to be. Among the things that are, the Visitor claims, some are always said to be themselves by themselves (αὐτὰ καθ' αὑτά), while others are always said to be in relation to something else (πρὸς ἄλλα). This is the twofold way in which the kind "being" functions in carving up the world, whereas the kind "difference" functions only in the second way. For a thing can only be said to be different in relation to something else, never in relation to itself, and thus difference must be conferred a nature all of its own (255D1-E1).

I have no wish here to wade into the interpretive morass that surrounds the distinction between being *kath' auto* and being *pros allo*.[38] Plato's use of these terms and their equivalents is wide-ranging and resists complete analysis, but all scholars agree that the distinction is made in the *Sophist* in order to single out a form of difference that is later identified as the form of not-being. It has not been noticed as often that this distinction also helps single out a form of sameness. For each of the pair, sameness and difference, functions in just one of the ways in which being functions, but not both:

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[38] The passage at 255C12-13 is tightly compressed and has inspired a wide range of readings since antiquity: τῶν ὄντων τὰ μὲν αὐτὰ καθ' αὑτά, τὰ δὲ πρὸς ἄλλα ἀεὶ λέγεσθαι. An interpretation going back at least as far as Diogenes Laertius takes Plato to be distinguishing here things spoken of on their own (e.g., "horse") from things spoken of in relation to something else (e.g., "equal"). For a recent account that expands upon this view, see R.M. Dancy, "The Categories of Being in Plato's *Sophist* 255c-e," *Ancient Philosophy* 19 (1999), pp. 45-72. I agree rather with those who find in the passage a distinction, not between things, but between two ways in which the verb "to be" applies to things. This group of interpreters, however, is also splintered into sub-groups. Those who distinguish between complete (*kath' auto*) and incomplete (*pros allo*) senses of the verb "to be" (roughly analogous to the "is" of existence and the "is" of predication) include Cornford (1935), pp. 296-7, J.L. Ackrill, "Plato and the Copula," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 77 (1957), pp. 1-6 and reprinted in *Essays on Plato and Aristotle* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp. 80-92, Moravcsik (1962), p. 54-5, and David Bostock, "Plato on 'is not' (*Sophist*, 254-9)," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 2 (1984), pp. 90-104. Others find no evidence in the passage of a complete sense of "to be," but a distinction more akin to the "is" of identity (*kath' auto*) versus the "is" of predication (*pros allo*). Those in this camp include (most influentially) Michael Frede, *Prädikation und Existenzaussage* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967), pp. 12-36 and G.E.L. Owen, "Plato on Not-Being" in *Plato I: Metaphysics and Epistemology*, edited by Gregory Vlastos (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1971), p. 255-8. (Frede's view is more nuanced than this synopsis allows: see his "Plato's *Sophist* on False Statements" in *The Cambridge Companion to Plato*, edited by Richard Kraut [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992], pp. 399-402, where he makes plain how being *kath' auto* on his interpretation corresponds more closely to the "is" of definition than the "is" of identity. See also Silverman [2002], pp. 165-181, who provides a detailed account of different readings of this passage, and whose own view is most in line with Frede's.) I fall in with the latter camp, having been most convinced by Reeve (1985), and much of what I say henceforth assumes this reading of the *kath' auto* / *pros allo* distinction, although I leave open whether the distinction permits an existential use of "is" in the way that Lesley Brown argues for persuasively in "Being in the *Sophist*: A Syntactical Enquiry," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 4 (1986), pp. 52-9. To the extent that my argument is plausible in other respects, I hope it supports the reading of 255C12-13 developed by Frede and Owen.

sameness can only relate kinds to themselves (*kath' auta*); difference can only relate kinds to others (*pros alla*).[39] And since every kind must be discriminable by itself and in relation to something else, being, sameness, and difference must pervade them all. It is consequently owing to their relational functions that these kinds may be said to associate with every kind: being relates kinds to themselves and to others; sameness relates kinds only to themselves; and difference relates kinds only to others.

Now if being, sameness, and difference have these relational functions, it is natural to speculate where the two remaining greatest kinds, rest and change, might fit into a *kath' auto* / *pros allo* schema, and following Reeve, I believe it is within this distinction that the solution to our problem lies. Rest may be accommodated quite easily, for we have already accepted a way in which the essential nature of every kind must remain fixed. This is the sense in which all forms are immutable or unalterable, a view that Plato is no less committed to here than he is in earlier dialogues. In exploring the nature of justice in the *Republic*, Socrates believes that to pursue the question "What is justice?" seriously, we must assume that there exists something answerable to this question, which one tracks in inquiry: something that remains stable and unchanging in itself for the purposes of investigation. This would be the form of justice, and the same attributes would presumably hold of anything that figures in a comparable "What is F?" question.[40] Which is just to say, in terms of the distinction glossed above, that all forms must be at rest in relation to themselves (*kath' auta*).

The function of rest as a greatest kind thus parallels the function of sameness.[41] This is made clear at 255E8 ff., where the Visitor is examining the ways in which the greatest kinds associate with one another and gets Theaetetus to reconsider the possibility of change blending with rest. Directly after spelling out the way in which change blends with sameness in relation to itself (256A12-B1), he asks whether there would be anything out of place (ἄτοπον, 256B7) should change be found in some way

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[39] Cf. Reeve (1985), p. 58. See in addition Lloyd P. Gerson, "Plato on Identity, Sameness, and Difference," *The Review of Metaphysics* 58 (2004), pp. 305-32. Gerson does not appeal to the *kath' auto* / *pros allo* distinction, although I take his claim that "[t]he only way the indivisible identity of a form can be specified is, it seems, through its own indivisible essence" (p. 319) to imply that sameness can only serve a *kath' auto* function in the interweaving of forms: it cannot relate kinds directly to other kinds.

[40] Included here would be, not only other virtues, but also things like "beauty," "knowledge," "sophist," and perhaps even "hair" and "dirt" (see *Parmenides*, 130A8-E4). What's at issue on this view is not the worth of these things, but whether they can serve as viable objects of inquiry. Evidence for this view can be found in the *Phaedo*, where forms are posited for all things upon which we place the stamp "the thing itself which is" (τὸ αὐτὸ ὃ ἔστι), both questioning in our questions (ἐν ταῖς ἐρωτήσεσιν ἐρωτῶντες) and answering in our answers (ἐν ταῖς ἀποκρίσεσιν ἀποκρινόμενοι) (75D2-4).

[41] The parallel is already drawn in the Gigantomachy, when the Visitor asks Theaetetus at 249B12-C1 whether a thing can persist in the same respects (κατὰ ταὐτὰ) and in the same way (ὡσαύτως) and concerning itself (περὶ τὸ αὐτὸ) separate from rest (χωρὶς στάσεως). I depart here from Reeve (1985), p. 58, who holds that in addition to being predicated *kath' auto*, rest can also be predicated of a kind in relation to something else (*pros allo*). That is, he takes the function of rest to parallel the function of being rather than sameness. But he does not make clear how a kind can be said to rest in relation to another kind. Perhaps what he has in mind are the ways in which some kinds may entail other kinds. The kind "man" would be resting (i.e., unchanging) in relation to the kind "animal" according to this view, since it's part of the nature of a man to be an animal. True enough, but it seems to me that the kind "man" would not be unchanging here in relation to the kind "animal" as such, for there's much more to the kind "man" than the kind "animal."

(πῃ, 256B6) to participate in rest. Theaetetus's mistake earlier had been to think that if change and rest associated with one another, change would be "altogether at rest" (παντάπασιν ἵσταιτ', 252D6), but with the key distinction made at 255C12-13 between two ways in which things can be spoken of, it seems change can be said to blend with rest "in some way," namely, in relation to itself (*kath' auto*). The ability of rest to be predicated of every kind is hence secured.[42]

Once we make room for rest among the greatest kinds, it is difficult to justify excluding change, other than for the reason that all forms are immutable. I suspect this is in part why some commentators have often only been willing to induct being, sameness, and difference into the class of all-pervading kinds.[43] But the immutability of the forms is captured perfectly well in the claim that they are at rest or unchanging in relation to themselves, and acceptance of this claim does not yet compel acceptance of PS: the position held by the Friends of the Forms that the forms are *completely* unchanging. Indeed, if change is to be among the greatest kinds and so associate with every kind, this position must be rejected.

The challenge that remains, accordingly, is to make room for change as an official greatest kind. All we have granted so far is that every form is unchanging in itself. We have not ruled out a way in which the forms undergo a more relative sort of change, and on the assumption that the distinction at 255C12-13 is exhaustive, such a conception of change is in fact what the text demands. For if no form can be said to change in relation to itself (*kath' auto*), then every form must be attributed with

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[42] Cf. Frede (1967), who takes 256B6-7 to be a cautious formulation ("vorsichtige Formulierung") of the claim that change, like all forms, partakes in rest (p. 34). Vlastos (1981), pp. 283-94 and Roberts (1986), p. 240n. 5 disagree. Vlastos dismisses the qualifying sense of "in some way" (πῃ) at 256B6 by stressing its presence in a hypothetical question. But if the Visitor does not expect Theaetetus to take this question seriously, why is the possibility of change blending with rest even considered? Roberts denies that change can blend with rest in any way on the grounds that change and rest are contraries (on which, see nn. 30 and 34 above), and because "there is no suggestion anywhere that two forms can be said to combine in one sense but not in another." Surely, though, the point of the *kath' auto / pros allo* distinction is to illuminate how being can be said to blend with all forms in two ways, and the emergence of difference as a greatest kind at 255D1 ff. depends on the idea that forms blend with difference in one sense (sc., *pros alla*), but not in another (sc., *kath' auta*). The Visitor's proposal at 256B6-7 and Theaetetus's concurrence with this proposal at 256B8-9 on account of the principle that "some of the kinds blend with one another, while some don't" can be read straightforwardly in light of 255C11-12 as an acknowledgment that change may blend with rest in a qualified way without being identical to rest. On Roberts' view, by contrast, "Theaetetus's reply doesn't make any sense," and she is forced as a consequence to locate a lacuna in the text and accept the interpolation of lines offered by Cornford (1935), pp. 286-7. The only other alternative, she believes, is to read 256B6-7 as a scholium. Yet such drastic measures are unnecessary if a straightforward reading of the text as it stands is possible. Theaetetus's reply is explicable on this reading, for having distinguished at 255C11-12 two senses in which the forms can be spoken of (*kath' auta* and *pros alla*), he can appreciate how change may rest in relation to itself (*kath' auto*) without being "altogether at rest" as he had thought initially at 252D6.

[43] See especially David Wiggins, "Sentence Meaning, Negation, and Plato's Problem of Not-Being" in *Plato I: Metaphysics and Epistemology*, edited by Gregory Vlastos (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1971), pp. 288-91, who regards change and rest as "just examples or specimen predicates," Julius Moravcsik, *Plato and Platonism* (Blackwell Publishers, 1992), pp. 182-6, Harte (2002), p. 154, and Cornford (1935) in n. 37 above.

change in relation to something else (*pros allo*). But in relation to what?[44] The Visitor has already offered one answer to this question: the forms change in relation to being known. This was of course one of Plato's reasons for rejecting the Friends of the Forms at 248D10 ff. A problem we had with accepting such a claim earlier on was that there was no evidence of a conception of relative change in the text, but with the emergence of change as a greatest kind, this issue can be set aside. Once an understanding of change *pros allo* is accommodated in Plato's ontology, we can confidently read this conception back into his argument that the forms change incidentally in being known.

A more serious problem we had, however, concerned the fact that if this were the only sort of relative change that Plato ascribes to the forms, their existence would be totally contingent on being known by us.[45] To retain their status as independent objects of knowledge and inquiry, therefore, change must be attributed to the forms in virtue of their own nature. And this is where we light upon a second way in which the forms may be said to change, based on Plato's arguments in this more positive stretch of the *Sophist* for their interrelatedness: the forms are changed in relation to one another. In being associated with one another, they are affected by one another, and to the extent that they are so affected, they are changed.

I shall hold off from defending this claim until the next section. At present, I simply wish to note that if we accept such an understanding of the forms, Plato's sketch of being at 249C10-D4 may be filled in quite adequately. For we can see how, according to this view, the forms are to an extent unchanging (sc., *kath' auta*) and changed (sc., *pros alla*): they are resting in relation to themselves and changed in relation to one another. This has the advantage of revealing a continuous thread to the Visitor and Theaetetus's investigations into being, starting with the battle between gods and giants through to the interweaving of forms and the greatest kinds.[46] It also completes Plato's picture by means of the key distinction he draws between two ways in which things can be said to be, and it makes room for rest and change as all-pervading kinds within this *kath' auto* / *pros allo* schema.

For our purposes, furthermore, what's especially noteworthy about the distinction at 255C12-13 is that Plato's interest here, just as at 251C8-D3, concerns how being functions in discourse: how it is spoken of (λέγεσθαι, 255C13). But discourse is only made possible for us thanks to the blending of kinds; as the Visitor puts it memorably later, it's through the interweaving of forms with one another

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[44] In raising this thorny question, Reeve (1985) contends that "[t]he only plausible candidate is, time" (p. 59). The status of change as a greatest kind is ensured on this view, in that all forms can be said to change *pros allo* by "accumulating longer and longer histories." Part of the difficulty in making sense of the idea that a form changes *pros allo* is that in order to claim that an object changes in relation to something else, it seems we need a stable reference point with which to compare that object over time. Thus we can say that a form undergoes a Cambridge change when one comes to know it (see n. 24 above); but no such reference point is obviously available in saying that every form changes apart from us. To avoid this problem, Reeve's strategy is to argue that the forms change in relation to time itself. Such a solution, however, fails to explain the role of change in the interweaving of forms, which is what we need at this point. On the reading that I argue for, a conception of change that is not dependent on time makes better sense of its relational function as a greatest kind.

[45] Cf. Keyt's objection to Owen's reading of 249C10-D4 in n. 29 above.

[46] The Visitor frequently refers in this stretch of the dialogue to an "account" of being that he and Theaetetus are jointly advancing, first cited after the Gigantomachy at 249D7, mentioned again at 251A2 and 251C8, and once more at 254C2 before examining the greatest kinds.

(τὴν ἀλλήλων τῶν εἰδῶν συμπλοκὴν) that discourse (λόγος) arises for us (259E5-6).[47] Having argued for this view against the late-learners and verified at 252E1-8 that the forms associate in certain ways, Plato sees fit to remind us of the blending relation on no less than seven occasions in this part of the dialogue (cf. 253B8-9, 254B7-C1, 256B8-C3, 257A8-9, 259A4-5, 259E5-6, 260A1-3). It is clearly his most fundamental claim in the work. However, if as I have claimed the forms are changed *pros alla* by their interrelatedness, then denying that they change in any way amounts to denying that they are able to blend in any way, leaving us incapable of asserting anything of them in relation to each other. Such a position would make discourse, and so dialectic, impossible.

Thus, although gentler figures than the giants, the Friends of the Forms are ultimately committed to a thesis that Plato finds just as unacceptable. As with his rejection of HF, it seems his principal aim in rejecting PS is to make us better in argument (cf. 260A1-7), but once again, his reasons are based on what is fundamentally a metaphysical objection to this thesis, which affirms his commitment to the existence of forms. The forms are changed in virtue of their *own* nature on this view—namely, in virtue of the relations that hold among them—but since this is a relative change they experience, their essential features remain stable. It is consequently not surprising that the Visitor embarks on a careful examination of forms and the ways in which they blend with one another shortly after the battle between gods and giants. For as we have seen, to engage in any meaningful discussion about the world at all, Plato believes that both these aspects of the forms must be preserved: their stability and their interrelatedness.

6. The Interweaving of Forms

What evidence is there for claiming that the forms are *changed* by their interrelatedness? Recall that, for Plato, to be affected is to be changed. This was an important premise in his argument against the Friends of the Forms at 248D10-E4. The suggestion that forms are susceptible to being affected (πάσχειν, 248C8) in any way or able to affect (ποιεῖν, 248C8) anything is a claim that these figures are said to deny at 248C7-9. But since, in being known, the forms are affected, and by being affected (διὰ τὸ πάσχειν, 248E4), they are changed (κινεῖσθαι, 248E4), Plato is led to reject their position. He takes for granted the principle that to be affected is to be changed.[48] To pull off my argument here, then, all I need show is that in being interrelated, the forms are affected by one another. This would be enough to maintain that they are changed *pros alla*.

For textual evidence of this, I would point to the Visitor's frequent use of the reciprocal pronoun "with one another" (ἀλλήλων) in describing the blending relation. Grammatically, that pronoun is

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[47] The connection between this understanding of *logos* and the arguments that corroborate it is nicely explored by J.L. Ackrill, "ΣΥΜΠΛΟΚΗ ΕΙΔΩΝ," *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies of the University of London* 2 (1955), pp. 31-5 and reprinted in Ackrill (1997), pp. 72-9. His solution to the problem of how these passages bear on later examples of *logoi* in the dialogue, such as "Theaetetus sits," is still by and large the best available. For other readings, see Cornford (1935), pp. 300-17, J.M.E. Moravcsik, "Συμπλοκὴ Εἰδῶν and the Genesis of Λόγος," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 42 (1960), pp. 117-29, Kenneth M. Sayre, *Plato's Analytic Method* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), pp. 204-15, and Patricia Clarke, "The Interweaving of the Forms with One Another: *Sophist* 259E," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 12 (1994), pp. 35-62.

[48] This is of course denied by Vlastos (1981), but now that we have located a conception of relative change in the dialogue, there's no reason to equate change with alteration, as he does (see n. 23 above). The forms may change in being known, without thereby being altered. I take such alteration to be Vlastos's main target.

reserved for relations in which two or more objects affect, and are in turn affected by, one another. When, for example, the Visitor asserts at 257A8-9 that "it is the nature of kinds (ἡ τῶν γενῶν φύσις) to have association with one another (ἔχει κοινωνίαν ἀλλήλοις)," the Greek may be taken to suggest that the associations that hold between the forms affect them in some way. Similarly, at 259E5-6, the interweaving of forms with one another (τὴν ἀλλήλων τῶν εἰδῶν συμπλοκὴν) in discourse seems to suggest that the forms are affected by one another in discourse.[49]

Support for this idea can be found by attending more closely to the way in which Plato describes the blending relation. A general definition is provided, fittingly enough, during his rejection of the Friends of the Forms. At 248B2-6, to clarify what he means by the term "associating" (κοινωνεῖν), the Visitor settles on the following formula: "an affection (πάθημα) or an affecting (ποίημα) that arises from some power (ἐκ δυνάμεώς τινος) when things come together in relation to one another (τῶν πρὸς ἄλληλα συνιόντων)." This is the way in which the *knowing* relation comes to be viewed between us and the forms at 248D10-E4, but it is not of course the only use to which Plato puts this term in the dialogue. For the *blending* relation between forms and forms is also typically described in light of their association (κοινωνία) with each other (cf. 250B9, 251D9 ff., 253A8, 254B7 ff., 256B2): indeed, it's the very nature (φύσις, 257A9) of forms to interact in this way. Plato uses the same term to describe the cognitive relations that hold between us and the forms and the metaphysical relations that hold among them.[50]

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[49] See also 258D7-E1, where difference is said to be chopped up among "all things that are in relation to one another" (πάντα τὰ ὄντα πρὸς ἄλληλα), and 259A4-6, where the take-home lesson for Theaetetus is that "the kinds blend with one another" (συμμείγνυταί τε ἀλλήλοις τὰ γένη) and that "being and difference run through all of them and one another" (τό τε ὂν καὶ θάτερον διὰ πάντων καὶ δι' ἀλλήλων διεληλυθότε).

[50] The connection is well-observed by Campbell (1867), who remarks that "[t]he introduction of this word, which plays an important part in the sequel, should be noticed" (p. 126). Unfortunately, few commentators on the *Sophist* since have followed this advice. Cornford (1935) summarily declares that the epistemological use of κοινωνεῖν at 248B2-6 "has no connection (such as Campbell imagines) with its use later to describe the 'combination' of Forms" (p. 239). But the blending of forms with one another is covered rather well under τῶν πρὸς ἄλληλα συνιόντων, and it seems to me that the burden of argument here falls on Cornford to rule out such a connection. The real difficulty lies in making sense of how, in associating with one another, the forms might affect one another, but this should spur further investigation rather than outright dismissal of the idea. A quite different approach to this whole issue is taken by Brown (1998), pp. 190-1 who observes, correctly, the connection between the Visitor's definition of κοινωνεῖν above and the definition of being that the reformed giants are compelled to accept at 247D8-247E4: that being is any power whatsoever to affect or to be affected (cf. n. 5 above). This is the infamous δύναμις proposal, but I do not put as much stock in it as Brown does. I agree that Plato draws a link between this proposal and the κοινωνεῖν relation, for the Visitor plainly connects the two at 248B3-4. However, Brown suggests that the δύναμις proposal represents Plato's final thoughts on the nature of being in the dialogue (p. 205n. 49). This view disregards the arguments he submits for the interweaving of forms and his analysis of the greatest kinds later on, which are continuous with his concerns in the Gigantomachy. On my view, the criterion of being that Plato arrives at by way of the giants' position is applied to the forms in a very qualified sense: they are affected, but only in relation to being known and in relation to each other; whereas the δύναμις proposal by itself is unrestricted in what it admits into the class of things that are: anything affected in any way, by the smallest degree and by the slightest thing

This understanding of the blending relation provides compelling evidence that the forms affect, and are affected by, each other on account of their association with one another. It is corroborated by the fact that Plato continues to describe their interrelatedness in this fashion. The late-learners, who deny all such relations, are portrayed at 252B9-10 as those who allow us to speak of nothing in association (κοινωνίᾳ) with another, due to the affection of another (παθήματος ἑτέρου). Thereafter, in working out the analogy between kinds and letters, the Visitor affirms that the kinds are affected "just as letters are affected" (οἷον τὰ γράμματα πεπονθότ', 253A1) in associating (κοινωνεῖν, 253A8) with each other. At 256D11-E3, in investigating the greatest kinds—those which serve as "vowels" in the letter analogy—he maintains that difference affects (ποιεῖ, 256E1) all of the kinds by making them independently distinguishable. And at 259C7 ff., relations of sameness and difference between things are said to result in them being affected (πεπονθέναι, 259D2) in some way.

There is accordingly sufficient textual support for the idea that the forms are affected by their interrelatedness, and in conjunction with the principle that Plato appeals to at 248D10-E4 in rejecting the Friends of the Forms, we can conclude that by being affected (διὰ τὸ πάσχειν, 248E4), the forms are changed (κινεῖσθαι, 248E4). They are changed in relation to each other. What this amounts to in terms of a substantive point is more difficult to fathom, but I believe we can get some philosophical mileage out of the idea by reconsidering what exactly the interrelatedness of the forms implies. To claim that the forms associate with one another in determinate ways is to claim, among other things, that there are certain likenesses and unlikenesses that hold between them: they are able to associate in some respects, while unable to associate in others.[51] So suppose that two forms, *A* and *B*, are said to be like each other in one respect, while unlike each other in another respect. It seems reasonable to claim in addition that the forms have "changed" in some way: what's true in one case (*A* is like *B*) is false in another (*A* is unlike *B*). Whether this is so or not would of course depend on the respects in which these two forms are being considered, which is a task that Plato assigns to the dialectician (cf. 253D1-E2, 259C7-D2).[52] However, if there is a change to speak of in these cases, it would only have been a relative change that the forms have undergone, not an intrinsic change.

An example will help clarify this point, and it can be drawn directly from the *Sophist*. Using the method of division, the opening pages of the dialogue present an account of the kind "sophist" that is both like and unlike the kind "angler." That there's no inconsistency here is made clear once we reflect on how these kinds associate with each other. They are alike in their mutual association with the kind "hunter." The angler is a hunter of fishes, while the sophist is a hunter of human beings,

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(247E2), is awarded the mark of being. Thus applied, the proposal covers material and immaterial objects, but I am unconvinced that Plato broadens his conception of being to include the sensible world in this way.

[51] Relations of this sort are also discussed by Alexander Nehamas, "Participation and Predication in Plato's Later Thought," *The Review of Metaphysics* 36 (1982), pp. 343-74 and reprinted in *Virtues of Authenticity: Essays on Plato and Socrates* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), pp. 196-223 (see especially pp. 208-9). Such relations fall naturally under the *pros alla* uses of predication developed by Frede (1967) and elaborated on by Constance Meinwald, "Goodbye to the Third Man," *The Cambridge Companion to Plato*, edited by Richard Kraut (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 378-84, who argues persuasively for a *kath' auto / pros allo* distinction in the *Parmenides* that supports Frede's reading of 255C12-13 in the *Sophist*. (For the differences between Frede's reading of this distinction and Owen's, see p. 395n. 29.)

[52] Contrast this to the expertise of sophists, which consists partly in their skill at manipulating likenesses to attain specific ends (cf. 234E7 ff., 259D2-7).

and in this respect, the Visitor goes so far as to declare, they are of the same kind (συγγενῆ, 221D9). But by dividing further according to kinds, the angler and sophist part ways, for one peculiarity of the sophist's expertise is that he hunts by persuasion (222C10), which is a skill that the angler has no share in. While the angler and sophist are alike in being hunters, then, they are not alike in being persuaders. The two kinds blend in one respect without blending in another.

Now, when considered in both these respects, the sophist looks different. Someone might try to convince us as a result that the kind "sophist" itself has changed, or that there are no such things as unchanging kinds in light of these cases. Yet as long as we have our dialectical wits about us, we can see how this is merely an appearance of intrinsic change. What has changed in these cases is not the essential nature of the kinds themselves (*kath' auta*), but the various respects in which they are being investigated in relation to one another (*pros alla*). Sorting out such associations according to Plato demands rigorous inquiry and argument; distinguishing the facility of sophists from other kinds of expertise cannot be achieved through an unreflective act of judgement, and when it comes to more complex issues, such as those concerning what is and what isn't just, this demand will be more acute. In all cases, however, the metaphysical picture in the background remains the same.[53]

Let us now review the details of that picture in terms of Plato's solution to the battle between gods and giants, and what persists as his steadfast commitment to forms. According to this view, every form is identifiable as the distinctive form that it is on account of being the same as itself and different from others. This is the status that a thing enjoys in being *kath' auto*. The mistake of the late-learners is to infer from this that nothing can be spoken of as something else: a claim that leaves them incapable of properly asserting anything of the things that are (cf. 252B8-C9). The mistake of the Friends of the Forms is to suppose that the self-same status of the forms demands that they are completely unchanging (cf. 248A3-C9). One reason why Plato objects to this claim is spelled out in the text at 248D10-E4, and has been canvassed above as (1a): if the forms were incapable of change, they would be incapable of being known. This would make dialectic pointless.

Another reason, canvassed as (1b), needs to be drawn from the text somewhat more laterally, but we can take it to follow from Plato's rejection of figures like the late-learners and his arguments in the *Sophist* for the interrelatedness of forms as kinds. These arguments are directed against a sort of ontological atomism: a conception of forms as hermetically sealed and entirely unrelated to one another. I take this to be a picture of the world that the Friends of the Forms are committed to, which they (not unlike the late-learners) infer from the status of forms *kath' auta*. But at this stage in his career, Plato is interested in exploring another aspect of the forms: their status in being *pros alla*. His concern is with the various respects in which they may be considered in relation to one another, the ways in which they include or exclude each other, or are compatible with each other, or perhaps even pervade all others. Since we have now concluded that such interrelations result in the forms having been changed, we can recognise this aspect of them as a second reason why Plato rejects an ontology of complete stability: if the forms were incapable of change, they would be incapable of blending or associating with one another in discourse. This would make dialectic impossible.

Both these objections are grounded in the capacity of the forms to associate (κοινωνεῖν) with us and amongst themselves. In contrast to (1a), however, which is an epistemological objection to the

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[53] I'm grateful for correspondence with Richard Kraut here in getting me to think harder about what it means for the interrelatedness of the forms to constitute a sort of change.

Friends of the Forms, (1b) is a metaphysical objection, and once the forms are established to have changed in this way, independently of us and in virtue of their own nature, we can make good sense of the positive ontology that Plato endorses at 249D3-4 as a response to the question I raised in (2). The question there was what alternative he had to an ontology of stability and an ontology of flux, and his response was to opt for a position in between PS and HF: with the wishfulness of children, philosophers should insist that reality is both unchanging and changed.

Our investigation into the twofold status of forms *kath' auta* and *pros alla* has revealed that this isn't merely wishful thinking, for these aspects of the forms are not incompatible. The forms remain unchanging in relation to themselves, and hence do not change "in every way" (πανταχῇ, 249D2), but they can be attributed with change to the extent that they are interrelated.[54] Moreover, because these relations are presupposed in any act of rational inquiry, the forms must be understood as being in a state of perfect change. The central feature about them that Plato appeals to here is that they are at all times associated (κεκοινωνηκέναι, 254C1), and in being associated with each other, they are at all times changed (κεκινημένα, 249D3).[55]

This view is of course still far removed from the giants' position. An ontology composed of independently-existing and stable forms was a view that they were unable to accept because of their commitment to HF, and it was no accident that we found them as a result of this to be incapable of the practice of asking and answering questions that rational inquiry demands. But it should be clear to us now how a commitment to PS makes such inquiry equally impracticable according to Plato. The *Sophist* may be best understood on this reading as a natural sequel to the *Theaetetus*, in giving us reasons to reject a Parmenidean ontology that reflect his earlier rejection of a Heraclitean ontology. In doing so, the dialogue presents a needed corrective to the view held by the Friends of the Forms, according to which the forms are as remote from one another as they apparently are from us.

On Plato's alternative view, forms are understood in a more functional capacity—in terms of the role they play in inquiry and argument—and the metaphysical picture that he comes to endorse is ultimately designed to support them in that role. For from what he suggests in the *Sophist*, this is the only ontology that makes dialectic possible: a view that implies an element of stability that allows the forms to remain independent objects of knowledge and inquiry, but also an element of change that allows the forms to become known and to be associated with one another in discourse.

The Friends of the Forms cannot allow such association, and at 259D9 ff., the Visitor takes them to task for this. Anyone who tries to dissociate everything from everything else, he tells Theaetetus, is

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[54] I think this reading ultimately does a better job than others of making room for rest and change as greatest kinds. Besides Reeve's solution (for which, see nn. 44 and 47 above), attempts to deal with this issue can be found in Paul Natorp, *Plato's Theory of Ideas: An Introduction to Idealism*, 2nd edition (1921), translated by Vasilis Politis and John Connolly (Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 2004), pp. 274-9 (see also pp. 265-71), William Charlton, "Plato's Later Platonism," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 13 (1995), pp. 113-33, and Silverman (2002), pp. 157-8 and pp. 294-5.

[55] The use of the perfect tense is significant. It is used similarly in describing the ways in which letters and kinds are affected (πεπονθότα, 253A1; cf. πεπονθέναι, 259D2) and in describing the all-pervading nature of the greatest kinds, such as difference (διὰ πάντων . . . διεληλυθυῖαν, 255E3-4).

completely "unmusical" (ἀμούσου, 259E2) and "unphilosophical" (ἀφιλοσόφου, 259E2).[56] Plato is obviously referring in this passage to the late-learners, but he is also referring at least implicitly to the Friends of the Forms, who are committed to denying that the forms blend with one another. Thus, the Visitor remarks at 260A1-3 that he and Theaetetus have chosen the right time to "battle it out" (διεμαχόμεθα, 260A2) against these kinds of people, and to compel them to allow one thing to blend with another.[57] Rather than taking each form to be sealed off from all others and isolated, on the view that Plato argues for, the boundaries between forms turn out to be more permeable, making them more susceptible to various investigations depending on the respects in which they are being considered in relation to one another. And it is just this susceptibility that leads him to attribute the forms with a sort of change. Such a view makes discourse possible for us, but more vitally for Plato, it safeguards philosophy: the greatest thing of all (cf. 259E5-260A6).

7. Parting Words

We should consider, finally, how well this picture of the world fits with Plato's arguments for forms in other works, for a challenge that might be raised against this view is that the various associations between the forms give rise to a "compresence of opposites" problem. T.H. Irwin has argued in a well-known paper that certain sorts of compresence in the sensible world signify a worrisome kind of flux in Plato's middle-period dialogues. In these works, Socrates commonly appeals to forms to avoid such compresence; but if by the time of the *Sophist* compresent opposites are found in forms (*A* is like and is not like *B*, *A* is and is not the same, *A* is and is not at rest, etc.), it might appear on my view that Plato's reasons for downgrading sensible objects in earlier dialogues were unfounded.[58]

There are two points to observe in response. First, if cases where *A* is both like and unlike *B* represent a sort of compresence of opposites, these are not of the flux-inducing variety that Plato attributes to sensible objects in works such as the *Republic*. In these works, beauty cannot be said to consist in being colourful, for example, or in whatever is simply perceived beautiful by convention, because under certain conditions such sensible properties can make the same thing both beautiful and not beautiful. This is not, however, the sort of compresence at issue in cases where forms are concerned. For it is not the form "sophist" itself that *makes* the sophist like or unlike the angler on this view, but rather the various respects in which these forms may be understood in relation to one another and the respects in which they may not.[59]

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[56] I note in passing that the "uninitiates," who I coupled with the giants in Section 1 (see nn. 7 and 8 above), are described similarly in the *Theaetetus* as "unmusical" (ἄμουσοι, 156A2).

[57] Theaetetus had previously maintained at 241D1 ff. that he and the Visitor "must do battle in arguments" (διαμαχετέον ἐν τοῖς λόγοις, 241E8) in contending with Parmenides' views on being, and this becomes a running motif throughout the Gigantomachy and beyond (cf. 249C6-8, 256D5-6, 260D5 ff.).

[58] See Irwin (1977), pp. 4-13. I'm grateful here to Tad Brennan, who first got me to consider the relation between my view and Irwin's, and to Richard Kraut, for putting the challenge to me in these terms.

[59] This is how Gail Fine supports a qualified compresence in forms in "Immanence," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 4 (1986), pp. 71-97 and reprinted in *Plato on Knowledge and Forms* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003), pp. 301-25 (see especially pp. 313-4). She argues convincingly that Plato's claim in the *Sophist* that every form both is (with respect to being the same as itself) and is not (with respect to being different from other forms) falls short of the troubling sort of compresence that concerns him in middle-period dialogues. As the Visitor remarks at 256A10-B4 in explaining how every form is both the same and not the same: we're not speaking in these cases in the same way.

The second and more crucial point to note here is that the sort of change that Plato attributes to the forms on my view is not the sort of change that he attributes to sensible objects in works such as the *Republic*. His focus there seems to concern the way in which objects presented unreflectively to the senses appear to change in themselves, but this is not how the forms should be said to change. On the contrary, we have seen the immutability of forms upheld as a hallmark of Platonic doctrine. Yet at the same time, the aspect of the forms that commands his focus in the *Sophist*, I have argued, is their interrelatedness, and it is in virtue of this fact that they can be attributed with change: not in relation to themselves, but in relation to one another.[60] So we need not suspect that Plato came to have second thoughts about his views on the flux of the sensible world and the supremacy of forms, for these claims are consistent with the way in which he ascribes change to the forms later on.[61]

Still, one might ask whether this view of the forms, while not entirely inconsistent with Plato's earlier views, nonetheless represents an innovation by the time he gets to the *Sophist*.[62] But here, too, I am inclined to find continuity rather than novelty. It's true that the *Theaetetus* conspicuously avoids referring to forms in exploring the question of knowledge. However, we ought not to see in this a sign that Plato had lost faith in them or had come to believe they were peripheral to answering that question. Quite the opposite: he doesn't invoke forms in the *Theaetetus* since his project in this work remains incomplete.[63] This is for the most part a negative or ground-clearing project where his aim is to show us what makes the pursuit of knowledge and the practice of dialectic impossible: namely, a Protagorean epistemology according to which the world is just the way it appears to be and a Heraclitean ontology according to which the world and its objects are in flux. We are left by the end of the work in exactly the place we should be before reading the *Sophist*, which is Plato's dramatic and thematic counterpart to the *Theaetetus*, where he offers not only a full-fledged account of forms, but solutions to other issues left unresolved in the prequel, such as the possibility of false belief.

We should not therefore conclude from the absence of forms in the *Theaetetus* that Plato meant to abandon them, for he obviously intended this dialogue to be read in conjunction with the *Sophist*. Nor, I think, should we conclude less radically that Plato meant to provide us in his later works with a revised view of forms, as though his earlier views required amendment. To claim that there exists a form of justice, as he does in the *Republic*, involves presupposing that there exist a set of essential features particular to justice that make this form not only the distinctive thing that it is, but worth inquiring into and arguing about. It's quite compatible with this to claim that justice may associate

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[60] Irwin is hardly oblivious to the interrelatedness of the forms. Indeed, on the view that he ascribes to Plato in the *Republic*, a full specification of the forms in a teleologically-ordered system is the form of the good itself (*Plato's Moral Theory: The Early and Middle Dialogues* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977], p. 225). Irwin does not, however, argue that this interrelatedness constitutes a sort of change in the forms.

[61] Although she is concerned with their immanent character, Fine (2003) similarly allows Plato a conception of coincidental motion for forms (a kind of relative change) in reply to Aristotle's criticisms. As she puts it: "the only sorts of changelessness he is concerned to ascribe to forms are those sorts forms need to remain the forms they are; but coincidental motion (as opposed, say, to various sorts of alteration) is not one of these" (p. 325). Earlier in the same paper, she locates a conception of Cambridge change in forms as far back as the *Phaedo* (see pp. 306-9).

[62] This way of understanding Plato's development has a long pedigree, but for examples, see Nehamas (1999), pp. 196-223, and Moravcsik (1992), pp. 129-212.

[63] This is also the view of Sedley (2004), pp. 99-102 and pp. 109-13, who finds in the *Theaetetus* an ushering in of Platonic metaphysics through Socratic method.

with other forms in different, and on occasion conflicting, ways depending on the case at hand. Indeed, this is how the discussion proceeds in the dialogue: justice as defined in a city looks different from justice as defined in a human soul, in that some forms peculiar to a definition of civic justice (e.g., the class of farmers) will not appear in a definition of psychic justice.[64]

Other associations, particularly those in which justice is put to work, are more problematic than this case. In these cases, the just thing to do may entail conflicting courses of action. For instance, on some occasions, it appears just to return a weapon to its owner, while on others, it appears just to do the opposite. Now, a clever wordsmith might seize on such appearances to convince us that the nature of justice itself has changed and that there is in fact nothing that answers to the question "What is justice?" But again, with our dialectical wits about us, we can make sense of these sorts of cases by discerning the ways in which a weapon may justly be returned to an owner of sound mind, for example, but not to an owner who is insane. Such associations do not suggest that the pursuit of justice itself is futile or present a problem in general for Plato's forms. To be sure, it seems we are encouraged in these earlier dialogues to investigate the various relations that hold between forms.

For additional evidence of this, we can turn to a typically rich passage at 454A1-9 in the *Republic*, where we find a number of concerns that foreshadow Plato's project in his later dialogues:

> SOCRATES: Great, oh Glaucon, is the power of the art of disputation (ἀντιλογικῆς).
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> GLAUCON: Why's that?
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> SOCRATES: Because it seems to me that many people fall into it unwittingly, thinking that they are not quarreling (ἐρίζειν) but conversing (διαλέγεσθαι), because they are unable to examine what's said (τὸ λεγόμενον ἐπισκοπεῖν) by dividing according to forms (κατ᾽ εἴδη διαιρούμενοι). Rather, they pursue the opposite (ἐναντίωσιν) of what's said according to the name alone (κατ᾽ αὐτὸ τὸ ὄνομα), assailing one another in eristic discourse (ἔριδι), not in dialectic (διαλέκτῳ).

The distinction between eristic discourse and dialectic that Socrates draws here crops up implicitly in the *Sophist* in terms of the difference between sophists and philosophers.[65] Moreover, the method that Plato calls upon to guard against such disputation is clearly the method of division—a method that commentators often take to be a later invention. Most importantly, however, Socrates portrays the forms in this passage as kinds that blend with each other in certain respects. The challenge he is dealing with at this point in the *Republic* concerns how men and women can serve the same function in the ideal city when earlier on it was established that those who have different natural capacities should serve different functions in the city. Plato's response is to examine what's said by dividing according to kinds: men and women are surely unlike with respect to their reproductive capacities, but with respect to their capacity to govern a city, there are no relevant differences between them.

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[64] If this seems to read too much into the text, I would point to the *Timaeus*, where Socrates summarises his analysis of justice in the *Republic* not only in this general sort of way, but by using the vocabulary of division: in defining civic justice, we are told, the kind "guardian" was divided off (διειλόμεθα, 17C7) from kinds such as "farmer." In these respects, civic justice seems to differ from psychic justice, but where likenesses rather than unlikenesses are discerned, as in the tripartite structures that city and soul share in common, Plato thinks these correspondences can be used to draw valuable conclusions about the nature of justice itself.

[65] Cf. 259B8-D7. See also 232E2 ff. earlier in the dialogue, where sophistry is categorised explicitly under the art of disputation (τῆς ἀντιλογικῆς τέχνης, 232E3).

From this, I would argue that there is no significant discrepancy between how Plato conceives of forms in the *Republic* and how he conceives of them in the *Sophist*. He clearly alludes in the above passage to a theory of forms as kinds; but spelling out this theory just isn't on his agenda in earlier works. His principal objective there, I believe, is to argue for a distinction between how things are and how things appear, and an understanding of forms *kath' auta* is naturally suited for that purpose. He reserves for his later works a full examination of forms *pros alla*, but it seems to me that this is not so much a revision or rewriting of the theory of forms, as it is a new chapter.[66]

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[66] Cf. Meinwald (1992), p. 391, who takes the metaphysical passages of middle-period dialogues to signal the "motivations and outlines of views that it is not their purpose fully to develop." As she puts it, by the time of Plato's later period, "the theory of Forms was in new leaf."

3

LOVING WISDOM: THE EDUCATION OF DESIRE IN THE *PHAEDRUS*

1. From Metaphysics to Moral Psychology

In investigating the metaphysics of the *Sophist*, we have seen how each of the greatest kinds—being, difference, sameness, rest, and change—may be predicated of all the forms, and how these relations are necessitated by the role that the forms play in dialectic. In exploring any "What is F?" question, we must assume that there exists something answerable to this question, which we track in inquiry, and which is identifiable as the distinctive thing that it is on account of being the same as itself and different from others. This in part is just what a form is. To serve such a function as stable objects of knowledge and inquiry, the forms must be unchanging in themselves and so attributed with rest. And in being interrelated with one another, they must also be attributed with change.

These features of the forms can be said to follow from their role in human cognition in representing things as they really are (τά ὄντα, *Tht.* 187A5-6; τὴν ὄντως οὐσίαν, *Sph.* 248A11). Gregory Vlastos has described this sense of "real" in Plato as "that which is cognitively dependable, undeceiving." But there remains another sense in which Plato is apt to talk about the reality of the forms that Vlastos also mentions, "which becomes most prominent when he thinks of the 'really real' things, the Forms, as objects of mystical experience."[1] These are the occasions in Plato's dialogues when the forms affect us more deeply than in cognition, under conditions often regarded as otherworldly, and under descriptions that rely on imagery rather than argument.[2] Perhaps there are good reasons for this. Vlastos himself, while acknowledging that the issue merits further investigation, claims that in these contexts the word "real" functions as "a value-predicate, but one that transcends the usual specifications of value, moral, aesthetic, and religious; it connotes more than goodness, beauty, or holiness, or even than all three of them in conjunction."[3] Small wonder, then, that Plato resorts to more exuberant language when depicting this aspect of the forms.

We typically think of reality today in the cognitively dependable sense, as a world we can come to know. But it's the other sense of "real" that I'll focus on in this chapter, according to which the forms represent objects of value. This is a view that we're not accustomed to when reflecting on the real world. We do not, for instance, find such language in the metaphysics of modern philosophers like Hume and Kant, or in our scientific understanding of the world as devoid of evaluative content. Yet beyond this peculiarity, speaking of the forms in a value-laden sense gives rise to a puzzle in

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[1] Gregory Vlastos, "Degrees of Reality in Plato" in *Platonic Studies*, 2nd edition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), pp. 63-4.

[2] The best examples are the metaphysical passages of the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*. Vlastos also refers to *Republic* 490A8-B7 (which I consider below) and 500C2-D2, where the philosopher is said to examine the forms in a rational order and, through consorting with them, become well-ordered and divine himself.

[3] Vlastos (1981), p. 64.

Plato's metaphysics that Vlastos describes as "not wholly free from an incoherence."[4] To see this, consider the forms of injustice and ugliness.[5] Such forms can be straightforwardly understood as real in the cognitive sense—as objects of knowledge and inquiry. But it's far from clear how these forms (let's call them "bad forms" for short) might be considered real in Vlastos's other evaluative sense—as "objects of mystical experience."

This is a puzzle I shall return to at the end of this chapter, but I'm going to approach it in a somewhat roundabout way by raising two seemingly unrelated problems for Plato's moral psychology. This isn't as strange as it may first appear. We are trying to get a handle on the forms as objects of value, and a natural way in which to do this is to focus on ourselves as *valuers*—that is, on the way in which Plato believes the forms affect us. This requires an investigation into ourselves as creatures who desire and value things: creatures who have what he terms an *erotic* nature. Approaching the task from this direction, I think, gives us an idea of how the forms might be attributed with value. It will also go some way towards an understanding of Plato's metaphysics that's less otherworldly and mystical than Vlastos suggests.

Let's begin, then, with two leftover problems with the moral psychology of the *Republic*. Plato famously defines justice in this dialogue as a kind of psychological health, where this requires an analysis of the human soul into three distinct parts—appetite, spirit, and reason—with each part performing its own proper function. The two problems with this account are the following. First, the psychic harmony described in the *Republic* depends crucially on the role of reason in governing the other parts of the soul, but Plato says precious little about what the proper functioning of reason involves. We know that all three parts of the soul are meant to work in harmony in the just person, and that this psychological state involves a relationship with the forms, but we're not told much about why this is relevant to a life governed by reason.

The second problem runs deeper than the first. For even if we had an answer to the first question, it's not obvious how such a psychological portrait provides us with a recognisable account of *justice*. If any virtue carries with it a concern for the good of others, surely it is justice. The worry here, however, is that an account of justice in terms of my own interest—my psychological health—leaves it open why I should respect the interests of others. At best, it seems Plato can only get a sense of other-regarding concern from this account that's derived from self-regarding concern, not the direct concern for others that we commonly expect of a just person.

Now, I'm going to spend most of this chapter answering the first question rather than the second. But I think the key to both problems lies in Plato's views on eros.[6] In short, we get an answer to the first question by focusing on the philosopher's love of forms, and we get an answer to the second question by focusing on the philosopher's love of others. Yet since both answers depend on a robust conception of love or eros, that's the topic I'll investigate here.

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[4] Ibid.

[5] As Vlastos notes (p. 64n. 27), Plato has no qualms about positing such forms in the *Republic* (475E9-476A7). In the *Parmenides*, moreover, Socrates is made to countenance forms of hair, mud, and dirt (130C1-E4).

[6] This is similar to the approach of Richard Kraut, "Egoism, Love, and Political Office in Plato," *The Philosophical Review* 82 (1973), pp. 330-44, and Terence Irwin, *Plato's Ethics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), chapter 18, both of whom connect Plato's account of justice in the *Republic* to his views on eros.

Section 2 begins with Plato's treatment of eros in Book VI of the *Republic* in terms of the philosopher's love of forms. It is apparent from this part of the dialogue that Plato wants to assign a kind of eros to reason, but the *Republic* itself sheds no light on what distinguishes this sort of motivation from the brute desire of the tyrant in Book IX, whose nature is also described as erotic. Section 3 examines and rejects as incomplete a standard way of understanding Plato's conception of rational eros. Section 4 then proposes an alternative reading drawn from the twofold analysis of eros we find in the first part of the *Phaedrus*. Here and in Section 5, I argue that rational eros is best understood as a kind of rational compulsion: the kind we experience in dialectic when, for instance, we recognise the force of a good argument. Such compulsion should be distinguished from the sort of coercive argument that Socrates is often (wrongly in my view) thought to inflict on his interlocutors. Nonetheless, reflecting on these two modes of compulsion helps illuminate the second part of the *Phaedrus*, which I turn to in Section 6, where Plato explains more fully the sort of motivation required for dialectic. Finally, I return in Section 7 to the puzzle of how the forms might be attributed with value and what this conception of eros demands of us in relation to others.

2. Beauty and Truth

When the time comes in Book VI of the *Republic* to spell out the proper functioning of reason, Plato's discussion centres on the philosopher. Here and in Book VII, we learn that the proper objects of concern for the rational part of the soul are the forms, and that the proper method of pursuing these objects is through dialectic. But in addition to developing a certain cognitive attitude towards the forms, it's clear from these portions of the *Republic* that this requires a certain sort of motivational outlook. We experience the forms on this view, not with a cold and calculating eye, but with smouldering need and desire. The experience is captured in Plato's depiction of the philosopher's love of forms at 490A8-B7, and the language is nothing less than rapturous:

> . . . it is the nature of the real lover of learning to struggle towards being (τὸ ὄν) and not to remain with each of the many things that are believed to be. Rather, in pressing ahead, he neither damps down nor extinguishes his erotic love (ἔρωτος) until he grasps the nature of what each thing is itself (αὐτοῦ ὃ ἔστιν ἑκάστου τῆς φύσεως) with that part of the soul that is fitted to lay hold of such a thing and is akin to it. And in so doing, on approaching and commingling with that which really is (τῷ ὄντι ὄντως), and begetting intelligence (νοῦν) and truth (ἀλήθειαν), he knows, truly lives, is nourished, and thus released from the pains of giving birth, but not before.[7]

Note first the reference to the forms in this passage in Vlastos's evaluative sense. Plato almost always reserves the honorific "that which really is" (τῷ ὄντι ὄντως, 490B5) for the forms—as he does in the *Sophist*, for instance, in working out their logical properties.[8] At this stage of the *Republic*, however, his focus is on the way in which the forms affect us. The use of sexual imagery here to describe the experience has also often been recognised and compared to parallel descriptions of eros

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[7] All translations from Plato are my own, although I have made frequent use of editions found in *Plato: Complete Works*, edited by John Cooper and D.S. Hutchinson (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997). Where I refer to the *Phaedrus*, I have benefited greatly from James Nichols' translation (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998) and C.J. Rowe's commentary and translation (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1986). All references to the Greek are to John Burnet's *Platonis Opera*, vols. I-V (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1900-7). For references to ἔρως and its cognates, I have usually transliterated the Greek or used some variant of "erotic love."

[8] Cf. *Sophist* (τὴν ὄντως οὐσίαν, 248A11-12) and Vlastos (1981), pp. 58-63 for further discussion.

in the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*, where the philosopher's experience of the forms provokes a similarly intense response, and corresponding metaphors of philosophical propagation and conception can be found in the *Theaetetus*.[9] But in terms of the argument of the *Republic*, these lines seem out of place. For Plato's analysis of eros in this dialogue is on the whole disparaging, being lumped in Book III with disease, drunkenness, and other misfortunes (396D1-3), and consigned in Book IX to the life of the tyrant, where it functions as a "great winged drone," marshalling and commanding unruly appetites at whim (573E3 ff.). Surely this eros must differ from the sort that characterises the lover of learning above, yet Plato does nothing to resolve the discrepancy. To gain a better understanding of the philosopher's love of forms, we should therefore look elsewhere than the *Republic*.[10]

Plato's conception of our response to the forms as erotic has had a more noticeable influence on accounts of religious and aesthetic experience than it has on the history of philosophy. The Platonic desire "to know the connection between Beauty and Truth, and the place of Beauty in the moral and intellectual order of the Kosmos," extolled by Oscar Wilde's character Gilbert in *The Critic as Artist*, owes much of its force to the theory of forms, even if we agree with Wilde that the natural domain of beauty is the immanent world of particulars in which we live.[11] But the way in which Plato himself understood this response and its bearing on his views in metaphysics and moral psychology remain open questions.

On the standard view, our desire for the forms is modelled on our desire for others—in particular, our sexual desire for others. Rational eros according to this view is simply a sublimated version of sexual eros. And admittedly, the imagery that Plato uses to describe this experience, in the *Republic* passage above and in other dialogues, does suggest such a reading. Nevertheless, I shall argue that this conception of rational eros is incomplete. A better model for understanding our desire for the forms is found in Plato's analysis of eros in the *Phaedrus*. Unique among other dialogues is the clear distinction drawn in this work between two kinds of eros, and we can make better sense of the way in which Plato takes reason and passion to converge by focusing on the desires he assigns here to the rational part of the soul.

On the view that I'll argue for, rational eros is better understood as a kind of rational compulsion: the kind we experience in reasoned inquiry and argument. Instead of an instrumental notion of reason as a mere calculating faculty, the rational part of the soul according to this view functions as a distinct source of motivation, with its own set of concerns and values. This is a conception of rationality not often found in modern philosophy. Blaise Pascal famously quipped that the heart has its reasons, which reason knows not of. But for Plato the opposite is true: reason has its loves, which the heart knows not of. Such desires of reason are alluded to but not fully investigated in the *Republic*. By focusing on them in connection with the practice of dialectic, however, the *Phaedrus* clarifies for us what the proper functioning of reason involves.

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[9] See *Theaetetus*, 148E7-151D6. The verbs rendered above as "approaching" (πλησιάσας, 490B5) and "commingling" (μιγείς, 490B5) are often suggestive of sexual intercourse in Greek.

[10] Plato's ambivalence towards eros in the *Republic* is closely examined in the most recent study of this topic by Paul Ludwig, "Eros in the *Republic*" in *The Cambridge Companion to Plato's Republic*, edited by G.R.F. Ferrari (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 202-31.

[11] For a nice discussion of this anti-transcendental approach to Plato's forms, see Melissa Lane, *Plato's Progeny: How Plato and Socrates Still Captivate the Modern Mind* (London: Duckworth, 2001), pp. 73-6.

3. Eros and Appetite

One account of what I've called the "standard view" of Plato's conception of eros has recently been put forward by C.D.C. Reeve. According to this account, all eros is a kind of desire or appetite, "and desire an inanition—an emptiness of either the body (hunger, thirst) or the soul (ignorance). What fills the emptiness is what satisfies the desire, and what fills it most permanently is what provides the most robust and lasting pleasure."[12] Rational eros, no less than other desires, seeks the fulfillment of a lack—it's just that, in this case, the lack resides in the soul and stems from ignorance. What fills this emptiness of soul is knowledge of the forms, in much the same way that bodily hunger finds satisfaction in food. The main difference between rational eros and bodily appetite on this reading is that knowledge of the forms provides stable and lasting satisfaction, whereas the satisfaction of desires such as hunger and thirst remains fleeting.[13]

I do not wish to dispute the claim that all eros is a kind of appetite, for it has good precedent in the Platonic corpus. But even Reeve is quick to recognise that the above conception of eros contains a deep irony: "When an irrefutable account of beauty is augmented or replaced by contemplation of the Form of beauty," he notes, "love is fully satisfied and our emptiness is filled once and for all. This is the first manifestation of the deep problem of Platonic love. We desire only what we do not possess [. . .]. But the pleasure of complete possession kills desire and with it the incomplete being whose essence it is. Love requited is death."[14] That our love of the forms should meet such a sorry end should give us pause for thought, and indeed there are grounds in the *Phaedrus* to hold that the above account is only a partial one. For while Plato accepts the premise that eros is a kind of desire or appetite in this work, he is careful not to let the matter rest with that claim.

The entire first part of the *Phaedrus* is designed to show that there is much more to eros than simply appetite. Both Lysias's speech (implicitly) and Socrates' first speech (explicitly) feature speakers who view eros as a kind of appetite (ἐπιθυμία τις, 237D3-4), and on the basis of this principle, both seek to denounce erotic lovers. Later on, however, Socrates comes to regret this assessment, and in his second speech, he develops a conception of eros that cannot be regarded in terms of appetite alone. In this speech, eros is seen as "something divine" (τι θεῖον, 242E2) and erotic lovers are praised. For Plato's fuller account of eros, then, it would be natural to look here.

A further reason to reject an account of eros simply in terms of appetite is that such a view makes it hard to credit Plato's forms with independent value as objects of desire. All erotic attachment stems from emptiness on this reading, and the impact of the forms on our moral psychology consists

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[12] C.D.C. Reeve, *Love's Confusions* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), p. 113. Reeve's study concerns love in all its guises, although his focus on the *Symposium* makes clear that his topic at this point is Plato's conception of rational eros. The "standard view" outlined in what follows refers mainly to this work, since it captures most succinctly a way in which the philosopher's love of forms has often been understood. Reeve provides a more nuanced view in "A Study in Violets: Alcibiades in the *Symposium*" in *Plato's Symposium: Issues in Interpretation and Reception*, edited by James H. Lesher, Debra Nails, and Frisbee Sheffield (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), pp. 124-46. See also n. 36 below.

[13] Sexual desire provides a powerful metaphor for Plato's conception of eros on this reading. Reeve makes the parallel explicit later, when he refers to Homer's Calypso as "the closest thing to a Platonic Form, apparently, that a woman could be—a perfect satisfier of male sexual desire" (p. 146).

[14] Reeve (2005), p. 115.

merely in filling us out; once possessed, our love for them will be quenched. But whatever value we find in such objects seems to depend on their ability to satisfy us, whereas one would think that the forms should retain their value as objects of desire quite apart from any pleasure we derive from them.[15] This suggests that the language of emptiness and possession does not capture all there is to rational eros, and that a different model should be sought for the desire that Plato assigns to reason.

4. Eros and Madness

Plato's conception of rational eros is better understood in light of his claim in the *Phaedrus* that eros is a species of madness. He revisits in this work his familiar tripartite analysis of human psychology, with the three parts of the soul (appetite, spirit, and reason) now represented allegorically as a pair of horses led by a charioteer. But as compared to his portrait in the *Republic*, which dwells on the internal workings of the soul, this is an image that's more dynamic, portraying a soul that looks outward and which is affected and inspired by a world awash with foreign sights and sounds and other people. We come to understand and engage with the world on this view through our engagement with others, and for Plato this requires an education of character—or more specifically, an education of desire—in which we cultivate an appropriate motivational attitude towards others.

We have already noted that there are two kinds of eros distinguished in the *Phaedrus*. The first is wholly without reason (ἄνευ λόγου, 238B7) and viewed in terms of appetite alone. The second, which is the kind Socrates comes to favour, receives a more illustrious depiction as "the recollection (ἀνάμνησις) of those things that our soul once saw when it journeyed with a god, and looked down upon the things we now take to be, and lifted up its head into that which really is (τὸ ὂν ὄντως)" (249C1-4). It's lines such as these, no doubt, that have secured Plato's reputation as something of a supernaturalist. We lead bifurcated lives according to this interpretation, with the sensible part of us mired in the natural world below and the rational part functioning in some remote realm of incorporeal being: the world of forms.[16] I think this is a poor caricature of Plato's metaphysics, although a full-fledged discussion of his theory of forms is not my aim in this chapter.[17] What I am interested in is how he conceives of our response to the forms. For the reference to the doctrine of recollection in this passage makes plain that those things beheld by the soul are forms (cf. 249B6-8), and as in Book VI of the *Republic*, Plato's focus here is on the way in which these objects affect us:

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[15] The difference I have in mind here is roughly along the lines of our response to a work of art versus our response to a mouth-watering dessert: what underlies the difference in these cases is not so much a distinction between two objects, but two distinct ways in which each object is appreciated.

[16] John McDowell rejects this conception of reason in "Two Sorts of Naturalism," originally published in *Virtues and Reasons: Philippa Foot and Moral Theory*, edited by Rosalind Hursthouse, Gavin Lawrence, and Warren Quinn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), pp. 149-79 and reprinted in *Mind, Value, and Reality* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), pp. 167-97 (see esp. pp. 176-77). As he makes clear in a note, his own view is that Plato should not be represented as a supernaturalist about reason in this way. Rather, "Plato is a naturalist of the Aristotelian sort, with a penchant for vividly realized pictorial presentations of his thought" (p. 177n. 19).

[17] On the reading of the *Sophist* that I proposed in Chapter 2, forms are better understood in terms of the role they play in inquiry and argument: the practice of dialectic. Such a reading need not be restricted to Plato's later dialogues. See esp. *Phaedo* 75D2-4, where forms are posited for everything upon which we set the seal "the thing itself which is" (τὸ αὐτὸ ὃ ἔστι), "questioning in our questions (ἐν ταῖς ἐρωτήσεσιν ἐρωτῶντες) and answering in our answers (ἐν ταῖς ἀποκρίσεσιν ἀποκρινόμενοι)."

note in particular the use of "that which really is" in Vlastos's evaluative sense. This experience is a kind of inspiration (ἐνθουσιάζων, 249D2), but it is also according to Socrates a kind of madness (μανίας, 249D5), and one who comes to share in this madness (ταύτης μετέχων τῆς μανίας, 249E3), he maintains, is properly called a lover (ἐραστής, 249E4).

Plato conceives of our response to the forms here as manic in some sense, but what's this description of our moral psychology meant to capture? Madness in the *Phaedrus* is best understood in terms of compulsion or loss of self-control. This is a running motif throughout the dialogue, beginning with the myth alluded to at 229B4 ff., where Phaedrus asks Socrates whether he believes in the legend of Oreithuia's abduction by the god Boreas.[18] The theme is reinforced later on when Phaedrus pressures Socrates into making his first speech, at one point threatening him with violence (βίαν, 236D2), before finally compelling him to speak (ἀναγκάσω σε λέγειν, 236D7) with an oath, and when Socrates subsequently retracts this speech, he asserts that it was composed under duress and goes so far as to disclaim ownership, telling Phaedrus it "was spoken by you through my mouth, bewitched by drugs" (242D11-E1).[19]

This language of compulsion plays an especially important role in the *Phaedrus* in relation to eros. From the start of Lysias's speech, in which eros is denounced, it's the compulsive nature of erotic lovers that he targets in criticism, whereas non-lovers are reputed to behave not from compulsion (ὑπ᾽ ἀνάγκης, 231A4), but from their own free will.[20] Likewise in Socrates' first speech, erotic lovers are censured for being driven by compulsion and frenzy (ὑπ᾽ ἀνάγκης τε καὶ οἴστρου, 240C7-D1). But by the time of Socrates' second speech, the language of compulsion shifts. He begins this speech by stating that although eros is indeed a kind of madness, not all madness is bad. Rather, "the greatest of good things come to us through madness, when it is conferred with a divine giving" (244A6-8).[21] Such madness may be considered erotic in the highest sense when one locates some

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[18] Socrates takes care to neither demythologise nor endorse the truth of the story. The truth of the legend does not matter to him; what matters is the truth about himself (230A1-3). This topic in the dialogue is the focus of Charles Griswold's *Self-Knowledge in Plato's Phaedrus* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986).

[19] Other depictions of such seizure in the *Phaedrus* are discussed well by Andrea Nightingale, *Genres in Dialogue: Plato and the Construct of Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 159-62.

[20] Cf. 232A4-5, where non-lovers are described as "masters of themselves" (κρείττους αὑτῶν) and 233C1-2, where Lysias's speaker proudly declares that "I won't be overcome by eros, but serve as master of myself" (οὐχ ὑπ᾽ ἔρωτος ἡττώμενος ἀλλ᾽ ἐμαυτοῦ κρατῶν).

[21] Socrates' about-turn in this speech has led some scholars to claim that Plato is analogously renouncing here the asceticism of earlier works such as the *Republic*, where eros and the emotions in general are regarded rather less favourably. Martha Nussbaum presents a case for this reading of the *Phaedrus* in *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), chapter 7. There appears to be evidence for such a reading in Book III of the *Republic* at 402D1 ff., one of the few episodes in the dialogue where eros is regarded positively, in which Socrates is quizzing Glaucon about a more refined sort of eros (ὀρθός ἔρως, 403A7) that has no kinship with madness (μανικόν) or licentiousness (ἀκολασίας). The difference between this view and the reformed view of Socrates' second speech in the *Phaedrus* is certainly notable. (For further differences, see Nussbaum [1986], pp. 204-6.) I'm unsure, however, whether this signals reform on Plato's part, for the madness targeted here in the *Republic* is the sort associated with brute appetite, and at this stage in the dialogue Plato does not have the resources to distinguish such mania from the divine madness of the *Phaedrus* or the philosopher's love of forms in Book VI.

trace of beauty in the world in the figure of another person, and becomes "intensely compelled" (συντόνως ἠναγκάσθαι, 253A1-2) to commune with the forms on account of that person.

The strangeness of this claim cannot be emphasised enough, a fact that Vlastos has acknowledged in remarking that "here eros is not only described, but *defined*, as mania by our ultra-rationalist Plato, and is associated as mania in the closest terms with philosophy [. . .]. This convergence of mania and nous in love does not seem to intrigue commentators. Few of them notice the paradox at all or, if they do, they seem bent on explaining it away."[22] To resolve the paradox, I now wish to suggest that what this higher conception of eros serves to capture is the sort of experience we suffer in dialectic. There is reason to suspect this on other grounds, since it's through active struggling (ἁμιλλᾶσθαι, 490A1) rather than passive revelation that the philosopher eventually consorts with forms in the *Republic*, which in the context of Book VI signifies the work of dialectic (511B3-D5).[23] And in the *Phaedrus*, it's by engaging with others in philosophy that we come to encounter the forms: this is what distinguishes the genuine erotic lover of Socrates' second speech from the lover of his first speech, for whom others are regarded merely as sources of pleasure. Plato's depiction of this experience in the *Phaedrus* as compelling should lead us to consider what role such compulsion might play in philosophical inquiry and argument.

5. Coercion and Compulsion

The Greek term that I have translated above as "compulsion" (ἀνάγκη) is most frequently used in its philosophical sense to convey the force of necessity in argument.[24] What this describes, in effect, is a sort of dialectical compulsion. But there are at least two ways in which to understand such compulsion. Consider, first, being subject to a Socratic elenchus. At many places, particularly in Plato's aporetic dialogues, Socrates' interlocutors complain about being pressured into drawing conclusions unwillingly, as if by external force, due to previous concessions they make in argument.[25] This is Callicles' complaint in the *Gorgias*, where he protests the way in which Gorgias was compelled (ἀναγκασθῆναι, 482D4) by Socrates earlier in the work to contradict himself. Dialectic is regarded here as a coercive practice—a mode of external compulsion—with Socrates in the figure of a bully, and Callicles goes on to advise Socrates to abandon this practice if he knows what's good for him.[26]

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[22] Gregory Vlastos, "The Individual as an Object of Love in Plato" in *Platonic Studies*, 2nd edition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), p. 27n. 80.

[23] Similarly in the cave allegory of Book VII, the pain of being dragged from darkness into light serves to depict the process of being compelled through dialectic to see the truth of things.

[24] By the time of Aristotle, the term is used explicitly to convey logical necessity: cf. *Metaphysics* VI, where he distinguishes between the sense of ἀνάγκη employed in contexts of violence (κατὰ τὸ βίαιον) and the sense "by which we mean it's not possible to be otherwise" (1026b28). Plato is less exacting in his use of the term.

[25] For a recent work that looks to redress this perceived abuse, see John Beversluis's *Cross-Examining Socrates: A Defense of the Interlocutors in Plato's Early Dialogues* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). For critical study of the features of the Socratic elenchus itself, see Gregory Vlastos, "The Socratic Elenchus," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 1 (1983), pp. 28-58 and Richard Kraut, "Comments on Gregory Vlastos, 'The Socratic Elenchus,'" *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 1 (1983), pp. 59-70.

[26] Robert Nozick takes exception to such coercive models of philosophy in *Philosophical Explanations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), chapter 1. I have been benefited greatly here from T.H. Irwin's discussion of this topic and its relation to Socratic method in "Coercion and Objectivity in Plato's Dialectic," *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 40 (1986), pp. 49-74.

But to the extent that he aims to get his interlocutors to see the truth of things, this isn't a fair characterisation of Socratic method. We find a similar assessment of Socrates in the *Protagoras*, where he is charged with indulging in a "love of victory" (φιλονικεῖν, 360E3) in forcing Protagoras to answer his questions. Socrates responds to Protagoras by claiming that his only desire in pursuing such questions is to learn the truth about virtue (360E6-8). Likewise in the *Crito*, he affirms that he has always been the type of person persuaded by the argument that seems best to him on reflection, even when this argument leads him to his death (46B4 ff.). If we are to take Socrates at his word in these passages, we should consider his motives in a more charitable light.

In fact, a closer look at how Plato characterises philosophical method in the dialogues suggests a sort of compulsion more internal to the inquirer, rather than external in the way that Callicles and Protagoras complain. Consider the educational programme that Socrates prescribes for the philosopher-ruler in Book VII of the *Republic*. This is a process that involves "a leading of the soul (ψυχῆς περιαγωγή) from a nightlike day to the true day: the ascent to that which is" (521C6-8). The first course of study Plato advocates, mathematics, is a natural ally of philosophy in that both direct their attention to unchanging and incorporeal objects of inquiry (numbers and forms respectively) that are apprehended in thought rather than sensible perception.[27] Both subjects, we might say, are on an ontological and epistemological par with one another. But Plato goes further than this when he delves into the psychology of the inquirer at 523A10 ff. with his famous "summoners" argument. On some occasions, we find ourselves presented with conflicting perceptions that summon our critical faculties. When we perceive three fingers of decreasing size, for example, we do not typically ask what it means to be a finger, but upon observing that one finger is both large and small, we are compelled (ἠναγκάσθη, 524C7) to see the large and the small, not as blurred together, but distinct, and to ask what largeness and smallness themselves are (524C6-11; cf. 523D3-5). Similarly in mathematics, when something is perceived to be both one and unlimited in number, the soul finds itself at a loss and is compelled to inquire on its own into the nature of the one itself (524E4-5).

It is crucial to notice how mathematics and philosophy are singled out in this argument not simply in terms of their objects, but for their psychological effect in spurring independent thought. Socrates emphasises this aspect of mathematics as being especially useful to philosophy, since "it leads the soul very much upwards and compels it (ἀναγκάζει) to discuss the numbers themselves" (525D6-7). This prompts a nice pun at 526A8-B3, where mathematics is considered especially compulsory (ἀναγκαῖον, 526A8) for the philosopher, since it "compels (προσαναγκάζον) the soul to use intelligence itself upon the truth itself." Indeed, all subjects that study the form of the good—the highest object of philosophical inquiry—are soon distinguished by this ability to "compel the soul to turn itself around" (ἀναγκάζει ψυχήν . . . μεταστρέφεσθαι) towards the best of the things that are (526E2-4).[28] Since these are the subjects that will later be described as a "prelude" to the so-called song of dialectic (531D7-8), we should expect the same sort of compulsion to figure there.

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[27] For a detailed examination of the study of mathematics in the *Republic* and its place in Plato's ethical theory, see Myles Burnyeat, "Plato on Why Mathematics is Good for the Soul," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 103 (2000): 1-81, reprinted in *Mathematics and Necessity: Essays in the History of Philosophy*, edited by Timothy Smiley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). For the power of mathematics to provoke independent thought, see in particular pp. 74-80.

[28] Literally: "towards that place where the happiest of that which is (τὸ εὐδαιμονέστατον τοῦ ὄντος) exists." See also the famous account of education at 518D3-7 as a "turning around" (μεταστραφήσεται) of the soul.

I suggest, then, that we think of the compulsion Plato has in mind as a mode of internal compulsion: the sort of experience we suffer in recognising the beauty of a good argument. Support for this view can be found in Plato's other erotic dialogue, the *Symposium*, where Alcibiades speaks of having been "struck and bitten by arguments in philosophy (ὑπὸ τῶν ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ λόγων, 218A5)" in his heart (καρδίαν, 218A3) or soul (ψυχήν, 218A4) on account of Socrates.[29] Such arguments, he contends, may be considered laughable or useless on a superficial basis, but when examined more carefully, they are found to be the only ones with any intelligence (νοῦν, 222A2).

The experience Alcibiades describes above is not hard to relate to. We speak of arguments as compelling in the sense that they command our admiration and a particular respect: if I accept each step of a good argument, I must accept the conclusion. This can be viewed as a sort of compulsion, but what compels me here is a certain part of myself, which Plato identifies as my reason. Not all compelling arguments are good, of course, but all good arguments are compelling. For a signal feature of such arguments is that they reveal to us the truth of things, which the rational part of us is naturally drawn to.[30] We might accept these arguments reluctantly, or decide not to heed them at all; but where there is unwillingness, Plato thinks, this is because of prejudices, beliefs, or feelings clung to by other parts of ourselves, products of upbringing or habit perhaps, that need to be subjected to critical scrutiny and evaluation. Self-examination of this sort can be painful, as Socrates' interlocutors usually learn, and as the difficulty of removing deep-seated prejudices often reveals.[31] Philosophy might not be the only way of effecting such change. Yet when applied and taken up with the right motivation, the response that it provokes emerges from within and may be regarded as a mode of internal rather than external compulsion.[32]

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[29] Alcibiades goes on to depict this experience at 218B3-4 as "the madness and bacchic frenzy of philosophy" (τῆς φιλοσόφου μανίας τε καὶ βακχείας). But what he describes here is a state of mental conflict, and it would be a mistake to identify this with the kind of madness that Socrates praises in the *Phaedrus*. Alcibiades remains some way off from feeling that sort of erotic experience (see also n. 36 below).

[30] This is a point that Irwin (1985) makes in distinguishing between permissible and impermissible cases of compulsion: "in the permissible case you are warning me, reporting how things are, not intervening in them, even though your report may be as effective as an intervention. You tell me about the facts; and the compulsion emerges from them plus my beliefs and desires. If you tell me that there is a wasp on my sandwich, you are reporting; putting a wasp on my sandwich is much more like coercing. The reporting, we might say, has a compelling effect, but only the intervention is coercive" (p. 51).

[31] Consider here Socrates' description of his art in the *Theaetetus* as a kind of midwifery, and the pains of labour that his interlocutors experience in submitting to him (151A5 ff.). Socrates himself claims to be under the influence of some divine compulsion in practicing this art (μαιεύεσθαί με ὁ θεὸς ἀναγκάζει, 150C7-8).

[32] Contrast this with Richard Rorty's critique of what he terms Plato's invention of "philosophical thinking" in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), according to which "[p]utatively rational *ananke* is, so to speak, just a sublimated form of brute *bia*" (p. 158). (I take the reference from Irwin [1985], pp. 51-3.) This reading of Plato presumes rational compulsion to be utterly external and imposed from without—by some otherworldly realm of "non-human reality" (p. 157)—rather than internal in the way that I have suggested. It also depends on attributing metaphysical views to Plato that I believe are exaggerated, for Plato's commitment to truth and the idea of an independent reality can be better understood in terms of, rather than prior to, his reflections on dialectic (see also n. 17 above). For the implications of Rorty's wholesale rejection of Platonic realism, see Jaegwon Kim, "Rorty and the Possibility of Philosophy," *The Journal of Philosophy* 77 (1980), pp. 596-7.

6. Philosophical Eros

We are now in a position to ask which of these two modes of compulsion better expresses the philosopher's love of forms in Book VI of the *Republic*. On the one hand, Plato's forms appear to be prime examples of entities that exert an outside influence over us. They are independent objects of knowledge and inquiry, after all, and being led by the forms may be understood in this respect as a kind of external compulsion. And yet the forms also have standing as independent objects of value: they are bearers of beauty and truth, and in this respect we may understand their influence in the way that a good argument moves us from within. For the compulsion in this case emerges from the rational part of us, which Plato takes to be essentially akin (συγγενεῖ, 490B4) to the forms.

This suggests a portrait of self-displacement: a feeling of being led ineluctably by something beyond oneself that at the same time reflects the truest part of oneself. And it is this external/internal split, I believe, that leads Plato to classify our response to the forms as a kind of madness in the *Phaedrus*, a response which, in depicting the more conative side of our rational nature, he also views as erotic.[33] Hence, when Socrates looks to summarise his twofold analysis of eros much later on in the dialogue, it's in terms of mental upheaval (ἄφρον, 265E4; παρανοίας, 266A2) that he categorises both the "left-handed" love of his first speech which assimilated eros to appetite, and the conception of rational eros developed in his second speech.[34]

This isn't to say that the philosopher feels conflicted. Plato's account of the genuine erotic lover in his chariot allegory is instructive here. For it's the strangeness of the experience (ἀτοπίᾳ, 251D8), the feeling of being out of place, that characterises the lover's encounter with the beloved. The problem is his inability to locate precisely the source of what moves him—in something external or something internal—and the impact that this has on his sense of self.[35] He cannot feel otherwise; but at the same time, he doesn't *want* to feel otherwise. Contrast this with Alcibiades' predicament in the *Symposium*, where he finds himself compelled by Socrates' arguments almost despite himself: "for I know well enough that I'm unable to contradict what he urges it's necessary to do," he asserts, "but whenever I leave him, I succumb to the honours of the many" (216B3-5).[36] Clearly one way in which to distinguish the lover of forms is by his attention to the right sorts of objects. But more importantly, at least from the standpoint of moral psychology, rational eros involves an entirely different affective response on the part of the lover. In seeing things as they really are, the *Phaedrus* describes the philosopher here as both disoriented and at one with himself (ὁμονοητικόν, 256B1), held captive yet set free (δουλωσάμενοι μὲν ᾧ κακία . . . ἐλευθερώσαντες δὲ ᾧ ἀρετή, 256B2-3).

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[33] I take this account of philosophical madness to be consonant with the one put forward by G.R.F. Ferrari, *Listening to the Cicadas: A Study of Plato's Phaedrus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 190-203, who also invokes the language of compulsion (see esp. pp. 196-8). He examines this response through the lens of the philosopher's love of others, whereas my focus has been on the philosopher's love of forms.

[34] The need to maintain a balance between the external and the internal is also a theme with which the *Phaedrus* concludes, when Socrates prays that whatever things he has outside him be friendly to the things within him (ἔξωθεν δὲ ὅσα ἔχω, τοῖς ἐντὸς εἶναί μοι φίλια, 279B9-C1).

[35] Note here the frequent reminders in the *Phaedrus* that Socrates is a person very much "out of place" (ἀτοπώτατός, 230C6), far from the walls of the city and removed from his everyday haunts in the agora.

[36] Reeve (2006), p. 138 also distinguishes between the madness that Alcibiades suffers from in the *Symposium* and the divine madness of the *Phaedrus*. The problem is that Reeve's account can only locate this difference in the objects of Alcibiades and Socrates' love, not in their different psychologies.

Harry Frankfurt has written trenchantly on this issue:

> When we accede to being moved by logic or by love, the feeling with which we do so is not ordinarily one of dispirited impotence. On the contrary, we characteristically experience in both cases—whether we are following reason or following our hearts—a sense of liberation and of enhancement. What accounts for this experience? It appears to have its source in the fact that when a person is responding to a perception of something as rational or as beloved, his relationship tends towards *selflessness*. His attention is not merely concentrated upon the object; it is somehow fixed or seized by the object. The object captivates him. He is guided by its characteristics rather than primarily by his own. Quite commonly, he feels that he is overcome—that his own direction of his thoughts and volitions has been superseded.[37]

On the face of it, this description of being overcome, which Frankfurt terms "volitional necessity," suggests a loss of self. What the person encounters is something true and real—the kind of event that shakes up one's world view. But it's important to observe the role of the lover's *assent* here and the fact that he lives a more enriched life in seeing things anew. The experience provides him with a sense of fulfillment, although it's not just the fulfillment of a lack that he enjoys, but the sense of recognising the worth of something external to him, which he comes to identify with what he most deeply values. In so doing, he becomes more fully himself than at any time previously.

According to this account, the consummation of love would consist, not in possession, but to use the vocabulary of the *Phaedrus*, a feeling of "reverence and awe" (αἰδουμένην τε καὶ δεδιυῖαν, 254E9). One virtue of such an account is that it explains our commitment to abstract ideals as well as other people. It also holds out the prospect of continued fulfillment in pursuing those ideals. That's why being moved by a good argument can both satisfy and sustain a philosopher's commitment to truth, understood as an ideal that governs his life as a whole. Such love, presumably, was the sort that Socrates hoped to arouse in Alcibiades and his other companions. For if the *Phaedrus* is any guide, no greater good exists than this for human beings (256B3-7).

There remains an obvious worry here, however, and Plato sees it. Some compelling arguments can be vicious and have the ability to arouse very immediate feelings of obsession, zeal, and even rage, stirring the soul of an audience in an altogether terrifying way. The worry is that Socrates' distinction between two kinds of eros in the first part of the *Phaedrus* draws only a fine line between the rational compulsion that motivates the philosopher and the compulsion that may incite other manic behaviour.[38] Both kinds of eros, we should recall, are classified under the wider category of mania (265E1-266B1). But what distinguishes the compulsion that the philosopher seeks to elicit from the compulsion produced by the skilled rhetorician? Or to put it another way: what singles out this kind of madness as distinctly *rational* in comparison to other kinds of madness?

We might think that philosophical eros is distinguished by the absence of appetite, but we would be wrong on two counts. First, in the chariot allegory, appetite is held in check rather than eliminated in the lover's soul. For it's the pairing of the good horse (representing spirit) *with* the bad horse (representing appetite) that signifies something particular about human desire. The implication

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[37] Harry Frankfurt, "The Importance of What We Care About," *Synthese* 52 (1982), p. 267.

[38] Cf. 267C7-D2, where Thrasymachus is described as "clever at angering the many (ὀργίσαι . . . πολλούς) and again, when they have been angered, at charming them with incantations."

throughout is that the appetites should be honed and incorporated within the soul, not killed off, and to this end the bad horse is given free rein for a while before the charioteer comes to restrain it (254A7-E5).[39] Second, to the extent that being moved by the attractive style and prose of a speech is peculiar to the appetitive part of the soul, it is hard to see why attending to and taking pleasure in these features of discourse should be absent from a philosophical approach towards argument. Plato seems to allow for such an approach in presenting Socrates in the *Phaedrus* as a character so enamored with argument (λόγων ἐραστοῦ, 228C1-2) that he leaves the polis, possessed with a desire (ἐπιτεθύμηκα, 227D2) to hear Phaedrus speak (cf. 230D3-E4), and one of the requirements he later sets down for a good speech involves the pleasing arrangement of its form (236A3-6; cf. 264C2-5).

Nor would we be right in thinking it's the assent of the philosopher that distinguishes rational compulsion. The power to secure a listener's assent through speech would have been more characteristic of rhetoric than dialectic to an Athenian audience. Gorgias, in his *Encomium of Helen*, remarks on the ability of discourse to "drug and bewitch the soul" through persuasion with no threat of violence or force (βία) by removing all reluctance on the part of the listener (B 11.8-14), and Plato seems to acknowledge this power in the *Philebus*, where Protarchus alludes to a similar remark by Gorgias on the superiority of rhetoric over all other arts (58A7-B3).[40]

That philosophy and rhetoric might appear indistinguishable in terms of their psychological effects would have concerned Plato. The sophists and demagogues of his day were after all simply the spin-doctors and propagandists of our own, and it is fitting therefore that he devotes the second part of the *Phaedrus* to a study of the differences between philosophical and merely rhetorical uses of discourse. Significantly, his focus at this point is on the way in which to compose beautiful speeches and arguments (καλῶς . . . λέγειν τε καὶ γράφειν, 259E2), and the language of compulsion returns, but with respect to the power of discourse as a whole, which he defines as a "leading of the soul" (ψυχαγωγία, 261A7-8; cf. 271C10).[41]

The discussion in this part of the *Phaedrus* proceeds in three stages, each of which serves to distinguish dialectic from simple rhetoric. Socrates sets himself the rather ambitious task of convincing Phaedrus that in order to speak adequately, one must philosophise adequately (261A3-5). To begin with, he claims, the art of speech-making requires being able to "argue in opposition" (ἀντιλογική, 261D10), citing legal argument, public speaking, and even logic puzzles as examples.[42] But this, in turn, demands a grasp of truth: the cognitive ability to distinguish associations between

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[39] Cf. Ferrari (1987), p. 194: "efforts to curb the lustful horse merit the title of 'integration' rather than mere 'manipulation' or 'repression' because they are the result of following through on the soul's sexual interest far enough to see where the line must be drawn."

[40] See *The Older Sophists: A Complete Translation by Several Hands of the Fragments in Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, edited by Rosamond Kent Sprague (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1972), pp. 50-54. For the contrast between persuasion and force, see Irwin (1985), pp. 62-3, and Bernard Williams, *Shame and Necessity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 154-8.

[41] This topic and its connection to Plato's views on philosophy and rhetoric is explored by Elizabeth Asmis, "*Psychagogia* in Plato's *Phaedrus*," *Illinois Classical Studies* 11 (1986), pp. 153-72.

[42] Socrates' allusion at 261D6-8 to the "Eleatic Palamedes," who is said to make the same things appear like and unlike, one and many, resting and moving, is considered by most scholars a reference to Zeno of Elea and his well-known logical paradoxes.

things that are relevantly related (262A5-C3). What seems too strong is the idea that in order to persuade a listener about, say, what justice is, one must know the truth about justice. However, Socrates need not be making this wildly implausible claim; he argues only that a speech must draw *some* truthful connection between things, such as justice and advantage, in order to be compelling.[43] It is difficult to imagine how a speaker not even so minimally guided by the truth could be effective at persuasion.

Socrates goes on to identify this cognitive ability with the method of division (263B6-C5), which he assigns to the dialectician (265D3 ff.), and which we see on full display in the *Sophist* and *Statesman*. But the *Phaedrus* adds a further wrinkle to this picture by claiming that the art of speech-making requires knowledge of souls. In a passage that recalls Gorgias's analogy above between medicine and rhetoric—as drugs are applied to the body, so speeches are applied to the soul—the issue at this stage concerns how to engage with others in discourse (270B1-9). Arguments are not produced in a vacuum for Plato, but directed at particular people with variously shaped souls and motivational outlooks. In addition to the cognitive ability of distinguishing how things are appropriately related, then, the dialectician must also know what sorts of speeches are appropriate to what sorts of souls. Similarly, the rhetorician who aims to induce a desired response in his audience must through subtle refinements know how to fashion a speech that effectively grips the listener.

Herein lies the problem for Plato with the rhetorician, who knows full well the nature of the soul, yet keeps this knowledge hidden (ἀποκρύπτονται, 271C2), preferring to flatter and manipulate an audience through alluring turns of phrase rather than encourage independent thought and learning. And this is where Socrates can draw a final contrast between dialectic and rhetoric. With his attention now turned to the soul of an audience, he begins to describe the way in which discourse should be received.[44] The topic is couched in terms of a well-known critique of writing (274B6 ff.) that is soon applied to speech-making in general, including presumably the kinds of speech-making referenced earlier in legal, political, and logical contexts. What sets writing apart for Plato is a feature that all discourse is susceptible to, namely, a tendency to be accepted uncritically on the authority of the producer. The issue here, accordingly, is not whether spoken discourse is superior to written discourse, since each of them can be dangerous when taken in isolation, but whether a discourse upholds the virtues of dialectic.[45]

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[43] As Thrasymachus asserts at least initially in the *Republic*, in defining justice as the advantage of the stronger. Similarly, Lysias's speech in the *Phaedrus* draws a fairly conventional connection between eros and appetite. Socrates' problem with the speech is not simply the narrow-mindedness of this view, but the fact that Lysias is not more straightforward about the connection (see 263D5-E2).

[44] This difference between the transmission of discourse by an author and its reception by an audience is also made by Nightingale (1995), pp. 138-48. For its importance to Plato's conception of philosophical discourse, see esp. pp. 162-71.

[45] Plato's critique of writing receives a famous critique of its own by Jacques Derrida in "Plato's Pharmacy" (translated by Barbara Johnson in *Dissemination*s [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981], pp. 61-171). Yet this reading seems to miss the point that Plato's criticism in the *Phaedrus* is not directed at writing as such, but any discourse not subjected to scrutiny by an audience. Thomas Szlezák draws on the critique with the *Seventh Letter* as the basis for an esoteric reading of the dialogues in *Platon und die Schriftlichkeit der Philosophie* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1985). Those who see Plato making less of a contrast between written and spoken discourse include Rowe (1986), pp. 207-8, Ferrari (1987), pp. 208-12, and Nightingale (1995), pp. 164-5.

What then are these virtues? The answer seems to lie in Plato's description of dialectic at 276A5 ff. as an "ensouled" (ἔμψυχον, 276A8) mode of discourse. This description is hardly illuminating taken by itself, for Plato omits telling us what it means for discourse to be endowed with soul. A clue may be found earlier in the *Phaedrus* in Socrates' second speech, where he defines the soul explicitly as "that which moves itself" (τὸ αὐτὸ ἑαυτὸ κινοῦν, 245E7-246A1).[46] The conception of rational eros he goes on to develop elaborates on this account of the soul, but the association of these features now in discourse allows Plato to distinguish dialectic more clearly from rhetoric. In speaking of dialectic as an ensouled activity, he comes to identify it with an independent principle of movement: a mode of discourse that relies on an individual's own capacities rather than the authority of another. It is the kind of discourse generated internally (ἔνδοθεν) rather than from outside (ἔξωθεν, 275A3-5), and "written with knowledge (μετ' ἐπιστήμης) in the soul of him who learns" (276A5-6) for the sake of inquiry and teaching (ἀνακρίσεως καὶ διδαχῆς) rather than mere persuasion (277E5-9).

Associating this independent movement of the soul with the compulsion of eros explains why Plato considers such eros an aspect of our rationality. For in contrast to the power of rhetoric that moves us as if by external force, the power of dialectic consists in its ability to rouse our critical faculties, urging us to tend only to those features that are the hallmark of good argument, such as the agreement of one's beliefs, the courage to be found wrong, and an openness to the views of others.[47] But it should be evident at this stage that such an approach to argument requires more than the cognitive ability of knowing how things are appropriately related and the knowledge of souls that Plato had previously identified as characteristic of dialectic; it also requires an appropriate motivational attitude in relation to others, on account of which the dialectician can be said to engage in a cultivation rather than an indoctrination of the soul of his interlocutor.

This portrait of the philosopher as a tiller of the soul has a precedent in Book IX of the *Republic*, where reason is compared to a farmer (γεωργός, 589B2) who cultivates those aspects of oneself that are temperate and ordered, making a community of the soul as a whole. The *Phaedrus* employs the same image, but with the philosopher now looking outward, cultivating souls other than his own.[48] Just as the intelligent farmer (ὁ νοῦν ἔχων γεωργός, 276B1-2) will plant seeds in fertile ground using the art of farming (τῇ γεωργικῇ . . . τέχνῃ, 276B6-7), Socrates claims, so the philosopher using the art of dialectic (τῇ διαλεκτικῇ τέχνῃ, 276E5-6) seeks a fitting soul to plant and sow with knowledge (φυτεύῃ τε καὶ σπείρῃ μετ' ἐπιστήμης, 276E6-7) discourses having their own seeds (σπέρμα, 277A1), which generate other discourses in other characters (ἤθεσι, 277A2) and provide those who share in this exchange as much happiness (εὐδαιμονεῖν, 277A3) as is possible for human beings.

The relationship described in this passage between the dialectician and his interlocutor is often figuratively compared to the erotic relationship described in the first part of the *Phaedrus* between

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[46] Cf. *Laws* 895E10 ff., where the soul is defined in almost exactly the same terms (τὸ ἑαυτὸ κινεῖν, 896A3). The *Phaedrus* also calls this the essence (οὐσίαν, 245E3) of soul. That which is moved from outside (ἔξωθεν), by contrast, is said to be "soulless" (ἄψυχον, 245E4-6).

[47] Socrates' self-description in the *Gorgias* is revealing here: "And what sort of person am I? One of those pleased to be refuted if anything I say is untrue, and pleased to refute should someone say anything untrue; and not more displeased to be refuted than to refute" (458A3-5).

[48] Compare this to the difference drawn by Irwin (1995) between intrapersonal and interpersonal propagation in the *Symposium* (pp. 306-11).

lover and beloved.[49] It has not as often been observed that the two parts of the dialogue are also joined here at the level of content. In the first part, Socrates emphasises repeatedly that there is no greater good for human beings than that found in erotic activity (244A6-8, 256B3-7; cf. 266A6-B1). In the passage above, he is no less emphatic in stating that those who engage in dialectic correctly for the sake of mutual benefit and learning are granted the highest human good (εὐδαιμονεῖν, 277A3). Both kinds of activity are said to result in our flourishing, so we should presume that there is some connection to be drawn between them. Plato does not make their connection explicit, although by focusing on the role that eros plays in dialectic, we can see how they may be brought together.

As other commentators have argued, it is essential for Plato that the philosopher be suitably motivated in engaging with others by looking to educate rather than simply impose his convictions on an audience.[50] This sort of motivation is erotic in the sense that I have suggested, because it is directed towards that part of the soul that's rational: the part capable of thinking and asking questions for itself. The dialectician hopes to effect a transformation in his interlocutor, not by promulgating particular beliefs or accepted wisdom, but by challenging him to examine seriously those arguments that trumpet the authority of expertise and convention, to participate in a process of inquiry that permits an internal distance and creates a space in which he can generate thoughts that he may call his own concerning what's just, and beautiful, and good (278A2-B4; cf. 252D1-E5).

What results is a collaborative activity between partners rather than the unilateral force exerted by the rhetorician, such that the dialectician can regard those discourses arising in others as "brothers" (ἀδελφοί, 278B1) of his own; but in order to engage in this activity productively, Plato expects a sort of bilateral compulsion from both partners in their common pursuit of the forms. The motivation, that is to say, must be reciprocal.[51] This would be a genuine leading of the soul through philosophical inquiry and argument, as opposed to rhetoric, which is concerned not so much with leading souls as it is with possessing them and holding an audience in thrall. At the same time, adding a motivational component to the practice of dialectic clearly raises the standards for what counts as "good argument." This is important to Plato since, as I have claimed in earlier chapters, the practice of dialectic requires a metaphysical picture populated by forms, and in order to explain our commitment to this practice, he needs to explain our commitment to the forms. Yet it is also important because, as we have seen now, in order to make possible the productive engagement with others that dialectic requires, Plato needs to explain how this engagement demands an appropriate attitude towards others on the part of the dialectician, with a corresponding attitude on the part of his interlocutor. In this way, the *Phaedrus* reveals how the proper object of concern for the rational part of the soul should be the good of others as well as the world of forms.

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[49] For this point, see R. Hackforth, *Plato's Phaedrus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952), p. 164, Rowe (1986), p. 212, and Ferrari (1987), pp. 222-32.

[50] See in particular the debate between C.J. Rowe and Malcolm Heath in *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 7 (1989), pp. 151-91. Philosophical discourse is distinguished, as Rowe puts it, by "the right *intention* on the author's part: he must compose his *logos* with the *intention* of teaching (rather than merely persuading); that is, of initiating or continuing the two-way process of communication on which teaching depends (or which teaching is)" (p. 183). Cf. Nightingale (1995), p. 165-6, who adds the condition that the philosopher be suitably related to his own discourse by subjecting the arguments within himself to scrutiny.

[51] In the chariot allegory of Socrates' second speech, this reciprocity is prefigured in the "counter-love" (ἀντέρωτα, 255E1) of the beloved.

7. The Song of Dialectic

To conclude, let us circle back to the questions with which I started this chapter. We began with a puzzle in Plato's metaphysics concerning the way in which the forms might be attributed with value: "to know the connection between Beauty and Truth," as Wilde put it, "and the place of Beauty in the moral and intellectual order of the Kosmos." The puzzle was how to reconcile the reality of the forms in this evaluative sense with the more straightforward cognitive sense in which Plato usually speaks of the forms. For it's one thing to regard forms of justice, beauty, and goodness as valuable, but what about so-called "bad forms," like injustice, ugliness, and evil? As Vlastos remarks, to speak of forms such as these as value-laden seems to border on incoherence.

When Plato talks about the forms in a value-laden sense, it is almost always in terms of our desire for them. In particular, he situates their influence in an aspect of our rationality: a response he describes as erotic. This led us to some issues in his moral psychology, where I argued against a standard view of eros modelled on emptiness and possession. I claimed instead that Plato's conception of rational eros is better understood as a kind of rational compulsion—the kind we experience in being moved by a good argument—and it is here in terms of their compelling effect on us that the forms should be attributed with value. This explains how even bad forms may be seen as value-laden. They are valuable insofar as they too, no less than their positive counterparts, figure in "What is F?" questions and so compel us in philosophical inquiry and argument.

On this view, the value of the forms can be retained in their functional capacity as objects of knowledge and inquiry. For even in Book VI of the *Republic*, where we find Plato's most powerful depiction of the philosopher's love of forms, it's in the Socratic question concerning the "what is it" of each thing (ὃ ἔστιν ἑκάστου, 490B3) that he locates their influence, rather than some ineffable contact with the supernatural. Such a reading preserves the status of the forms as objects of value without having to regard them with Vlastos as objects of mystical experience.

Focusing on this conative side to our rational nature also helps answer the two problems I raised for Plato's moral psychology in the *Republic*. The account of the good life he proposes in that dialogue, which is the life of justice, requires the proper functioning of reason, and Plato goes on to argue that the best use of reason lies in the pursuit of knowledge through dialectic (511B3-D5; 531D7-533E2). He holds in addition that the practice of dialectic demands a certain affective response to the forms, but he does not make clear why this response has its provenance in the rational part of the soul rather than spirit or appetite, nor why it should matter for a life governed by reason.

The idea that dialectic demands a certain sort of character should be familiar to us from our study of the *Theaetetus* and *Sophist*. Plato does not provide a positive account of the soul in these dialogues, but he does imply negatively that some states of soul make dialectic impracticable. In the *Theaetetus*, for example, Theodorus complains that the flux theorists lack stability not only in their arguments, but in their own souls (180B1). This is an ethical objection that points to a particular character flaw in these figures—a sort of psychological discord that leaves them unwilling or unable to participate in rational inquiry. Likewise in the *Sophist*, the Visitor criticises the late-learners as "unmusical" (ἀμούσου) and "unphilosophical" (259E2) for attempting to dissociate the forms from one another.

We may contrast these criticisms with the life of justice that Plato depicts in the *Republic*, where the three parts of the soul are ordered "like three limiting notes on a scale: high, low, and middle" (443D5-7). But the *Republic* does not elaborate much further on what this well-tuned state of soul

looks like. The *Phaedrus* provides a better portrait of the soul in this regard by clarifying how the proper functioning of reason involves not just the ability to distinguish how the forms are related, but a particular motivational outlook. This is an outlook associated with the compulsion of eros, although a compulsion that differs from the sort that might affect other parts of the soul; it is rational in the sense that it issues from reason's own resources rather than from desires with their origin outside oneself, such as a longing for the attention of others or the indulgence of appetite, and it is guided by the truth of things rather than how things merely appear. Instead of shaping the world to fit one's desires, such an outlook requires shaping one's desires to fit the world.

This analysis of eros helps explain the intense kinship that Plato draws in the *Republic* between the rational part of the soul and the forms, such that the philosopher, by consorting with what is ordered and divine (ὁμιλῶν κόσμιός τε καὶ θεῖος), becomes divine and ordered himself (500C9-D1). But it also explains how the proper functioning of reason requires a concern for others, and hence how the demands of the good life are continuous for Plato with the demands of justice. This was the second problem I raised with the moral psychology of the *Republic*: the problem of egoism.[52] Taken by itself, an account of justice as psychic harmony seems entirely self-regarding and leaves it open why the philosopher should feel any concern for others. A robust conception of love or eros answers this challenge, however, allowing Plato to speak of the philosopher as a "craftsman" (δημιουργόν, 500D7) of justice and civic virtue, on account of "some compulsion arising within him" (τις . . . αὐτῷ ἀνάγκη γένηται, 500D4) to not only shape himself, but to put into practice what he sees in the forms in the characters (ἤθη, 500D5) of other human beings. Significantly, Plato takes such compulsion to be generated internally rather than forced, and in this respect he suggests that the philosopher's love of others is coextensive with his love of forms.[53]

Such a view, I believe, goes some way towards answering a further challenge to Plato's ethics posed by Martha Nussbaum: the problem of otherworldliness. For there's a sense in which Plato is insulated from the charge of egoism. His approach to ethics depends on a metaphysical picture that gives the forms pride of place in ethical inquiry. But by deflecting the charge of egoism, his position now seems to commend an indifference to human affairs altogether. According to this view, "ethical norms are what they are quite independently of human beings, human ways of life, human desires. Any connection between our interests and the true good is, then, purely contingent. The good is out there; indeed, it has always been out there, even before we began to exist. And no wishing of ours, however profound or urgent, can make it otherwise. It is not made for us, nor are we made for it."[54] In contrast to this approach to ethical inquiry, Nussbaum advocates a more

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[52] For a fuller discussion of this objection, see Kraut (1973) and Irwin (1995), pp. 256-61.

[53] The importance of the philosopher's love of others in the *Republic* and its connection to Plato's political theory is discussed in more detail by Kraut (1973), pp. 336-43.

[54] Martha Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 17. Nussbaum adds in a note that this may well be an exaggeration of Plato's view, especially when compared to dialogues such as the *Timaeus*, which implies a stronger connection between the structure of the human soul and the structure of the forms. Her point is rather that this is a way in which Plato was read by later Hellenistic philosophers, who are the primary focus of her study. Still, as she remarks, it is a powerful view of ethical inquiry that is often associated with Plato, and her use of the chariot allegory in the *Phaedrus* to illustrate this approach makes it all the more necessary to offer a reading of the dialogue that defends Plato from the charge of indifference.

therapeutic model of philosophy that situates human concerns at the centre of ethical theory and according to which "ethical truth is not independent of what human beings deeply wish, need, and (at some level) desire."[55]

I've offered a reading of Plato in this chapter that does not imply an indifference to human affairs. On the contrary, he locates our attachment to the forms in a necessary feature of our rationality, where they retain their objective status while remaining central to our deepest concerns.[56] Moreover, we have seen how the model of philosophy Plato advocates in the *Phaedrus* involves both a cultivation of oneself and a cultivation of others. Two aspects of dialectic emerge as salient here. On the one hand, the dialectician's commitment to truth involves standing in a proper relation to the forms. Yet dialectic is also a shared activity that involves the patient and systematic examination of people's beliefs through a reasoned exchange of arguments. The dialectician attends in this case to the rational part of others, but not only that part; he devotes himself to reason because of its role in the human good, though he remains alert to the forces that influence people and shape their characters. And with this knowledge of souls, he applies different arguments to different characters, seeking to promote that state of soul in his interlocutors which is most harmonious.

This is what it means to produce virtue in others, for the philosopher's fate in the *Phaedrus* is to care about virtue in all its guises, in forms and in souls, with the result that he can be identified as a "lover of the beautiful" (φιλοκάλου), but also as "someone musical (μουσικοῦ) and erotic (ἐρωτικοῦ)" (248D3-4). That Plato often presents Socrates disabusing his interlocutors of their convictions and pointing out inconsistencies in their beliefs does no discredit to this model of philosophy as long as it remains motivated by the truth of things. Nor does it detract from a more positive approach towards argument under the right conditions—an approach Plato describes ultimately as a service (θεραπείαν, 255A1) that the philosophical lover provides his beloved.[57]

A final worry we may have here concerns how Plato's conception of eros can justify a more partial notion of love. For we typically love others, not for the means they provide in pursuing abstract ideals of beauty and truth, but for the beauty they themselves have as individuals.[58] My focus has been on understanding the philosopher's love of forms on its own terms, but can the view that I have proposed do justice to this feature of our emotional lives? I think it can, and in this regard it offers a further advance on the standard view of Plato's conception of eros. According to that view, our love of forms should be modelled on our love of others. But this seems to get the order of explanation backwards. We should consider instead how our love of others might be modelled on our love of forms.

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[55] Nussbaum (1994), p. 23.

[56] Here I follow Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), for whom "[l]ove is the general name of the quality of attachment and it is capable of infinite degradation and is the source of our greatest errors; but when it is even partially refined it is the energy and passion of the soul in its search for Good, the force that joins us to Good and joins us to the world through Good" (p. 104).

[57] Compare this to the "therapeutic argument" that Nussbaum (1994) finds in the Hellenistic philosophers, and contrast it to *Protagoras* 312B7-C2, where Socrates admonishes Hippocrates for entrusting the guidance of his soul to the service (θεραπεῦσαι, 312C1) of a sophist when he does not know what a sophist is.

[58] This is an objection to Platonic love made by Vlastos (1981), pp. 3-34. For a defence, see Anthony Price, *Love and Friendship in Plato and Aristotle* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), pp. 15-54.

On the standard reading, all eros is simply desire or appetite and seeks the possession of its object, but a problem with this view, we observed, was that it seemed to deprive the loved object of independent value by confining it to the role of a satisfaction provider: love requited is death. The reading that I've suggested avoids this problem, however, since it no longer locates the value of the loved object in its capacity to fulfill a lack. A beautiful argument may compel us even after we have explored all its intricacies. Similarly, our love of others may remain compelling long after growing accustomed to their presence and the emptiness in us is filled. Love requited need not be death. What we recognise in others once our love is refined is their worth as independent sources of value, with fathomless depths to plumb. That this involves effort on our parts should come as no surprise, since this is the same kind of compulsion that Plato believes we have for the forms. Rational eros, like all love deserving of the name, requires hard work. And in the case of our love of the forms, that is the work of philosophy.

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