

FALSE STATEMENT IN THE *SOPHISTES*

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Plato's analysis of false statement in the *Sophistes* has been the subject of so much discussion in recent years that it might well be regarded as an exhausted theme,¹ one of those themes that should be laid *ad acta* for a while. If however, as I believe, the discussion has been based in part on an incorrect appreciation of what Plato said, a reexamination may be warranted. I shall limit myself to showing what are the

¹ In an article entitled "Theaitetos fliegt" (*Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 48 [1966] 113-52) K. Lorenz and J. Mittelstrass offer a solution to the problems of *Soph.* 251D-263D. If we are to assume that the passage is meant to yield logical theory, then theirs seems to me a reasonable solution and an improvement on preceding ones. They first survey and criticize recent discussions, pp. 113-28. They append (151-52) a short bibliography of these discussions, to which we can now add the essays of Ryle and Vlastos in *New Essays in Plato and Aristotle*, ed. R. Bambrough (London 1965) and of Ackrill and Anscombe in *The Monist* 50.3 (July 1966) 383-420. For interpretation of 259E5 see A. L. Peck, *CQ* 2 (1952) 57-60.

In the discussion by Lorenz and Mittelstrass, the text of the *Sophistes* is sometimes made to yield a meaning it does not warrant:

(1) ὁ λόγος γέγονεν ἡμῖν means "Rede entsteht" (128) and cannot be construed "die Rede wird wahr oder falsch gemacht" (134, 137). But γέγονε means "has come to be and is," and so we may translate "the weaving together of *eidē* is the *genesis* of statement." So the conflict they envisage 129 does not arise, and their reconstruction does not suffer.

(2) It seems excessive to suggest that quantifiers are introduced by the use of genitive and dative after κοινωνεῖν.

(3) *Ideenverflechtung* (130 and *passim*) is misleading. Plato can hardly have meant to suggest that every subject of a sentence has idea status. This would give us ideas to which Platonists do not subscribe. And that every subject-term has reference to an *idea* requires proof.

(4) "Seiendes" is throughout the translation for ὄντα. It seems doubtful that it always has existential import. "Seiendes aussagen wie es nicht ist" for τὸ μὴ ὄν λέγειν is misleading. M. Frede, *Prädikation und Existenzaussage* (Göttingen 1967) 48-49, argues, to me convincingly, that Plato does *not* distinguish existential use and copula.

All of these however are merely blemishes and not flaws in the logical reconstruction. It fails because it imposes on the text an arbitrary, logically oriented interpretation.

moves he makes, and how he reaches the conclusion he does reach. The question whether Plato's doctrine is tenable, in whole or in part, in terms of modern logic is beyond the scope of this study.

The discussion of false statement falls into five parts, each part corresponding to a move in the development of the thesis. It will be convenient to conduct our discussion conforming to these divisions:

1. 256DII-258C7: Not-being and its two kinds.
2. 258C7-260AI: Summing up against Parmenides.
3. 260AI-261C6: The problem of statement (*logos*).
4. 261C7-263AI: Basic doctrine of meaning and statement.
5. 263AI-263D5: Test case: "Theaetetus flies" etc.

It must be remembered throughout that Plato is single-mindedly pursuing his purpose, which is to show that false statement as $\tau\omicron\delta\ \mu\eta\ \delta\upsilon\ \lambda\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\epsilon\upsilon\iota\nu$ is possible; and further that this phrase means: (a) in the Parmenidean sense, (if anything) nothing relevant to our inquiry, (b) in a modified sense, to say *what is not* as *what is other than* (or different from) X, and (c) to make a false statement. This last sense is for Plato's purpose the important one. He will use it to differentiate between the activities of the sophist and the philosopher, and to justify his relegating the sophist to the class of purveyors of false statement. It must also be remembered that, here as elsewhere, Plato for all his frequent prolixity excludes from his argument what he does not consider essential to it. In the present instance he attempts no general logical doctrine.

1. 256DII-258C7: NOT-BEING AND ITS TWO KINDS

The E. V. (Eleatic Visitor) sums up so far. In the noetic order there is a universal principle of identity enabling us to pronounce judgments of identity in respect of all kinds² (entities/ideas/forms): and likewise

² I use the term "kind" as if in quotes, to temporize among the several possible meanings of $\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\nu\omicron\varsigma$ and $\epsilon\iota\delta\omicron\varsigma$, and especially for the "greatest kinds." It is a misleading translation because it suggests the kinds or classes of diaeresis, and one-over-many relations. I can discover no better term. "Idea" and "form" are both pre-empted by the hypostasized concepts of a theory of ideas, "genus" and "species" by diaeresis. In the metaphysical "core" of the *Sophistes* Plato is chiefly concerned with the inter-relations of ideas/concepts, and these are of more than one variety. I hope that "kind" may be acceptable as a noncommittal, portmanteau designation. Where a special sense of importance for my argument is implied I seek to point it out.

there is a principle of difference having as its extension the totality of existents and enabling us to distinguish each entity from all other entities. This *thateron*, or difference, is a member of the small class of “greatest kinds” or very important kinds. It is a transdepartmental or, if you will, a formal concept, its function being that of a vowel-like tie operating between ideas/concepts as vowels operate between consonants to form syllables. We say of each and every entity that it is *not*—in the sense that it is *other than*—all other entities; and so we speak of a kind “not-being,” another name for which is *thateron*, other-than, or difference. In practice *thateron* is used as a rule for the universal principle, $\mu\eta\ \delta\upsilon\nu$ being reserved for its secondary form. (For this $\mu\eta\ \delta\upsilon\nu$ I use “not-being” to distinguish it, as it is not distinguished in Greek but must be in English, from Parmenidean “non-being”).

The E. V. then (257B1), indicating only the fact of transition but not the new theme, embarks on a discussion of not-being in statements. This yields a secondary sense of $\mu\eta\ \delta\upsilon\nu$. As applied to single entities (in statements) the universally-operating principle *thateron* is “fractioned” or “breaks down” into a not-being that marks off the entity in question from a range of other entities, and not *all* other entities, as was the case for the universal principle. The word for “is fractioned” or “breaks down” is *κερματίζειν* (257C6, 258D8). It is implied also by *ἀφορισθέν* or “marked off” (257C1, E2) and by *μέρος* (C10), *μορία* (D4) “part.” *Κέρμα* is a piece cut off from a whole, and *κερματίζειν* (see Diès, *Lexique* s.v.) “to cut up into pieces.” The most frequent concrete use is “to make change,” *κέρμα* being a small copper coin. So universal difference is envisaged as applicable to particular entities in a fractioned form, this occurring when we make statements about them, saying that they *are not* (X). Our denial that some entity is X is not tantamount to an assertion that it is some opposite of X, but only that it is *other than* X, X being the predicable following the “*is not*” or “*is other than*,” or better, the thing to which X refers (C1-2).³

³ G. E. M. Anscombe’s diptych (*Monist* 50 [1966] 403) may imply some such interpretation as I offer. But my image would be three-dimensional, something like the aviary, but with the person who catches and combines the volatile inhabitants of that noetic world himself inside. Other commentators anticipate in part, but I have not

been able to discover one who interprets throughout on the basis of two types of $\mu\eta\acute{o}\nu$, obvious as such a reading might seem. It is basic to my interpretation here.

The section 257B1–258C6 is crucial. Plato has been at pains to achieve precision in expressing and explaining what he has to say, as is shown especially B9–C2. But commentators, preoccupied as they often are with Aristotelian logic or with a preconceived theory of ideas, are unwilling to follow him. F. M. Cornford, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge* (London 1957) 290, says: "The not-beautiful is the collective name for all the Forms there are, other than the single Form, 'Beautiful'." A. E. Taylor, *Plato: The Man and His Work* (London 1949), explains in a footnote (165) but fails to exploit (61). He criticizes Burnet (*Greek Philosophy* I [London 1914] 288), but Burnet is much nearer to the mark. In order to clarify I append a paraphrase of the section: "A further point. When we use 'is not' in statements we are not asserting some opposite of 'is' but only something *other than* (what a statement in 'is' would have asserted). For example, when we say of something that it is not large we do not thereby assert that it is (the opposite of large, viz.) small, but perhaps only that it is of medium size. In negating a statement we are not asserting its contrary. When we prefix a 'not' or 'non-' to a predicate we signify thereby a predicate other than the predicate negated, or—better—other than the referent signified by the word following the negative not/non.

"A further consideration (257C4). Difference (*thateron*) has a fractioned nature. Just as knowledge breaks down into departments of knowledge each having a name of its own (the sciences), so there is a single notion 'Difference' (of universal application), which also breaks down into parts. As an example of partial application, we can state of something that it is beautiful. We can also set over against this assertion one asserting that it is not beautiful (and not-beautiful is an instance of partial or fractioned difference). Here we do not assert of something that it is different from all other things, universally. We affirm that it is other than beautiful. What we are doing (E2) is to distinguish within one kind or class or range a part which we mark off and then oppose to some one entity within the range. Not-beautiful is the name for a part of the range which includes the beautiful, but a part distinguished from and opposed to the beautiful, and going by the name 'not beautiful.' That is, beautiful is one of a range of predicates (ugly, pretty, passable, etc.). When we say of something that it is not beautiful, we concede that any of the predicates within the range *may* be applicable, with the single exception of 'beautiful.'

"Now (257E6) if we say of the beautiful that it is an existent concept, we must make the same assertion of the group of incompatible predicates that we oppose to it when we make the contradictory assertion that it is not beautiful. (This should not surprise us because) we say that difference (*thateron*) is an entity. So its parts must be entities too. This fractioned difference operative in contradictory statements is the not-being we have been seeking. It will enable us to explain false statement, and so cope with that merchant of false statement, the sophist."

This paraphrase presents fairly what Plato is saying, but it does so in terminology foreign to him, and so perhaps misrepresents the *way* in which he is thinking of logical process. In the *Timaeus* (34A–B, 37C–D) he describes the motions of the world soul, how its circles of identity and difference pronounce universal judgments in those kinds, and how partial judgments are made in the categories. He further describes (43B–44B) the motions of the human soul, and its perturbations in judgment. To these descriptions Aristotle has reference in the *De anima* (406B26–407B11). His criticisms of Plato are directed specifically to problems of judgment. How should Plato's soul enable us to make the sort of judgments we do in fact make? How are his "fractioned" judgments possible (407A11–18)?

So we do not have an opposite, but we do have what is called an *antithesis* (257D7, E3, E6, 258B1, E1, and see 259B8). Its nature is illustrated 258B8. When we say of something that it is not large, our denial of its largeness does not assert smallness. It may just as well mean "equal in size." So when we say of something that it is "not beautiful" (257D10) we are taking a part of difference (C10) and designating it "not-beautiful." The "not-beautiful" is separated off from some one class or kind (namely beauty) and opposed to a single kind (namely beauty) (257E2-4). When we say that something is not large we are not asserting that it is large's opposite small. We are implying the applicability of some predicate in the same incompatibility-range as small,⁴ but a predicate other than large. When we say "not-large" we are not contemplating predicates such as "two cubits long" or "sitting" but only predicates in the "large" range.

Now if for the *thateron* of universal extension we could claim existence as an entity or kind, so also for its parts of limited extension we can claim that they are entities.⁵ They are οὐδὲν ἦττον . . . αὐτοῦ τοῦ ὄντος οὐσία (258B2).

Are problems of *being* raised here?⁶ Is it not rather probable that Plato, with the central problem of his dialogue in mind, is suggesting

I would suggest that Plato in the *Sophistes* is thinking not in terms of logical process, but in terms of the *Timaeus*' motions of soul. This would not of course prevent him from giving a correct account of logical process. The psychogony is designed to explain such process, and was so understood by Proclus, *In Tim.* 2.158-59 (Diehl.) Proclus, with reference to the *Sophistes*, says (2.159.2-3) "*Thateron* when broken down is not-being."

⁴ P. F. Strawson, *Introduction to Logical Theory* (London 1952) 6: "When we apply a predicate to something, we implicitly exclude from application to that thing the predicates which lie outside the boundaries of the predicate we apply, but in the same incompatibility range."

⁵ There has been much discussion, with reference to the "core" of the *Sophistes*, of the uses of the verb "to be" as existential, copula, and identity sign. It is a real and interesting problem whether Plato distinguished between these uses consciously, i.e. whether he makes, or begins to make, a logical appraisal of their differences. For my purposes, however, this problem is not a relevant one. If he uses the terms without ambiguity or confusion of meaning, that suffices for his objective. In the beginning there may be some not unusual wavering between the notions of existence and reality, but not such as to render the argument invalid. For the problem see G. Vlastos, in *New Essays on Plato and Aristotle*, ed. R. Bambrough (London 1965) 1-9; C. H. Kahn, "The Greek Verb 'To Be' and the Concept of Being," *Foundation of Language* 2 (1966) 249-54, 260-62; and Frede (above, note 1), with bibliography.

⁶ J. M. E. Moravcsik, "Being and Meaning in the *Sophist*," *Acta Philosophica*

that just as we can say of someone $\tau\acute{o}\ \delta\acute{\nu}\ \lambda\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\epsilon\iota$, so also we can say $\tau\acute{o}\ \mu\eta\ \delta\acute{\nu}\ \lambda\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\epsilon\iota$. That is, statements of non-identity and the predication of not-X are just as valid a form of statement as their positive counterparts. It is surprising that Plato does not feel obliged to point out the ambiguity of $\tau\acute{o}\ \mu\eta\ \delta\acute{\nu}\ \lambda\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\epsilon\iota\upsilon$. He obviously saw that not all negations were false, or he would have concluded his inquiry here. We shall see that he uses $\mu\eta\ \delta\acute{\nu}$ in two distinct senses in his final solution.⁷ So far he had offered a solution of the problem of negative predicate terms of the form "not-large." (He does not contemplate predicates in the category of substance, nor the negation of subject terms.)

Fennica 14 (1962) 69–72, argues for negative forms. If my solution is accepted, then we are not compelled to envisage ideas of negatives. Aristotle, *Metaph.* 990B13 denies that Platonists believed in ideas of negatives. The relevant passage is 257C–258C. There it is said that *thateron* is a unity consisting of parts (257C). A part of *thateron* (contradictorily) opposed to beauty (D7), as *other than* beauty itself (D11), is said to be "not-beautiful." So not-beautiful is something separated off from a kind (*thateron*) and opposed to another kind (beauty) (E2–4).

This $\mu\eta\ \kappa\alpha\lambda\acute{o}\nu$ is itself an existent ($\delta\acute{\nu}$) (E10), and so also is the *antithesis* of a part of *thateron* and $\delta\acute{\nu}$, which is $\mu\eta\ \delta\acute{\nu}$ (258B1). This $\mu\eta\ \kappa\alpha\lambda\acute{o}\nu$ is, like $\mu\eta\ \delta\acute{\nu}$, an existent. It is one kind or idea ($\epsilon\acute{\iota}\delta\omicron\varsigma$) among the many ideas. Here we note:

- (1) That the E. V. argues from $\mu\eta\ \kappa\alpha\lambda\acute{o}\nu$ to $\mu\eta\ \delta\acute{\nu}$ and not vice-versa.
- (2) That $\mu\eta\ \delta\acute{\nu}$ is said to be an $\epsilon\acute{\iota}\delta\omicron\varsigma$ but not necessarily $\mu\eta\ \kappa\alpha\lambda\acute{o}\nu$.

So what $\mu\eta\ \kappa\alpha\lambda\acute{o}\nu$ is is explained at 257D10. We take any "nature," say beauty, and we oppose it to a fractioned *thateron* or a contiguous area of *other than* (beauty). To this complex, dependent on but *other than* beauty, we give the name "not-beautiful." It seems to me an unlikely candidate for idea status.

⁷ In recent years much has been made of the fact that it is not always present to Plato's mind that $\tau\acute{o}\ \delta\acute{\nu}$ is a $\pi\lambda\epsilon\omicron\nu\alpha\chi\acute{\omega}\varsigma\ \lambda\epsilon\gamma\acute{o}\mu\epsilon\upsilon\omicron\nu$, and it is true that we cannot always be confident how we should translate $\tau\acute{o}\ \delta\acute{\nu}$. Problems of existence play a small role in the *Sophistes*. Plato nowhere casts doubt on the existence of physical particulars, and cannot in that sense be said to have a gradational ontology. That he held a degrees-of-reality theory in the sense that Vlastos has made current there can be little doubt. But in our section of the *Sophistes* Plato is interested in the interrelation of ideas, and not in their ontological status. His solution of the problem of false statement is made to hinge on the possibility of certain kinds of predication, and not on the reality of referents.

Most English commentators have been brought up on Cornford's Theory of Forms and have cut their teeth on it. Even when they appreciate its problems, some appear still to believe that Plato must have held a theory of ideas on Cornfordian lines. W. G. Runciman, *Plato's Later Epistemology* (Cambridge 1962) 100–4, raises many and subtle problems in connection with the present argument, to which I should reply that Difference, a kind or form if you like, is in the *Timaeus* a soul constituent enabling judgments of difference. The applications of its $\mu\epsilon\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{\alpha}$ parts (which as such cannot be ideas even as species of a genus) occur when we make judgments, predicating e.g. $\mu\eta\ \kappa\alpha\lambda\acute{o}\nu$ (either of ideas or of particulars). This I shall argue in more detail elsewhere (*Phoenix*, Spring 1969).

2. 258C7-260A1: SUMMING-UP AGAINST PARMENIDES

This section begins by quoting Parmenides' veto on inquiries into non-being, the verses with which the investigation into false statement began (237A). The E. V. claims to have clarified not false statement but $\mu\eta\ \delta\upsilon\nu$. We have shown, he says (258E6), that it is not the opposite of being, but a kind other than being which "breaks down" and is applied to all entities in their relations with one another. "That part of it which is opposed to each entity" we call in the truest sense not-being. It is noteworthy here that it is not *thateron* itself but the negated predicate to which the E. V. applies the term not-being. He continues indeed by restating his whole theme: (a) that all kinds permit of mutual association, (b) that being and difference interpenetrate all kinds and one another, and (c) that in virtue of this penetration being itself and all entities "share in not-being" (in that they may be said to be not-X) and conversely *thateron* qua not-being and all its parts share in being. This doctrine is not only of ontological importance. It puts a stop to eristical discussions in which, by means of a Parmenidean denial of non-being, identity is denied, difference is ignored, and opposite predicates are attached without regard to the principles we have now shown to obtain (259D). To argue in the eristical way, the E. V. claims, is quite barbarous and would put an end to philosophical discourse, which comes to pass "through the mutual (or two-way) weaving together of kinds" (259E4-6).

In this section Plato makes large claims, and justifiable ones, for the surmounting of the Parmenidean obstacle and an advance to a theory of not-being. He also makes it plain that of primary importance, at least for his present purpose, is not-being as it breaks down into negated predicates in statements.

3. 260A1-261C6: THE PROBLEM OF STATEMENT ("LOGOS")

The transition from the problem of negative predicates to that of false statement, however smooth stylistically, is made by a leap whose justification is not immediately obvious. How opportune it was, says the E. V., that we established the possibility of mutual association against the opposition of the eristics (260A1-3). For such mutual association of kinds gives rise to the statement (259E5-6), and a statement itself is a kind (260A5). We may therefore ask of *logos*, as of

any other kind, into what associations it can enter; and in particular we may ask if it enters into association with $\mu\eta\ \delta\upsilon\nu$ (260B10). For if it does, then we may say of any statement S that "S is (true)," and "S is *not* (true)."

If, continues the E. V. (260B13), not-being does not mix with judgment and statement, then all statements necessarily are true. If it does mix, then you have false judgment and false statement. For to believe or to state what is not ($\tau\acute{\alpha}\ \mu\eta\ \delta\upsilon\nu\tau\alpha\ \lambda\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\epsilon\iota\nu$) is falsehood as occurring in judgments and statements. This is a reiteration of the theme problem: is false statement—and so sophistry—possible? The sophist is now supposed to concede that there is a not-being which can appear in the predicate of statements. What he is made to deny is that we can say of statement as a kind and a whole that it *is not* in the sense that it is false. It is recognized that "true" and "false" qualify statements as wholes. The sophist allows that there can be true statements, even with negative predicates. He disallows false statements. It is suggested that judgments (*doxa*) are parallel to statements, though this is not justified until later (263D–264B).

In this section Plato recognizes that only a statement can be true or false, and that we must therefore inquire into the nature of statement.

4. 261C7–263A1: BASIC DOCTRINE OF STATEMENT

In this section it must be remembered that it is Plato's aim to establish the possibility of false statement. It is no part of his purpose, and would be quite foreign to his method, to elaborate a doctrine of meaning and statement (though he offers a working definition, 261D–262A). If he can show that one type of false statement is possible, then the sophist's thesis of impossibility is refuted (and someone else may work out details of the theory). He does not of course doubt (and no more does the sophist) that false statement is in fact possible. He must show *how* it is possible if there is to be a real line of demarcation between philosophic or scientific discourse and all other discourse.

The first move of the E. V. is to offer as an analogy for the association of words that all-purpose model of letters in syllables that was used earlier (253A) to illustrate the association of kinds by means of trans-departmental or vowel kinds. But the only common feature in the

two uses of the analogy is that each produces a "joining-together" or *συναρμόττειν*. As letters when properly joined together in a syllable produce a phonetic unit, so words correctly joined together produce a unit of meaningful statement.

Now these words that we fit together in a statement are of two principal kinds, each of them being a vocal sign exhibiting or referring to those things (referents, entities, realities) for which they are symbols. One of these kinds is called *onoma*, the other *rhêma*. *Rhêma* is the vocal symbol having reference to actions (262A3). It would appear that Plato would have been willing to extend this to the passive voice and to the copula as part of a predicate (262C3, C8, D2-3). The symbol having reference to the agent performing these actions is known as *onoma*. Here we can translate neither "noun-verb" nor "subject-predicate." Plato's terms refer to the two essential parts of a statement, that having reference to its agent and that specifying the action performed by the agent. The E. V. points out that neither a series of agent-words nor a series of action-words in themselves amount to a statement (C2). You must "mix" agent-word and action-word (C5). Then and only then, "verbal symbols uttered one after another and having reference (to their referents) fit together" and "achieve something" (D4). This something is called a *συνπλοκή*, and though Plato was no doubt aware of its metaphor (D4), for him (*Theat.* 202B) as for Aristotle (Bonitz, *Index* s.v.) it had become a term describing the association of noun and verb in a statement.

The E. V. then moves on to give an example of "primary and minimum statement," a qualification to which he apparently attaches importance as he repeats it (C6 and C9). It is only "primary and minimum statements" that he instances and considers, and he formally concludes his discussion of the problem as follows: "Just as things (i.e. our referents) in some cases fit together with one another and in others not, so some of the symbols used in speech do not fit, but those which fit achieve a statement" (D8-E1). It is not said, but it is implied (D2-4), that an association in reality of agent and action is prior to the association of agent-word and action-word in statement, and determines their fit. That Plato, with his ontological bias, does not contemplate statements which do *not* reflect an association possible in reality need not surprise us.

The E. V. then adds two important footnotes to his exposition. First, a statement must be about something or someone (E6-7). Every agent-component must have a referent. Secondly (E9), every statement must have a quality. By this he means (263B2-9) true or false (and so the principle of bivalence is taken to be axiomatic).

In this section, we are given such primary and minimum considerations of the nature of the statement as Plato finds needful for his purpose. He could no doubt assume in his readers and hearers a background of logical inquiry. We know that both the Megarians and Aristotle were actively pursuing logical inquiries at the time. Plato's object is not to offer any theory of meaning, but only to secure acceptance of the minimum doctrine necessary for his conclusion.

5. 263A1-D5: TEST CASES

This brief section Plato obviously thought to be perspicuous, given the background of theory he had built up. Many of its difficulties are difficulties we create because we expect it to do more than Plato intends. But some problems remain. I will begin by stating what I think Plato to mean—what he thinks the moves of the E. V. achieve.

The E. V. begins by offering the statement "Theaetetus sits." This statement is offered as obviously true—we see him sitting—and as having a subject or agent-component clearly referring to its referent (A5). He then offers a second statement: "Theaetetus flies." A parenthesis adds that this is the same Theaetetus, here and now. The agent-component in both statements refers to the same person. Thereupon it is conceded that of this pair of statements the first is true, the second false. The two statements when made in relation are inconsistent. Why? The first states "the realities/facts as they are concerning you" (B4-5). The second is false. What makes it false?

In the first section of the discussion it was established that when we negate a predicate we exclude, as *other than* that predicate, not simply its opposite but a range of incompatibles. In the case of "sitting" one member of the range of incompatibles we denote as not-sitting is "flying." "Flying," like "walking" or "running," is one of a range of activities incompatible with sitting. If "sitting" correctly describes the activity of the agent named in the statement, that agent

cannot at the same time be performing another incompatible activity. So the agent-symbol and the activity-symbol cannot "fit" if "Theaetetus" and "sits" fit. So of the pair of statements if the one is true, the other must be false.

Why does Plato not use as his predicate term "not-sitting"? Probably because it merely negates. "Flying" is positively false, and is not merely inconsistent but an instance of deception (*ἀπάτη*, 260C6).

Is this what Plato alleges as his proof? The arguments he offers are brief and allusive, but, it seems to me, clear enough. He says of the second statement "Theaetetus flies" (1) that it is a *logos* or statement, and one of those in the shortest—and so most perspicuous—form (C1); (2) that it refers, as does the first, to Theaetetus; (3) that it states about him (in its predicate) things *other than* the things that are, as being the case. Further (4) he refers to the earlier discussion of negated predicates: "About each particular we maintained that there are many things that are, and many things that are not" (B11, cf. 256E1–257A6).

To sum up, the E. V. shows that "Theaetetus flies" is a statement which as a whole is inconsistent with another statement instanced and assumed to be true. You cannot at one and the same time of an identical subject state that "Theaetetus sits" and "Theaetetus flies" without contradicting yourself. The second statement is false because it ascribes to the identical subject an activity-predicate within the incompatibility-range of the activity the agent is in fact performing.

As a theory of meaning and reference, what Plato has to say here only touches on aspects of the problem. If we attempt to construct for him from his hints a coherent doctrine, we at once encounter serious difficulties. Even the examples of statement he chooses are to our minds unsatisfactory. But if we concede that his objective was a limited one, then perhaps our most serious reservation concerns the phrase *τὸ μὴ ὄν λέγειν* or *τὰ μὴ ὄντα λέγειν*, which he has chosen as the theme of his inquiry. He never attempts systematically to uncover the ambiguities of that phrase. It is made to cover non-being, not-being as *other than* or the principle of difference, negation of predicates, and, finally, inconsistency or false statement. It also has existential overtones. In a logical treatise these would be grave defects. But Plato is writing a dialogue. He has chosen to use as his theme the catchword that was in dispute at his time between philosophers

or scientists and sophists or publicists. In his manipulations of it he avoids the pitfalls dug for him by its ambiguities. If we wish to fault him, we can do so only by showing (as I do not think it can be shown) that in *thateron* we have a metaphysical link between negated predicates and false statements. He probably believed that there is a motion of soul which in both cases produces judgments of difference, but this does not constitute a common nature.

Recent discussion of "Theaetetus flies" has centered in the British school. Their interests being chiefly logical, they find it hard to conceive that the Plato who could "do logic" so superbly well should not be interested in its formal problems. But in fact Plato shows an interest in such problems only in the *Sophistes*, and there only as they are immediately relevant to his principal inquiry. He discusses at length elsewhere the relation between words and their referents, the psychological background of judgments, the way in which the judging mind is constituted, and the "objects" with which it is concerned. But of second-order problems and logical appraisal he has to say only what he says in the *Sophistes*. This fact astounds us. We find it difficult to believe that at a time when there was lively discussion of logical problems among Megarians and Eleatics, and when in the Academy itself Aristotle was probably working towards his *Topics*, Plato should not have appreciated the importance of their inquiries.

Perhaps the conclusion of the first part of the *Parmenides* (135C-137C) suggests an answer. There, when Socrates despairs of philosophical inquiry, Parmenides recommends to him that *before* engaging in such inquiry (135C) he exercise his mind while he is yet young in so-called *adoleschia*, or in hair-splitting after the manner of Zeno. (The term "exercise" occurs four times in the short passage, and suggests the physical exercises engaged in for sport or relaxation in the palaestra.) Such exercises or games do not befit a man of Parmenides' age—at the dramatic date he is about Plato's age at the time of writing the *Sophistes*—and Parmenides himself concurs in this view of Zeno's, adding that he is now as unaccustomed to dialectical encounters as he is to the games of love. However, as he is among friends and does not risk ridicule, he yields to their insistence. It can be no accident that the respondent he chooses, the young Aristotle "who was one of the Thirty" (127D), should bear the same name as that

young Aristotle who at the date of composition was engaged in logical inquiries—exercises or games—in the Academy.

The dialectical encounter that follows, brilliant and productive of insights as it may be, produces no final conclusions. It is engaged in, so we are told, as an exercise and propaedeutic to philosophy, which apparently must be pursued by other means when it investigates the beautiful, the just, the good (135C). Was Plato then simply oblivious of the importance of logical appraisal? Did he consider such inquiries something that did not befit his mature years (136D8)? Having shown in the second part of the *Parmenides* that he could do what the younger were doing, he put such exercises behind him. We may be reluctant to concede as much, but we must grant at least that his contribution to logical theory is small,⁸ and that his approach is not that of a logician.

⁸ See W. and M. Kneale, *The Development of Logic* (Oxford 1962) 11–12.