

## A Commentary on Plato's *Theaetetus*

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In *Theaetetus* Plato inquires whether sense perception (αἴσθησις) and then opinion (δόξα), by itself or with a ground or reason (λόγος) is true knowledge (ἐπιστήμη). It is assumed in the argument that there is a knowledge which is invariably true and undeceptive. The conclusion of the dialogue is that this knowledge can be neither αἴσθησις nor δόξα, but that to know this is to have cleared the way for an inquiry which may be more successful. In *Sophist* it will then be shown that ἐπιστήμη is a knowledge of the Ideas.

The inquiry is only sensible because αἴσθησις and δόξα have in them something of a true or 'epistemic' knowledge. That the senses are deceptive the older philosophers knew, and that opinions are often mistaken is common experience. In what way these forms of knowledge are true and unerring is much more difficult to see. It will appear in the dialogue that the truth of these forms is to be taken in the strictest sense: in them the 'not-being' of something or its relation to something else and its 'being' or relation to itself are known as combined in an absolutely determinate way. The argument is beyond the objections Zeno brought against the assumption that there are 'many' and not the One only, viz. that 'the many' would be an endlessly indeterminate relation of contraries.

The objects of αἴσθησις and δόξα are found to be in one way true and intelligible, in another way to be an indeterminate and deceptive relation of their logical elements. Thus in one way the immediate knowledge of the αἴσθητόν appears true without taking account of external conditions and consequences. But Protagoras who defends the truth of αἴσθησις in the dialogue, has need of the arts to save true knowledge from mixture with 'not-being' and untruth. And along with 'true opinion' there is also 'false opinion', which occurs in several forms.

The question whether αἴσθησις and δόξα are true or 'epistemic' knowledge can seem then ambiguous and unanswerable. It is possible, however, to take account of this twofold appearance of the objects of these ways of knowing and to bring them into one view. For the αἴσθητόν and the object of δόξα when one considers generally their constitution are seen to be a determinate and true relation of their elements. The relation of the knowing subject to these objects is not, however, simply of their logical constitution. Protagoras, so the dialogue represents him, knows the αἴσθητόν

partly as an object adequate to the knowing subject, which is the 'measure of all things'. Partly he knows it as this particular object, as which it is certainly not adequate to himself as universal 'measure'. He does not remain, however, with this division, but is shown as, even despite himself, bringing again to this immediate object its mediation and necessary connection with its 'not-being'. Likewise the knowing subject takes the object of opinion immediately and then through several stages comes to know its 'not-being' as not external to it but rather as a λόγος — a negativity or otherness which is its own.

It is when these two relations of knowing to its object are brought together that the question is answered whether αἴσθησις or δόξα is true knowledge. For then it is seen what these objects are. Both are relations of the sensible and the universal or intelligible. In Plato's language they are ways in which sensibles 'participate' in the Ideas. Whether the knowledge of these objects is ἐπιστήμη is thus a question about the adequacy of the 'participation'. Αἴσθησις is not true knowledge because the relation of the αἰσθητόν to the universal is merely formal. It 'participates' as a becoming or mobility in which the distinction of its elements is obliterated. The content of the αἰσθητόν is not 'participated', nor has the universal to which it is related through its mobility any content of its own.

With δόξα likewise there is an inadequacy of sensible and universal to each other. The unknown model of a true knowledge which guides the argument is the relation of 'participant' to 'participated' in the Ideas. There the sensible in all its content is grounded in the universal. The relation is like that of exemplar to individuals produced according to it. Logically the relation of sensible to universal is similarly understood in all the forms of knowledge. The separation of logical form from content is at its extreme in αἴσθησις. The movement from there to the Ideas is spoken of as a reminiscence or recovery of what was already known. In this and in the great images of *Republic* it is said that the sensible or immediate attitude of knowing to its object is the abstractest. Not even there is the knower involved in what is foreign, but he has only an incipient hold on what is his own.

In this first and most external attitude (εἰκασία) images are taken to be the primary and true being. So to think is described as imprisonment in an underground cave, from which to take as real the things to which images belong — the attitude of 'opinion' or 'belief' — is the first liberation. It is assumed that the natural human condition is a free intelligence which measures itself by a true knowledge where the endlessness and opacity of the sensible

has become a 'not-being' or 'otherness' of the Ideas without independent being of its own. This assumption is strongly opposed to what is usual at the present time. Between the subjective freedom of a Protagoras, with which the argument of *Theaetetus* begins, and the free natural individuality of contemporary liberalism and socialism there is indeed an affinity. Protagoras has, however, a tendency to the concrete. Implicitly he is a Platonist, as the argument will show. Contemporary liberation is rather an immersion in the natural and immediate or else an abstract elevation above it.

For this reason the argument of *Theaetetus* is very difficult to follow. The liberated modern is more easily at home in imagination either with the primitive — the original Garden where there is no break yet between thought and nature — or with Oriental forms (Hindu etc.) where thought is abstract and has not the independence in which it would make itself measure of the natural.

The naturalism of Protagoras (before Socrates develops it in the argument) is a subjective idealism which knows nothing in itself but only as it is for a percipient. His attitude is akin to that of Socrates who turns from the study of nature, as the early philosophers attempted it, and would investigate rather language and the universal — what belongs to thought. The natural as such has no authority for Protagoras or Socrates. The nature to which Plato's argument leads is for thought — an intelligible nature which has authority as understood and not from its factuality. If Plato is in one way not far from the beginning of western philosophy, in another way for moderns who have put aside that tradition and would be straightaway free in nature he is also in advance of them. If even we would have the capacity to control the Promethean works now masters of their makers, a beginning must no doubt be made again with Plato.

*Theaetetus* is among the dialogues J. N. Findlay calls 'stoicheiological' or about the Elements. In such dialogues as *Republic* or *Symposium* the Ideas are assumed and by them the opinions people have about the state, love or whatever are examined and brought into comprehensive view. In *Republic* certainly one learns about a dialectic which can treat the various forms of knowing and their objects as 'hypothetical'. Not only those forms treated in *Theaetetus*, but the ἐπιστήμη which knows the Ideas in their true nature, are only "hypotheses in the literal sense — that is stepping-stones and points of departure" to the Good. But the logic of this 'laying down' a certain form of being, and then not being bound by it like the prisoners in the Cave, but

through it passing to another form — this is not explained in *Republic*.

To speak of the forms of being as 'hypothetical' and to consider them in terms of their Elements are in general the same. For to 'lay down' say the αἰσθητόν is to consider its formation out of 'being' and an indeterminate 'not-being'. The 'hypothesis' is the result of a reflection in which the division of these terms is seen to belong only to an incomplete and subjective view of the object. In the 'hypothesis' the reflection that led to it is lost from sight. On that account one is imprisoned as by an object over which the knower has no power: it simply is for him. The 'hypothesis' only stands, however, so far as the knowledge of its 'being' and that of its 'not-being' or relation to something else — an intuitive and a discursive view of it — fall apart.

In *Theaetetus* one does not meet with the One and the Indeterminate Dyad. But the argument begins with Protagoras and the relation of 'being' and 'not-being' to the knower as it occurs in sensation. This indeterminate subjective relation Plato transforms into an individual or wholly determinate object that is for the percipient. It is for him as an 'hypothesis' in Plato's sense of the word. The logic of this transformation is in general the same as what elsewhere is called a limitation of the Indeterminate Dyad by the One. As may easily be illustrated from *Parmenides*, the relation of the divided principle to the One is given the form of a contrariety and in that relation the identity of the terms is brought to light in the object, which from the first was present in the Protagorean subject — the 'measure of being and not-being'.

Plato has no need of a general discussion of his method in *Theaetetus* for the reason that he begins with a concrete object. Protagoras does not know that his subjective 'measure' is an incomplete account of the relation of the subject to the being of images (εἰκασία). In completing Protagoras' position Plato brings before the reader the constitution of the αἰσθητόν from its Elements. The αἰσθητόν thus becomes an 'hypothesis' in the argument. He shows Protagoras' subjective attitude as not original but properly derivative. For it the αἰσθητόν is an 'hypothesis' whose origin is hidden from it, which it desires to retract. In the course of this movement the elementary structure of its object will come before the Protagorean subject himself and he can escape from his 'hypothesis'. The original correction of Protagoras' position excepted, it suffices to follow the internal development of the argument.

## II

*The Prologue* (142a - 143c):

In *Theaetetus*, as in *Parmenides*, the argument proper of the dialogue is set some distance in the past and is recalled by means of a faithful report — there as retained in the memory of Antiphon, here from a written report made by Euclides the Megaric. By this device Plato can conveniently indicate to a reader the perspective in which the dialogue is to read. The argument of *Theaetetus* is for Euclides and his friend Terpsion. It is sometimes said that the dialogue is dedicated to Euclides. The relation is more precise than that: the reader is invited to regard the dialogue from a Megaric standpoint; if he does this, he will not go far astray in his interpretation.

Euclides and his successors in the Megaric school have a very important relation to the Platonic philosophy. To the Socratic dialectic which took up what people said on practical questions and examined it in the light of the Good — that is, sought to stabilize and bring into one view the various and opposed opinions that were held on the questions — to this dialectic the Megarics gave a development which may be regarded as a first step towards the Platonic Ideas. What was other than the Good Euclides declared to be nothing. In this one should understand him to say that to bring together into a definition the various more universal and more particular δόξαι as Socrates sought to do, is impossible. This Plato takes to be true, unless one 'separate' the Ideas and consider the division and combination in a defining λόγος at the level of pure universality. Neither for sense perception nor for the attitude called 'true opinion' is there such a relation of self-identity and 'otherness' or difference as is sought in definitions, but rather a still incomplete process of bringing the particularity of sense under the universal. The Megaric position is also stated in the form that they dissolved the concreteness of the sensible into a plurality of λόγοι separate from one another; e.g. 'white Socrates' is another λόγος than 'musical Socrates'. All these λόγοι are separate from one another as having the form of self-identity; and apart from them there is no Socrates, unless as a still unanalysed residue.

This Megaric position is indeed where the argument of *Theaetetus* ends. What Euclides and Terpsion hear the slave read to them is an elaborate confirmation of their standpoint: what is other than the Good, if one understand this as the sensible and the universals of 'opinion' in their relation to the sensible, is shown to be a nullity — unless it will subsequently be found to be grounded on a deeper division and relation of universal and particular, that is, on the

Ideas. If the conclusion of *Theaetetus* is Megaric, no doubt the way to it much exceeds the limits of that school. That is plain, if one consider that the positions examined in the dialogue — other than the Megaric — are in general those of other Socratics: the thesis that the sensible is true being is in the realm of cognition equivalent to a Cyrenaic hedonism in the practical; and that 'opinion' is true knowledge turns out to be the thesis of Antisthenes.

Euclides and Terpsion have the dialogue read to them on the occasion of Theaetetus' death. By the manner of his death Theaetetus has confirmed the promise of his youth — that there was in him the spirit of true philosophy. Passing through Megara, mortally wounded, he declines to remain with Euclides but returns to die in his own country: he has come to the concrete objectivity sought by Socrates and expressed in the Platonic *Republic*, where the good of the individual is not divided from and opposed to that of the state.

The full context and perspective of the argument is that it is for an idealized Euclides for whom his destruction of the sensible is not the end but rather transitional to the Platonic Ideas. In this larger context the Megaric philosophy is not simply a new Eleaticism, whose principle is called rather the Good than the One, but is rather the result of a criticism of philosophical attempts to give this principle a development and content within the bounds of the sensible. It is not that these attempts are mistaken merely and without truth: in *Theaetetus* they appear as well founded but also as insufficient — as discovering a concreteness and realization of the Good which is unstable, and 'becoming' and not 'true being'.

### III

#### *Introduction* (143c - 151e):

Before taking up the question what is ἐπιστήμη, the dialogue gives careful attention to the nature and method of the inquiry in an unusually long introduction. This has three parts: the first treats the natural aptitude of young Theaetetus for so great a philosophical question; the second indicates how through his mathematical studies he is in some part prepared for it; the third describes the 'maieutic' art by which Socrates can guide others to intellectual discoveries and test the truth of them, though he is himself ignorant and incapable of them.

Theodorus' praise of his young pupil to Socrates may be compared with the description of the philosophical nature in *Republic V*. The chief point is that the intellectuality of Theaetetus is not that of the Sophists — a critical, subjective capacity — but a

balance of receptivity and activity which is capable of the concrete, that is the Ideas. It is not irrelevant to the present argument that, with his other virtues, he is also uncommonly courageous. One may recall that in *Republic* courage is defined as an adhering to what the legislator determines as dangerous or not. Here Theaetetus will be led to the conclusion that no criterion of the good is to be found in the sensible.

Theaetetus has initially the usual difficulty of Socrates' young respondents, that he looks to the parts and not to the general notion of what is sought. But he quickly recalls that what Socrates is asking for is already familiar to him from his mathematical studies. The example he gives of defining, namely a universal division of rational and irrational quantities, has however a more important relation to the argument of the dialogue. Theaetetus has encountered the infinite or indeterminate and knows, what by Zeno's arguments is impossible, that it can be limited. Quantities not directly comparable can be compared through their powers. The sides of figures comparable in area may be incommensurate. For Plato the determining of the Indeterminate Dyad is first of all seen in the formations of definite relations among numbers and in the limiting of space by its dimensions into individual bodies. The source of Zeno's paradoxes of the infinite became clear to Plato when he considered the claim of Protagoras to be 'measure' alike of being or the undivided and of the divided. Zeno and the Sophists passed in their thinking from undivided to divided, had subjectively the relation of the two sides, but could not combine them in the object. Here, it is only to the point that Theaetetus, having no knowledge of the Platonic Elements, has in fact experience of a concrete and objective attitude to the infinite. He is thus receptive of the argument Socrates will bring before him and not held by Sophistic or Zenonic scruples.

The third question is, given a natural propensity to philosophy and a mathematical propaedeutic, how is such thought initiated? In *Sophist* Socrates is no longer centre and guide of the argument, nor is anything said about the relation of species and genera to 'participants', where the logic of 'participation' has become explicit as not with the objects of αἴσθησις and δόξα. There division and combination of the divided is grounded in primary Ideas or 'greatest genera'. In *Theaetetus* there is no such knowledge of the universal as a λόγος present in the argument, only the general assumption that there is a knowledge of this kind and the search for it. Socrates knows the relation of 'being' and 'not-being' not as a Protagorean subject but as the objective identity which is called the One or Good. He seeks to determine the relation of the many

to this principle by definitions — that is, by stabilizing universally their 'being' and their 'not-being' or relation to one another. He has experienced the difficulty of discovering this determinateness through the study of language and the opinions people express in response to his questions. His state therefore in relation to his principle is a conscious ignorance. Socrates' difficulty is that, having turned from the study of the sensible, he cannot make a beginning of knowledge such as could lead him to the Ideas. At the same time he has hold of the principle of a true knowledge or *ἐπιστήμη*. The beginning must come from another source and at that from the side of sophistry, since in this there is implicitly a knowledge of the concrete. When Protagoras proposes that sense perception is *ἐπιστήμη*, Socrates can bring the 'being' and 'not-being' of the sensible into a determinate relation to his principle. That is the first office of 'maieutic'.

Secondly, the 'maieutic' art can examine whether the object thus determined stands up when considered as a relation of universal and immediate or sensible being — in the relation of 'participation'. Neither the one who supposes the *αἰσθητόν* to be true being nor the one who looks rather to the abstract universals of *δόξα* can measure his 'hypothesis' in that relation. For both of them sensible and universal appear rather to be endlessly divided and knowledge an external reflection which moves from one side to the other. Their measure is the Socratic ignorance which is sceptical alike of the sensible and of 'opinion'.

For Plato the way to a knowledge of the Ideas is through a study of images, names and statements, such as will disclose that the connection of these elements is not to be understood from themselves but through the logic of the Ideas. Socrates may be thought to have a certain unrealized concept of true knowledge by which he can measure *αἴσθησις* and *δόξα*, if someone equate them with *ἐπιστήμη*. His ignorance or that of Euclides is that they are beyond the standpoint of sense perception and opinion, but that abstractly. The true movement to the Ideas is through these forms. It is only by the criticism of them that the 'epistemic' standpoint of Socrates can acquire a content, that is can recognize that the sensible is primarily ideal or universal.

It is observed that not all intelligent young men make progress with Socrates. He is not of course a teacher of any particular art. But in question here is rather that some will learn better from one or other of the Sophists. To learn from Socrates one must be virtually free of the onesided dialectic that knows always how to set 'being' and 'not-being' against each other. In relation to this dialogue one may say that the criticism of 'sophistic' given in



*Cratylus* and *Euthydemus* is presupposed. Those who are not at this point should go to school with the Sophists; to remain with them is ruinous once one has begun to see the possibility of an objective dialectic.

## IV

*The Protagorean 'measure'* (151d - 152c):

To the question of the dialogue, what is *ἐπιστήμη* or true knowledge, *Theaetetus* first replies that it is *αἴσθησις* or sense perception. This answer is acknowledged to be from Protagoras, being what he intended in saying that "man is the measure of all things, of those that are that they are and of those that are not that they are not". The interpretation given of this saying is that knowledge is not of a thing in itself, which could be the same for all percipients, but of its effect on the senses, which varies from one percipient to another. Thus the same wind, for example, (*αἰσθάνεσθαι*) is felt as cold by one man and otherwise by another. Sense perception is therefore an appearing (*φαίνεσθαι*) for a percipient. And since for him this appearing always 'is', his knowledge is without confusion or error, which one assumes to be the character of *ἐπιστήμη*.

Protagoras, here as in the dialogue which has his name, will not have a knowledge, such as Socrates looks for, which is universal and the same for all. Or rather he will not have such a knowledge by way of reduction of the differences of things to an abstract identity. No less than Socrates he is interested in an true and infallible knowledge, but this should be inclusive of the diversity of things and of percipients. Thus his 'measure' is altogether universal: 'being' and 'not-being', the most general constituents of everything, are not simply objects but have reference to a knowing subject. But this 'measuring' subject is also particular and variable and as such would seem to be in no way the measure of all things. The development Socrates will give to Protagoras' position one should see as working out the relation of its universal and individualizing aspects. In the final version Protagoras will take for true the immediate sense impression, but this will have been set in a universal perspective.

In equating *αἰσθάνεσθαι* with *φαίνεσθαι* Protagoras takes the sensed quality as 'not-being' in distinction from 'being'. It is an 'otherness' and relativity which is not the being of the wind or whatever. But this 'not-being' also, he says, always 'is'. In this reflection Protagoras has left behind the particular content of the sensation and is considering the common character of sensations,

that they are a being of the relative. So considered, they come under the 'measuring' of a subject whose knowledge of them is free of the well known deceptiveness of the senses. For this subject everything invariably 'is'. 'Sophistic' according to the *Sophist* is an art of 'image-making'. But here 'image-making' seems to be true knowledge.

The sense of this position one can judge conveniently from the more explicit statement of it in *Gorgias* about not-being or Nature. There one has an Eleatic argument about a One or Principle and a supposedly derivative many. What distinguishes the argument from those of the Eleatics themselves is a consciousness that neither the original nor the derivative term is without relation to the knowing subject. The subject may be said to 'measure' both 'being' and 'not-being' in that it can show each to be unthinkable either with or without the character of the other. Each by itself is a contradiction and likewise their combination. In place of an objective ἀρχή stands the subject which knows the untruth of 'being' and 'not-being'. Protagoras' images are indeed endlessly varied. Formally they are a relation of their logical elements to a knowing subject.

When Protagoras says that 'cold' or any immediate sensation always 'is', there lies in this an insight into the nullity of its negativity or difference. The sensation is spoken of as a relation of the sense and an external agent. Later it will be described as "between" the two, an intermediate difference between contraries. And it will be shown that the determinate αἰσθητόν is not just indeterminably between contraries but is grounded in their identical relation. At this point the relation of 'being' and 'not-being' is still entirely formal and does not concern the determination of the particular sensible quality. It is simply, as with Gorgias, the recognition that the negative or different has no truth by itself but is always self-related. *Sophist* will describe the image as the true being of what truly is not, in which is said that one must take both 'being' and the 'not-being' universally as a relation of the aspects or moments themselves. Although Protagoras may be said to presuppose a manifold and varied world, he considers this division as also nothing but the 'being' or continuity of the divided.

Protagoras would of course say as well that the sensible image always 'is not' as that it is. It is because he can say both that he is measure of being and not-being universally. He does not take the further step of concluding that if the being and the negativity or differences of things are neither without the other, then the true is the λόγος which is the connection and movement of both. Gorgias

argued against that position as only compounding the difficulty of taking the aspects separately. And indeed to come to a Heraclitean λόγος from this standpoint has other difficulties than in a less self-conscious age. The conversion of Protagoras into a Heraclitean proceeds from Socrates. The true or identical being Protagoras took flight from is the principle in which 'being' and 'not-being' are united — the One or Good. The being of sense images is an immediate connection of the divided and opposed. The true reflection of the Socratic principle is not this being but a process of being and not-being against the stable identity of the Principle.

*Protagoras, a Heraclitean* (152c - 155D):

The subjective form of the 'measure', says Socrates, was obviously intended for the public; to the inner circle of his disciples it is evident that Protagoras taught the ancient doctrine of Heraclitus and all the philosophers, save Parmenides, and before them the principal poets. A Heracliteanism which can thus be ascribed indifferently to nearly all the Pre-Socratics is not the position of Heraclitus himself. No more is it the original Parmenides to whom one can oppose all the other philosophers as Heraclitean. The One is here the Socratic Good which begins to have actuality in the externality of 'becoming'. Since the early philosophers generally did not know such a division of intelligible and sensible, they can in this context be counted fairly as Heracliteans.

That 'not-being' is as well as 'being' Socrates recommends by various Heraclitean arguments against the static and lifeless, finding confirmation in Homer's 'golden chain', read by allegorizing interpreters as signifying the sun. Of all this and even the account given of the physical side of sense perceptions, which is especially pertinent to the argument, one is to take as established only the principle — that there is a 'becoming' opposed to true being. It is only after a long development of the argument, when the Ideas are known, that one can properly begin to speak of natural philosophy. Not extraneous to the present argument, however, is what is said of the sun as the unifying principle of 'becoming'. Socrates' interest is less in 'becoming' itself than in how it is perceived. To explain the perception of images it is necessary to show how in their externality they have an identical relation in which they are altogether determinate. Light Plato understands as a division and diffusion which remains self-identical. The sun, as the source of light, he describes as having a relation to the many visible objects analogous to that of the Good

to intelligibles. It is as in this medium that the indeterminate relativity of eye and what acts on it is conceived to become the perception of a qualified individual. Underlying this explanation is, however, a logical reflection on how an individual, external object can be for the perceiving subject.

The first exposition of Heracliteanism does not give a sufficient account of αἴσθησις. Something acts on the eye or other sense organ. Between agent and patient is a relation and what is perceived is a particular determination of that relation — an intermediate state between extremes. So much for the external or corporeal aspect. In the previous account the subject knew this intermediate through the relation of 'being' and 'not-being' to itself. Now this form is comprehended within the relation of 'becoming' to the Socratic principle. It is the form or mediation of the sensible content through which the subject knows it as fully determinate or individual. The defect of this account is that the 'not-being' or, one might say, otherness and mobility of the image is different from the reflection which brings it into an identical relation. On this account, though all is said to be motion, one does not know the sensible as just that: one does not know it truly. There is not, as before, simply a transition from 'not-being' to 'being'. The mediation is explicit by which what is other than itself is also self-related or 'is'. But what is sought is that the 'being' and the 'not-being' should be so combined as to hold their difference in one relation. αἴσθησις in the true account is knowledge of an immediate content such that the knowing of it is now also a reflection which strives to stabilize it but where immediacy and reflection have coalesced. Then the αἰσθητόν is an external individual which is also form and relation to other. As thus immediately concrete it is pure mobility.

The form of the argument in this second exposition is to show the αἰσθητόν, as it here appears, to be a contradiction. Such indeed was also the previous argument by which the identity of 'being' and 'not being' was transferred from the subject to the object. Now in this objective relation one meets again the sophistic attitude which sets 'being' against 'not-being' and cannot combine them objectively. The 'intermediate' between agent and patient, which the αἰσθητόν is, appears to be true simply for *this* percipient. If one claim for it a common and objective truth, a clever Sophist will quickly confound him with his puzzles. For example, if to six dice are added four one will say that the six are more; if twelve are added instead, then one will say that the six are fewer. Contrary predicates are applied while there has been no change in the object. The sophistic solution is to distinguish an indeterminate

otherness or 'not-being' from an identical relation or 'being'. The same objects may be regarded in one way or the other: change is either endless otherness or it is an identical relation of contraries.

In the objective view of Socrates one does not alternate between 'being' and 'not-being', or adhere abstractly to either, but observes that they both are present. Theaetetus becomes dizzy trying to choose. His dizziness is the inability to stabilize the alternatives and the incipient recognition that they are aspects of one object. The conclusion is that the 'not-being' and difference of things is also unity of form and self-identity.

One escapes thus from the necessity of dividing Heraclitean 'becoming', setting an aspect of being or rest against its mobility. What is other than the Socratic identity is movement and only that.

*Absolute or Cratylan 'becoming' (155e - 160e)*

Socrates has led the argument to a position which he is careful first to distinguish from that of crude 'uninitiated' materialists. The confusion is more likely now than in the earlier Heracliteanism for the reason that, if one may be excused an Aristotelian language, form is no longer divided from matter. The earlier 'becoming', one might say, was rather the disorderly, agitated Receptacle of *Timaeus*. Now rather container and contained have been brought into one relation, so that 'becoming' can easily be mistaken for an independent substrate; or, as the argument will show, sensible qualities are now qualities of something, which can appear to be an underlying subject, when rather it is nothing but movement.

The sense of the whole argument has been to bring the sensible so into relation to universal or true being that its difference from that being will appear as motion and nothing else. In the first stage the objective unity of 'being' and 'not-being' came into view. The immediate or external was then seen as a 'becoming' in which 'being' and 'not-being' were related, but also divided in that relation. Now the 'becoming', as external to the identity of this division, is pure mobility.

The explanation of sense perception begins again from the action of something on a sense organ. There are indefinitely many receptive senses and agents which affect them. Their interaction has "twin offspring" a quality, e.g., 'whiteness', and the determination of the sense to that sensation. The two came into being together and are relative to each other. Nothing is said here of a division between an indefinite externality of the terms of this relation and a necessary or identical connection. Rather the "offspring", as their origin is in a contrariety of agent and patient, are their difference and the perception of it as determinate. The

relation of percipient and perceived is straightway in one identity.

The argument then moves to a new distinction. There is not just the motion which is a qualitative change of the sense organ by an agent qualitatively different from it. That is now called a 'slow motion' which occurs in one place. There is also a swift 'phora' or local motion. This one will understand in the same way as the earlier transition from an inner identity to 'becoming'. The "twin offspring" are not yet an actual perception but only the determinate possibility of it. The perception comes to be of an external individual first through a shift from subject to object of the connection or unity of 'being' and 'not-being'. Then secondly this identity is externalized. In that externalization there is no more a division of qualities from the pure mobility but rather they appear as qualifications of the 'becoming' — points in the process or individuals, which are, however, nothing but the showing of an inner identity. In the knowledge of these objects the Protagorean subject, which as 'measure' knows the identical relation of 'being' and not-being', has a truth which is other than true or self-identical being.

There is perhaps no more difficult and elusive argument in the Platonic writings. Elsewhere it is illustrated by two very striking images. Asked by Parmenides how he thinks an Idea, while itself one and undivided, can be 'participated' by many, Socrates replies that it may be as with the light of day which, everywhere diffused, remains itself. Parmenides makes an objection from the side of the many: their being is rather like a sail spread over them and touching them externally, one with this part, one with that. None as an unbroken whole. But how again can the Idea be 'participated' in part? The part will not have the effect of the whole in the 'participant'. The solution, as Parmenides goes on to indicate, is that the individual 'participant' must be understood to be mediated by the total or contrary division of the Idea. Thus in a certain coalescence of his image and Socrates' may be understood how the immediate sensible 'participates' and depends on the Idea. The difficulty is of knowing the relation of the sensible to the Idea when as yet, like Protagoras or like the prisoners in the cave, one is sure images are true being. Or rather the argument to this point has only made clear what this belief in images is. It is properly a knowledge of their 'participation' or relation to the Ideas and can thus be the beginning of a turning from images to their originals.

*The criticism of Protagoras (160e - 187b)*

A long criticism of this result, that the sensible is the true and primary being and αἴσθησις true knowledge, moves through

several stages whose connection is by no means easy to grasp. It is essential that the criticism be seen as one argument. Otherwise nothing can be made of the later definitions of ἐπιστήμη as 'true opinion' and this was a λόγος. The logical division of the criticism is as follows:

A. Some preliminary criticisms show that Protagoras' position is invulnerable unless αἴσθησις can be shown to have in itself a relation to the universal.

B. This relation having been discovered, it is shown that immediate knowledge is not the sole measure of the αἰσθητόν, but that partly it is the object of a universal knowing.

C. The αἰσθητόν as pure 'becoming' is shown to be, now in part only, but totally dependent on a universal.

The argument moves from the conclusion that true knowledge is of the sensible individual. From that standpoint a knowledge of the universal, which Protagoras, as a 'wise man', presumably possesses, is simply another knowledge. A criticism proceeding from that knowledge therefore does not touch Protagoras' position. On its own account, however, immediate knowledge, if it belongs to the free Protagorean subject, has relation to the useful and good. When this relation is developed, it is found that immediate knowledge and that which can estimate its utility are not the same. Thus the thesis that only immediate knowledge is true falls by an argument intrinsic to this attitude. The third stage takes from the αἰσθητόν all that gave it independence and seeming primacy by showing that pure mobility is total dependence on the universal.

#### A. *Preliminary criticisms* (160e - 169d)

The preliminary criticism has three parts:

(a) The implication of denying that true knowledge of the αἰσθητόν has any universality.

(b) The consequences if one allows that to the position belongs knowledge of the universal, but that this and immediate knowledge are simply different.

(c) Protagoras' response to (a) and (b), in which he concedes a relation between immediate knowledge and that of the universal, but so that the primacy of the immediate is not affected by this relation.

#### A, a (160e - 163a)

Protagoras could have stated his position much more impressively, observes Socrates, had he said that not man but the pig or tadpole or whatever animal is most despised was 'measure of all

things'. His comment is just, so far as Protagoras will hold strictly to the immediate knowledge of the individual αἰσθητόν, as this has been explained in the argument. Protagoras is aware that his knowledge of the sensible is not simply that of an animal, but is with a universal consciousness of himself as 'measure'. His knowledge, as the Socratic exposition of his position has shown sufficiently, is an implicit νόησις or understanding. (He is in another world from the experimental psychologists for whom human knowledge is only more general and inventive than that of unmeasuring animals.) But in the immediate knowledge of the αἰσθητόν this difference is lost.

At the same time Socrates' criticism is philosophically undergrounded and only taken from the common opinion that men are reasonable but not other animals. It is not known in the argument what ἐπιστήμη or, as yet, even 'opinion' is. Protagoras can therefore justly protest that the criticism is only demagogic — appropriate to a public speech but not to philosophical argument. It is as if in criticizing Aristippus one called him a pig and neglected, what he also says, that his hedonism is the philosophy of a cultivated man. But then there is need that he or Protagoras explain how αἴσθησις is also a universal knowledge.

*A, b (163a - 165e)*

Socrates and Theaetetus already encountered the art by which the Sophists can confound a respondent by verbal reasoning and by opposing language and sense perception to each other. This 'eristic' Socrates now uses not inappropriately against Protagoras. It is, one might say, the characteristic dialectic of Sophists, of which Plato has given an account and complete criticism in *Euthydemus*. The pertinence of 'eristic' to the present argument is that it contains a consciousness of the contrariety of predicates, even though at the same time it merely follows ordinary language (where predication does not much conform to that simple structure). For eristics to win the applause they covet, a respondent cannot be permitted to distinguish a variety of meanings but take every statement as simple and unambiguous. While it is a mere game for others, Socrates finds it highly instructive as revelatory of an objective connection of contraries in a subject. There lies in 'eristic' thus the beginning of a relation of the individual to the universal, which is what is sought here against Protagoras.

By 'eristic' Socrates can prove that, if αἴσθησις is knowledge, what one remembers and no longer perceives one does not know.



Such an argument compels one to notice a division of sensible and universal. Again if, one eye covered, one sees with the other, one is caught in the contradiction of both seeing and not seeing at the same time. That argument awakens the reflection that contrariety in the sensible is not perceived so directly.

If in the demagogic use of language one has no insight how the sensible individual is a universal, eristic forces a separation of the two and thus begins to break through the barrier imagination and the illogical variety of language set in the way of such knowledge. Gorgias, one will remember, reasoned that, even in the untrue supposition that anything existed — that there was sensible being — it could not be known. For what is known is different from the existent; otherwise one would be obliged to say that whatever one could imagine also existed. He had not the knowledge that what was separate might be one with the sensible, but that through a deeper separation than that of language and imagination.

The movement of the criticism is towards a grounding of the sensible in the universal through its local elements. It is as in the Cyrenaic philosophy, where the calculus of pleasure and pain demands a knowledge of the negativity of the individual pleasant object which is not of an endlessly indeterminate otherness but has the character of a contrariety. Such one knows from the earlier exposition of the αἰσθητόν is the nature of its 'not-being'. The criticism is now at the point where Protagoras will acknowledge that he not only knows immediate being as true, but has also a universal knowledge of its 'being' and 'not-being' as the useful or beneficial and its contrary.

#### A, c (166a - 168d)

Socrates has Protagoras come to his own defence against demagogic and eristic attacks and lay down admirably what a philosophical criticism should be. One should take the theses of an opponent and show how they are mistaken — by what is contained in the theses themselves and not from some other standpoint. The theses to be examined by this purely objective method are (a) that truth is what seems to someone to be — his immediate perception, that is, of sensible qualities; and (b) that all is motion. These theses seem secure from rational criticism because the sense image, whose ground is pure mobility, seems to be entirely independent of thought.

From his own side Protagoras is ready to concede a certain relation of the sensible to the universal. His position does not require, as Socrates pretended, that there be no difference between

the wise and the ordinary man who takes the sensible to be true being. It need not be supposed, however, as in the 'eristic' criticism — that the universal is another order of being than the sensible. One can hold to the assumption that the sensible is true being and αἴσθησις the true perception of it and at the same time distinguish a more and a less useful relation to it. While all perceptions are equally true and in them no man is wiser than another, some perceptions are more socially useful than others. The wise man is he who can bring it about that these more useful perceptions also appear immediately true to someone. Protagoras' claim is that this relation of utility is grounded in the sensible and does not destroy the 'hypothesis' that this is the primary being. His position resembles the later utilitarianism which developed from the Humean philosophy. There is the very important difference that the Protagorean subject is not the subject of Humean idealism, but has a far less secure possession of the objective. The criticism is therefore, primarily of the object — of the being of the sensible. The concept of utility is in general the same, and what it is is no doubt more easily conspicuous in ancient than in modern dress.

*B. Truth as seeming (169d - 179d)*

Protagoras can regard the useful as grounded in the sensible because it has the character of means to an end, and the sensible is taken to be the end. Socrates' criticism will bring to light how that end is to be conceived and how the useful is related to the immediate or sensible good. The criticism (a) shifts the estimation of means from the single case to the universal: it is the man who has a τέχνη or art who is thought authoritative as to the useful. Protagoras responds (b) with the claim that it belongs to immediate knowledge to determine the highest goods. The argument then exposes what the universal is that Protagoras knows: as in the earlier exposition of his position it is the divided or dyadic principle. Then (c) the relation of immediate to the mediated or discursive knowledge of the αἰσθητόν is shown to be, as in the second part of the exposition, that of contraries to an indeterminate middle between them.

*B, a (169d - 172c)*

Socrates has sought to bring Theodorus to the defence of Protagoras, as having been among his friends. The eminent mathematician, who early abandoned the altogether general reasonings of philosophy for his science, is reluctant at his age to be drawn into a dialectical contest with Socrates. He gives way at

this point and together they begin the internal criticism Protagoras has asked for. Friendship apart, Theodorus must seem an unlikely defender of Protagoras, one who will too easily ally himself with Socrates. With him indeed the question how the universal is related to the sensible moves to the level of the arts and the reasoning which looks for necessary connections or causes. At that level the nature of utility becomes clear, as not while one stays with the sensible. In question here is the mediation or connection of images in relation to their immediate being, and of this Theodorus knows much from his geometrical art.

That it is such as himself, and not Protagoras, who know the conditions of the immediate good — who can provide that the pleasant and immediately true is also useful — is easily proved by the general opinion of men. Although they follow their senses and are not possessed of the more difficult ways of knowing, they do not take themselves to be 'measure' of everything but esteem as superior beings those who have acquired arts. That such is their opinion is especially clear in conditions of danger when they look to the pilot, physician and such experts as their saviours. Thus Protagoras is refuted by those who generally accept his position and are by his account infallible 'measures' of truth.

Theodorus acquiesces readily in a conclusion which does honour to his art and knowledge of the universal. Socrates comments, however, that Protagoras, should he thrust his head up from Hades as far as the neck and take part in the argument, would have no trouble in refuting them. How he would do so Socrates will show in the following section. Towards this he first makes some distinctions. Even if men are not equally 'measures' of the useful, it is another matter to show that Protagoras is mistaken about the knowledge of sensible qualities. Again, it is thought that no class of men has special competence in knowing what is just and holy, but that these are what the citizens of a state agree to call so and for as long their agreement stands. By this last knowledge the many will be authoritative in states and those in possession of the arts subservient to them. Protagoras is obliged himself to move to the universal. But what is this immediate knowledge of the highest ends?

#### *B. b* (172c - 177c)

What follows is no longer an argument with Theodorus but rather a monologue in which Socrates compares the life of the individual who would be 'measure' of the universal good with that of the philosopher for whom the Good itself is the principle by

which he is 'measured'. It is not a dialogue because it is about the first elements of discourse, whose relation has not yet the form of a definite division of positions. The Sophist, when he would give his immediate object the form of universality, breaks the synthesis of 'being' and 'not-being' which the earlier argument has shown it to be. The 'not-being' his senses received he then said 'always was'; its difference turned back on itself and was self-relation or being, and this connection of the moments was interpreted by Socrates to be a 'becoming'. What was there the formation of the αἰσθητόν is now a knowledge of it through its elements. In this one does not regard it as *this* sensible simply but as the point of meeting and determination of its constituents — from the universal standpoint the criticism has now assumed.

Aristotle thought possibly of the great digression of *Theaetetus* when he observed that between 'dialectic' and 'sophistic' the difference is less of method than of the "choice of life". For as they appear here, the Sophistic and the Socratic lives are moments of the same dialectic, where the one adheres to the many and divided, the other to the undivided, Good. The philosopher here described is not yet a Platonist: what he knows — and here explicitly touches the argument of *Theaetetus* — is the Socratic principle, and that taken Megarically, as the sole truth. To this principle the philosopher retreats from whatever has otherness and contrariety and is thus inevitably corruptible. That from which he retreats — the divided or not-one — is the object of the Sophist. The Sophist holds to the Dyadic principle, one may say, the philosopher to the One or Good.

With both there is an exclusion of the finite, but quite differently. The philosopher's principle is understood as comprehensive of or as the potentiality of the divided. The Sophists' principle is abstract universality and the exclusion of the negative therefrom. For this reason the philosopher's knowledge is liberating, an untroubled, unhurried tranquillity towards the changing. The Sophist is narrowed to pure abstractness and his life is the constant activity of maintaining that relation against an impinging otherness and externality. Neither takes the further step of combining the terms of the division, so that the divided would be a 'becoming' in relation to the One. It is to that conclusion that Socrates intends the digression to move. This comes into the argument in the description of the man whose life is measured by the water clock: his life is a pure becoming.

The digression may perhaps be clarified by two comments. Aristotle, beginning his discussion of the potential and actual, remarks that Euclides had no concept of the potential. His

principle is that and nothing more, only he does not know it as such, for the reason that there is for him no derivative or consequent being, having the character of unity, of which it would be the potentiality.

From the other side the sophistic position, in the present context, is that of the hedonist who has so far retreated from the single 'pleasant' as the good that his end is universal pleasure — a pleasure which has no contrary but on that account also has ceased to be pleasant. It is a nullity, as is the just and the holy which is laid down conventionally or democratically.

*B, c* (177c - 179c)

Socrates returned to the argument at the point where he digressed: there is an immediate knowledge in which all are equal, which determines the just and holy in a state; and there is that which aims at the good and useful. The wisdom of the Sophist is now the legislative art which should accommodate these perceptions to each other. There is no longer question after the digression of treating them as separate and regarding the immediate knowledge as primary and uniquely true. By itself the immediate knowledge appeared as a 'becoming' in which immediate and mediated were not yet distinguished. It is this division as falling within a 'becoming' which is now considered. The development is logically the same as earlier in the exposition of a limited 'becoming'. The *αἰσθητόν* exhibits this division, and is the object of a divided knowing.

The interest of the argument is to show the immediate and the mediated knowledge as about complementary aspects of the same 'becoming'. That it is for a subject is through the division of these aspects. In an altogether objective view or in relation to the Socratic principle the object will be the unity of these aspects. It will then be the absolute or Cratylan 'becoming', this as a disintegrative of distinctions as 'measured' by that principle. This section is thus to be understood as transitional to the criticism of the sensible as absolute 'becoming' which follows.

The knowledge of the useful is authoritative for the *αἰσθητόν* which is not yet: it knows the means and conditions through which a sensible object when present will be of a certain quality. The immediate knowledge knows authoritatively the quality now present. By this account the *αἰσθητόν* which Protagoras said was the sole measure of truth is greatly restricted: it is not an empty knowledge of the just and holy but is properly only of present sensible qualities. What confines its scope is the temporal division of the object.

The sensible in this view is the same division of contingent immediacy and necessary connection of contraries as earlier bewildered Theaetetus. The next and last stage in the knowledge of the αἰσθητόν is where the whole logic of its original constitution will be brought to light, and to that the argument now moves.

*C, Motion criticized (179c - 187b)*

The thesis that what seems to each is true for him while it so seems is taken to be disproved. The argument now takes up the other assertion, that 'being' is nothing else than 'becoming'. This appeared before as the more fundamental of the two, and the criticism has led back to it. Already the dependence of the sensible on true or universal being — its relation to that being in itself which Protagoras fled at the first — has in great part been established. In the digression the Sophists' object was an abstract attachment of the external to a self-identical thing. Then the sensible appeared as divided between a knowledge which centred the extremes of its 'becoming' in such an object and the apprehension of an immediate quality which seemingly stood apart from this dependence. The criticism will now complete the destruction of the sensible, so far as this is taken for an independent being. This final stage of the criticism has two parts:

(a) The sensible is shown to be nothing but a pure instability and relation to the universal.

(b) The qualities of the sensible, as falling in the identical relation of the thing to itself, are shown to be themselves primarily self-identical — with which one has discovered the object of 'true opinion'.

*C, a (179d - 183c)*

It is made clear, as before, that the Heracliteans to be examined are not to be taken narrowly but include all the philosophers except the Eleatics. The criticism is of the sensible, and the principles of the philosophers other than Parmenides and Zeno have something of the sensible about them.

There are difficulties in criticizing those who will not allow any statement to stand, but as soon as it is attacked will say the opposite in its place. The students are like that, suggests Socrates, but not the masters. No, replies Theodorus, a distinction of student and master is not found among them. For that there would indeed be need of definite and meaningful statements, which is what they will in no way allow.

There being no dialogue possible with the Heracliteans, their

position must be taken as a problem and investigated in a purely objective manner. The form of the problem is the relation of their mobile principle to Eleatic being. It is as though Socrates and Theodorus were caught between two wrestlers and, to escape from that dangerous position, lent aid to one to hasten his victory, thinking that if they failed in that they would assist the other and stronger contestant. The method of criticism will be, that is, to intensify to the extreme the opposition of the two principles, first from the one side, then from the other. A Heraclitean 'becoming' in which the last vestige of stability has vanished is to be set against a One equally absolute. In that relation will be seen, first, the dissolution of the αἰσθητόν as measured composition of 'being' and 'not-being', then, secondly, the formation of a new and universal object whose knowledge will be called 'true opinion'.

What gives an appearance of stability to the Heraclitean principle is a separation of the two kinds of change or motion present in it. It is possible to regard only the change of qualities, as this appeared in the twofold knowledge of the sensible. In this one does not observe the pure mobility and externality which was seen in the original exposition to give the αἰσθητόν its individuality and separation from the knowing subject. The Heracliteans who are being examined know that this immediate individuality is not a subject or matter of which definite statements can be made. It is a centre and connection of qualitative differences and, as the previous section showed, of a temporal succession of contrary qualities or a 'becoming'. The sensible individual is not, however, an identical subject of stabilized differences — of differences themselves grounded in their identity. It is that in which appear as external and distinct a 'being' and 'not-being' whose identity has been recognized in the argument both immediately and, in knowledge of the useful, in their division and difference. All that remains is to bring into one view the immediate and the mediated or utilitarian view of the sensible. The external individual is then the point at which occurs the contradiction of the immediate quality and its 'not-being' or otherness.

The extreme Heracliteans knew perfectly well the nature of the sensible and yet hold to it against the universal. In *Cratylus* they are represented as mobilizing the names of things — that by which rather the sensible is immobilized and given a universality. In that attempt they are very consequent and show themselves true philosophers. By sensualizing names to the extreme they expose to a Socratic view what in truth their nature and function is. There, as in the present argument, what sustains their position is nothing more than the residual attachment of a knowing subject to what it

knows are untrue distinctions. By their position the Heracliteans are in truth obliged to give up speaking: something is not so, nor again can be said not to be so; if anything, there should be said only that also the negation of any positive statement is untrue.

In the Eleatic or Socratic view the contradiction and disintegration of the sensible is the truth of the matter. There is more, however, in the argument than a simple confrontation of the One and the many. The sensible as it is for the Protagorean subject is already a first realization of the One or Good. So it was found to be in the explication Socrates gave Protagoras' 'measure'. For the 'aistheton' was an object self-identical in its complete or contrary division. As such, it may be said to 'participate' the Good: that was the character of the Good, as appeared in the digression. The αἰσθητόν was, however, a good which should be self-identical, the identity of the non-identical and so pure mobility. The criticism has exposed that the flight of the Protagorean subject to this immediate being belongs as well to the object. Giving himself over to immediate being, whether perceived or, as the pleasant, desired, Protagoras could keep hold of it as true being — that is, as identical with itself in its 'not-being' — only by subsuming it under a universal. This was done abstractly at first in the digression, then in the difference of the moments in the following section. Now the total αἰσθητόν is grounded in a universal being. It remains to be shown that this object is not just a collapse and coalescence of 'being' and 'not-being', but as was the case with the αἰσθητόν, has also the division of its moments and a definite content.

C, b (183c - 187b)

Where the sensible has been dissolved in relation to the Eleatic or Socratic principle, it seems reasonable that after Heraclitus the criticism should address itself to Parmenides. Theaetetus eagerly desires such an inquiry, but Socrates declines to undertake it. He fears both that it would exceed their abilities and that it would delay indefinitely their present inquiry, what ἐπιστήμη is, itself great enough. Reference is made to the meeting of a very young Socrates with a venerable Parmenides — that is, to the dialogue *Parmenides*. The discussion which follows on the formation of the object of 'true opinion' draws on the argument of that dialogue which it would be inappropriate to renew in the present context.

Already, in considering the concretion of 'being' and 'not-being' in the αἰσθητόν it was assumed that, not the One by itself of the first hypothesis of *Parmenides* was a true account of the principle, but this with the second hypothesis, in which multiplicity and difference are explicitly contained. There the difficulties could be



passed over more easily, since the unity of the moments was an unstable 'becoming'. Now it is a question of showing how differences and a definite content belong to a universal and unchanging object — that in the face of the underlying Megaric standpoint of *Theaetetus*, that there is no true object save the Good itself. The subsequent argument will indeed discover that 'opinion' does not in a full consideration know a true concretion. Where its object comes from in the first place could, however, make much difficulty. It is enough in the present argument that the thought which has discovered the self-identity of the αἰσθητόν should now recognize that its division and content belongs to that identical relation.

Socrates therefore asks Theaetetus whether one knows by the senses or rather through them. Having followed the argument perfectly, the young respondent is able to answer that it is rather through than by the senses. Of the immediate αἰσθητόν he would have said that it was known by the senses. What is not known is not the pure mobility the sensible has proved to be but the identical or true being which is seen to be its ground. The objects of the several senses are negativity or difference of this object, and knowing is a collecting and comparing of sense images by which they are brought into one relation. Primary in this is not the receptivity of the senses to aspects of an external multiplicity but universal distinction common to the various sense images, at their own level incomparable with one another. The 'hardness' of the 'the hard' for example, one knows by touch, and so the 'softness' of 'the soft'. Their being and contrariety to one another, and the common being, likeness, contrariety, etc., of the images of different senses are known by no sense organ, but are the universal form by which the known object is for a 'measuring' subject.

At the beginning of the argument the sensible was shown to be 'measured' by the knowledge of its 'being' and 'not-being'. In the fully determinate αἰσθητόν as an immediate external object, its logical form and relation to the knowing subject was obscured. In the reflection which completes the criticism of sense perception the logical form is again brought to light and known as the true object. Protagoras in being refuted is also in a way confirmed: what the criticism corrects is not the relation of knowing to known through the logical form, but that the knowledge of the content as so formed and intelligible is attained in sense perception. Once the subjectivity of Protagoras' position was corrected by explicating the relation of 'measuring' subject to what it measured, sense perception was found not to be true knowledge but only an

abstract and immediate intellection. The criticism has exposed this abstractness as a 'becoming' or transition into one another of the logical elements. It has at the same time discovered a 'being' whose negativity or 'not-being' is in stable and unchanging relation to it — which remains identical with itself in its relation to something else.

The criticism of pure mobility took away from the αἰσθητόν its last vestige of independence. In this immediate result the true being which appeared as its ground was not yet known as determinate as the identity and connection of the sensible content, taken not as mobility but as the negativity or 'not-being' of the new being itself. The being of the sensible was earlier discovered to be a relation to itself in which its 'not-being' was not an indeterminate otherness but an equalization and identity of active and passive contraries. The reflection by which now the soul "tries to judge" the images derived from the several senses is likewise the discovery of an indifference and identity of contrary qualities. The object of 'true opinion' is the result and completion of this reflection. In this there are two sides which have to be carefully distinguished. On the side of the sensible it is a negation of its being, which is the same as in the criticism of pure mobility save that the vanishing of immediate qualities is also an equalizing of their relation as opposed — a stabilizing of their mobility. To Socrates and Theaetetus it is explicit in this view that ἐπιστήμη is not αἴσθησις — not the knowledge which men and animals have from birth — but rather the opinion or judgement which gives to the immediate the stability of logical form. The other side is that the result of this reflection appears as a new beginning or 'hypothesis,' at which point one may say, the question whether one knows by or through the senses has been fully answered. This new beginning permits a second definition of ἐπιστήμη, to which the argument now passes.

## V

*'Episteme' is 'true opinion' (187b - 201c)*

Socrates asks Theaetetus to efface from his mind all the previous argument and see whether at the point they have now reached he can discern better what ἐπιστήμη or true knowledge is. An altogether new beginning is to be made, which is also a result of the earlier definition. In this transition is illustrated what Plato means in saying that the forms of being which are apprehended as true are "stepping stones and points of departure" — from one 'hypothesis' to another which provides better than the former

what was sought, viz: the adequacy of content and logical form.

In the cave of *Republic* the first liberation of the prisoners is to know that images are not a being on their own account but rather the things to which they belong. Between this new knowledge and that of images there is a relation analogous to that of the segments of the other principal division of the Line. On the side of 'becoming' as on that of 'being' there is a twofold relation of knowledge to its object. There is an abstract attitude and another in which the content is known as primarily on the side of the universal. The defect of 'true opinion' is opposite to that of αἴσθησις or immediate perception. Where the one knew an unstable externality which disintegrated in the attempt to know it truly, the other knows a universal which is insufficient to images and the immediate. The being 'true opinion' knows is a formal stability and universality of images which the argument will show to be discordant with their immediate being. There is knowledge of a concrete object, but where the concretion is only immediate and superficial. On this account the object can be regarded either as it possesses a logical unity or as it is an indeterminate and ever evasive multiplicity. What is the object of 'true opinion' is thus also the object of 'false opinion'. In trying to determine the meaning of this distinction of true and false the argument will discover the incoherence of its object and ask whether there is not a λόγος giving it true coherence — a λόγος, which brings the external multiplicity, within the universal or logical aspect.

The division of the argument is as follows:

- A. The object of 'true opinion' is considered according to its logical relations to a 'measuring' subject.
- B. To the object thus fully determined and independent the relation of knowledge is a divided reflection which cannot attain the unity of 'being' and 'not-being' which in A 'true opinion' appeared to know.

The argument thus follows a like course to the earlier treatment of sense perception. First is shown what the truth of opinion is, viz. the identical logical structure of knowing and known. As in the earlier movement from the subjective Protagorean 'measure' to the developed relation of a fully determinate or individual object to knowing, so here the argument transfers the question how false opinion is related to true from knowledge to the thing itself. Again, as sense perception did not retain its hold on the logical moments of the individual αἰσθητόν, but was an immediate knowledge only which knew the 'being' but not the negativity or 'not-being' of its object — so likewise 'true opinion' is found incapable of knowing

the false with the true, once its object is fully distinguished from the knowing subject and is for it as a thing. The distinction of true from false opinion then falls to the knowing subject: it is a difference of remembered from immediate knowledge, or else within memory between implicit and actual possession of the remembered. Underlying these divisions is however that between 'true opinion' as immediate and the mediation or negativity by which it is grounded and has claim to be true. At that point true and false opinion are seen to refer to a division of the thing as 'being' and 'not-being' — and the question there occurs whether the bond and connection of true and false, which is not found in the subject, is not an objective λόγος.

A. *The truth of opinion* (187b - 190e)

It occurs to Theaetetus at once in proposing that ἐπιστήμη is 'true opinion' that there is as well a 'false opinion'. That there is this division is noticed with 'opinion' as it is not so readily with αἴσθησις. For the attitude of 'opinion' was seen to have its origin in the effort of the soul to distinguish a thing truly — in an identical and unchanging relation — from the flux of immediate perception. In this mediated knowledge there seems place for error and deception as not in the immediate. So it appears in the genesis of opinion out of immediate knowledge. But if the new standpoint has been attained and is the beginning of the question about 'false opinion', there is much difficulty in answering it.

Socrates expresses a doubt whether 'false opinion' exists. Should they loiter over his doubt or press on with the argument? Theaetetus with his unfailing sense for the direction of the argument reminds Socrates of what he had said in the digression — that the philosopher is not in a hurry. Whether there is 'false opinion' is indeed a question that has to be asked in the timeless perspective of the Socratic philosopher. For the object of 'opinion' is a thing identical with itself. The question is how 'not-being' is related to 'being' so conceived. The difficulty is that the negativity or 'not-being' of something appears not as its relation to something else but to belong to the thing itself. What is it to know falsely or be mistaken about the determinations of this object?

It appears first to Socrates that 'false opinion' must simply be not to know a thing at all. 'True Opinion', as the argument has shown, is the result of a process — the conclusion of a reflection which has stabilized the 'becoming' of images. It is therefore not to be compared with learning or forgetting which are incomplete processes. 'True opinion' is indeed a mediated knowledge. But the

mediation has vanished in the conclusion and there remains only knowing or not knowing. In 'false opinion' will one then know something one knows or something one does not know? Neither is possible.

The argument is to be compared with Protagoras' first account of sense perception: the 'not-being' or relativity of sense organ and what affected it was said always to be. The relation of 'being' and 'not-being' to each other was not yet mediated as in the further development Socrates gave to the position. Here similarly 'being' and 'not-being' are taken as they are for the knowing subject: their relation is not seen as an objective mediation.

Perhaps we are not inquiring rightly, continues Socrates, and should ask not about the knowing of error but about its being. But it seems no less difficult to say what is the 'not-being' which is predicate of the individual known by 'opinion' than when it was considered in relation to knowing. 'Opinion' always knows not an absolutely indeterminate 'One' — a nothing — but some one (*ἐν τι*), a one which is determinably. The 'false opinion' which would know 'not-being' is not a knowing at all.

Socrates extended Protagoras' position before and said it was properly a Heraclitean 'becoming'. As in that 'becoming' the object of *αἴσθησις* appeared as an individual, but so that this individual and its mediation were different. In the present argument the object of 'opinion' is now a determinate individual, in which 'being' and 'not-being' are combined. Why not say as before that its determination is 'intermediate' between contraries? Because the object of 'opinion' already has in it the measuring and equalizing of contraries which is external to the *αἴσθητόν* at that stage of its exposition. For that reason its externality or relation to other evades the argument.

It appears next to Socrates that where the negativity and untruth of 'opinion' will show itself is in an *ἄλλοδοξία* or an opinion which takes one thing for another. In this proposal, as in the unqualified mobility where the being of the sensible was finally grasped, Socrates thinks that the otherness or 'not-being' of 'opinion' will be detected — and so also a distinct knowledge of its 'being' or truth. *Theaetetus* supposes Socrates to mean by *ἄλλοδοξία* such a relation as judging beautiful the ugly or ugly the beautiful, he who does this will truly think falsely. Socrates takes up the expression 'truly false' and explains that he does not intend to say that a contrary has its character not from itself but from its contrary. He means only that they are different. But is it possible in thought to lay down or posit something as not itself but something other? The thought that does so must know either both or one or

other of the two. Yes, assents Theaetetus, either at once or successively it will both combine and separate the two. Socrates then describes the thought which terminates in a 'true opinion' or judgment as an inner, unspoken ('logos') which determines what is thus known as both identical and as divided. The judgment is a combination of the identity and the difference of the terms: through the difference of contraries something is completely mediated and identical with itself in its otherness or 'not-being'.

The object of 'true opinion' has thus drawn into itself its 'not-being' or 'falsity'. The αἰσθητόν likewise was an object whose 'not-being' was contained in its being, but in that case only immediately. Where sensible images are diversely combined in waking and dream states of the soul or in other disturbances, the determinations of 'true opinion' are universal and unaffected by alterations in that part of the soul which reflects bodily changes. Who in the inner λόγος, which opinion properly is, ever confused beautiful with ugly, unjust with just? Not even in sleep does one ever venture to say this λόγος that 'odds' are 'evens'.

The object of 'true opinion' thus turns out to quite the opposite of the αἰσθητόν or immediate sensible. Both are the conclusion of a λόγος, but the one an external 'becoming', the other unchanging and in the soul. The object thus attained is not an Idea in which case the inner and the outer λόγος would be known as one and the same. Here the sensible images belong to a universal or self-identical being — to a thing — but the difference of things from one another straightway appears as an external multiplicity. The argument has separated things from one another: the 'hypothesis' that true being is the thing or object of 'true opinion' is the immediate result of this separation. The negativity or 'not-being' of things passes to an external reflection whose movement is towards regaining the original objective λόγος or a true knowledge of the 'hypothesis'.

#### *B. The externality of opinion (190e - 201c)*

The 'hypothesis' that the thing is true being has been laid down. The knowing subject takes separate and self-identical things in their immediacy to be its proper object. The connection of sense images by which the 'hypothesis' was established is external to the immediate result. The 'hypothesis' is thus not known as what it truly is, namely as a λόγος and unification of diverse sensible qualities in one subject. The course of knowledge is again to bring the externality of the sensible into an identical relation, where its division and negativity will be known as also continuous and

self-identical being. It is only at the point of extreme separation of immediate and universal or true being that the relation of things to one another can resume the form of a λόγος. Memory and imagination are a κάθαρσις through which the soul seeks a λόγος. The bridge by which it is able to connect sensible and intelligible logically is, however, language. But with that one has passed to the final division of the dialogue.

*B, a Memory and sense perception (191c - 195b)*

Error is not ascribed to knowledge of the thing which is presupposed to be true being and to be truly known but to the imperfection of memory. What memory is, the argument has not the resources to treat, unless through an image. To discuss the nature of memory the argument must have discovered the Idea of soul, which much exceeds the limits of *Theaetetus*. Nonetheless the examination of 'opinion' brings into view very clearly what the function of memory is in attaining knowledge of true being. In this regard it may be called an imperfect λόγος, which gives to sense images the form of identity and universality, but looks back to αἴσθησις for the division of this identity.

Memory is compared to a wax tablet which according to its composition and texture receives more or less perfectly, impressions stamped on it. Nothing would be more mistaken than to suppose that this 'tabula rasa' is for Plato more than an image and illustration. There are great differences between persons in the accuracy of their memories, and some are on this account more prone than others to take something they now perceive for something they remember, whether that about which they err had itself been previously known or not.

Why some remember better than others is only an incidental question to the present argument. The point of great importance is that 'false opinion' is from an imperfect accommodation of memory and immediate perception to each other. Through memory, sensations are preserved from the flux which the argument has shown to be their nature. But the universality memory gives them is insufficient to establish an identical and infallible relation to the thing perceived. Looking to the further course of the argument, one will say that the memory which permits recognition and failures of recognition has not analysed sensations sufficiently and is therefore misled by superficial likenesses and differences. It does not know the essential connection of 'being' and 'not-being' in the individual thing, but rather records external and contingent distinctions.

*B, b Inner memory (195b - 200d)*

Theaetetus is satisfied that they have discovered what 'false opinion' is, until Socrates draws to his attention that in memory itself, where there is no immediate perception present, one not infrequently falls into error. This inner memory is indeed the realm of fancy which can combine images as it likes and is not bound to perceived connections. On this account, people suppose to exist all manner of monstrous animals none has ever seen. But also in what one knows well according to an art, e.g., the knowledge of numbers by arithmetic, one makes mistakes of memory. Errors of this latter kind reveal best the nature of this memory. For the arithmetician can easily correct a mistake he might have made about the sum of seven and five, or, more easily, of larger numbers simply by counting the units. In passing from the identity to the division and difference of its objects memory and imagination do not break them up into simple elements. They are moved therefore by imprecise likenesses and differences, and this is the source of error.

But to speak appropriately of inner memory within its own limits has the same difficulty for the present argument as with the first memory which turned to received images and did not draw its content from itself. Again Socrates illustrates the operation of memory by an image. The image as before serves to explain how it is possible at the same time to know and not know something. In Aristotelian language one may know potentially but not actually. Platonically, knowledge is said to be 'recollection': it is a potentiality which is brought forth from the soul and actualized more and more adequately in the movement from *αἴσθησις* to *ἐπιστήμη* in the true sense. The image of the wax tablet did not express that the imprint was of something already known. That this is so was indeed contained in the logical explication of 'true opinion' — the equality of knowing and known and then the relation of knowledge to the thing as an immediate individual. The earlier image assumed the separation of immediate being from the universal, and thus an unwary reader might ascribe to Plato the crudity of a Lockean empiricism. An image for the inner memory must approach more closely the Platonic concept of knowledge and describe a movement from the universal or potential to the divided and particular. It does indeed seem incongruous to Socrates, that they should be talking about knowledge at all when they do not know what it is. But, recognizing that they have been for some time engaged in an impure dialectic — a concrete dialectic in fact, but where the relation of the logical elements is concealed



by a manifold content — and leaving an abstract clarity and refusal of the concrete to sophistic reasoners (ἀντιλογικοί), Socrates ventures to present his image.

There is a difference, he proposes, between possessing and actually having. The distinction is easily recognized in the arts. Having acquired an art, one possesses it also when he does not exercise it and have before him what he has acquired and possesses. This distinction Socrates represents by the image of a bird cage in which one keeps and may be said to possess all manner of birds. Another matter is to catch and have a particular bird. The image illustrates, what Sophists make much about, how one can both know and not know something. It appears, also to give a solution to the problem how 'false opinion' is possible. For in trying to catch a certain bird one may miss it and seize another in its stead.

There is much to attend to in Socrates' image. The birds move about freely in the cage or, as one might say, they enter into diverse associations, of which the psychological philosophers of a later age sought to discover the laws. In the present argument the laws are already known: they are the inner logical form or λόγος by which the object of opinion was constituted. The birds move about because their manifold differences have not been stabilized and reduced to the logical form. One has the ferment of imagination, where the content not being inwardly unified, is not what comes to mind in the power of the soul, as it does in the recollection which is according to an acquired art.

Because of this randomness in the soul's recollection a difficulty occurs to Socrates. When one calls to mind another 'knowledge' than that intended, one knows it not by knowledge — not by its identity with the intention, but by a negativity or 'not-being'. But that is to know by ignorance, which is like seeing not by sight but by blindness.

Theaetetus sees a solution if in the bird cage there are not only 'knowledges' but 'ignorances' — negative memories. Praising the acuteness of his young student, whose proposal is in the right direction, Socrates makes the further difficulty that when one has in error caught a negative memory or ignorance one will not know it as this but suppose it to be something known. But this does not seem possible in the case where one knew both the being and the negativity or where one knew neither or where one knew the one and not the other. The same perplexity occurred with the other image, and has in it that memory is taken as positive only. It appeared already in the argument that the thing was identical with itself in its otherness or negativity. The intention of Socrates'

images is not certainly to oppose to the externality of things, an abstract identity, but rather an identity which is the potentiality of their external dividedness.

Socrates points to the answer to his difficulty in asking whether over the positive and negative knowledge one will propose another knowledge relating the two — with which would recur the same problem and thus an endless regress. Elsewhere Parmenides made it an objection to the 'participation' of a plurality of things in the Ideas that as often as one saw a universal over them all, there would recur a difference of the two sides and the demand for a universal which would encompass the new division. Here by his image of the birds, Socrates has indicated where the solution of the 'one over many' is at least initially to be sought, namely in the knowledge that the collection and division of the many are the work of the soul in itself — an activity by which it comes to have what it already possesses. The image needs only the correction that possession should be seen as knowledge of the identity of images in their difference and relativity. With this criticism reappears the *λόγος* which the thing is known to be which the soul did not clearly discern so far as it approached it through the mediation of memory and imagination.

But now appears a greater difficulty, namely that the inner knowledge the soul has of things and that which it has of their external multiplicity are entirely divided from each other. Parmenides in his criticism of 'participation' went on to consider the possibility that 'participation' was not of a presupposed many to a universal but was, the whole relation, "in the soul". That will be the case if, as in the present argument, possessing and having are one movement — where to say that something is known not by knowledge but by ignorance will have the meaning that it is known through its mediation or relation to another. In this there remains, however, a division between this return to a knowledge of the thing as a *λόγος* and the immediate knowledge for which it appeared as an external individual. The criticism of 'true opinion' now attends to this division.

*B, c Judgment as immediate knowledge (200d - 201c)*

Socrates asks Theaetetus to reconsider his proposed definition of *ἐπιστήμη* in the face of the difficulties encountered. Rightly he is unmoved and replies that "True opinion is unerring and all that comes into being according to it is beautiful and good". Against him however, continues Socrates, is the whole class of rhetors and pleaders in the courts thought "greatest for wisdom". For they

are able in a short time to persuade, not teach, the judges the truth about some alleged crime. About facts which one could only know for certain if he were present and observed them, orators can give the judges a true opinion whereby they decide the case rightly, but without *ἐπιστήμη* or true knowledge of it.

Theaetetus had grasped the complete mediation of things by their otherness or 'not-being' to which Socrates led the argument. If something came into being according to this knowledge it would in its externality maintain its essential identity and thus be what one understands as good and beautiful. But the orators who can argue pro or contra and thus have in some sense, knowledge of the contrariety and total mediation of just and unjust, etc., can bring about a true determination of the case though the judges have heard only plausible reasons and no intuition of their actual connection in *this* case. Theaetetus has discerned an inner unity of 'being' and 'not-being' or of true and false. Socrates puts before him that this inner connection does not appear in the external, where instead one has the individual case with its many circumstances and a reasoning about them which is not known as the reason or 'logos' of the case itself. The truth of opinion is thus found to be merely inward and without reality.

If one would continue to argue that 'true opinion' is *ἐπιστήμη*, the argument demands that he show it to have a *λόγος* which is not only "in the soul" but is also brought forth and is the truth of the external multiplicity. Such a *λόγος* is language, which in the names of things gives an intuitive and existent basis to the discourse of the soul, which was what 'true opinion' by itself could not supply.

### *Επιστήμη is 'true opinion' with a λόγος (201c - 210c)*

The third attempt Theaetetus makes to discover that *ἐπιστήμη* is one will not divide from the second as that was divided from the first. Rather it is a continuation and completion of the second. The examination of the second 'hypothesis', that true being is what is known by opinion or a knowledge of things, has only been carried to the point where it has a like objectivity to the properly philosophical criticism of *αἴσθησις* — that which is according to the Socratic Good. True opinion was found to be of a being whose qualities were not immediate but had been mediated by the essential logical form and was self-identical in relation to their 'not-being'. Hitherto the criticism has sought to bring the difference and 'not-being' of things back to the first concept. In this their immediacy and externality has not been known as a realization of their inner *λόγος*, or, more Platonically, as a

'participation' in it, but as it was for a knowledge striving to overcome an external relation to its object.

How Plato understands the true 'participation' of things in the universal is expressed by Parmenides as a problem: if 'participation' is "in the soul" there is a twofold consequence: either "all things think", that is to say, their 'being' and 'not-being' is for a subject and not the division of the thing itself; or if the division is objective, then it has not the true character of a λόγος. This second alternative is, in Parmenides' words, that "though all things are thoughts, they will be unthought" (νοήματα ὄντα ἀνόητα εἶναι). In the language of *Theaetetus*, they will be a λόγος which still only accompanies 'true opinion'. The consequence of that is, as the argument will show, that the 'participation' of the many — what they have of the universal — is not a λόγος but a multiplicity of parts in which 'being' and 'not-being' are not united — unless in the negation of things, that is, in the retraction and abolition of the 'hypothesis' that things are true being. This result is admirably expressed by saying that though things are thoughts they are unthought.

The argument is divided as follows:

- A. The form by which one would attain a reasoned knowledge of things is different from their individuality. There is no λόγος of individuals, which can only be named, but only of the composite.
- B. This division of individuals from the relation to one another being shown to be groundless, the λόγος has the character of self-identity and is the parts out of which the individual is composed.
- C. This relation of material components to the individual is not a true λόγος but rather the complete determination of the individual in which it is distinguished from every other. What so distinguishes the individual is however, the 'true opinion'. The addition of a λόγος has thus no meaning — unless out of the argument appears another concept of ἐπιστήμη in which the universal will no longer be 'participated' as a contingent relation of components to individual.

*A. The 'logos' as indeterminate relation (201c - 206b)*

The first explanation given of a λόγος is rather a denial of it — a separation of its positive and negative moments. In the order of the argument it takes up from the previous attempts to mediate between the immediate and the universal by memory and imagination. The mediation is now by language, and the relation of

language to what it speaks of is understood on the analogy of the spoken language. Individuals are as letters — στοιχεῖα or 'elements' — which can be named but have no 'logos'. The combinations of letters into syllables and complete words are like the combinations of things which can be expressed by the combination of names.

It is obvious that on such an account there is no λόγος of things in the sense of a definition. The whole argument of *Theaetetus* is preliminary to Plato's investigation of definition in *Sophist*. The position here given is with good reason ascribed to Antisthenes, and, like that of Aristippus already examined, belongs to the logical preliminaries of the Platonic philosophy. The criticism of it is to be seen as purely intrinsic to the position. Antisthenes sought in an abstract universality independence from pleasure and everything superfluous to 'nature' — this understood, so far as his undeveloped logic permitted, in a teleological sense. The logic of this independence — in what way this universal is incipiently principle of the sensible — has been explained in the account already given how thought is one with itself in the object of 'true opinion'. The relation of the universal so defined to the sensible must be through its own logic — through a λόγος which is not interposed between the extremes, as Antisthenes attempts to do.

The criticism is in general like that of Protagoras where he claimed that immediate perception was 'measure' of the just and holy, viz., that it knew only an immediate and abstract universal which was not, like that of the Socratic philosopher, principle of the divided or negative. What that criticism achieved was to bring out that the relation of the αἰσθητόν to the universal must be mediated by the total form — there appearing as the contrary moments of time. Here likewise the argument will lead to a second concept of λόγος in which it appears as a connection of affirmative and negative as opposed.

Socrates' argument against this position, which would hold to a middle ground between sensible and intelligible, is to destroy its pre-supposition of formless individuals or things, regarded as prior to and independent of all predicates. These individuals can seem exempt from criticism in that nothing can be said of them, not even that they are. For in 'is' or any other predicate, there is division and the possibility of negation, where the individuals are supposed to be altogether undivided and without parts. The argument has three parts, of which the first proves that, if such individuals are primary, then it is mistaken to say that there is any λόγος or determinate knowledge of their relation to one another. An example from the knowledge of letters and syllables — the

model used by the authors of the theory to explain it — will suffice. If there is no determinate knowledge of either  $\Sigma$  or  $\Omega$ , neither can there be of  $\Sigma\Omega$  — the first syllable of Socrates' name. For how can one know both of elements of which one knows neither? Knowledge of the syllable is of the being or continuity of the letters. It is denied in the assumptions that there is any being of the letters. If the  $\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$  or relation of the elements is not grounded in them as simple individuals, then it must be regarded as a form ( $\iota\delta\acute{\epsilon}\alpha$ ) on its own account. The second argument will show that such a form, which is assumed to be different from the elements and to be composite, has in truth the undividedness ascribed to them. The argument begins from the assumption that this form has parts, as against the individual. Will then the whole, which the form is, be different from all the parts? Theaetetus thinks so. His answer appears plausible because the form has been separated from the many individuals. It is such a division as between continuous and discrete in numbers — between all as singular and as plural. But Socrates shows that with numbers and what is numerable, form as continuity and the discrete individuals are not separate. To avoid this consequence one may deny that the whole is composed of parts. But whole and part are relative terms which have no meaning in isolation from each other. It is conceded that one cannot remain with a duality of form.

The other course is to say that the  $\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$  or form is undivided. 'Being' and dividedness or 'not-being' will then be identical in the  $\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$  as they were for the elements. The cause of indivision will be the same in the one case as in the other, namely the relation now of the form as then of individuals to the Socratic One or Good. The notion of a  $\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$  which will be different from nameable individuals — or of names from statements — has to be abandoned.

The following comment may elucidate the argument. Antisthenes, if one assumes what is certainly a very distinct and coherent Socratic position, to be his, begins with the insight that in being named things are given the form of identity against all division or 'not-being' — to which division belongs also 'being' so far as contrary to 'not-being'. This understanding of names is the same as that to be found in *Cratylus*. It results from a distinguishing of the logical form of names from their physical being as sounds. This distinction becomes clear at the point where the latter is known in the Cratylan form of pure mobility or 'becoming' — where it has no stability, but is nonentity, against the identity by which the name has meaning and is not mere sound. This physical being of letters does not delay the argument of *Theaetetus* at this

point, partly because *Cratylus* is assumed known, partly because the being of the sensible has already been treated in the dialogue itself.

What is attended to here is the difference of things from the identity they have in the name. Where the same argument occurs in *Sophist* it is observed that names are not of themselves but of something named. They would be of themselves if the many, which are named, were not self-identical in their difference or 'not-being'. That the named is a pure individual beyond formal difference is indeed exactly what is asserted in the position now being examined. At the same time it is argued that along with the self-identity or being these individuals have as named, they are also divided and different from one another: the λόγος of things is a relation of this dividedness to names as likewise divided and different from one another.

While Antisthenes turns from the sensible and would be independent of it, his position turns out also to be a materialism: he holds to the being of things and denies the Ideas. Socrates' criticism is a destruction of that materialism, so far as it is the assertion of individual things as independent of universal being and the essential form. The many individuals, if one takes them strictly as that — as units beyond the division of form, are not other than the identical relation in which they are named. That is the first stage in his argument. The second is that the difference of the many as within that relation is a formal or essential division — a relation of parts to whole where one term is not without the other. It remains to bring these two parts of the argument into one view.

Socrates moves to his third argument. The first simply presupposed the many individuals or things. The second has brought them under the universal in their two aspects — as undivided and as divided. The third does away with the residual independence of the many. Socrates draws Theaetetus' attention to the process of learning, using as examples the learning to read and write or to play a musical instrument. It is not the case that individuals are unknowable. Instead he who has learned these arts knows the unanalysable elements through and through as universals, so that he can recognize and produce them in any context. The elements are not, as the theory asserted, knowable only by immediate perception, but are rather a self-identity and continuity of things in all their external diversity.

Socrates omits to give other proofs he knows that this division of elements from their combination or form is untenable. He observes that λόγος is here understood as language. If this λόγος converted 'true opinion' into ἐπιστήμη, then everyone not deaf and dumb

from birth would acquire true knowledge after whatever time, longer or shorter, he needed to acquire the habit of language. The dialogue does not treat the nature of language farther than it belongs to a critique of 'opinion' or judgment. Socrates' comment should, however, be in the highest degree instructive to linguistic philosophers of the present time. Language is an imperfect λόγος which does not attain a true concreteness. One holds to language against the reductive power of thought. But the argument shows that, once there has appeared the subjective freedom of Socrates or the Sophists, language has itself to be stabilized by a concreteness of thought.

*B. The λόγος as sum of parts (206e - 208c)*

The author of the position criticized may have meant something else by a λόγος. It is thus not yet time to conclude that 'true opinion' with the addition of a λόγος may not be true knowledge. The further course of the argument is to be regarded as a continuation of the criticism of Antisthenes. It is this in the sense that it renews and deepens the division between matter and form, already overcome, it might seem, in refuting the first concept of a λόγος. The tendency and final result of the argument is the war *Sophist* speaks of between the Friends of the Ideas and Sons of Earth. The dissolution of this conflict is the true beginning of a knowledge of the Ideas.

The argument of this last part of *Theaetetus* is the same as that by which a resolution of the conflict is indicated in *Sophist*. When one attends to the nature of the argument it will be clear that the Friends of the Ideas are none other than the Megarics. Quite apart from later testimony as to their teaching, one can be sure of this from *Theaetetus*. Euclides and Terpsion can hear read to them at the end their victory over obtuse and unteachable opponents, once they have recognized the common logical structure of the two positions.

The criticism of the first λόγος ends where it is seen to be the stable relation of the differences of things to their immediate being. The λόγος, which was different from individuals, now is the division and relativity of things as self-identical. With this, the argument has returned to the original concept of things. There the movement of thought was towards separating things from one another. Now their external differences are stabilized or given the form of being as against the things as immediate individuals. It is this relation Plato has in view in speaking of the war between the Friends of the Ideas and the Materialists of Sons of Earth. The universals through which things are self-identical in relation to one



another are not Ideas, but only images or qualities as they belong to things, and are freed from the flux of immediate being. Matter, again, is not truly spoken of by those who know it simply as an immediate self-identity and resistance to touch.

In *Sophist* Plato gives a provisional definition of being such as will satisfy, not indeed the Materialists, but their more reasonable opponents. It is provisional in the same sense as is the second concept of a λόγος here as sum of parts, namely as being a stage in an incomplete argument. In *Sophist* that is said to be which has in any degree the power of acting or being acted upon. It is long since familiar in the argument of *Theaetetus* how Plato understands the power of acting or being acted upon. Action and passion are through contrariety of form. In the first λόγος 'not-being' is brought into an identical relation or is found to have the indivision which before was said to be different from it and the object of an immediate knowledge. The second λόγος begins from this result, so that 'not-being' is the otherness and differences of what is self-identical. With this one first has a λόγος in the proper sense. The development is logically like that at the beginning from Protagoras to a Heraclitean λόγος. Here Plato has before him a division which is at once of the form and of the matter. The latter in this division is the relation of constituent parts to an individual composed of them — in which, that is, the negativity or otherness of the parts is related to their being. This individual Plato spoke of earlier as 'between' (μεταξύ) the contraries. And this intermediacy he went on to explain as a contingent individuality which was other than the necessary transition of contraries. Similarly here the defect of the λόγος on its external or material side is the contingency of the composite or product in relation to parts which have the stability of logical form.

In this relation appears clearly why a λόγος cannot transform true 'opinion' into ἐπιστήμη. The relation of the essential λόγος to the 'participant' is impeded by a priority of parts or constituents to the complete determination or realization of the form in the individual. In an Aristotelian language, applicable with suitable reservations, accidental determinations have a priority to substance. What remains to be accomplished in the present argument is to dissolve properties and their external appearance as material constituents into the simple form of the λόγος.

### C. The λόγος as distinguishing mark (208c - 210d)

The second λόγος left the individual indeterminate in relation to the parts. Hence to know Hesiod's hundred parts of a wagon or

the constituents of whatever else is not true knowledge of a thing. It is not a knowledge of how the parts are determined and united in the individual — not a knowledge of the form but of the factual composition in a particular instance. This defect a third notion of λόγος attempts to correct. The λόγος of something will be that by which an individual is distinguished from every other or its distinguishing mark.

One will for example, have true knowledge of Theaetetus if one's thought of him is fully determinate or individualized. But whatever is said of him is common to many. Even that he is snub-nosed and with protruding eyes he has in common with Socrates and as many others as are such. It will be necessary to know the differences of these differences right down to Theaetetus, if Socrates meeting him tomorrow can be sure he will recognize him.

The search for an ultimate distinguishing mark is, however, a waste of time, not because it cannot be found, but because one has it already in the 'true opinion'. That this is so has long been in the argument: the concept of 'true opinion' was precisely that by it one knew an individual self-identical in its qualities. The addition of a λόγος to 'true opinion' has therefore no meaning at all: it would be an additional opinion about the difference of something to that which already knows the difference truly.

But perhaps what was meant by the λόγος was not an opinion about the difference but knowledge (γινῶναι) of it? But that is equivalent to saying that true knowledge or ἐπιστήμη will be right opinion along with an ἐπιστήμη of the difference. A foolish statement, where we are trying to discover what ἐπιστήμη is! With that the second definition breaks down no less than the first.

The argument ends in a dark and abrupt manner. There are two stages to the conclusion. The first is that in truth things are absolutely distinguished by 'opinion'. The second is that one does not have thereby a true knowledge of this complete difference. For such knowledge would be required that the self-identity 'opinion' knows things to have through their logical form or relation to the knowing subject should also appear truly. For that their externality or materiality — the relation of material constituents to individual must itself exhibit the simplicity of the logical form. Matter, that is, must appear, not as parts or a determinate content which is presupposed in its finitude, but as the contradiction and nullity of existent contraries — as a nullity in its difference from form.

Thus one may say is confirmed the adherence of Euclides to the Socratic One or Good and the argument that it can have not true

realization in the sensible. Theaetetus may have been frustrated in his attempts to discover a knowledge which would be true by the objective measure of that principle. If in the future he conceives further notions what ἐπιστήμη is, they will be better for the present examination. That is, he will have to look to a universal being which is the ground of the sensible. Meantime he will be easier to live with, not thinking he knows what he does not know. He can no longer falsely think that truth belongs to him in his particularity — in that wherein each is potentially at war with others and does not know the universal as what is first and substantial.

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