The Unity of Oneness and Plurality in Plato's *Theaetetus*

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Daniel Bloom

LEXINGTON BOOKS
Lanham • Boulder • New York • London

Published by Lexington Books
An imprint of The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc.
4501 Forbes Boulevard, Suite 200, Lanham, Maryland 20706
www.rowman.com

Unit A, Whitacre Mews, 26-34 Stannary Street, London SE11 4AB

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Information Available

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Bloom, Daniel (Assistant Professor of Philosophy)
The unity of oneness and plurality in Plato's Theaetetus / Daniel Bloom.
pages cm
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-0-7391-8571-1 (cloth : alk. paper) -- ISBN 978-0-7391-8572-8 (electronic)
1. Plato. Theaetetus. 2. Knowledge, Theory of. 3. Ontology. I. Title.
B386.B56 2015
121--dc23

2015016686

The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI/NISO Z39.48-1992.

Printed in the United States of America

This book is dedicated to my parents, Barry and Talya Bloom, in gratitude for their unwavering love and support.

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Preface

Every commentator on a Platonic dialogue faces the difficult choice of deciding how far he or she is willing to wander away from the explicit claims made in the text. This difficulty arises because Plato himself does not make any assertions in the dialogues, choosing rather to put the assertions in the mouths of his characters. Taking any claim, then, as Plato's position requires a willingness to interpret the text, to draw a conclusion he never explicitly endorses.

In order to do this one has to first assume that Plato is endorsing some position, and then take on a method for determining what claims can be established as expressing that position. There is much disagreement regarding the proper methods for interpreting a dialogue, so much so that finding a commentator that makes similar methodological assumptions as you do is like finding a companion in the search for knowledge.

Settling on specific methodological assumptions should only be done partially prior to the account of the dialogue, for the dialogues themselves address what the proper assumptions are; i.e., the dialogues in general, and the *Theaetetus* in particular, provide us with an account of good methodological assumptions. Hence, we must assume a method of interpretation going into the text that allows us to adapt it to whatever it illuminates for us in Plato's account. In other words, it must be a moving method, one that is capable of adapting as it proceeds; one that can absorb what it discovers. This means that in some very real sense the result of an account of a Platonic dialogue leads the reader directly back to the beginning of the inquiry — only the method of this new beginning should have now been filtered through the dialogue itself.

This book makes two primary methodological assumptions at the outset of its account of the dialogue. The first assumption is that Plato is a master of both his style and content. Thus, if there is a question as to whether or not an apparent "mistake" is intentional or not, I always give Plato the benefit of the doubt. I do not assume that Plato has changed his mind simply because I am unable to understand the contradiction in the way that Plato intends it. For example, toward the end of the *Theaetetus* Plato offers a clearly invalid argument dealing with alls and wholes. My assumption is that Plato did not make an error, nor is he trying to slip one past us; rather, there is a point being made about the difference between different kinds of unities, a point that may be overlooked if the reader's attention was not captured by something as jarring as Socrates making what at first glance appears to be a bad argument.

The second methodological assumption is that each dialogue is a whole unto itself. To be a whole unto itself each of the dialogues must have a unity to them. Our task, as active readers of a dialogue, is to discover and grasp the unity.

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Each dialogue's unity can be grasped in many ways, just as the unity of a wagon can be thought of as being composed of five parts, or one hundred parts. As long as different accounts of a dialogue allow us to grasp the unity of the dialogue to the same extent, each will be as good an account as the other.

With all this in mind, my hope is that this book accomplishes two things. First, that it supplies an account of the *Theaetetus* that uncovers a principle of unity of the dialogue that is similar to the one Plato had in mind while writing the text, and that this principle of unity tells us something significant both about the world, and about how we know the world. Second, that it serves as an example of a meaningful approach to reading a single Platonic dialogue as a coherent whole, an example that can be applied more generally to other dialogues, and thus allow for a richer engagement with Plato's entire corpus.

Acknowledgments

Many people have helped in the production of this book. I am deeply indebted to Edward Halper for his guidance and encouragement, as well as for being a wonderful example of what it means to live a philosophical life. To my brother, Laurence Bloom, for his openness with philosophical insight, and for being such a willing partner in philosophical investigation. To Graham Schuster, for his philosophical companionship, and for both his honest criticisms and boundless positivity. To Richard Winfield, whose comments on a draft of this book raised questions I had overlooked, and whose enthusiasm helped convince me to publish. To Elizabeth Brient with whom I read the *Theaetetus* for the first time. To Joey Carter, who read and commented on the entire manuscript. To Brian Howell for growing with me as we developed the ability to do philosophical work. To the University of Georgia Philosophy Department and the Joseph Bertram. Gittler Fellowship for allowing me to focus my attention exclusively on the book for a period of time.

Introduction

The guiding question in the *Theaetetus* is "what is knowledge?" The dialogue ends without Socrates and Theaetetus having given an adequate account of what knowledge is, and as a result it appears that the dialogue fails to achieve its goal of giving a *logos*[1] of knowledge. However, I will argue that there is a way in which their inability to give a *logos* of knowledge really constitutes a success: the failure of the dialogue's *logos* to capture knowledge is in accord with its implicit proof that knowledge and *logos* are incompatible. In other words, the dialogue's inability to give a *logos* of knowledge constitutes a kind of proof that there is neither a *logos* of knowledge nor a knowledge of *logos*.

The success of this proof, however, rests upon some kind of limited knowledge of *logos* and some kind of limited *logos* of knowledge. This means that the dialogue gives us an argument limiting the connection between knowledge and *logos* that itself rests upon that very connection. This is not an oversight on Plato's part. Rather, I will argue that Plato is using this reflexivity in order to draw out the details of the limited connection between the two.

The basic argument for the incompatibility of knowledge and *logos* rests on two points. The first is that knowledge is only of what is. Since to be is to be one, this means that *knowledge is always of what is one*. The second is that *logos is inherently multiple*. The inherent multiplicity of *logos* means that any attempt to express what is known must always fail because it must always make something that is one into something that is many. Yet, in order for *logos* to be meaningful, which is one of the dialogue's fundamental assumptions, the multiplicity that *logos* contains must somehow be the same as the oneness that it seeks to express. In short, the dialogue's failure to give a *logos* of knowledge is in accord with its implicit proof that the oneness of knowledge and the manyness of *logos* are incompatible, and yet the recognition of this depends upon the ability to connect the oneness of knowledge and the manyness of *logos*.

This book attempts to make sense of the connection between the oneness of knowledge and the multiplicity of *logos* by trying to clarify the ways in which the connection is and is not intelligible. This is not merely an epistemic question; it is also an ontological one. In the *Theaetetus*, the oneness of knowledge is tied directly to the oneness of being, and we will see that *logos* is tied directly to the multiplicity inherent within distinct beings. Thus, the investigation into the relation between the oneness of knowledge and the multiplicity of *logos* is also a more general investigation into the relation between oneness and plurality, and that between Being and distinct being.

Plato uses both literary and philosophical devices in the *Theaetetus* in

order to direct the readers' thinking toward the issues involved in the relation and opposition between oneness and plurality. He represents the opposition dramatically through Parmenides and Heraclitus. The refutation of Theaetetus' first proper definition of knowledge ("knowledge is perception"[2]) undermines the Heraclitean position that everything is in flux, which holds that there is no being or oneness. The discussion of false opinion[3] following Theaetetus' second proper definition of knowledge ("knowledge is true opinion"[4]) undermines the Parmenidean position that all is One and there is no plurality. We are left with the difficulty of working our way through the problems involved in understanding the middle ground between the oneness of Parmenides and the plurality of Heraclitus.

This middle ground is inherently contradictory. There are many ways in which this contradiction expresses itself, and many difficulties involved in trying to make sense of it. The basic problem, briefly, is that while all being is One, distinct being also requires multiplicity.[5] Thus, distinct being is somehow both one and many. But how is this possible? To state the same problem somewhat differently: distinct beings are composed of parts, and yet to be is to be one. Thus, a unity composed of parts seems to be something that both is and is not.

The connection between oneness and knowledge means that this problem of connecting oneness and manyness, or of understanding how the same thing both is and is not, is directly connected to the question "what is knowledge?" We will find that the account generated by the recognition that distinct being both is and is not leads to an account where we both know and don't know the same thing. As a result, the account I am offering can be read as an argument that concludes that all knowing (with the possible exception of knowledge of the One) is simultaneously a not-knowing.[6]

Sketch of the book's main argument

I will give a brief outline of the argument here. The argument is strange and not as clear as I would like it to be, but that may be unavoidable when arguing that every act of knowing is also an act of not-knowing. Each distinct being is a multiplicity that is somehow held together as one thing by a principle of unity. The principle of unity of any distinct being cannot itself be a part of that which it unifies, but rather must exist separately from the multiplicity. Since the principle of unity makes the unified object one, and oneness and being are the same, it follows that the being of that which is unified exists separately from the object it allows to exist. Since the unified object's being is what it is, and since this being is separate from it, the unified object is not what it is. This means that a simple grasp (such as an opinion [δόξα]) of a unified object both is and is not a grasp of that object, for knowledge of the unified object requires grasping how it is one, which in turn requires grasping its principle of unity.

But, since the principle of unity is distinct from that which it unifies, this grasp of the unified object both is and is not knowledge of the unified object. The unifier as well, if it is also both one and many, will itself then only be known by grasping its principle of unity. Thus, the process will repeat until we reach that which is entirely one. It follows that the entirely One is the only being that can be unqualifiedly known, since the knowledge of everything else is a simultaneous knowing and not knowing.

The process of repeatedly finding higher and higher principles of unity generates levels of being, each lower level depending on the higher for its oneness. The relations between the levels of being are at the root of the account of *logos* I will be offering.[7] As a unification of disparate elements, *logos* accomplishes the same thing that the unifier does. That is, a successful *logos* is one that allows someone to grasp an object's principle of unity. Considering *logos*'s inherent multiplicity, we see that the ability it gives someone to grasp oneness (in the form of a principle of unity) must also entail the *logos* itself being left behind. As such, a meaningful *logos* shows itself to be the transition from a lower level of being to a higher. In other words, a meaningful *logos* overcomes itself. This is the success of the *Theaetetus*, it gives us a *logos* that allows us to abandon it so as to be able to grasp the principle of unity that makes the dialogue a single *logos* as opposed to several disconnected *logoi*. The principle of unity of the dialogue is the levels of being. The levels of being, however, are both one and many. Thus, the *logos* of the *Theaetetus*, if successful, leads us to the need for a new *logos* so that we can grasp the unity of the levels of being.

The following is a brief summary of the primary sections of the dialogue. This will be followed by a brief outline of the chapters that make up the book. The breakdown of the chapters does not precisely line up with the primary sections of the dialogue. The reason for this should become evident in the book itself.

Outline of the primary sections of the dialogue

142a-151e: This section begins with the dialogue's external frame, in which Plato tells us how the discussion between Socrates, Theaetetus and Theodorus came to be recorded, and in which he raises the question of what distinguishes one *logos* from several *logoi*? Following the frame, there are four key components in this section of the dialogue. The first is an introductory conversation between the dialogue's main characters. The second is an initial attempt at a definition of knowledge. The failure of this attempt is followed by examples of what a proper definition is, including Theaetetus' own definition of incommensurable numbers. Lastly, this section includes the famous image of Socrates as a midwife.

151e-187a: This section contains the first proper definition of knowledge: "knowledge is perception." The lengthy justification and refutation of this definition includes an investigation and refutation of Protagoras' "man is the measure" doctrine, and of the Heraclitean position that "all is flux." This section is interrupted by a rather lengthy digression comparing the character of the philosopher with the character of the lawyer. The section ends with the pivotal argument undermining the claim that knowledge is perception, and proving the existence of the soul as a principle of unity.

187a-201c: This section contains the second proper definition of knowledge: "knowledge is true opinion." This section is almost entirely taken up with an attempt to answer the question "what is false opinion?"

201c-210d: This section contains the third proper definition of knowledge: "knowledge is true opinion with a *logos*." Socrates attempts to explain this definition by appealing to an atomistic account of nature, an account that he refers to as a "dream." The investigation into the dream contains the central discussion of the whole (ὅλος) as a combination of the all (πᾶς) and the single look (ἴδος). The dialogue concludes with three attempts at a definition of *logos*.

Outline of book's chapters

Chapter 1 (142a-184b): The first chapter establishes the fundamental opposition that serves as the ground for the dialogue's account. The opposition is between the One and the many, or, to put it in dramatic terms, between Parmenides and Heraclitus. Plato goes to significant lengths to get the reader to recognize that all beings that we can think or talk about are both one and many, a recognition which sets us up to face the question of how multiplicity can be held together as one. Through the process of establishing the opposition at the heart of the dialogue chapter 1 also offers a broad sketch of the arguments to come.

Chapter 2 (184b-201a): The relation between the unified and the unifier is established by the pivotal argument that serves as the refutation of Theaetetus' first proper definition of knowledge. The explicit role of the argument in the dialogue is to disprove the claim that knowledge is perception. I will argue that its impact is far more significant than its immediate role in the text, and that this argument, which proves the existence of the soul as a principle of unity, is at the very center of the dialogue's account. It is a transcendental argument that, in addition to proving the existence of the soul, also offers a way to overcome the distinction between thought and being. This is followed by an analysis of the

discussion of false opinion that follows Theaetetus' second proper definition of knowledge ("knowledge is true opinion"). This section supplies us with both a refutation of Parmenides, and a proof that the principle of unity transcends that which it unifies. The possibility of false opinion, along with the existence of the soul as a principle of unity, leads us to recognize the need for levels of being, which are distinguished from one another insofar as the higher levels supply the principle of unity for the lower levels.

Chapter 3 (201c-210d): Once the levels of being have been established, we are faced with the task of trying to understand how the levels of being are related to each other. The difficult issues involved in these relations come out in the discussion following Theaetetus' final proper definition of knowledge ("knowledge is true opinion with a *logos*"). We will see that it is the function of *logos* to connect the levels of being. We find that a successful *logos* is one that allows the thinker to grasp an object's principle of unity, and by doing so allows him to grasp that object on a higher level of being. In other words, chapter 3 seeks to understand the sameness between the levels of being by attempting to account for the connection between the unified and the unifier. One of the repercussions of this is that we find that every *logos* requires multiplicity, and, as inherently multiple, it will always fall short of the object it seeks to express.

Chapter 4: Having established the levels of being and their relations in the previous three chapters, and hence having formed a grasp of the dialogue's principle of unity, we find ourselves facing the limitations of the account. The central problem lies in the necessity of difference, which is necessary for the possibility of the levels of being, which in turn is necessary for both distinct being and intelligibility. Yet, as inherently not one, difference must be unintelligible. Thus, difference ends up being both necessary for, and prohibitive of, distinct being and intelligibility. In this sense, chapter 4 is an attempt to distinguish the intelligible from the unintelligible, which amounts to an attempt to understand the differences between the levels of being.

Conclusion: Along with giving a summary of the overarching account, the conclusion will briefly discuss the issues that arise from giving a *logos* that argues for the limited intelligibility of any *logos*.

Notes

1. I leave the word *logos* here, instead of translating it as "account," because the precise meaning of the term is a major issue in both the dialogue and this book. For now it will suffice to think of it as meaning account in a very loose and flexible sense.

2. The first time this definition is given it is stated as "οὐκ ἄλλο τί ἐστιν ἐπιστήμη ἢ αἴσθησις," which translates to "knowledge is nothing other than perception." 151e2-3.
3. 187d-200d.
4. The first time this definition is given it is stated as "κινδυνεύει δὲ ἡ ἀληθὴς δόξα ἐπιστήμη εἶναι," which translates as "there is a chance that true opinion is knowledge." 187b5-6.
5. The dialogue argues for the existence of distinct being primarily through the assumption that false opinion is possible. This is the focus of the second half of chapter 2.
6. This, of course, applies no less to the account I am offering. The problem of giving an account of how all accounts are incomplete will be a recurring theme in this book, and will be the primary issue in the conclusion.
7. *Logos* is the focus of chapter 3.

Chapter One

The One and the Many

The function of this chapter is threefold: first, I will lay out what I take to be the fundamental opposition of the *Theaetetus*, an opposition which I argue serves as the structuring principle of the dialogue. The opposition is presented in several ways, and I will try to show how Plato is using each of these representations of the opposition to orient us in the dialogue's account of knowledge. Second, I will raise the problems that Plato sees with each of the poles of the opposition (though the meat of his refutations will be put off until chapters 2 and 3). There are two related problems with each of the poles: both poles do away with the possibility of contradiction, and both poles undermine the possibility of meaningful discourse. The avoidance of these problems pushes us (and Theaetetus) into a middle ground between the two poles of the opposition, a middle ground that is both contradictory and nonetheless the only philosophically fruitful ground. Because the dialogue does not explicitly point to the opposition as its structuring principle, the third section of the chapter will consist of mostly dramatic textual evidence that Plato wants us to focus on the opposition.

Images representing the dialogue's fundamental opposition

There are two primary dramatic representations of the opposition between the One and Many. The first is found in the dialogue's "digression" and is represented by the opposition between the philosopher and the lawyer. The second is represented by Socrates' predecessors, Heraclitus and Parmenides. Both of these oppositions are explicit in the dialogue.[1]

In the *Theaetetus*' famous digression (172b-177c) Socrates presents us with two completely different kinds of people with antithetical lifestyles and correspondingly antithetical souls. The lawyers are those who have "bounced around in law courts and such places from their youth," and are "always talking in an unleisured way, since flowing water is sweeping them along." They are described as slaves who "fawn and worm their way into favor," being "small and not upright in their souls." The philosophers, on the other hand, know nothing of the matters that concern the lawyers. The philosopher "takes flight" in his search for "the nature of each and every one of the beings as a whole and

not lowering itself at all to any of the things nearby." Each of the two is described as a laughingstock when he is forced into the realm of the other. The philosopher is a joke when he is made to "discuss the things at his feet and in front of his eyes." The lawyer is left "helpless and stammering" when he is dragged upward away from the particulars. Thus, the lawyer and his realm of ever-flowing particularity is set apart from the philosopher and his realm of elevated universality.

The *Theaetetus*' characters, not too surprisingly, seek to separate themselves from the lawyers. Socrates, speaking to Theodorus, refers to the philosophers as "our choral group,"[2] a classification which Theodorus enthusiastically endorses. Socrates' nonconformity to the class of the lawyer is no surprise. His lack of familiarity with their modes of operation is often mentioned in the dialogues. The *Apology* contains perhaps the best known of Socrates' claims to carry himself in a manner that could not be more different than that of the lawyers: "The position is this: this is my first appearance in a lawcourt, at the age of seventy; I am therefore simply a stranger to the manner of speaking here."[3] Socrates spent his life without engaging in (indeed avoiding) the activities of the lawyer. There are entire dialogues in which Socrates stands opposed to the rhetoric of the lawyers.[4]

Socrates' opposition to the lawyers is thus not anything surprising. What is very surprising is that the appropriateness of the classification of Socrates as a philosopher becomes highly suspect once we take notice of some of the particular descriptions applied to this class, descriptions that clearly do not fit with Socrates (let alone Theodorus). The philosopher is described as someone who does not know his way to the marketplace, but Plato tells us elsewhere that this is not Socrates.[5] The digression asserts that the philosopher does not take into account lineage, yet Socrates is the one who recognizes Theaetetus as the son of Euphronius of Sunium at the beginning of the dialogue, and praises the qualities of his father.[6] The dialogue even concludes by pointing to Socrates' lack of free time (which is all the philosopher has) as he is pulled away by the indictment that Meletus has drawn up against him.[7] Socrates, the embodiment of philosophy in the Platonic dialogues, does not fit his very own description of a philosopher![8] It seems that, according to the digression, not only is Socrates not a lawyer, he is not a philosopher either. But if Socrates is not a philosopher, then who is?

And yet, Socrates clearly shares some qualities with the philosophers. Perhaps the most telling of these is his attachment to universals. His criticism of Theaetetus' first attempt at a definition of knowledge is directed precisely at its lack of universality.[9] Socrates, with his awareness of particulars and interest in universals, represents a combination of, or some kind of intermediate between, these two antithetical classes, which in turn means that Socrates represents a combination of two utterly distinct souls.

The importance, and the difficulties, of this unifying of antitheticals is also reflected in a second thematic opposition in the dialogue: the opposition between those who believe all things are in motion and those who believe "all things are one and it stands still in itself."[10] This is the opposition between Socrates' predecessors, Heraclitus (partnered with Protagoras) and Parmenides.[11] Socrates suggests an investigation of the two men[12] with this warning,

> But if both sides show themselves to be saying nothing within measure, we'll be laughed at if we consider ourselves to have anything to say, since we're lowly folks who'd be rejecting very ancient and thoroughly wise men as unqualified.[13]

Socrates does indeed make himself the butt of the joke, but only partially. He does show that neither side has "anything to say," but that their inability to speak is only partially a flaw. In short, Socrates argues that intelligible speech (*logos*) requires both the oneness of Parmenides and the multiplicity of Heraclitus because *logos* entails using many words (or names) to represent one idea. Thus, eliminating either oneness or plurality undermines the possibility of *logos*. One rejection (that of Heraclitus) is explicit, while the other (that of Parmenides) is implicit.[14] What is left after the rejection of these two wise men? I will suggest that the middle ground between the lawyer and the philosopher, where Plato places Socrates in the digression, is a mirror of the middle ground between Heraclitus (as a partner of Protagoras) and Parmenides.

It doesn't take too in-depth a look at Heraclitus or Parmenides (as they are represented in the *Theaetetus*) to see why Socrates takes his middle position to be laughable. Socrates refers to Heraclitus in the dialogue as one of those who claim that

> Nothing is either any one thing or of any one sort, but it's from rushing around and from motion and from blending into one another that all things come to be — we say they "are," not addressing them correctly, since nothing ever *is* but is always becoming.[15]

Socrates claims that any person who adopts the Protagorean position that man is the measure of all things must also accept the position of Heraclitus and his wise partners. The Protagorean position itself is suggested as the doctrine of anyone who believes knowledge is perception. The connection between these three theses (knowledge is perception, man is the measure, and all things are in flux) is never made explicit by Socrates, and there is much debate about it.[16] I take it that the general push of the connection lies in the notion of substance. If there were such a thing as substance underlying and unifying the perceptible properties available to us then clearly knowledge could not be perception: for

perception sees the properties, not what underlies them.[17] A lack of substance entails that the only things that exist are perceptible qualitites, and these perceptible qualitites are always changing. The deniers of being are the deniers of substance, and the deniers of substance are the deniers of principles of unity and stability.

There is much less said about Parmenides in the dialogue. What is made clear is that Parmenides denies multiplicity. Socrates refers to Parmenides as one who claims that "since it is wholly motionless, being is the same for the all," and "all things are one and it stands still in itself, having no place in which to move."[18] Parmenides denies multiplicity and motion, while the others deny oneness and stillness.

Thus, Socrates seems to have to affirm and deny multiplicity and motion, and affirm and deny oneness and stillness. How can this be? There are two central themes that arise out of situating Socrates in between Parmenides and Heraclitus.[19] These themes will be investigated throughout the book, but as a way of orienting the investigation, I will give a sketch of the two issues here (with the understanding that much of the argumentation they require will be put off until later). The first is that both Heraclitus and Parmenides remove the possibility of contradiction from their accounts (though they obviously do so in opposite ways), while any position that combines the two will have to incorporate contradiction somehow. The second issue is that *logos* (or any kind of expression of knowledge) becomes an impossibility for both Parmenides and Heraclitus, and that the grounding for a viable *logos* is a central motivation for Plato's position.

1. Impossibility of contradiction for Heraclitus and Parmenides

The general form of a contradictory statement is "A is B and not B."[20] Thus, in order to allow for the possibility of contradiction there must be some one thing (A) and also that which is not A (B and not B). Contradiction requires oneness and manyness, for in a contradiction some one thing must be and not be something else. Heraclitus does away with contradiction by eliminating oneness, while Parmenides does away with contradiction by eliminating manyness. What middle ground is to be found in between these two? Socrates' laughable position in the *Theaetetus* is a combination of both Heraclitus and Parmenides,[21] a combination that requires a willingness to accept the world, and ourselves, as contradictory.

Much of the secondary literature on the passages involving the Presocratics, particularly those involving Protagoras, seems to have overlooked this doing away with the principle of non-contradiction. In particular the numerous discussions of the peritropé,[22] have expended much thought and talent on a topic that, while interesting in its own right, on this account becomes a non-issue for Protagoras.[23] There is considerable debate over whether Plato is successful in proving Protagoras' "man is the measure" doctrine to be self-

contradictory. Does Protagoras avoid contradiction, or does he embrace it?[24] The argument above shows that there is nothing there to avoid or embrace, since in order for contradiction to be a possibility there must be oneness, which the Heraclitean Protagoras denies.

The position's denial of the principle of non-contradiction seems to raise the problem that it makes it impossible to explain Protagoras' attempts (via Socrates) to give over arguments in order to convince Theaetetus of his doctrine, for, after all, any argument Protagoras might use would presuppose the principle. But this is really only an image of a problem, for Protagoras' concern is not the giving over of objective truth (for there is none); rather, his goal is persuasion. Just as Protagoras is willing to make appeal to creation myths in the dialogue bearing his name[25] in order to give a story that would persuade the crowd, so too Protagoras uses arguments in order to persuade. Arguments, for Protagoras, cannot have any genuine truth, for this would rely upon the principle of non-contradiction, which is no more real than the characters of his myths. This charge of using arguments for persuasion and not truth is leveled against Protagoras by Socrates himself at 161e. Strikingly, Protagoras, through the mouth of Socrates, lays a similar charge against Socrates.[26] The accusation is that Socrates is using "persuasive talk and what seems likely in arguments"[27] instead of grasping what is necessarily the case as mathematics does. Socrates does indeed do this. The *Theaetetus*' digression referred to above is an elegant piece of Socratic sophistry that uses rhetoric in an attempt to undermine rhetoric.[28] So too Protagoras strives to use argumentation to undermine argumentation, despite (and because of) the fact that arguments cannot have any stronger claim to non-existent objective truth than any other form of persuasion.

After each of the attempts to refute Protagoras, Socrates claims that, while Theaetetus may be convinced, he is sure that Protagoras would not be.[29] On two occasions during the final set of refutations, Socrates questions the effectiveness of his own criticism. A closer look at one of these criticisms, along with Socrates' criticism of his own criticism, should help make it clear that Plato is directing us toward recognizing the need for contradiction. In the peritropé,[30] Socrates argues that Protagoras, according to his own account, must disbelieve his own account. For, since Protagoras claims that what each person holds is true, and since many people hold that his account is untrue, Protagoras himself must agree with the truth of the beliefs that his account is false, and hence, he must believe his own account to be false. In response to this criticism, Socrates says that Protagoras

> would pop out his head as far as the neck, once he'd refuted me in many ways for speaking nonsense, which is likely, and you for agreeing, having sunk back, he'd be swept off and running away.[31]

What are we to make of this bizarre image of Protagoras' head? What is the "nonsense" that Socrates has spoken? The content of Protagoras' criticisms here is not offered explicitly, but the image gives us an idea of what it would be like. The reminder of the pervasiveness of becoming is evident in the image of Protagoras' departure, and it is the all-pervasiveness of Heraclitean (and hence Protagorean) becoming that entails the elimination of substance. But there is more than just a reminder of flux in the image; the issues of meaningful discourse and contradiction are being suggested as well.

The image of heads popping out of the ground occurs again in Aristotle's *De Anima*. In book III, chapter 6 Aristotle addresses the possibility of falsehood. He claims that

> the thinking of indivisible things is one of those acts in which falsehood is not possible, and where there is falsehood as well as truth there is already some kind of compounding of intelligible things as though they were one — just as Empedocles says "upon the earth foreheads of many kinds sprouted up without necks."[32]

The possibility of falsehood is directly connected to the issues of contradiction and meaningful discourse, which Aristotle is also here connecting to the relation of one and many. These many foreheads, Empedocles goes on to say, remain separate until friendship (or love) comes along and puts them together. Aristotle's reference to Empedocles points to the claim that the possibility of thinking what is false arises out of a compounding of the many "as though they were one," while the thinking of what is indivisible admits of no falsity. Thus, until friendship unites the many parts there is no falsity. In short, Protagoras (in the Heraclitean form he appears in the *Theaetetus*) denies the possibility of false opinion because he denies the love/friendship found in Empedocles. In the *Theaetetus* the denial of love/friendship is what I above referred to as the denial of substance/*ousia*.

In the *Sophist*, the recognition of the necessity of the one and many for the possibility of contradiction is present in full force. The Eleatic stranger claims that knowledge is only possible by rejecting "father Parmenides" and combining being and non-being (and thereby also denying Protagoras and Heraclitus). The stranger appeals to Empedocles in his suggestion that the many (non-being) be unified by love in order to allow for knowledge (242d). I take it that the *Theaetetus*' image of Protagoras popping his head up as far as the neck represents the manyness of Empedocles without the unifying principle, i.e., without substance (or, to use Empedocles' term, love). It is only half of what the stranger suggests we need for knowledge. The denial of substance, as pointed out above, is at the heart of the accounts that make up Theaetetus' second definition of knowledge. With the existence of substance, knowledge cannot be of what is *and* be perceptible. Plato uses the above image to tell us that the

content of Protagoras' criticisms is not the issue. Indeed the content cannot be the issue, for there cannot *be* any genuine content without the oneness that substance supplies. Once substance and the principle of non-contradiction have been abandoned, argumentation becomes merely another rhetorical device. It has no greater claim to truth than any other means of deciding how something appears to oneself.

Thus, the use of argument can never compel Protagoras to abandon his position. Why then does Socrates bother with formulating arguments against the sophist? The answer to this is obvious when one remembers that Socrates is a midwife like his mother, except that he births opinions instead of babies,[33] and that in the *Theaetetus* he is not attempting to birth the opinion(s) of Protagoras but those of Theaetetus. Socrates' arguments expose a contradiction not in Protagoras' position (for again this is impossible), rather they expose a contradiction within Theaetetus. He shows Theaetetus that he cannot consistently accept both the principle of non-contradiction and believe that "man is the measure of all things." Since Theaetetus does accept the principle,[34] he therefore cannot believe that man is the measure.

The twist here is that the appeal to Socrates' midwifery means that the refutation of Protagoras is particular to Theaetetus, for it is only in relation to Theaetetus' other beliefs that Protagoras' account must fail. Or to put it in more Protagorean terms, Socrates is using Theaetetus as the measure of Theaetetus' own beliefs: Theaetetus is the measure of all things for Theaetetus! In convincing Theaetetus that Protagoras' position is unacceptable to him because of his own beliefs, Socrates is operating within the subjective realm (of Theaetetus), which is precisely the realm championed by Protagoras.[35] The difference here, however, is that it is not perception that makes man the measure, it is opinion. It is no coincidence that it is opinion that marks off Theaetetus' next definition of knowledge.[36] The futility of arguing against Protagoras (and Heraclitus), and the corresponding recognition that Protagoras is only left behind because Socrates is serving as midwife to Theaetetus, all results from the impossibility of applying the principle of non-contradiction within Protagoras' "account."

Moving now to the other pole, it is noteworthy that Plato does not say much explicitly in regards to Parmenides in the *Theaetetus*. There is little textual evidence in the dialogue for Parmenides' denial of the principle of non-contradiction. Socrates claims to be afraid to talk about, let alone criticize, father Parmenides. There are, however, several arguments explicitly directed at father Parmenides in the *Sophist*, and while none of them explicitly mention the principle of non-contradiction, its relevance to the discussion there is unquestionable. One of the arguments against Parmenides begins with the assumption that "we need to use every argument we can to fight against anyone who does away with knowledge, understanding and intelligence but at the same time asserts anything at all about anything".[37] The stranger claims that

Parmenides does just this by denying the possibility of motion, as do the believers in flux by denying the possibility of rest:

> The philosopher — the person who values these things [knowledge (ἐπιστήμη), intelligence (φρόνησις) and understanding (νοῦς)] the most — absolutely has to refuse to accept the claim that everything is at rest, either from the defenders of the one or from friends of the many forms (εἶδος). In addition he has to refuse to listen to people who say that *that which is* changes in every way. He has to be like a child begging for "both" and say that *that which is* — everything — is both the unchanging and that which changes.[38]

In order to allow for knowledge we must be willing to accept the coexistence of the contraries, rest and motion. This Parmenides cannot do, for in his assertion of utter oneness he has done away with any contraries.

All of this suggests that what Plato is trying to do in the *Theaetetus* (and the *Sophist*) is carve out the middle, contradictory, ground between the One and the Many. The possibility of contradiction is the first issue that depends on this middle ground. The possibility of *logos* is the second.

2. Impossibility of *logos* for Heraclitus and Parmenides

The second issue to take note of here, and one that is both central to the *Theaetetus* as a whole and a major focus of the upcoming chapters, is the consequences that the positions of Parmenides and Heraclitus have for the ability to give a *logos*, or to put it in the terms used above, the issue is why Heraclitus and Protagoras have nothing to say.[39] If *logos* involves the relating of parts to a whole as the last section of the dialogue suggests,[40] then both Parmenides and the advocates of flux will be unable to give a *logos*. Parmenides is unable because there are no parts, while the advocates of flux lack the necessary whole. This is one of the "refutations" that Socrates gives of Heraclitus toward the end of the discussion of the second definition.[41] The structure of the argument is as follows.

There are two kinds of motion: local motion and alteration. Those who say that everything is in motion must say that everything is in both kinds of motion, for otherwise it would be just as true to say that everything is moving and not moving. But if everything is in both kinds of motion, then the local motion that brings the perceiver and perceived together cannot be said to bring together a "certain sortness" (ποιότης)[42] with a seeing, for the sortness must be an altering, as must the seeing. Thus, in claiming to see whiteness I must also be seeing what whiteness changes from and to, i.e., not-whiteness. And in seeing I must also be not-seeing. Thus, the name of seeing should not be attached to the act of seeing any more than not-seeing should be attached. Seeing is perceiving. Thus, perceiving is no different than not-perceiving. Therefore, to say that knowledge

is perception is also to say that knowledge is not perception. In short, once we do away with unchanging substance, we do away with any meaningful discourse.

The overall point here is that the acceptance of the claim that knowledge is perception, because of its denial of oneness, is incompatible with any kind of rational account. The two are incommensurable.[43] In denying substance, Protagoras has effectively undermined any possibility of logical criticism, for logical criticism operates through displaying contradiction, and contradiction requires the oneness found in substance.

Meaningful *logos* is impossible in a Parmenidean world as well. One of the primary refutations of Parmenides in the *Sophist* focuses specifically on the impossibility of genuinely Parmenidean speech. The stranger points out that simply by saying that "only one thing is" the Parmenidean has undermined his position. The name (the one) is either the same as what is named or different from it. It cannot be different for then we have two things, the name "one" and the one itself. If the name is the same as what it names then either the name names nothing, or else it must be the name of itself. The first option is dismissed as empty. The second entails us agreeing that the name of the one is the one of the name, which also is dismissed as absurd.[44] In short, language requires both a signifier and a signified if it is to refer. The discussion of Parmenides in the *Sophist* is far more complicated than I am suggesting here, and my discussion of false opinion in chapter 2 will require us to go much further into the meat of what the stranger has to tell us there, but this simple argument is enough to show the basic incompatibility of Parmenides' account and accounts in general.

Logos entails a manyness that Parmenides has done away with. Perhaps we should take Socrates' suggestion in the *Theaetetus* that he cannot do Parmenides justice as a reflection of his view that there is no *logos* that can actually capture Parmenides' position, though he tells us that this is only part of the problem: "I'm afraid that we won't understand what was said (τὰ λεγόμενα), and that we'll be left much further behind what he was thinking when he said it."[45]

It should be evident what task Plato is setting before us here. Plato, simply by appealing to logical investigation, is arguing for combining the unchanging oneness of Parmenides and the un-unified motion of Heraclitus. Socrates himself says as much, claiming that "advancing little by little, we have unwittingly fallen between the two parties."[46] I will argue that the principle that unifies these opposed accounts for Plato is the soul. It is in this very regard that the *Theaetetus* is to be understood as a display of the human soul, as Socrates suggests at the beginning of the investigation into knowledge.[47]

Plato's carving out of this middle ground works by arguing against the poles of the opposition which serve as the boundaries of the contradictory realm of meaningful discourse. This, of course, requires refutations of both Heraclitus and Parmenides. The details of the refutations are complicated and will take up

the bulk of chapter 2. For now it will suffice to preface this discussion with a general outline of the arguments.

We are led out of the strictly Heraclitean landscape in the refutation of Theaetetus' second definition of knowledge, that knowledge is perception, by recognizing the need for a oneness underlying any change. This oneness is explicitly seen as a refutation of Heraclitus, and it is grounded in the acceptance of the possibility of meaningful discourse. There are several stages to this refutation. There are distinct refutations for Protagoras (man is the measure), Heraclitus (all things are in flux) and Theaetetus (knowledge is perception). The common thread through these three connected positions, as suggested above, is that all of them deny that there is substance, i.e., a oneness that provides the being of what is and persists through change; without this oneness we lose all meaning.

We are led out of any strictly Parmenidean landscape (though only implicitly) by both the second and the third definitions of knowledge, each of which, in virtue of their falseness (and our ability to recognize that falseness), show us the need for plurality. For, as I will argue in chapter 2, the dialogue shows us that false opinion requires that one thing exist on different levels of being, and that all error is a mistaking of one level for another. The distinctness between levels of being (which will be investigated in chapter 4) obviously means that everything cannot be entirely one.

In short, the refutation of Heraclitus shows us the need for the oneness his account is lacking, while the refutation of Parmenides shows us the need for the plurality his account is lacking. The fourth and final definition (knowledge is true opinion with a *logos*) develops the issues that are to be faced by the new path carved out in between Plato's predecessors.

We will see that the sense in which the refutations of the two opposed positions come together is the same as the sense in which the possibility for coming to know arises with the possibility for error. Both Parmenides and Heraclitus, in doing away with the possibility for contradiction, have done away with the possibility for error. It is in demonstrating to Theaetetus that he believes error to be possible by arguing for the falseness of one of his opinions (his false opinion that knowledge is true opinion), that Parmenides is first cast aside and Heraclitus is once again shown to be insufficient. The possibility of falseness,[48] or error, serves as a refutation to both Heraclitus and Parmenides. For falseness entails the principle of non-contradiction, which both Heraclitus and Parmenides have done away with.

Evidence that the opposition is supposed to be focused on

The preceding is preparation for the account I will be arguing for, with a general sketch of some of the argumentation that is used. The function of the preceding foretaste is to serve as a kind of ground-clearing for the account to come. This reading of the *Theaetetus*, however, is not a common one, and as a

result it may be useful to offer some dramatic textual justification for the reading, before turning to the arguments themselves.

Plato fills his dialogues with markers to indicate directions his texts can go. These markers come in many forms: types of characters, settings, events, digressions, myths, frames, and many others. While generally these do not serve as convincing arguments on their own, they can, when seen as fitting together, support a particular reading. The following are three such markers that I suggest Plato is using in the *Theaetetus* to point us in the direction of the opposition outlined above. All three of the following markers take place in the dialogue before Theaetetus' first proper definition of knowledge (and second attempt).[49]

First marker: the frame (142a-143d)

The discussion between Euclides and Terpsion in the opening frame suggests the opposition in question in a context that remains central throughout the whole dialogue. Euclides tells how he came to hear the *logoi* ("words" — plural) of Socrates and Theaetetus. Then after explaining his repeated process of writing notes quickly, then filling in the notes, then checking back with Socrates for corrections, he claims that he was able to get something pretty much like the πᾶς ὁ λόγος ("the whole talk" — singular). There are at least two things suggested here by Plato. The first is that there is a difference between an un-unified collection of words and a unified collection of words. The second is that (if Euclides is right) there is some process that is able to turn the one into the other. This act of unification, I will argue, is what we engage in when we come to know. We will see that Euclides' method for turning *logoi* into a *logos* mirrors the definitions of knowledge offered in the dialogue proper. Euclides' hearing of the words corresponds with the definition of knowledge as perception. His writing the words down corresponds with knowledge as true opinion (opinion being defined by Socrates later in the dialogue as asserting the same thing over and over,[50] as the written word does). The checking with Socrates corresponds with the addition of a *logos* to true opinion. Accepting that Euclides' method recalls the process outlined in the dialogue, and provisionally accepting that this process is tied to coming to know (as I will argue) means that, in the frame of the dialogue, Plato connects the turning of *logoi* into *logos* with coming to know. Coming to know corresponds with an *act of unification* that is somehow intimately bound up with a *logos* coming out of *logoi*. The question that we readers are faced with in the frame is whether or not Plato's *Theaetetus* is a *logos* (a coherent unified whole) or whether it is *logoi* (just a collection of words). The answer, as I hope to show in chapter 3, is that the dialogue's failure to unite the *logoi* into a *logos* is precisely what provides the dialogue with its unity and hence qualifies it as a *logos*. Or, to put it in the terms used before, the principle of oneness in the dialogue is the recognition that no *logos* can ever truly capture a principle of oneness. The fact that this question is raised in the context of *logos* is meaningful in relation to the point made earlier, i.e., that the

opposition between the one and the many has serious implications for the possibility of any meaningful *logos*. The *Theaetetus*' frame not only orients us around this issue, but it also suggests, through Euclides' struggle to capture the dialogue, that achieving the unity of a *logos* is a difficult, time consuming, task.

Second marker: first attempt to define knowledge (146c-148d)

Plato again suggests the one/many theme of the dialogue in Theaetetus' first attempt at a definition of knowledge.[51] It is not an uncommon feature of Platonic dialogues to begin with the interlocutor answering Socrates' request for a definition with either a list of many examples, or one instance out of a list of many possible examples.[52] Socrates' denial that either of these types of answers are a satisfactory form of definition is universal, but his expression of this denial is not always the same. There are two general types of response that Socrates gives to these definitions. In response to the giving of a single example (or instance) of an action that is taken to exemplify the term to be defined Socrates either shows that (1) the example can also, in certain cases, be bad, thereby undermining its ability to be the definition of that which is always good,[53] or (2) Socrates points out to the interlocutor the many examples that he has left off that he thinks fall under the term to be defined. The *Euthyphro* explicitly states this as the problem. Socrates responds to Euthyphro's suggestion that piety is prosecuting the wrongdoer[64] by getting Euthyphro to agree that "there are many other pious actions."[55]

The latter form of response is to point out that a list of examples fails to capture the oneness of the definition being sought. This, in a few places, elicits from Socrates some kind of comment along the lines of "I am in great luck, Meno; while I am looking for one virtue, I have found you to have a whole swarm of them."[56] It is this second type of definition and response that we get in the *Theaetetus*:

> **Theaetetus**: It seems to me, then, both the things one might learn from Theodorus are pieces of knowledge, geometry and what you went over just now, and also skill at leather-cutting and the arts of the other craftsmen — each and every one of these is nothing other than knowledge.
> **Socrates**: It's certainly well bred and generous of you, dear fellow, when you're asked for one thing (ἕν), to give many (πολλά) and varied things (ποικίλα) instead of something simple (ἁπλοῦ).[57]

There are a couple of dialogues (the *Theaetetus* is one of them) in which Socrates follows up his initial response to definition by example by defining a term for the interlocutor.[58]

> **Socrates**: In the next place, one who has it in him, surely, to answer in a low key and brief way, is going around along an endless road. For example, in the question about mud, it would surely be a low-key

> and simple thing to say that mud would be earth mixed with liquid, and to say goodbye to whoever uses it.[59]

On the surface, all Socrates is doing here is giving the interlocutor an example of what Socrates hopes to get from him. But looking closer, we see that Socrates is doing exactly what he is criticizing the interlocutor for doing, i.e., he is giving a particular example of a definition as a stand in for a definition of definition, seemingly making the assumption that the interlocutor will be able to make the general inference that is required for him to apply the method of definition to the question at hand. So too the interlocutor is giving a particular example (or in Theaetetus' case a collection of examples) with the expectation that Socrates will be able to make the general inference to the universal definition. In short, Socrates seems to be criticizing the attempt to define by example by showing *by example* that definition does not entail example. Or in other words, Socrates' explanation of the problem with defining by example applies to the explanation itself.

Socrates could avoid this problem by giving a definition of definition, as opposed to an example of a definition, and thereby be in accord with his own standards. Why doesn't he do this? The answer that the rest of this book will be arguing for is that Socrates does not do this because, on his own account, it is impossible. There is no definition that can be stated that can actually reflect what is being defined. This applies not to just the attempt to define knowledge undertaken in the *Theaetetus*. *All* definitions will be incomplete because there is an inherent incompatibility between knowledge and expression. This, of course, would mean that Socrates is asking the interlocutor to do the impossible.

There is quite a bit in the secondary literature dealing with some of the multitude of issues that arise out of Socrates' discussions of examples and their relations to definitions. A common element of these discussions is the recognition that a proper definition should reflect the elements of the essence of that which is defined. In the words of Alexander Nehamas, "to know what x is and thus to know x itself is just to know its essential properties."[60] This notion of knowledge through definition by giving essential properties is compatible with Plato, but it is nonetheless seriously problematic. The final portion of the *Theaetetus* is a display of the problems involved. The second and third definitions of knowledge in the dialogue raise the problem with this notion of definition from opposite sides.[61] These sides will be looked at in some detail in chapter 2 (and then again in chapter 3), but we can get a preview of the overall problem by looking at what Aristotle has to say about the notion of definition in the *Posterior Analytics*.

A proper definition of a substance, according to Aristotle, does involve the essential attributes of what is defined. There are four kinds of essential attributes that Aristotle lists in the *Posterior Analytics,* one of which is part of the substance's definition.[62] Yet, insofar as the attributes are what they define, they

cannot truly be attributes. If the definition of a substance were simply attributes (essential or otherwise) then there would be nothing for the attributes to actually belong to. Attributes belong to substances. Thus, to define a substance as a collection of attributes is to do away with the very thing the attributes themselves depend on. In short, we give the substance by listing essential attributes that are not actually attributes. This comes out in Aristotle's differentiating between that which is defined and that which is demonstrated. He says:

> Every demonstration proves some predicate of some subject, either affirmatively or negatively; but in a definition nothing is predicated of anything else; "animal" is not predicated of "two-footed" nor vice versa, nor is "figure" predicated of "plane"; a plane is not a figure, nor a figure a plane.[63]

To be is to be one. Thus, the definiendum, insofar as it is, is one thing; one thing that is described by essential properties, but is not itself, as the essence, predicated. Yet, a definition also must entail genus and differentia, which must be different. Hence, the statement of any definition must reflect that which is one, and yet must also entail a multiplicity of parts.[64] Aristotle raises this very issue as an impasse in *Metaphysics* Z.13. After arguing that no substance can be made out of universals, and no substance can be composed of other actualities Aristotle says:

> So that there cannot be an articulation in speech (*logos*) of any independent thing (*ousia*). But surely it seems to everyone and has been said from earliest times that a definition belongs to an independent thing either solely or most of all; but now it seems not to belong to this either. Therefore there will be no definition of anything; or in a certain way there will be and in a certain way there will not.[65]

This captures what lies at the heart of the *Theaetetus,* and the upcoming discussion. Any definition, and more generally any *logos*,[66] *is* in virtue of being one in some way. To convey the oneness, however, requires a representing of that oneness in parts. A meaningful *logos* somehow represents oneness through plurality (or at least through many ones). We will see, primarily through the final refutation of "knowledge is perception," that for Plato this one/many necessity for expression belongs not just to expression, but also to the objects being expressed. In other words, the need for a unifying of the one and the many is necessary for both *logoi* and beings.

There are two types of definition offered as examples of definition in these early stages of the dialogue. The first is the definition of mud as earth mixed with water, supplied by Socrates and quoted above. The second is the one given

by Theaetetus.[67] Theaetetus, and his friend (young) Socrates, come up with a universal definition for commensurable (σύμμετρος) and incommensurable (οὐ σύμμετρος) number. The definition differentiates length (μῆκος) from potency (δύναμις), a length being the side of an equilateral number and a potency being the side of a figure that can only be represented commensurately with a non-equilateral quadrilateral. There is much discussion about the particulars of Theaetetus' mathematical insight, but the point relevant for us is that Theaetetus' definition, which earns high praise from Socrates, is unlike the definition Socrates offered just a moment before. Theaetetus has not broken down the definiendum into its parts, rather, he has shown it to be a "part" of a larger whole. In short, Theaetetus has defined incommensurable and commensurable numbers as species of number, a method that differs fundamentally from Socrates' breaking the definiendum into parts. Indeed, Theaetetus' definition seems to be right in line with the method of division that Theaetetus learns from the stranger on the day after his discussion with Socrates, as displayed in the *Sophist*.[68] Theaetetus has given us a definition that operates by dividing a genus into ultimate differentiae.

These two methods of definition both operate by relating a one and a many, though they do so in different ways. Socrates' example divides a one into a many, while Theaetetus' example starts by recognizing that what is to be defined is a (single) part of a many that make up a larger one. This mirrors the opposition between the *logos* and the *logoi* raised in the frame, but here a new question is added: do we grasp the *logos* through the *logoi*, or do we grasp the *logoi* through the *logos*? Or in other words, is the whole (i.e., the oneness) known through the parts (the many), or are the parts known through the whole? These two methods of definition both come back into play in the philosophically loaded discussion of Theaetetus' final definition of knowledge (as "true opinion with a *logos*"), and both prove, on their own, to be insufficient to supply knowledge. Their positioning before the first proper definition of knowledge once again orients us, the readers, around the one/many theme suggested above.

Third marker: Socratic midwifery (149a-151d)

The final hint of the dialogue's theme that I will suggest is the most opaque, and yet also the most well-known. It is Socrates' comparing himself to a midwife. The issues related to the one and the many are not mentioned explicitly, nor are Parmenidean being and Heraclitean becoming, but pushing the analogy only slightly leads us to them. The marker becomes clear once we recognize a problem with Socrates' analogy (between his art and his mother's art).

Socrates tells us that there are certain requirements to be a midwife: no woman may be a midwife "while she herself is still conceiving and bearing, but only those who no longer have the power to give birth."[69] The cause for this is that the goddess Artemis is without mate or child, and yet has childbirth allotted

for her protection. However, since human nature is "too weak to grasp an art [τέχνη] dealing with things it has no experience of" it has therefore not been granted to "barren women to be midwives."[70] Thus, it is allotted to those who once gave birth but are no longer able to do so to be midwives.

The problem arises once we recognize that Socrates himself is not only currently barren of any wisdom but he has also always been so: "The God continually forces me to be a midwife but (each time) prevents me from generating anything. I myself, then, am not at all anybody wise, nor has any discovery of that sort been generated in me as the offspring of my soul" (150c-d). Thus Socrates both claims the criteria for midwifery are previous birth and that he has never given birth. How then can Socrates consider himself a midwife?[71]

There are two possible interpretations that can give meaning to the seemingly contradictory analogy. They, in typical Platonic fashion, contradict one another, and yet both seem to be true to an extent.

(1) This particular problem with the midwife analogy disappears if it is impossible for beings subject to bodily experience to give birth to that which is true born, i.e., if it is impossible to come to have knowledge. If that is the case then Socrates' lack of wisdom can't prevent him from being able to birth that which he does not, and has never, had. Since Socrates has birthed wind-eggs[72] he has had the only experience that is required of the midwife to the human soul. Socrates' current state of barrenness is simply a reference to his well referenced claim that he knows he doesn't know, i.e., he does not have any opinions (wind-eggs) that need birthing. In short no previous experience having birthed true-born offspring is necessary for the midwife of the soul because this is not something they will ever have to do as a midwife to another. This interpretation leaves the question of why Socrates claims that his midwifery needs to distinguish between the real and the wind-egg when the real is not a possibility. This can be explained away (which is really all that this interpretation can do) by recognizing what Socrates is trying to accomplish with the analogy: he is trying to encourage Theaetetus to inquire into the question "what is knowledge?," even in the face of Theaetetus' (rightful) self-doubt.[73] The impossibility of true birth is far from the encouragement that the analogy intends. So it is for Theaetetus' sake that Socrates makes the claim about real births.[74]

(2) The second interpretation starts by recognizing that in the analogy Socrates is really comparing himself to Artemis rather than his mother and the other mortal midwives.[75] For both Artemis and Socrates are put over midwifery without themselves ever having given birth. On this interpretation we are led to see a fundamental difference between Socrates' art and the art of his mother. The need for experience in birth in order to be an ordinary midwife stems from the claim that *human nature* is "too weak to grasp an art dealing with things it

has no experience of." Socrates' art does not require experience because it is, in some way, not human. Rather what Socrates does is more like Artemis, i.e., it is divine. The need for experience arises in the material realm; Socrates' art has left that realm behind. In the use of reason[76] experience (i.e., bodily experience) is no longer needed — in fact not only is experience not needed in Socrates' art, it is what causes the need for Socrates' art in the first place. In other words, it is through experience that one acquires the wind-eggs.

Thus, one way of resolving the apparent inconsistency in the image of the midwife is to recognize the limited nature of mortal man. It is because of this limited nature that we require experience in order to practice a craft. It is as "beings" (or, more appropriately, becomings) in the world of change that we will never birth knowledge. In other words, Socrates' barrenness is a universal barrenness. This universal lack of knowledge, I will suggest, is an alignment with the position of the believers in flux. There is no universal truth to be birthed and differentiated from the wind-eggs on their account, for no birth is a true birth. The two criteria for knowledge that Plato suggests in the *Theaetetus* are that it is unerring and "of what is."[77] We have seen in what way "man is the measure" allows for the fulfilling of the unerring criteria, i.e., by undermining the possibility of contradiction it also undermines the possibility of error. Along with the impossibility of error, however, also comes the impossibility of truth. This can be seen through the second criteria. If all things are in flux, then nothing *is*. All things in motion means that there is nothing *to be* known, and hence no possibility of grasping the truth about anything. In this way we can do away with the inconsistency in the midwife image, for the need for experience with true birth (which Socrates lacks) in order to serve as a midwife to another's true birth is no longer required because true birth is no longer a possibility. In short, by turning Socrates into Heraclitus we can save the image of Socrates as a midwife by doing away with the birthing of knowledge.[78]

The second way of resolving the apparent inconsistency is to recognize the divinity, and hence transcendence, of man. The primary arguments for the claims made here arise in the text during the final refutation of knowledge is perception. But accepting for now the conclusion of what will be argued for later we can see that it is by removing ourselves from the realm of flux (of which we are most truly not a part) that we (re)attain knowledge. The multiplicity of experience is something the soul must withdraw from if it is ever to attain knowledge. The image of birthing is saved by being flipped on its head: we acquire knowledge not by coming up with something new, but rather by ceasing to come up with, or pay attention to, what is new and changing. There is no birthing of knowledge, for knowledge simply is and does not become. The birthing, in this case, is of the soul itself; the soul returning to being from encumbered bodily concerns. Birth is akin to a leaving the body behind for the heavenly realm proper to the philosopher. It is only in unchanging divinity that knowledge can be found. Thus turning Socrates into Parmenides likewise saves

the image of Socrates as midwife, though it does so by inverting the image (i.e., the birther becomes the birthed).

Either one of these alone (Heraclitus and Parmenides), as mentioned above, is insufficient for Plato, and what the dialogue undertakes is to show what is entailed in the overcoming of the opposition. Turning Socrates into either of the Pre-Socratics saves the image, but where does it leave us in terms of the possibility of coming to know? Heraclitus saves the image by effectively undermining the possibility of coming to any knowledge whatsoever by doing away with any being to be known (a position which Socrates will later argue is impossible to argue for or against). Parmenides, on the other hand, saves the image by doing away with the possibility of becoming (whether it applies to the birther or the birthed), and hence undermining any possibility of *coming* to know, which seems to be what the Socratic midwife is supposed to be helping someone to do. The image can avoid contradiction by turning Socrates into Heraclitus or Parmenides, but doing so necessarily gives up part of the image. Plato's laughable position wants to hold on to both aspects of the image: the possibility of knowledge and the possibility of coming to know.

What then would it mean for Socrates to be both the divine and the mortal midwife? What would it mean for the birthing of knowledge to both depend upon and not depend upon experience? It is worth noting that this attempted combination is not something new to readers of Plato; it is tied to the difficulties inherent in understanding the relation between the changeable realm of experience and the unchanging, transcendent realm of Being; the relation between the inside of the cave, lit by candlelight, and the outside world itself, illuminated by the sun; the connection between the form and its instantiation. The *Theaetetus*, however, is unique in its approach to these problems. We find ourselves in the middle realm between the eternal and the mortal in the dialogue by recognizing the impotency of the other options. More specifically we find that both of the two ways (Heraclitus and Parmenides) of denying contradiction leave us unable to account for what we find in ourselves. The inadequacy of each of the poles of the opposition will be argued for in chapter 2. I will do so by moving through the dialogue sequentially, following Plato's ordering of the discussion.

Notes

1. See especially 172c-d for the opposition between the philosopher and the lawyer, and 180d-181b for the opposition between Heraclitus and Parmenides.
2. "τοῦ ἡμετέρου χοροῦ" (173b3). Unless otherwise noted, the translations are from Joe Sachs.
3. *Apology* 17d.

4. Whereas the opposition is explicit in the *Apology* (17a-18a), the *Protagoras* and *Gorgias* are examples of dialogues where the opposition is implicit.
5. In the *Apology,* Socrates says "If you hear me making my defense in the same kind of language as I am accustomed to use in the marketplace by the bankers tables, where many of you have heard me, and elsewhere, do not be surprised or create a disturbance on that account" (17c-d). See also *Gorgias* 447a.
6. *Theaetetus* 144c.
7. 210d.
8. Many people point this out. Benardete (1997, p26) and Waymack (1985) are two examples.
9. An investigation of this is to come shortly.
10. 181a-b
11. Mark H Waymack makes the same connection between the two oppositions in his article "The Theaetetus 172c-177c: A Reading of the Philosopher in Court," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* vol. 23, No.4 (1985), pp. 481-489.
12. Of which he only undertakes one.
13. 181b.
14. The details of these refutations will take up the bulk of chapter 2, and will begin the account of the underlying ontology in the *Theaetetus*.
15. 152d-e.
16. Fine (2003) argues for a "connection criterion," which says that an account of each of the three theses should be able to explain its connection to the other two. Indeed this ability to explain the connection between the theses is to serve as the primary criterion for judging accounts (p. 137). Burnyeat (1990) offers two readings of this section of the dialogue, both of which depend upon the unity of the three theses (pp. 7-65).
17. Another way of presenting the same argument: Socrates assumes that knowledge is of what is (152c). Since substance is the being of the object, and since substance is not perceptible, the existence of substance would have to mean that knowledge is not perception.
18. 180e.
19. To refer to Socrates' position as "in between" Heraclitus and Parmenides is not quite accurate. Part of the difficulty expressing this account is that it is not unqualifiedly true to consider oneness and manyness as simply contradictories or as simply contraries, for what I will be arguing is that we cannot say that either position is true or false; we need aspects of both of these positions in order to say anything meaningful at all. This will be fleshed out in the book's examination of unity and wholeness. To get into this examination, however, we must begin with claims that will show themselves later to be incomplete.
20. The many different forms that the principle can take, while interesting, are not an issue here, for all of them entail a one and a many.
21. This is also the stranger's move in the second half of the *Sophist* (236d-268d). The relation between the *Theaetetus* and the *Sophist* is clearly intimate, which is evidenced no more so than in their common attempts to carve out a middle ground between the believers in flux and those who believe all is one. There will be much more to say about the *Sophist* later in our investigation.

22. 170c-171c. "Peritropé" is the name given to one of Socrates' attempted refutations of Protagoras' doctrine. It argues that Protagoras' account is self-refuting. Peritropé literally translates as "turning around"
23. Though it is relevant to Theaetetus, as we will see.
24. There is far more nuance in these discussions than I suggest here, though I don't think that any amount of nuance can overcome the problem I am raising. The interpretations of the peritropé do not divide neatly into two camps. Besides those who argue that Protagoras is shown to be self-contradictory (See Fine [2003], Burnyeat [1976b], Sedley [2004]), and those who argue that Plato fails to show that Protagoras' account is self-contradictory (Cornford does this, though he does so by separating perception and judgment and claiming that Plato's argument only applies to judgments [1967, p.100]), there are also those who argue that Protagoras is not shown to be self-refuting; he is simply shown to be unable to convince (Chappell [2005], Bostock [1988]).
25. *Protagoras* 320c-322d.
26. That is, Socrates through Protagoras is engaged in self-refutation over his own argument that self-refutation is possible!
27. πιθανολογίᾳ τε καὶ εἰκόσι (162e8).
28. While there is a general argument being given in the digression establishing the difference between the lawyer and the philosopher, it is couched in a playful rhetorical style that appeals to stoties of falling into wells and laughing Thracian maidservants (174a).
29. There are two or three rounds of refutation (depending upon how you make the divisions). M. J. Levett divides the refutations of Protagoras into the superficial (160e-165e), and the serious (170a-172c, 177c-179b). In response to the superficial objections and the first part of the serious objections, Socrates takes on the voice of Protagoras in order to supply what he thinks would be the Protagorean response (166a-168c, 171c-d). After the final refutation, Socrates questions the effectiveness of his criticisms of Protagoras, but this time he does it in his own voice (179c-d).
30. Peritropé literally translates to something like "turning around," and generally refers to self-refutation.
31. 171d1-3.
32. *De Anima*, 420a26-30. Translation by Joe Sachs.
33. This image of midwifery will be addressed in some detail later in this chapter, since it is also one of the ways that Plato sets up the opposition between the one and the many that structures the dialogue.
34. Theaetetus' acceptance of the principle is not only shown by his being convinced by arguments; it is also demonstrated in his definition of incommensurable numbers (the investigation of which we will turn to shortly). The defining by division that Theaetetus uses relies on A being not not A. Another way to see this is in the context of the opposition as put forth in the digression: Theaetetus' definition seeks the universal that applies to, or is set over, the many particulars. In short he is seeking a way to relate the one and the many, but the denial of the principle does away with this opposition.
35. By subjective here I simply mean that which is for the perceiver. There are some more nuanced distinctions made that question whether Protagoras is a subjectivist or

a relativist, but these are not relevant here. See Burnyeat's "Protagoras and Self-Refutation in Later Greek Philosophy" and "Protagoras and Self-Refutation in Plato's *Theaetetus*." See also Fine (2003).

36. The role of opinion, or belief, and its difference from perception in the Protagorean doctrine is somewhat controversial. Fine (2003) claims that "to say how things *appear* to me is to say how things *are* for me" (p.133), which is to say that perception entails opinion. I don't think that this can be the case, or at least we should not take opinion here to be the same as opinion as it is discussed in Theaetetus' next definition of knowledge. One problem that would arise on Fine's account is that there would end up being no difference between the second and third definitions of knowledge. If we say that everything that appears to me is true (for me), and appears is the same as believes, then the second definition, in saying that perception is knowledge and is always true, will amount to saying that true belief is knowledge (the third definition). The primary difference between the "belief" entailed by perception and the belief discussed later is the presence of memory. Belief, properly speaking, requires the presence of memory. This is suggested in the *Theaetetus* by the involved discussion of memory in the third definition of knowledge (as true opinion/belief). Aristotle suggests the same thing at the conclusion of the *Posterior Analytics*: "All animals have [sense perception], but in some the perception persists, while in others it does not. Where it does not, there is either no cognition at all outside the act of perception, or no cognition of those objects of which the perception does not persist." (*PA* 99b37-100a1). (Aristotle makes the same distinction at the beginning of *Metaphysics*, 1.980a-b). Plato hints that this distinction between human cognition and the perception of animals is something that Protagoras' position does not take into account (161c4) (Kenneth Dorter [1990, pp349-350] makes this same suggestion). Plato also suggests that Protagoras does not take this to be a problem (162d-e, 166c-d), because for Protagoras the "memory" (and hence the connected opinions) of man are simply different perceptions had at different times: "Do you think anyone would go along with you that a memory that's present to him of things he experienced, when he is no longer experiencing them, is an experience of the same sort as he underwent at the time? It's far short of it" (166b). The distinction between perception and opinion will be investigated in more detail at the beginning of chapter 3.
37. *Sophist* 249c. The Translations of the *Sophist*, unless otherwise noted, are from Nicholas P. White.
38. Ibid 249c-d (My emphasis).
39. This will be one of the primary issues discussed in chapter 3, where we will investigate Socrates' lengthy discussion of *logos*, but it is worth noting some preliminary results at this point in order to reinforce my current claim that the opposition between the two Pre-Socratic philosophers is being used by Plato as a structuring principle in the dialogue.
40. 201d-210b, but specifically 202b. I will be arguing in the third chapter that the entirety of the final section focuses on the relation of the parts and the whole.
41. 182c-183b.
42. 182a.

43. Marina Berzins McCoy (2005) makes a similar claim regarding the incommensurability of Protagoras and Theaetetus (37); however her reasons for doing so are different. She suggests that Protagoras' position is internally consistent, and is only shown to be inconsistent with Theaetetus' opinions (22, 32). This is right, but it is misleading to refer to Protagoras' position as internally consistent. Consistency is determined by the principle of non-contradiction, and I have argued that this does not play a role in Protagoras' "account." This same incommensurability is reflected between Socrates and Protagoras in the drama of the dialogue named after the sophist (it is also reflected in the arguments, but that is harder to show in a short space). It requires the effort of the group (335d-338e) as well as some physical restraint (335d) in order to keep Socrates and Protagoras engaged with one another. For authors who make this suggestion about *Protagoras* see Halper (2004) and Griswold (1999).
44. *Sophist* 244b-d.
45. 184a.
46. 180e-181a.
47. 145b.
48. More accurately, it is the belief in the possibility of falseness.
49. 152c.
50. 190a.
51. Once one starts looking for suggestions of reference to the one/many theme they are (perhaps too) easy to find. I will only focus on the ones that I think will frame the book in the clearest manner. Some others are: the similarity in appearance between Socrates and Theaetetus, the same name (Socrates) for two different characters, perhaps even the similarity between the period in Theaetetus' life in the frame to Socrates' in the dialogue proper (just before death for both of them).
52. The *Charmides* (159b-160d) and the *Meno* (71e-72e) actually have both of these problems, though in different ways. The section of the *Theaetetus* under investigation gives a list of examples, while the *Euthyphro* (5d) gives a single instance.
53. *Charmides*, 159b-160d.
54. *Euthyphro* 5d.
55. *Euthyphro* 6d.
56. *Meno* 72a.
57. *Theaetetus* 146c-d.
58. Other instances of Socrates giving examples of definitions are: *Laches* 192b, and *Meno* 75b and 76a.
59. *Theaetetus* 147c.
60. Nehamas (1999) p. 226.
61. The sides, as we shall see, are the one and the many.
62. *Posterior Analytics*, I.4.73a35-38.
63. *Posterior Analytics*, II.3.90b34-39.
64. The multiplicity of parts (predicates) that the definition seems (and in a way needs) to have is reflected in the role of the definition in a demonstration. In order for the demonstration to be able to show a necessary connection between subject and predicate through the middle term, the definition must be seen as supplying a

necessary predicate; meaning that in its use in demonstration the definition is treated as being an essential predication, while properly speaking the definition does not entail predication.

65. *Metaphysics* 1039a, Sachs translation. Aristotle suggests this as a refutation of what he takes to be Plato's position. His solution to the problem that definition seems to be impossible is to recognize that the genus is a potenitality, and hence, its inclusion in the *logos* of an *ousia* does not make either the *logos* or the *ousia* itself multiple. I will be arguing, in agreement with Aristotle's account of Plato, that for Plato the universal is indeed actual. This leads to the result that in one way definition is possible, and in one way definition is not possible (just as Aristotle argues), but that for Plato this is not a problem. See Halper, 1989 (pp. 110-132), for an account of how Aristotle handles these issues.
66. Definition is one kind of *logos*, as we will see in chapter 3.
67. 147d-148b.
68. The *Theaetetus* is the first dialogue in a trilogy. The drama of the dialogues tells us that the discussion in the *Sophist* takes place the day after the discussion in the *Theaetetus*, and involves all the same characters with the addition of the Parmenidean Stranger from Elea. Yet the method of defining by division taught to Theaetetus by the stranger in the *Sophist* comes up at least twice in the *Theaetetus*. The first time it is used by Theaetetus himself in reference to incommensurable numbers and serves as an example of the kind of definition of knowledge Socrates is looking for (147d-148b). And then again this method of definition by division becomes the topic in Socrates' final attempt at a definition of logos at the very end of the dialogue (208c-210a), where the method is problematized precisely in regards to the difficulty in relating the One to the many that it poses.
69. 149b.
70. 149c.
71. R. G. Wengert raises this problem, though his suggested solutions are all unsatisfactory (as he himself claims). Wengert, R. G. "The Paradox of the Midwife," History of Philosophy Quarterly Vol. 5 (1988), pp. 3-10.
72. Passages in the *Parmenides* where Socrates makes claims seem to be an example of this. For instance Parmenides asks Socrates "is it your view that, as you say, there are certain forms which these other things, by getting a share of them, derive their names — as for instance they come to be like by getting a share of likeness, large by getting a share of largeness, and just and beautiful by getting a share of justice and beauty," to which Socrates responds "it certainly is" (130e-131a). Also Socrates self-characterization of his youth in the *Phaedo* recalls his self-birthing of wind-eggs. As he says "when I was a young man I was wonderfully keen on that wisdom they call natural science, for I thought it splendid to know the causes of everything, why it comes to be, why it perishes, and why it exists. I was often changing my mind in the investigation" (96a-b). And he goes on to say "this investigation made me quite blind even to those things which I and others thought I clearly knew before, so that I unlearned what I thought I knew before" (96c).
73. This interpretation, with its claim that knowledge is impossible, aligns with an account that argues that inquiry is the highest human good. See Halper (2007) and Bloom (2014) for such an account.

74. Another possibility: that if one were to actually birth genuine wisdom the need for Socrates will be gone. Meaning that Socrates' lack of wisdom will be no impediment to the one who actually does birth wisdom. It is, of course, also far from clear how Socrates would be actually helping this person in any way other than ridding them of wind-eggs that are impeding their seeing of the truth, in which case we would be back in the situation outlined above where Socrates no longer requires personal experience of true-birth.
75. Those who adopt this approach: Benardete (1997, p. 30) and Tschemplik (2003, p. 51).
76. Reason here most properly applies to *nous*. We will see later (chapter 3) in what way *nous* must leave the realm of experience behind in order for it to be able to serve as the ground for genuine knowledge.
77. αἴσθησις ἄρα τοῦ ὄντος ἀεί ἐστιν καὶ ἀψευδὲς ὡς ἐπιστήμη οὖσα. "Therefore perception is always of what is, and, being knowledge, is without falsity." 152c.
78. Part of the beauty of Heraclitus is that he was able to treat himself as both midwife and expectant mother! The fragments we have left are wonderful examples of writings that intentionally undermine themselves, exposing themselves as wind-eggs.

Chapter Two

The Levels of Being (184b-201a)

Introduction

The dialogue's extended argument for the necessity of oneness[1] is completed with the final refutation of "knowledge is perception."[2] The upshot of the argument is that the soul (and its objects), in order to be able to account for the multiplicity of experiences that we have, must be both one and many. The argument holds that all objects of experience and thought derive their being from the soul itself. Hence, by recognizing the multiplicity of experience we simultaneously recognize the multiplicity of the soul, since all experience is had within, and is a byproduct of, the soul itself. This argument is followed by an attempt to account for false opinion. While the investigation of false opinion appears to be unsuccessful it nonetheless supplies the reader with an implicit account of how false opinion can occur. I will argue that the possibility of false opinion rests upon each object (of thought or experience) belonging to multiple levels of being. The general idea is that every intelligible object must be a one composed of parts. Since knowing is tied to grasping being, and being is tied to oneness, to know an object is to know its principle of unity. Thus, each object, as both one and many, will be known only when its multiplicity is left behind for a grasp of its principle of unity. Or, in other words, each intelligible object is dependent on something to unify it; that principle of unity is both the object's being and yet is, nonetheless, distinct from the object as something that has parts. This distinction between that which unifies (and hence supplies being) and that which is unified (and hence acquires being) leads to the distinction between levels of being. Each object, therefore, as both that which is unified and that which unifies must belong to multiple levels of being. This has two repercussions for the soul itself. The first is that since all objects belong to the soul itself, and all objects belong to multiple levels of being, the soul itself must contain multiple levels of being. The second is that since the soul contains multiplicity it must itself be multiple, and, hence, will itself require a principle of unity. We will see that the principle of unity of the soul will have to transcend any possible intelligible experience.

This chapter will be divided into two primary sections. The first will focus on the the final refutation of "knowledge is perception," and bring out some of the underlying metaphysical assumptions that the argument makes about the soul. The second will focus on the dialogue's account of false opinion. Taking these two together will give us the *Theaetetus*' implicit argument for the existence of levels of being. This will lead us into chapter 3 where we will investigate what we can know about the relation between the levels of being.

Part one: the refutation of "knowledge is perception" (184b-186e)

The argument in the dialogue that is taken to undermine the second definition of knowledge (and leads the reader to recognize the need for a soul to serve as a principle of unity) begins by recognizing that perceptions are made *through* the senses as opposed to *with* the senses. The things perceived through one power, i.e., through a particular sense organ, cannot be perceived through any of the other powers. For example a taste as sensed through the tongue cannot be sensed by any other organ. Thus, thinking anything about common objects of the senses cannot be done through any particular sense. Being (οὐσία), same and different, like and unlike, and number, are common to all objects of sense. Therefore, the power by which these things are revealed cannot be through the senses. Things are cognized either by the soul through the senses, or by the soul "itself through itself."[3] Thus, being, and the other things common to all the senses, since it cannot be grasped by the power of the soul operating through the senses, can only be grasped by the soul itself through itself. Knowledge is only had of being.[4] Therefore, knowledge can be had only by the soul itself through itself. Therefore, perception has no share of knowledge, and as a result perception cannot be knowledge.

The argument hinges on the activity of the soul. The soul can either work through the senses (i.e. one of its "powers" [δύναμις]) or through itself. In working through the eye, the activity of the soul is the actual seeing. When working through the tongue, the activity of the soul is the actual tasting. When working through itself the activity of the soul is described as working with those things that are not immediately present to the soul through the senses.[5] In one way all these activities are distinct, depending upon what power, if any, the soul is operating through. But in another way these activities are all one and the same; namely, the one, single soul is either operating through a power, or operating through itself.

The argument shows us that knowledge is only to be found in the soul's exercise of its activity independently of any power, or what amounts to the same thing, knowledge is only to be found in the activity of the soul itself through itself. This follows once we accept that knowledge is only had of being, and that being is not grasped by the soul through a power. If knowledge is had in the activity of the soul working through itself, and perception is the activity of the

soul through the senses, then perception necessitates not having knowledge. Thus, not only can perception not be knowledge, it altogether precludes knowledge.[6] Socrates' comment after this argument has come to light that "it was not for the sake of all of this that we began discussing it, to find out what knowledge is not, but what it is"[7] has a double meaning. The claim is not just that they have found perception and knowledge not to be the same; they have actually found what knowledge is not, i.e., the activity of the soul through something other. This means that the finding of what knowledge is not has coincided with, and necessitates, the distinguishing between the soul itself and particular powers of the soul.

This relation between the soul itself and the soul's parts, or powers, is at the heart of the dialogue and will be part of the focus of this chapter.[8] The distinction between the soul's activity and its powers is our first real clue to understanding the middle ground between Heraclitus and Parmenides. The refutation of "knowledge is perception," and the opposition between the soul's activity and the soul's power that it generates, is the final refutation of an account that embraces pure multiplicity, showing us the need for an underlying oneness. Yet the argument has done much more than just argue for the existence of "some one look"[9] (εἰς μίαν τινὰ ἰδέαν) to unify the faculties. *The argument has moved the entire investigation within the soul*, for all intelligibility depends upon the commons which are within the soul itself.[10] Even the discussion of distinct faculties is a distinction within the soul itself. The difference between subject and object has become blurred to the point of extinction. Each object is what it is, i.e., derives its being, from the soul. Thus, by arguing for levels of being for the objects we simultaneously argue for levels of being within the soul (the very soul we have just argued is the principle of unity for all experience).

Unpacking the argument

There is an entire ontology and epistemology packed into this refutation of "knowledge is perception." In some sense, the rest of this book, and the sections of the *Theaetetus* that follow the argument, is all explication of this argument. Hence the rest of this section, dealing exclusively with the argument, should be taken more as a prelude to what the argument entails than as a complete fleshing out of all its details and repercussions. To start we must notice that the argument differentiates possible activities of the soul, all the while treating them as activities of one and the same soul. This creates an opposition between the soul as a principle of unity (and hence as one), and the soul as divisible into multiple faculties or potencies (and hence as many). This opposition is expressed by distinguishing the soul itself through itself and the soul through another. Both sides of the opposition refer to activities: either the activity of the soul itself through itself, which is where knowledge is to be found, or the activity of the soul through another, where knowledge is not to be found.

There are two stages to the argument and both of them relate back to the opposition between Parmenides and Heraclitus discussed in chapter 1, for both of them focus on the unifying of a multiplicity. The first part of the argument shows that the soul "is some one look" that is able to bring together that which is particular to each of the senses. The second part of the argument shows that each of the commons (κοινός) is a principle of unity that turn the undifferentiated sense-content supplied by the senses into intelligible objects of experience. A problem arises here. The commons belong to the soul itself through itself. This must be the case because the commons must be present to the soul prior to any intelligible experience, for they are what make intelligible experience possible. Thus, the commons are somehow identified with the soul itself. The soul itself is supposed to serve as a principle of unity, and hence must be one, and yet there are a multiplicity of commons. In order for the soul to be one and also to contain all the commons, it must be the case that the multitude of commons are somehow also one. Or, in other words, the soul is the principle of unity not just of what is derived from the senses (i.e., sense-content), it is also the principle of unity of that which unifies the sense-content (i.e., the commons). Thus, the argument has divided experience into four levels, where each lower level is unified by the level above it. Perception itself (first level) is unified in the combination of sense-content and the commons (second level), which is unified by the commons themselves (third level), which in turn is unified by the soul as a single look (fourth level).

Thinking back to the arguments for the middle ground given in chapter 1, we can see that there is nothing to be said about perception itself, nor is there anything to be said about a soul that would be entirely one, for meaningful *logos* requires both multiplicity and oneness. The only way we can grasp "pure" perception and an utterly one soul is through recognizing their necessity for the intelligible experience we do have. In other words, the argument for the soul as a principle of unity underlying perception is a transcendental argument. The argument rests upon the assumption pointed out earlier that there is such a thing as meaningful *logos*, and it is unity that supplies *logos* with its meaning. Since the commons are responsible for unifying the undifferentiated sense-content, we must grasp them in order to grasp perceptual experience. Yet insofar as the commons themselves are multiple we must likewise grasp their principle(s) of unity in order to be able to grasp the commons. There is a regress at work here. Knowledge is of being, and being is one. Thus, to know something is to know how it is one. Thus, any principle of unity that is itself multiple will, despite making that which it unifies intelligible, itself be unintelligible until one grasps its principle of unity.

This is what the famous cave analogy from the *Republic* suggests as well.[11] The Good, or the One, is that which makes everything else be, and be intelligible. Yet the grasping of the shadows as shadows does not take us

immediately back to the Good itself, but rather allows us to recognize the being of the objects casting the shadows. These in turn are grasped by that which allows these objects to be, and so forth, until eventually we arrive back at the source of the being of every stage, i.e., the One itself. So too in the *Theaetetus* coming to know is a continual process of seeking greater and greater unity.

The nature of these levels, and their relations to one another, are not examined in the argument for the soul itself, but they are nonetheless needed for the argument to work. A primary example of a distinction between levels of being is the distinction between the common itself, as it is present in the soul prior to any experience, and the object of experience that derives its unity from the common. The relations at work begin to get fleshed out when we think through the problems of false opinion that arise from Socrates and Theaetetus' discussion immediately following the argument, but some thought about this relation now will better prepare us for that discussion.

The distinction between the soul's working through another and the soul's working through itself is difficult to parse out. Perception with some kind of minimal awareness, i.e., where some kind of basic structure is imposed upon the sense-content, is pretty clearly a case of the soul working through another. So, too, thinking about the content of what has previously been perceived, even if not currently perceiving, would seem to also be the activity of the soul through another (memory). But how far can we get away from the particular sense-content before we can say that the soul is no longer acting through another, but rather is itself by itself? Take, for example, Theaetetus' definitions of commensurable and incommensurable numbers.[12] Is this act of defining achieved by the soul itself through itself, or does it too depend on the soul reaching outside of itself? Theaetetus separates what he and young Socrates did from what Theodorus did by distinguishing between particular examples and a collection of all the particulars into some one thing. Theaetetus says,

> Theodorus here was diagramming (ἔγραφε) something for us about potencies (δυνάμεών), demonstrating about the potential side of the three-foot square and about that of the five-foot square that they are not commensurable in length with the foot-long line, and demonstrating in this way as he picked out each of them one by one up to the potential side of the seventeen-foot square; at that one, for some reason, he got tangled up. So something of this sort occurred to us: since the potential squares are obviously infinite in multitude, we would try to gather them together into some one thing (πειραθῆναι συλλαβεῖν εἰς ἕν), in which we could address our speech to all these potential squares.[13]

How does the technique used by Theaetetus and young Socrates differ from that used by Theodorus? Are both techniques examples of the soul working through another, or are the young mathematicians working through the soul itself? One

of the explicit differences pointed to is that Theodorus is working through each particular example. He draws each square and its diagonal, diagramming the relation in a way that can be seen, and is distinct for each one. Theaetetus and Young Socrates, on the other hand, cannot be demonstrating visually for their demonstration applies to each of the numbers. There is no particular that is the full embodiment of their definition for their definition includes all the particulars. Thus, it seems that at least part of what differentiates the work of the young men from that of their teacher is that Theodorus' work is tied to perception in a way that the young men's work is not.

Yet, it is false to say that the work of Theaetetus and young Socrates is free from perception; for, after all, their technique was inspired by Theodorus' diagrams. They moved from the particulars to a more general grasp.[14] The distinction between that which belongs to the soul itself as opposed to what is generated by the soul through another is akin to the distinction to what must be present to the soul a priori, and what is only present to the soul a posteriori. For the commons are what allow us to have any intelligible experience or thought, and hence must be present to the soul prior to any experience or thought. But how do we draw a clear line between the a priori commons and the universals that arise out of our experience? The *Theaetetus* does not flesh out an answer to this problem, and providing one is more than I am willing, and perhaps able, to undertake. Attempting to make these issues clear is, after all, the seminal work of no less a philosopher than Immanuel Kant.[15] The point I aim to make here is that the argument for the soul requires a distinction between the a priori commons themselves and the commons mixed with sense-content, and that further distinctions arise within this distinction depending on how far the latter objects are from the commons themselves (i.e., how intertwined with sense-content the objects are). These distinctions are central to Plato's discussion of false opinion, a discussion which will further develop the distinctions made here.

Before turning to the examination of false opinion, which comprises most of the investigation into Theaetetus' second proper definition of knowledge (that knowledge is true opinion) it is worth taking stock of what implications the argument for the soul has for the dialogue's earlier investigations of Heraclitus and Protagoras. The argument has disproved the claim that knowledge is perception, which was linked to the positions of both Heraclitus and Protagoras, yet there are significant portions of the two Pre-Socratic positions that are nonetheless still present with us after Theaetetus' first proper definition of knowledge has been shown to be a wind-egg.

The refutation of "knowledge is perception" has shown that the pure flux of Heraclitus is an incomplete, and incoherent, picture of reality. The single look that the argument seeks to prove is fundamentally opposed to the ever-changing flux of the Heraclitean world. The soul is the unchanging seat of the flowing

experience we have. It is a oneness that imposes structure and unity to the flowing realm of sense-content. The sense-content itself, however, seems to fit perfectly with the substance free world of Heraclitus. Sense-content, according to the argument, only acquires substance through the soul. This is the reason that nothing at all can be said about sense-content independent of the commons, just as we saw with the account of Heraclitus given earlier in the dialogue[16] and examined in chapter 1.

The argument's relation to Protagoras is particularly striking. In a significant sense the argument for the soul has reinforced the idea that "man is the measure." The intelligibility of all experience and thought is entirely dependent on the commons that belong to the soul. An opinion or judgment is a particular structuring of undifferentiated sense-content,[17] a structuring that is accomplished by the judger's (i.e., the soul's) application of commons. Further, according to the transcendental reading of the argument offered here, the commons cannot come from experience, but rather must be supplied by the soul itself through itself. Thus, the object of an individual's (lower) judgment, or experience, is something that is created by that person. Judgment does not recombine the being and oneness of what is sensed, for that would require that the objects of sensation already have the commons applied to them. There is no "thing" that is sensed at all, at least no thing that anyone can say anything, or make any judgments, about. We really seem to still be squarely in the realm of Protagoras!

Yet this account cannot be the same as Protagoras' if for no other reason than that we have just deemed 'knowledge is perception' to be a false opinion, and according to Protagoras there are no false opinions. How can the account arising out of the argument for the soul retain "man is the measure" and yet also be able to allow for the possibility of false opinion? The answer lies in the idea of levels of being. The argument entails that the being and oneness of every object of judgment stems from the common belonging to the soul itself. The pure multiplicity of sense-content becomes something that *is* only by its connection with being itself; coming to be is becoming one. Thus, every multiplicity that *is* derives its being from that which supplies it with oneness (for all objects of experience and *logos* this is a common), and that means that the multiplicity *is* something other than itself. Or in other words, since the being of every multiplicity lies in something outside of itself, every multiplicity must not be what it is. This is how things are (and are not) in the contradictory realm in between Parmenides and Heraclitus; things must be and not be what they are.

We shall now turn to an investigation of how the levels of being are necessary for the possibility of false opinion, which in turn will help us understand the argument for the soul more clearly.

Part two: false opinion (187d-201a)

There are five parts to the section of the text dedicated to figuring out what false opinion is. The first three parts (188a-e; 188d-189b; 189b-190e) are arguments that conclude that false opinion is impossible. The final two arguments are images (the wax block [191c-198c] and the aviary [198d-200c]) that are unable to capture false opinion, at least not completely. The arguments, though each a distinct argument for the impossibility of false opinion, fit together in a way that leads us to recognize the need for levels of being. A brief outline of the upcoming section is as follows.

I am going to argue that the first argument in this section is unable to account for false opinion because it fails to recognize that the soul must have several distinct powers/faculties. The second argument is unable to account for false opinion because it fails to recognize that there are multiple types of beings that correspond to the multiplicity of faculties. The third argument includes both of the above mentioned multiplicities but, nonetheless, is still unable to account for false opinion because it fails to recognize judgment's ability to relate the different faculties and corresponding beings to one another. The image of the wax block does relate two distinct faculties and their corresponding beings to one another, and as a result it is able to explain certain types of false opinion; however, the image fails to include the faculty of "thought" (*dianoia*) as independent from the others and is, thereby, unable to explain false opinions that supposedly occur within that faculty alone. The final image of the aviary attempts to treat thought independently of the other faculties, and as a result it is once again unable to account for false opinion.

The first lesson to draw from this is that errors in pure thought are actually impossible, as are errors in any isolated faculty. The errors only arise when the faculties are mixed in with, or mistaken for, one another. To put it in the terms used earlier, false judgment only occurs when the soul's activity involves the relating of commons themselves to commons mixed with sense-content. It is in the act of mis-relating these that false opinion occurs.[18] We will see that this means that it is possible to mistake a memory for a perception, but not a memory for a memory. Likewise it is possible to mistake an unmixed common for a mixed common, but not an unmixed common for an unmixed common. The next, and more important, lesson is the generalization that all error is a confusing of the objects of one faculty for the objects of another faculty. This confusing of the objects of one faculty for the objects of another faculty is the same as confusing one kind (or level) of being for another. Thus, all error is a mistaking of one kind (or level) of being for another. The conclusions I draw from the investigation into false opinion are implicit in the dialogue. They arise largely through applying the lessons learned from the refutation of "knowledge is perception" to the investigation into false opinion. We should expect these two sections of the dialogue (i.e., the refutation of the Protagorean/Heraclitean position that knowledge is perception and the investigation into the possibility of

false opinion) to be related since an integral part of the Protagorean position being dismissed is that false opinion is not possible.

The first argument: knowing or not knowing (188a-e)

The first argument states that all opinions are either of what one knows or what one doesn't know. This allows for only four possible ways that false opinion could occur: mistaking what is known for what is known, mistaking what is not known for what is not known, mistaking what is known for what is not known and mistaking what is not known for what is known. All four of these are deemed impossible for two reasons. The first is that knowledge cannot be the source of ignorance; the second is that what is not known cannot be an object of judgment. The example Socrates uses is someone's mistaking Theaetetus for Socrates. If one does not know either Theaetetus or Socrates, one cannot mistake the one for the other, and if one knows them then one could never think that the one is the other. Hence false opinion appears to be impossible.

The argument is clearly problematic. After all, "knowledge is perception" has already been shown to be false earlier in the dialogue. So, if we are in agreement with Socrates and Theaetetus' earlier refutation, we must believe that there is false opinion. It is, however, not easy to see what the problem with the argument actually is. John Ackrill raises a case of false opinion that he thinks Socrates' argument fails to be able to account for. He writes:

> Unfortunately, of course, with ordinary proper names the argument outlined above does not work. A man might be introduced to me at one time as "Jo" and at another time as "Smith," and it might be a matter for later discovery by me that Jo and Smith are one and the same person. Before this discovery I might well think they were different people, and I could express this belief by saying "Jo is not Smith."[19]

The conditions for this error, Ackrill notes, are that I can identify some set of features of the person in question to which I have applied the name "Jo." and some other set of features to which I have applied the name "Smith." Properly speaking these features are of the same person, and my false opinion arises from my failure to recognize this. The confusion in this case, according to Ackrill, is one of naming. As Ackrill puts it, Socrates "operates with ordinary proper names as though they were logical proper names,"[20] meaning that Socrates takes the names (i.e., Theaetetus and Socrates) to be necessarily connected to a single, simple object, when in actuality they are nothing more than a mere description consisting of several unified characteristics of something that admits of numerous possible descriptions. It is Socrates' confusing of these two different kinds of naming that, Ackrill thinks, leads to the argument's mistaken

conclusion that false opinion is impossible.

This distinction between logical proper names and ordinary proper names relates directly back to the previous discussion about the commons and their relation to sense-content. To use the name "Theaetetus" in the ordinary sense is to refer to some unified set of characteristics (say bulging eyes and snub nose), and this amounts to a mixing of sense-content and commons.[21] To use the name "Theaetetus" in the logical sense is to refer to the simple principle of unity itself. This principle, we have just argued, is Theaetetus' beautiful soul, which is the source of the commons.[22] Thus, a naming can either be a reference to a mixture of sense-content and commons (ordinary names) or it can be a reference to an unmixed common (proper names).

Thus, Ackrill's distinction between the types of names is central, but the inferences he draws from the distinction miss the mark. His claim is that if we treat the names Jo and Smith as ordinary names, the mistaken judgment that "Jo is not Smith" is clearly possible,[23] for the mistake is simply taking one set of possible characteristics of Jo Smith and calling it Jo, and taking another set and calling it Smith. Since the sets of characteristics are different when I hold them next to each other I can judge Jo and Smith not to be the same, thereby allowing for the false opinion. The problem here is that in Ackrill's scenario the supposedly false judgment that "Jo is not Smith" is actually a *true* judgment. If Jo is a distinct set of characteristics from Smith then Jo *is not* Smith, and the corresponding judgment that Jo is not Smith must be true. By pushing aside the soul (as an unmixed common) and focusing on the characteristics alone the judgment that "Jo is not Smith" ceases to be false.

What then must be the case for "Jo is not Smith" to be correctly described as false? In order for the claim to be false, it must be true that Jo is the same as Smith. Yet, in order to be able to *judge* Jo not to be Smith they must be different, for if they were entirely the same one could never judge the one not to be the other. What we need is for Jo to be *and* not to be Smith. How is this possible? The solution is obvious; Jo is the same as Smith insofar as both refer to the same individual, i.e., the same soul, and Jo is different than Smith insofar as they are distinct representations of that same individual. Again, Jo and Smith differ as distinct collections of sense-content, but Jo and Smith are the same insofar as the distinct collections of sense-content are unified by the same principle. This duality — of substance and appearance — resolves the problems that arise with false opinion in this argument, and they do so by undermining one of the argument's fundamental assumptions. The argument assumes that things are either known or not known, with no middle ground. Recognizing the above duality we can see that this assumption is a false disjunction. To have a representation of Jo Smith, i.e., to grasp Jo Smith as a unity of characteristics, is neither to know Jo Smith (for it does not grasp his principle of unity) nor is it not to know Jo Smith (for there is some loosely unified content present to the

soul).

To sum up so far: the object of a grasp can either be the principle of unity itself or it can be the principle of unity as it applies to that which it unifies. Or to use the language from the refutation of "knowledge is perception," the common mixed with sense-content both is and is not the common. This is a general principle at work in the dialogue; that which is unified by a principle of unity both is and is not that principle. This is perhaps most obvious with οὐσία; the being of an object of experience lies in the common itself. Thus, insofar as the object of experience is not identical to the common it must not be what it is. Thus, to know a being only as an object of experience is to both know and not know that being. It is precisely this knowing and not knowing of the same thing that the first argument against false opinion assumes is impossible. It is the recognition that the being of the objects of experience is supplied by the soul that gives us a way to see how the same thing can be known and not known at the same time.

We can now see how it is possible to make the false judgment that "Jo is not Smith." Insofar as we take Jo and Smith as merely objects of experience (or appearances) there is no false opinion. For, if they are simply appearances, it means that to have them appear distinct to us, which is required for judging them to be different, entails their truly being distinct. For similar reasons they cannot be entirely the same either, for if they were entirely the same they could never appear as distinct to us. As objects of experience they must be distinct and not distinct. Yet, Jo and Smith, in their οὐσία, are not distinct.

In this way, the relation between the commons and the sense-content (or any unifier and unified) undermine the first argument offered against false opinion. What allows for the possibility of the false judgment that "Jo is not Smith" is that Jo Smith *is* in multiple ways; he is as a principle of unity and he is as objects of experience.[24]

The multiplicity of ways in which Jo Smith *is* are all representations constructed by the soul of the one experiencing (or judging or thinking)[25] Jo Smith. The multiplicity of being, therefore, is something present to the soul of the "measurer" (to use Protagoras' term). A question arises here: since the objects present to the soul exist in several different ways, and the objects that are for the soul exist because the soul determines them to be that way, does that mean that the soul itself must exist in several different ways? The answer to this must be yes. The reason is that the entire range of levels of being belongs within the soul. Thus, if the difference between the levels of being is real (which I am in the midst of arguing they must be, if false opinion is going to be possible) then there must be real difference within the soul. The soul, at least potentially, corresponds to and is responsible for, multiple levels of being and as a result must itself exist, at least potentially, on these multiple levels.

Because the commons are both the principle of unity for all intelligible experience, and are supplied by the very soul having the experience, it should be

the case that regardless of whether we look at the levels of being from the standpoint of the object, or from the standpoint of the subject we come to the same results. This is part of making man the measure, and part of what we saw with Protagoras' account from earlier in the dialogue. As Socrates says in regards to Protagoras' view of the perceiving and the perceived:

> There are two forms of motion, each infinite in multitude, the one having the power to act the other to be acted upon. From the intercourse of these and their rubbing against each other there come to be offspring, infinite in multitude but twins, a perceived and also a perceiving that always falls out conjoined and generated with what is perceived.[26] . . . For there isn't even any active thing until it comes together with what's acting on it, and the thing that comes together with one thing and acts comes to sight again as being acted upon when it comes up against something else.[27]

So too in Plato's picture the experiencer, qua experiencer, only comes to be along with the coming to be of the experienced. The difference between the accounts is that for Plato the being of an experiencer is not really found in the act of being an experiencer. In other words, the experiencer is the soul working through another. The being of this unity of soul and other is found in that which serves as the principle of unity of the compound; the principle of unity of the soul and other is the soul itself. Or in yet other words, the experiencer is a compound, and as a compound its being lies in that which supplies it with its unity. The soul itself is the unity underlying the multiplicity of the experiencer. Therefore the soul itself (not as experiencer) is fundamentally the being of the experiencer.

This is the same as the distinction pointed to earlier in the Jo Smith example, except in this case we are talking about the *faculties* of perception (i.e., being an experiencer) instead of the *objects* of perception (the qualities attributed to Jo and to Smith). These, I have been arguing, are equivalent. For the qualities and the faculty responsible for perceiving the qualities both express the same level of being. This is also the point of transition between the first argument against false opinion and the second. The second argument is fundamentally the same as the first, only instead of focusing on the subject, it focuses on the object. As Socrates says when moving from the one argument to the other, "well then, is what we're looking for something one ought not to examine in this way, going by one's knowing or not knowing, but rather by something's being or not?"[28]

The second argument: being or not being (188d-189b)

The second argument is generally taken as another formulation of an oft repeated argument in Plato's works. The suggestion that motivates the argument

is that false opinion is having an opinion about what is not, while true opinions are opinions about what is. The general structure of the argument against this view of false opinion is that to have an opinion about what is not is to have an opinion about nothing, and to have an opinion about nothing is to not have an opinion at all. Therefore, it is not possible to have an opinion about what is not, and hence, on this account, false opinion is impossible. Some version of this argument is given in the *Cratylus*,[29] the *Sophist*,[30] and the *Euthydemus*.[31] The general argument is striking for several reasons, but the specific context and examples used in the *Theaetetus* are particularly telling for us. The version of the argument in our dialogue is actually an argument by analogy. Here is part of the exchange between Socrates and Theaetetus that constitutes the argument:[32]

> **Socrates**: Is there any such thing anywhere else?
> **Theaetetus**: What sort of thing?
> **Socrates**: If someone sees something, but sees nothing.
> **Theaetetus**: How could he?
> **Socrates**: But surely if he sees any one thing, he sees one of the beings; or do you suppose that what's one is ever among things that are not?
> **Theaetetus**: Not I.
> **Socrates**: Therefore, someone who sees at least any one thing sees something that *is*.
> **Theaetetus**: So it appears.
> **Socrates**: And therefore, someone who hears anything hears some one thing at least, and hears something that *is*.
> **Theaetetus**: Yes.
> **Socrates**: And so does someone who touches any one thing at least also touch something that *is*, if indeed it's one?
> **Theaetetus**: That too.
> **Socrates**: So doesn't someone who has an opinion have an opinion about at least some one thing?
> **Theaetetus**: Necessarily.
> **Socrates**: And does someone who has an opinion about some one thing not have an opinion about something that *is*?
> **Theaetetus**: I go along with that.
> **Socrates**: Therefore, someone who has an opinion about something that *is not* has an opinion about nothing.

The first thing to notice about this passage is that it makes the same problematic assumption as the first argument, though here it is couched in different terms. The first argument assumes that something is either known or not known (with no in between), while this argument assumes that something is either one or not one (with no in between). It is fundamentally the same assumption except that the first argument makes the assumption in reference to the activity of the subject while the second makes the assumption in reference to the object. As

we've just seen the distinction between the activity of the subject and the being of the object is fundamentally false since the being of the object is derived from the activity of the soul. Thus, the two arguments work in fundamentally the same way. As a result, it is not surprising that they are refutable in the same way. Admitting levels of being, or oneness, undermines the argument. If there are levels of oneness, then it is not enough for the argument to say simply that an object of opinion is or is not, for the levels of oneness mean that an object can be one and not one at the same time. In fact being one and not one at the same time is exactly what the refutation of "knowledge is perception" showed us must be the case for all objects of experience. Every object grasped by the soul through another is what it is in virtue of a combination of common (e.g., oneness) and sense-content. The sense-content is multiplicity that is unified through the common. Thus, every combination of common and sense-content is something that is a mixture of what is one and not one. The upshot here is that the second argument against the possibility of false opinion is overcome in the same way as the first, by admitting levels of being.

The second thing to notice about this version of the argument against false opinion is that it is an argument by analogy, connecting what is true of seeing, hearing and touching with what is true of opining. The analogy is between perception and opinion, and it is intentionally problematic. Perception has *just* been proven not to be knowledge. Why then suppose that opinion, the currently proposed definition of knowledge, should resemble perception? In fact, the refutation of "knowledge is perception" showed us that perception and opinion differ in precisely the way that this argument treats them as the same; the analogy between perception and opinion in this argument takes the oneness of their objects as the center of the analogy. Yet, we saw that perception, as pure sense-content, lies beyond all intelligibility precisely because it was devoid of oneness. Opinion is derived from the combination of the sense-content supplied by perception with the commons. This means that opinion differs from perception precisely in their relation to oneness. To say this again in another way, properly speaking being and oneness are not perceived. It is only once the contents of perception are joined together with the commons (being and oneness being two of these) in judgment that perception has any relation to being. It is interesting to note that based on the above analysis we are prepared to recognize that the assuming of a sameness between the two distinct faculties of perception and opinion (the assumption used to argue against the possibility of false opinion) is itself a false opinion. This mistaking of one faculty for another is the same problem as the mistaking of one level of being for another, which we saw was a problem in the first argument against the possibility of false opinion. Interestingly, this means that the first argument against false opinion started with faculties (i.e., knowing or not knowing) and then showed us that there must be levels of being in the objects, while the second argument against false opinion

started with the being of the objects (i.e., something either is or is not) and then showed us that we must distinguish between the faculties. This is not at all surprising, and perhaps it can even be taken as support for the argument I made earlier that there fundamentally is no distinction between the subject and object in the account generated in the *Theaetetus*.[33] This lack of a genuine distinction is why the undermining of the arguments against false opinion can be done from either the perspective of the subject or object, and in either case we end up invoking the other.

The third argument against the possibility of false opinion recognizes both the necessary multiplicity of ways things are present to the soul and the necessary multiplicity of ways of being, and hence it can be seen as a combination of the previous two arguments. The argument fails to be able to account for the possibility of false opinion, however, because it does not consider these different faculties and beings in relation to one another.

The third argument: *allodoxia*, or other-judging (189b-190e)

The third argument hypothesizes that false opinion is "ἀλλοδοξία,"[34] or "other-judging." Specifically Socrates says that "False opinion is a kind of other-wise opinion, whenever someone, having made an exchange in his thinking, says that one of the beings is another of the beings in turn."[35] We are now explicitly dealing both with things that are present to one of the soul's faculties (to which the first argument tried to limit itself) and things that *are* (to which the second argument tried to limit itself). False opinion, according to the third argument, is mistaking something that is and is present to the soul for another thing that is and is present to the soul. The problem with this, according to Socrates, is that we simply never do it. No one ever says to themselves that "what's beautiful is more ugly than anything, or what's unjust is just."[36] It is impossible to say that one of the things that is present to your soul is another of the things that is present to your soul, and since other-judging requires us to do this, it follows that other-judging is impossible.

The development this argument makes over the previous two, besides indicating that the relation (this is really too weak a word) between the subject and the object, is to be found in the examples that Socrates uses. To make sure we set about questioning the argument, Plato has inserted into his examples of impossible opinions a reference to an opinion expressed earlier in the dialogue. At the beginning of their discussion Theodorus says that Theaetetus is not beautiful.[37] Later on Socrates says to Theaetetus that "you are beautiful, Theaetetus, and not ugly as Theodorus was saying, for one who speaks beautifully is beautiful and good."[38] Theodorus seems to have mistaken the beautiful and the ugly, yet Socrates has just claimed that this never happens.

What accounts for the two opposed opinions being expressed here? How can Theodorus judge Theaetetus to be ugly and Socrates judge him to be beautiful? Does the truth of one of these opinions preclude the truth of the other,

or can both be true? It would seem, based on what has been agreed to in the argument, that simply to be able to judge Theaetetus to be beautiful means that he must be beautiful, and likewise to be able to judge him to be ugly means that he must be ugly, for after all ἀλλοδοξία is the exchanging of something that is for something else that is. How has Theodorus seen ugliness where Socrates sees beauty? The answer is both obvious and central to an understanding of Plato's conception of false opinion. Theodorus is referring to Theaetetus' appearance, while Socrates is referring to his soul or form.[39] The being that is judged to be ugly by Theodorus is an object of perception (i.e., sense-content mixed with commons). The being that is judged to be beautiful by Socrates is an object of judgment, and serves as the principle of unity for the experience.

It is important to keep in mind both the sameness and the difference between these two objects (i.e., the appearance and the substance). The appearance depends upon the substance for its being; the substance is the principle of oneness for the multiplicity that appearance is composed of. This means that substance is the being of the appearance. Or to say it another way, appearance derives its being/oneness from substance, but can only represent this oneness through its multiplicity, and as such *is* less than the substance from which it derives its being.[40] Thus the two judgments (of appearance and substance) are fundamentally of the same thing (Theaetetus), but present the being of that thing more or less fully.

The nature of the unified/unifier relation and how many different kinds of relations fit into this type of relation will be developed over the remainder of the book. In particular chapter 3 will show that one meaningful way to think about this relation, which can also be thought of as the relation between the levels of being, is in terms of the whole and the part. Chapter 3 will argue that the parts are unified into a whole through one kind of *logos*, and that another kind of *logos* shows the whole to be a representation of an even higher oneness. This is not different than the three levels that I have been laying out in this chapter; perception is unified in judgments of commons and sense-content, which are unified in the commons alone. The recognition that it is *logos* that joins the levels of being together, along with the recognition of the importance of differentiating wholes and parts, will help us to better understand the unified/unifier relation that is so crucial for the possibility of false opinion.

Looking back at the third argument we can now see its problem. No one ever says that beauty is ugliness. What we do say is that one and the same thing is beautiful in one way and ugly in another. This does not mean that we say that Theaetetus' nose is ugly but his eyes are beautiful, for in that case we are not saying that the same thing (Theaetetus) is beautiful and ugly. This was the type of error that Ackrill made. What it means is that the false opinion arises out of a lack of recognition of the different ways of viewing the same object or, what amounts to the same thing, a failure to recognize the different ways of being that

a thing can have. Applying ugliness to Theaetetus is not false if we take the name Theaetetus to refer to his appearance, which *is* one way in which Theaetetus himself exists. It is false if we refer it to his soul, which is another way[41] in which Theaetetus exists. Failing to distinguish between the appearance and the substance that underlies the appearance causes us to have false opinions.

It may be worth noting here that Socrates calls Theaetetus beautiful in response to him differentiating between the soul itself through itself and the soul through another. The exchange between the two is as follows:

> **Theaetetus**: It seems to me that there's absolutely no such special organ for these things [i.e., the commons] as there is for those others [i.e., judgments containing sense-content], but the soul itself, through itself, appears to me to observe the common things involved in all things.
> **Socrates**: Because you are beautiful, Theaetetus, and not ugly as Theodorus was saying, for one who speaks beautifully is beautiful and good.[42]

Beauty here is tied to the recognition of the distinction between the unifier and the unified, the very recognition that I am arguing is central to avoiding false opinion. Further the unifier, which in this case is the soul, is tied to speech. The importance of speech is tied to the importance of *logos* that was mentioned before, i.e., in its role connecting the levels of being that it is so crucial to distinguish between.

As mentioned before, failing to distinguish between the appearance and the substance that underlies the appearance causes us to have false opinions. This is akin to saying that failing to distinguish the objects of one faculty from the objects of another faculty causes us to have false opinions. This obviously follows from the argument I gave earlier connecting the being of the objects with the faculties. From the perspective of the faculties we have seen that to avoid the puzzles raised by the three arguments we need *both* to know and not know the same thing. We need to know it insofar as it is present to us as an object of judgment, and we need to not know it insofar as its presence to us is connected with ignorance. It is the multiplicity of ways that something can be present to the soul that allows us to both know and not know. And since knowledge is of what is,[43] the possibility of false opinion rests upon some thing's both being and not being. These beings that are *and* are not are the mixtures of sense-content and commons that we've been discussing.[44] This means that there is truth to the second argument's assertion that false opinion is judging what is not. It is not that the object of judgment has no being at all, but rather that it receives its being from elsewhere and thus is less of a being than that which supplies it with its being.

All this sheds light on the falsity of the definition in question. Theaetetus

has mistaken opinion for knowledge. Opinion, if we take it to be formed from perception, is based on some kind of appearance, while knowledge (since it is of what is)[45] is based on substance. Theaetetus' definition has mistaken one faculty for another, and hence it has mistaken one mode of being for another mode of being. Thus Theaetetus' third definition of knowledge is not just false, it is the form of false opinion insofar as it confuses one of our discerning faculties for another, which as we've just seen is the ground for the possibility of all false opinions.

Section four: the wax block (191c-196c)

The wax block is the first time Socrates includes the *relation* between distinct faculties in his attempt to account for false opinion, and as a result he successfully identifies a source of one of the types of false opinion. More specifically he lays out an image of how we can mistake a memory for a perception or a perception for a memory. The success of the image lends credence to my assertion that false opinion requires multiple types of cognition, and that the objects of these multiple types of cognition must be able to be seen as both unified and separate. The introduction of multiplicity in the soul, however, introduces the need for a principle of unity for the soul itself, i.e., a principle of unity for the current principle of unity. In other words, the wax block forces us to confront the following question: what is it that unites the multiplicity of faculties in the soul? A brief look at the image will make the problem clear.

According to the wax block analogy false opinion can arise in those instances in which having "knowledge," i.e., remembering by having stamps in the wax block in our souls, we mistake perceptions for that of which we have the stamps. Socrates' example is seeing Theaetetus and Theodorus off in the distance "knowing" them both (i.e., having stamps of them both) and yet matching each one up to the wrong stamp. In this case Theaetetus and Socrates agree that false opinion occurs.[46] The difference between the true and the false opinions is that in the true opinions the soul matches up the stamp(s) and the perception(s) properly, while in the false opinions it does not. This means that in order for the image to illustrate false opinion we need to posit distinct faculties which present different objects to the soul, which the soul is then able to relate to one another through something other than the faculties being related. Clearly it is this relating of the objects of the two faculties that is really the act of judging or opining, for it is in this relating that truth and falsity are possible. The wax block uses memory and perception to show us that judgment involves our ability to unify (either truly or falsely) the objects of two distinct faculties.[47]

A question arises here: what kind of being is proper to the objects of perception and what kind of being is proper to the objects of memory? In the investigation of the first three arguments problematizing false opinion, I made

the claim that distinct faculties entail distinct types of beings as their objects. The introduction of memory complicates this rather general assertion. After all, if we are capable of remembering objects perceived, objects opined, and objects thought, and each of these are different types of beings, then it would seem to follow that memory itself must be able to have multiple types of beings as its object.[48] Further it would then seem that mistaking perceptions and memories of Theaetetus and Theodorus is a mistake that only involves one type of being, the type of being that is involved in judgments about perception, i.e., sense-content mixed with commons. If this were the case it would be a counterexample to the position that all error entails a mistaking of one type of being for another. The following paragraphs will show why this is actually not a problem by showing how the improper relating of perception and memory is also mistaking one kind of being for another.

Judgment, according to the wax block, relates to images. Socrates goes through a lengthy discussion of the faculties required for false judgment, concluding that according to the wax block there are three criteria for such judgments: perception, memory, and the soul. Perception and memory supply the objects to be judged as either the same or different by the soul. The soul must "see" the two images as distinct in order to be able to judge them as the same or different. That means that in order to make a judgment of sameness or difference the soul must have already judged a difference, i.e., simply in order to recognize two distinct objects of judgment the soul must have already judged the objects as distinct. This means that the memory of Theaetetus cannot *be* the perception of Theaetetus, for if it were there would be no possibility of judging them to be different. To put it in terms of the wax block, the signet ring is not the same as the impression it leaves in the wax.

Thus even judging two images to be the same requires them to be different in some way. This was also one of the lessons derived from Ackrill's oversight discussed earlier. I can only judge that Jo is not Smith because the representation that is Jo is actually different than the representation that is Smith. The falsity of the judgment "Jo is not Smith" is contingent upon Jo and Smith referring to something beyond the distinct appearance of each one of them. So too here with the two images present to the soul through the wax block and perception, as long as we treat them merely as images it will always be true to say that the one is not the other.

In what way then can the judgment that the impression in the wax *is the same* as the signet ring from which it came be a true judgment? Clearly it cannot be a judgment that holds that the impression itself and the signet ring itself are the same, rather it must be a judgment that they either both refer to the same thing or that the one refers to the other.[49] In this way judgment requires a distinction between kinds of beings. There is the being of the image as a referent, and there is the being of that which is referred to. This, once again, takes us back to the distinction made earlier between the unmixed commons and

the commons mixed with sense-content. The unmixed common (say Theaetetus' soul) is "referred to" by the common mixed with sense-content (say Theaetetus' appearance) in much the same way that both the impression in the wax and the perception of the person must refer back to the soul of the person being sensed or remembered. More specifically, the memory and the perception must refer to something in common if the judgment that they are not the same is possibly false, and if the judgment that they are the same is possibly true.

The relation between the faculties and the objects of the faculties requires something to hold the faculties in relation. This is the function of the soul in judgments, just as it was the function of the soul in perception earlier. In the refutation of "knowledge is perception" Socrates refers to the soul as that which brings the content supplied by the different senses together. There must be something capable of this since we can attribute visual and auditory properties to one and the same object of judgment. Likewise for the distinct faculties; we can recognize Theaetetus' beautiful soul as being somehow connected to the ugly image that appears before us. In order to do so there must be some way of connecting (in judgment of some kind) the objects of perception and the objects of opinion/thought. This is once again the soul. Yet, as we've seen, each of the activities of the particular faculties is also the work of the soul. Thus, the soul is both the examiner and the examined of these judgments. To be both the examiner and the examined is to be both the principle of unity and that which is unified. This is really no surprise since we've seen that the being of that which is unified must also come from the unifying soul. However, for the soul to be *both* the unified and the unifier the soul must be multiple. And to *be* multiple is to require a principle of unity. Thus, the soul itself must also require a principle of unity.

This multiplicity in the principle of unity (i.e., the soul) has been present from the moment we recognized that all intelligibility stems from the soul. The account I have offered thus far has involved the doing away with of the subject/object distinction; every object of perception, opinion and thought *is* only because of its attachment to the commons supplied by the soul. The being and structure of everything is within the unifying soul. But this means that the unifying soul, in unifying the objects present to it, is unifying itself. This is what it means to say that the soul must be both unified and unifier; it is both the oneness *and* the multiplicity, and as such requires a higher principle of unity to account for its being. Further, this higher principle of unity needed to account for the being of the soul must, clearly, lie outside of the soul. For to place it in the soul would do nothing to overcome the fact that the soul is *both* one and many, and hence do nothing to overcome the manyness of the soul.

This, I suggest, refers us back to one of the poles of the opposition that frames the dialogue: the utter oneness that is represented by father Parmenides. Indeed this section has shown that the soul fills the middle ground between the

pure flux and manyness of Heraclitus (as represented by the pure, and unintelligible, sense-content) and the complete oneness of Parmenides. Both the pure flux and the complete oneness must lie outside of the soul, and yet both are necessary to make sense of all that can actually be present to the soul. What it means to say that the pure flux (sense-content) is needed to be able to account for the multiplicity of sensation, opinion and thought will be the focus of chapter 4, though the argument for the soul provided much of the justification for this claim. The need for a higher principle of unity lying outside of the soul has been demonstrated through the multiplicity present in the soul, and will be a main component of the investigation of the relation between levels of being in chapter 3.

We started with one pole of the opposition: the pure multiplicity expressed by Heraclitus and Protagoras. We argued that this position requires the positing of a principle of unity as represented by the soul (or "some one look"). We have now seen (at least in a preliminary way) that this principle of unity itself requires a principle of unity, which will be the case for every principle of unity until we reach the Parmenidean One itself. The dialogue's movement "upward," however, has stalled. The moment of derailing was seen earlier when Theaetetus having claimed that there were some things that the soul undertakes itself by itself nevertheless suggests that knowledge is of judgments that involve the sensible realm, i.e., judgments that are of commons mixed with sense-content.[50] Because of this mistake by Theaetetus the dialogue never *explicitly* investigates the repercussions of the soul being multiple, though it does give us an argument for this being the case, as well as plenty of implicit direction as to how to conceive of our contradictory souls.

Turning back to the wax block we can now see that the errors it allows for are also a result of mistaking a common itself for a common mixed with sense-content. Once the judgment has gotten to the souls of Theaetetus and Theodorus there is no longer the possibility for error, for to say that (the soul of) Theaetetus is (the soul of) Theodorus is as absurd as saying that "the unjust is just," or that "one thing is, more than anything, some other thing," which Socrates explicitly denies the possibility of.[51]

Section five: the aviary (197a-200c)

This reading of the three arguments and the wax block is supported by Socrates' criticism of the wax block. The move away from the wax block to the aviary refocuses the account back on the unity necessarily supplied by the soul. In doing so Socrates explicitly brings into question the very thesis I am suggesting the wax block invokes:[52] he suggests that the problem with the image is that it makes it impossible to make mistakes in thought[53] alone, i.e., it is impossible to make mistakes without mistaking the objects of one faculty for the objects of another. Or in other words, Socrates claims that the wax-block is insufficient because it is *only* able to account for false opinion by appealing to

multiple faculties (and the corresponding beings they have as their objects). The example he uses to move away from the wax block and toward the aviary is one which he and Theaetetus claim belongs solely to one faculty. Socrates says:

> What about the eleven that one does nothing other than think; does this argument [the wax block] say otherwise than that one could never suppose it to be twelve that one also thinks?[54]

He explains that this error clearly happens when one sets before himself five and seven themselves (as opposed to five and seven things) and supposes them to be eleven. This error, it seems, takes place in thought alone, without any need for multiple faculties. This, however, would take us back to the problem associated with the first argument of the section: mistaking one thing he knows for another thing he knows. This kind of error has already been agreed to be impossible and was taken as the first ground for the impossibility of false opinion.[55] Thus, accepting the arithmetical example of false opinion seems to leave us with an insoluble dilemma. As Socrates says:

> **Socrates:** But then one has to show that having false opinion is anything but the swerving of a thought in relation to a perception, for if it were that, we could never be wrong in thoughts themselves. But now, you see, either there is no false opinion, or it's possible not to know the things one knows. And of these, which do you choose?
> **Theaetetus:** You're putting forward a choice there's no way through, Socrates.[56]

Theaetetus' response here seems to be right on target. How can one choose between the impossibility of false opinion and the impossibility of not knowing what is known? These are the choices offered by Heraclitus and Protagoras, the choices that were refuted earlier.[57] We are faced with this dilemma as a direct result of limiting our investigation of false opinion to one faculty, and hence to one level of being, for as seen before the recognition of levels of being makes not knowing what is known intelligible.

To repeat: the existence of false opinion requires not knowing what you know, and this ignorance of what is known is only possible by introducing multiple levels of being. But Socrates' focus solely on one faculty in the image of the aviary has eliminated the wax block's method for introducing multiplicity into being. Thus, so long as we remain in the confines of a single faculty we are stuck in an insoluble dilemma.

Plato must therefore come up with a new way of finding the multiplicity necessary for arithmetical errors.[58] The primary solution proposed by the aviary is to introduce multiplicity into the faculty of thought itself by differentiating the potential from the actual, or, to use Socrates' phrasing, by differentiating

between "a possessing of knowledge"[59] and "a having of knowledge."[60] Once someone has learned something he (passively) possesses that piece of knowledge. This (passive) possession allows him to recall the piece of knowledge, and while thinking what he (passively) possessed he (actively) "has" it. The error in judgment occurs when he mistakes one piece of knowledge that he actively "has" for another piece of passively possessed knowledge. In the image the distinction between active and passive is the difference between holding (or having re-caught) a previously caught bird as opposed to having a bird stored in the aviary somewhere but not holding it.

Thinking back to the argument for the existence of the soul it should be obvious that there is something amiss with the image of the aviary. According to the image, the pieces of knowledge are collected from experience. The aviary starts out empty and is slowly filled over time. This is not at all the picture of knowledge that we saw through the refutation of knowledge is perception. Previously we saw that knowledge is found only in the activity of the soul itself through itself, and is had only of what *is*, and hence is known only through the commons themselves. That which is gathered from experience is never of the commons themselves, but always involves sense-content. Thus, the aviary's claim to represent numbers themselves (i.e., eleven itself as opposed to eleven apples) cannot be accurate, at least not insofar as the objects of pure thought are the unmixed commons.

Taking the above into account, we can raise this question about the aviary: what actually are the objects of judgment that belong to the faculty that the aviary is supposed to represent? The image explicitly distinguishes this thinking (*dianoia*) from judgments that are directly tied to perceptible content, and it implicitly distinguishes this thinking from judgments about the commons alone (by tying the objects of the aviary's judgments to what is gathered from experience). Thus, the objects of *dianoia* are neither the combination of sense-content and commons that constitute the particulars found in experience nor are they the commons alone that both make the objects of experience possible and constitute the proper objects of knowledge. In making dianoetic judgments about the number seven we are neither thinking about seven apples nor are we thinking about a common. Rather, the objects of *dianoia* make up some middle ground between the two.

A full account of what the objects of *dianoia* are (to the extent that one is possible) will require the rest of the book (and then some). In brief the answer lies in the notion of a universal. Dianoetic judgments, as represented in the *Theaetetus*, are applicable to more than one object (i.e., they are not particular), but are not applicable as widely as the commons. The objects of dianoetic judgment, rather, have a limited generality. There are two issues that we must face in coming to an understanding (to the extent that it is possible) of limited generality, and not surprisingly the two issues correspond to their oneness and their manyness. (1) What connects these objects (and their faculty) to that which

unifies them (the commons) and that which they unify (the objects of experience)? This will be the focus of the investigation in chapter 3. (2) What distinguishes these objects from one another? This will be the focus of the investigation in chapter 4. Both of these questions also apply to the objects of experience and the commons, but it is with dianoetic judgments that the answers become most clear, for reasons that the investigation will hopefully demonstrate.

The images of the wax block and the aviary both fail to present us with an accurate portrayal of the soul itself through itself. This, of course, is no surprise since the soul itself through itself is independent of images. The way that they fail is noteworthy for our understanding of the soul's necessary oneness and plurality. The wax block requires us to assume a soul that relates the distinct faculties. Similarly the aviary forces us to posit a soul that is distinct from the single faculty represented by the aviary. To put it in terms of the image: The aviary is a container *within*[61] the soul that stores the pieces of knowledge collected previously by the soul. The image, besides just asking us to view the aviary as part of the soul, also forces us to consider the soul entering the aviary in search of the knowledge that it contains. The active knowing described above is represented in the image by the soul entering into the aviary that it is supposed to contain within itself. In other words, the recalling of previously possessed knowledge requires that the soul enter into a part that it contains within itself. This is clearly contradictory in that the soul must be a whole within a part of itself. This was an issue in the wax block as well. The soul has to stand outside of what it is directly perceiving, outside of the wax block, in order to relate the two objects that the faculties convey. Indeed the notion of conveyance itself brings with it externality. Thus, according to the images the soul must stand apart from that which is a part of itself. This means that neither the wax block nor the aviary can be an accurate depiction of the soul itself through itself, which, as the refutation of the second definition taught us, is the province of knowledge. It also means that the soul, as multiple, will itself require a principle of unity.

Conclusion to chapter two

The three arguments have shown us that in order for false opinion to be possible we must introduce multiplicity into the soul. The images attempted to introduce the proper multiplicity, and by doing so have shown us once again the need to see the soul as one. Thus the *Theaetetus* has proven to us that the human soul must be both one and many. The proof has been based on two related assumptions. The first, and more fundamental, is the principle of non-contradiction. Without it, Socrates argued earlier, we are stuck in the realm of Heraclitus where nothing we say or think can possibly have any meaning. The second assumption is that there is false opinion. Denying false opinion leaves us bound to attribute equal worth to any judgment as we found to be the case in the

Protagorean realm.

Extricating ourselves from these two parallel extremes has left us with the problem of making sense of a soul that is both one and many, a soul that may well be capable of being entirely within a part of itself. The one/many character of the soul is also reflected in its ability to grasp multiple levels of being, each level of being corresponding to a faculty of the soul. The levels of being are the ground for the possibility of false opinion, which must be possible since Theaetetus' opinion that knowledge is true opinion turned out to be false. We have sketched an outline of these levels of being, and the general kinds of objects to be found on each level. Further insight into the levels will be uncovered by chapter 3's investigation into the relation between the levels, and chapter 4's investigation into the difference between them. All of this is playing out in what we are seeing is a hierarchy of being along the lines of the hierarchy proposed by Plotinus in the *Enneads*. A hierarchy holding father Parmenides' One at the top and working down, through the soul itself through itself, and through the soul itself through another, toward the ever-flowing rivers of Heraclitus.

Notes

1. 151e-187a.
2. 184d-187a.
3. αὐτὴ δι' αὐτῆς ἡ ψυχὴ (185e1 and 185e6).
4. Socrates makes this assumption in relation to perception at 152c.
5. "Aren't some things by nature for both human beings and animals to perceive right from birth, all those experiences that stretch through the body to the soul, while other things, gathered up [ἀναλογίζομαι] about these in connection with their being and advantageousness, come to be present with difficulty and over time, through many troubles and through education, to those to whom they come to be present at all" (186b11-186c5).
6. Cornford (1935) recognizes this as well (p. 102).
7. 187a.
8. Perhaps it is worth reminding ourselves that the entire discussion between Socrates and Theaetetus takes place under the pretext of an examination of the young man's soul (145b).
9. 184d.
10. D. K. Modrak (1981) makes a similar suggestion, though differences arise in our explanations of why Socrates emphasizes the amount of time and effort it takes to grasp the commons. Modrak suggests (46-47) that the need for time and energy indicates that Socrates probably thinks that *ousia*, and the other commons, cannot be present in simple perceptions such as "this is red." My account suggests how even simple judgments, such as "this is red," can both require commons, and yet still entail that the commons can only be grasped with time and difficulty. On the other hand, Burnyeat (1976) argues (primarily through philological methods) that "what

the soul discovers in perception is external to and independent of ourselves and our bodies" (43). This seems to be entirely counter to my position here. However, Burnyeat also asserts that "to perceive something is not, as such, to be aware or conscious of it as being anything in particular" (50). This is very much in line with a transcendental reading of the argument in that it denies the intelligibility of anything that may be external to the individual perceiver/thinker.

11. 514a-520a.
12. 147d-148b.
13. 147d-e.
14. In his expression of what they did when they moved from the more particular instance to the more general grasp, Theaetetus uses the term ἀπεικάζω (147e and 148a), which can be translated in several ways, such as "imaging" (Sachs), or "compared" (Levett), or "likened" (Cornford).
15. Chapter four will address these issues, but it will do so in a way that shows that our grasp of the nuances of the relations between these levels must be incomplete.
16. 181c-183c.
17. The sense-content is undifferentiated to me. Whether or not it is undifferentiated in itself is beyond the scope of the current discussion.
18. One can conceive of this mis-relating as mistaking a form for its instantiation, or vice versa.
19. Ackrill (1966) p. 386.
20. Ibid. p. 387.
21. How many and which commons are involved in any judgment is a difficult question, and one that, because it is not necessary for the current account, will not be addressed here.
22. It is worth reminding ourselves that it is, as yet, unclear if we should think of the commons as being within the soul, or if we should think of them somehow as the soul itself. This latter option has the further complication that properly speaking there would then only be one common, for the soul, as the principle of unity, is one. This central and complex issue will be examined in greater detail later in this chapter and in the final chapter of the book.
23. Ibid. pp. 386-387.
24. It is actually more correct to say that he is many objects of experience.
25. The distinction between experience, judgment, and thought, can only be made loosely. All of them are some kind of grasp of that which is one and many. The source of the differences between them is determined by their attachment to sense-content. Experience is something like simple perception with only the most basic distinctions being made. Judgment involves using *logos* to find principles of unity of objects of experience. And thought involves finding principles of unity for principles of unity (perhaps even for the commons themselves). Again, there is no way to draw clear lines between these activities and there objects. The reason for this will be discussed in chapter 3, and be the focus of the examination in chapter 4.
26. 156a-b.
27. 157a.
28. 188c-d.
29. 429d.

30. 236e.
31. 283e.
32. 188e-189a.
33. Socrates gives an argument at the end of Book V of the *Republic* that deals with these issues. In arguing for the rule of the philosopher Socrates distinguishes between the various faculties by appealing to their objects. He says, "In a capacity (δύναμιν) I look only to what it's directed to and what it accomplishes, and by that I call each of them a capacity, and that which is directed at the same thing and accomplishes the same thing I call the same capacity, while I call that which is directed at something different and accomplishes something different a different capacity" (477d). Socrates uses this account of capacities (or faculties) to distinguish knowledge and opinion, i.e., knowledge is the capacity that deals with the things that are, while opinion is the capacity that deals with the things that "lie between what *is* purely and simply and what in no way is" (477a). This is very similar to what is being assumed in the *Theaetetus*, a possible difference being that in the *Theaetetus* that which "purely and simply is" is contained within the soul itself.
34. ἀλλοδοξία (189b12).
35. ἀλλοδοξίαν τινὰ οὖσαν ψευδῆ φαμεν εἶναι δόξαν, ὅταν τίς <τι> τῶν ὄντων ἄλλο αὖ τῶν ὄντων ἀνταλλαξάμενος τῇ διανοίᾳ φῇ εἶναι (189b12-c2).
36. ἀναμιμνήσκου δὴ εἰ πώποτ' εἶπες πρὸς σεαυτὸν ὅτι παντὸς μᾶλλον τό τοι καλὸν αἰσχρόν ἐστιν ἢ τὸ ἄδικον δίκαιον (190b2-4).
37. οὐκ ἔστι καλός (143e8).
38. καλὸς γὰρ εἶ . . . (185e3-5). This comment on the beauty of Theaetetus by Socrates is caused by Theaetetus' assertion that there are some things (i.e., the commons) that the soul engages in itself through itself. Theaetetus' beauty is attached to his ability to separate the commons from the senses. Socrates goes on to say that Theaetetus' recognition that there are some things the soul thinks itself through itself has saved him along account. On the interpretation of the text being offered here this would indeed have been a long account. Theaetetus' acceptance of the activity of the soul itself through itself is an admittance of the presence of the commons in the soul prior to any perception. I am in the midst of arguing that this amounts to no less than an acceptance of the grounds for the possibility of recollection and the existence of the forms.
39. 184d3.
40. What we can say about the difference between substance and appearance is highly problematic. Since the being of appearance lies in substance it would seem that what makes appearance different from substance must be "not being." This will be the subject of chapter 4's investigation.
41. And a more complete way since it is the principle of unity of the appearance.
42. 185d-e.
43. 152c.
44. We will see later, however, that this does not mean that it is correct to think of the judgments about the commons themselves as being judgments about what purely is.
45. 152c.
46. There are three such cases of possible false opinion out of the total of seventeen cases investigated. It has been pointed out (Sachs p. 97 n. 47) that the number of

cases investigated by Socrates here (seventeen) is the same as the number of cases investigated by Theodorus in his investigation of square and rectilinear numbers. It is also worth noting that the three cases of possible false opinion that Socrates discovers is the same in number as the three square numbers that Theodorus would have found in his investigation. What reason Plato has for aligning false opinion with square numbers, or opinion with number in general, is a difficult question to answer.

47. It shows us this by itself being an object of judgment. The image of the wax block is being judged to be the same as judgment itself.
48. I only raise this as a possibility for it is not at all self-evident that memory remembers thoughts as thoughts, or opinions as opinions, or perceptions as perceptions.
49. Whether we take the impression in the wax to refer back to the perception itself, or whether we take both the impression and the perception to refer directly back to the soul (or principle of unity) of that which is perceived makes no real difference for this account (though it is important for an understanding of what memory is). We have already argued that the soul is the principle of unity that allows for the being of the object of perception, and as a result even if we take the memory to rely on (i.e., get its unity from) the perception that would still mean that fundamentally it is unified by the soul (as the principle of unity of its principle of unity). Besides, the important part for my account is that there is some difference in *being* at work here, i.e., in order for judgment to be false the judgment must somehow be mixing an object and that objects principle of unity.
50. He does this at 187a, when he identifies the activity of the soul itself through itself with opinion.
51. 190b.
52. That is, false opinion requires a multiplicity of faculties.
53. διανόημα 196b6
54. 195e.
55. 188a.
56. 196c-d.
57. The impossibility of false opinion was a major aspect of the account attributed to Protagoras. False opinion's impossibility obviously meant there was no problem not knowing what was known, for since knowledge was perception, and that which was perceived only existed insofar as it was perceived there could be nothing that existed that was not known. 163a-165e addresses these issues in Protagoras and Heraclitus most directly, but they are relevant throughout the entire investigation into Theaetetus' second definition of knowledge.
58. Plato could simply avoid the dilemma by denying the claim that arithmetical errors take place in thought alone. There seem to be two ways to do this. The first is to treat arithmetic like we treated objects in the wax block, which would amount to asserting that there is no seven itself, but rather to think of seven is always to think of seven somethings. This, however, would put us back in the position of those who deny judgments of the commons alone, a position which has dire consequences for the possibility of false opinion. The other alternative is to recognize that the commons themselves are multiple and hence require their own principle of unity. If we identify

the commons with the soul then the multiplicity of the commons entails a multiplicity within the soul itself through itself, which in turn means that the soul itself, as the multiplicity of commons, requires a higher principle of unity. Since it is precisely in the relationship between that which unifies and that which is unified that we find the multiple levels of being that allow for false opinion, this introduction of multiplicity in number would offer a way to account for the arithmetical error in question. It would, however, have accomplished this only by introducing a new level of being; the level which supplies the principle of unity for the commons.

59. ἐπιστήμης κτῆσιν, 197b3-4.
60. ἐπιστήμης που ἕξιν, 197b1.
61. 191c8, 194c5, and 197d4-6.

Chapter Three

The Sameness Between the Levels of Being (201c-210d)

Introduction

We have seen through the first two chapters that Plato has enclosed us within an opposition. The possibility of meaningful discourse arises with the possibility of contradiction, both of which depend upon the existence of substance or *ousia*. The existence of *ousia* in turn undermines the possibility of a purely Heraclitean account, *ousia* not being in flux, but rather persisting through it. The being of *ousia* as opposed to, and conjoined with, the non-being (or becoming) of flux generates the levels of being that we found in the refutation of "knowledge is perception." Through the discussion following Theaetetus' second proper definition of knowledge ("knowledge is true opinion") we recognized that it is these multiple levels of being that allow for the possibility of false opinion, all false opinion involving a mistaking of one level for another. Error's need for multiple levels of being, however, means that a purely Parmenidean account undermines the possibility of false opinion. Thus, by accepting both the possibility of meaningful *logos* and the possibility of false opinion[1] we find ourselves embracing the unification of the One and many spread out over levels of being.

Each of the levels (in between the One and non-being) must be a certain combination of oneness and manyness that is both the same as and different to the other levels of being. They must all be the same because (1) they are all levels of being and (2) each of the lower levels gets its being from its relation to the higher levels. Indeed, in some sense, what each of the lower levels *is* is found only in the being of the higher. And yet despite this sameness the possibility of false opinion requires a difference between them. As we saw the grasp of Theaetetus as an object of perception must be distinct from the grasp of him as a soul. Thus, there are two fundamental questions that must be faced if we are to understand the levels of being: (1) how are the levels the same as one another? and (2) how are the levels different? This chapter will attempt to address the first of these questions. The fourth chapter will try to deal with the second.[2]

Outline of upcoming argument:

The refutation of the final definition of knowledge as "true opinion with an account" (μετὰ λόγου ἀληθῆ δόξαν, 201c-d) is broken into two primary sections, each one corresponding to one of the two parts of the definition. The first main section is the atomistic account of the dream (201d-206a). This section is the most explicit account of the levels of being offered in the dialogue, though it ends in aporia. The second main section is an attempt to define *logos* in such a way as to solve the aporia that arises out of the dream (206c-210b). Through Socrates and Theaetetus' attempts to salvage the dream we come to see that *logos* is the relation between the levels of being. These two primary sections are separated by a brief, yet crucial argument against the dream (206a-206c).

The dream divides objects into elements and compounds. Elements are one and do not admit of *logos* or knowledge, whereas compounds are many and do admit of *logos* and knowledge. Thus, the dream views objects as either one or many. We will see that this strict duality in the dream creates a dilemma. The dilemma can be overcome by recognizing that besides the possibility of objects being one *or* many, there is also the possibility of them being one *and* many. Putting it in the terms that the investigation will use, instead of trying to think of an object either as all its parts (πᾶς) or as a single look (ἰδέα), we must think of it as a collection of all its parts that is also a single look, i.e., we must think of it as a whole (ὅλος). This is another way of saying that all intelligibility depends upon the combination of oneness and manyness. Further we will see that the all, the whole, and the single look are another way (and perhaps the clearest way) of representing the levels of being.

The *logos* of *logos* that concludes the dialogue holds the key to understanding the movement between the levels of being. It is through *logos* that we are able to understand the movement from the all to the whole, and from the whole to the single look. This movement can be called "coming to know," though we will see that in the instant that we come to know we simultaneously cease knowing. Coming (and ceasing) to know in this way will show itself to be the act of grasping a principle of unity, which is precisely what we should expect considering our investigations up to this point.

The general position that arises out of these sections is that the levels of being are also levels of knowing. There is no *logos* expressive of knowledge precisely because *logos* belongs to the intermediary realm between one and many, while genuine knowledge,[3] being of what is one, belongs to the Parmenidean realm of pure oneness. In order for *logos* to be possible there must be some initial object grasped as one thing, and there must be the possibility of representing that object through its multiplicity. Any object that can be represented through its multiplicity must have a higher principle of unity that is distinct from itself as something multiple.[4] The goal of *logos* is to allow the thinker or hearer of the *logos* to move from an initial (lower) grasp of an object, through that object's multiplicity as represented in the *logos*, and to a higher

grasp of the object's principle of unity. In other words a good *logos* allows us to go from grasping an object as it is on a lower level of being to grasping that object on a higher level of being. Thus, a successful *logos* will leave itself behind as it grasps the higher unity that it both seeks and depends upon.

One positive outcome of this dialectic is that the dialogue's failure to give an accurate *logos* of knowledge turns into a (potential) success; for if my reading is correct, the dialogue's ostensible failure to express knowledge is a kind of confirmation of its own claim that knowledge is inexpressible. Failing to be able to say what knowledge is is the consequence of grasping that genuine knowledge is of what is one. The denial that there is any *logos* of knowledge does not, however, undermine the possibility of knowledge. It does, however, leave us facing the imposing questions of what relation *logos* could have to knowledge, and what value (or even being) *logos* can have as (at least partially) separate from knowledge.

The dream in return for a dream (201c-202c)

Theaetetus' remembering of something he "heard someone saying" leads to his final definition of knowledge as true opinion with an account.[5] This is the only proper definition offered that has two parts. We will see in this chapter that having two parts to the definition, opinion and *logos*, is a significant movement forward in coming to grasp the incompleteness of any definition of knowledge. In short, we shall see that the two parts of the definition signify the contradictory nature of all objects of *logos*, that it be both one and many at the same time; opinion corresponds to the oneness requisite for any grasp, and *logos* corresponds to the manyness that depends upon oneness for its being. The oneness of opinion and the manyness of *logos* are each to be understood in two ways. The oneness of opinion is that *from which logos* begins and also that *to which logos* is directed. In other words, opinion, as it is used here, is a generic term for a grasp of a oneness, and as such can refer to both that which is unified and that which unifies. This also explains the two types of *logos*: *logos* toward the principle of unity and *logos* away from it.

Socrates' filling in of Theaetetus' incomplete memory leads to the following account of knowledge as true opinion with a *logos*. All things either fall into the class of elements (στοιχεῖον) or into the class of compounds (συλλαβή).[6] The elements are without parts whereas the compounds are composed of the elemental parts. As Socrates says:

> There's nothing for it [the element] other than to be named only, since it has only a name, but the things made out of these are already composite, and just as they are intertwined, so too when their names are intertwined in the same way there has come to be an articulation (λόγον), since the very being (οὐσίαν) of an articulation is an intertwining of names. So in that way the elements are inarticulable

> and unknowable, though they're perceptible, but the compounds are knowable and speakable and capable of being held in true opinion.[7]

The general idea behind the dream's account is easy enough to follow, though all of its consequences are very difficult to grasp. Only compounds are capable of having a *logos* and being subject to true opinion; since these are the two criteria the current definition attributes to knowledge, the compounds, and the compounds alone, are capable of being known. Accepting this position, however, puts us in a dilemma. If the compound is simply all the elements then the account holds that each of the elements being unknowable on its own becomes known when held together. This is deemed as absurd.[8] While there is no justification for this claim of absurdity Theaetetus' reason for deeming it so seems to be that if the elements are unknown, and if the compound is nothing other than all the elements, then to say that the compound is known through the elements is to say that ignorance is the ground for knowledge. The other option is that the compound is "some one look"[9] arising out of all of its elements; but as *one* look, it is without parts and, hence, has no *logos*, which means that according to the current definition, the compound will also be unknowable. Thus, in either case, whether we make the compound the all (πᾶς) or some one look (ἰδέα), it is unknowable.

The connections between the levels of being discussed earlier in the book and the current distinction between collections and single looks are evident. The two options for identifying the compound thus far offered are its multiplicity and its principle of unity, neither one of which allows for knowable compounds while maintaining the definition's denial of knowable elements. As we should expect from chapters 1 and 2, there is a third option besides the all and the single look. This third option is the combination of oneness (represented by the single look) and plurality (represented by the all). Besides the all and the single look the whole (ὅλος) is briefly introduced as the third option for explaining what the compound is. This combination of the one and many is offered and then withdrawn by Socrates in the course of laying out the dilemma. It is in the introduction and (intentionally) far too abrupt dismissal of this third option that the meat of this section is to be found.[10]

After presenting the first horn of the dilemma (associated with identifying the compound and the all) Socrates begins to shift to the other horn (identifying the compound with the single look). This shift is interrupted by the introduction of a middle ground represented by the whole, which is characterized as what "has come into being out of the parts [and] is also some one form (εἶδος), different from all the parts."[11] The whole is the one (i.e., the single look) *and* the many (i.e., the all). This new whole, as both one and many, is precisely what we've been pointed toward from the very beginning of the dialogue. Yet Socrates argues against the whole being distinct from the all, eventually abandoning it as a distinct option, and thereby trapping us in the dilemma. Why

does Plato have Socrates do this? If I am right that this third option is what we are looking for (and what Plato wants us to find),[12] then it follows that the arguments Socrates uses to eliminate the distinction between the all and the whole should be flawed, and flawed in a way that help the readers move in the proper direction. This is precisely what I think happens in the dialogue, and what I will try to show. In my view, Plato is once again trying to help us think through the relation between the unifier and the unified, a relation which is essential to the possibility of *logos*, and he is doing so by giving a *logos* questioning the being of such a relation.

There are two parts to the dialogue's investigation of the whole. The first is an argument identifying the all and the whole. This argument gets derailed by Theaetetus. The second is another argument identifying the all and the whole that, despite being accepted by Theaetetus, is blatantly fallacious. The question we must ask is why Plato uses the arguments he does? Chapter 2 was, after all, an argument for the existence of just such a whole. Why then is Plato unable to, or why does he choose not to, give us a viable account of what a whole is?

I will argue that the examples Socrates uses in his argument identifying the whole and the all actually lay out a relatively clear picture of the existence of levels of being, which again reaffirms the existence of wholes as a combination of the all and the single look. The reason that Plato chooses to, or really has to, use an argument that fails to capture the nature of wholes is because of the limitations of *logos* in general. Specifically, *logos* is unable to truly capture being at any level, but what it does do is put the soul in a position to be able to leave *logos* behind and thereby grasp the being *logos* can never actually capture. In other words *logos* is a kind of springboard that can be used to grasp being at any level (at least up to the commons), but only if the thinker is willing to jump off the springboard. This is why the argument fails to give us an accurate account of wholes: it has to. The way it fails, on the other hand, is just this kind of springboard which gives us the ability to grasp the kind of being a whole must have. This, again, is also the case with the grasping of knowledge itself, and the reason why not being able to give a *logos* of knowledge does not mean knowledge is not possible.

Denying the identity of the all and the whole leaves us (once again) with three levels of oneness: the all, the whole, and the single look. In one sense these mirror the levels seen in chapter 2, which were sense-content, sense-content mixed with commons, and commons themselves. In another sense these three levels (all, whole, and single look) all belong to each of the three previous levels insofar as each of the previous levels lies between the pure flux of Heraclitus and the utter oneness of Parmenides.[13] This will come out by working through the chapter, but the basic idea is that all three levels examined in chapter 2 are levels because they represent (or contain) a kind of unity. The distinctness between the levels has to do with the degree of oneness of the unities; one unity being "higher" than another in virtue of containing the lower's principle of

unity. Thus, since each level represents a unity, and all unities contain the all, the whole, and a single look, the current investigation applies to objects on every level of being.

The intentionally problematic arguments identifying the all and the whole (204a-205e)

In the intentionally problematic arguments identifying the all and the whole, the whole serves as a stand in for the compound. Just as in the dilemma that followed from the dream, where we faced the question of whether to conceive of the compound as an all or a single look, so too in this section Socrates challenges Theaetetus to decide whether the whole is an all or a single look. In response to the question of whether the whole and the all are the same Theaetetus says "I have nothing clear, but because you urge me to answer confidently, taking a bold risk, I say that they're different."[14] Thus, the investigation starts by assuming that the whole and the all differ. This is a reasonable assumption by Theaetetus since they have just argued that the compound and the all must be different if the dream is to bear fruit. There are two arguments that follow; each one purports to disprove the identity of the all and the whole. The first does so by trying to identify both the all and the whole with the "number" (ἀριθμός) of the thing. The second does so by identifying both the all and the whole with "that from which nothing is lacking (οὗ ἂν μηδαμῇ μηδὲν ἀποστατῇ)."[15]

The first attempted argument (204a-204e) works through examples and is left uncompleted. It begins by stating that the number six is the same as three plus two plus one, three times two, two times three, and any other expression that equals six. In all these cases we speak of the same thing, i.e., six. Since each one is equivalent to six, when we say any one of them we say all of them. Thus, six is all of the ways of saying six. Therefore, the all (six) is the same as all the parts (all the ways of saying six), at least for whatever is composed of numbers. The dialogue continues:[16]

> **Socrates**: Then let's speak of them in the following way. The number of the plethron and the plethron are the same thing, aren't they?
> **Theaetetus**: It appears to be.
> **Socrates**: And it's the same way with the number of the stade?
> **Theaetetus**: Yes.
> **Socrates**: And so also the number of the army and the army, and similarly with all such things? With each of them, all the number is all the thing.
> **Theaetetus**: Yes.

Since the number is nothing other than the parts, and the parts are agreed to be the all, it (supposedly) follows that if the all and the whole are different then the whole is not made of parts, "since then it would be an all, being all the parts."[17]

Having established (supposedly) that the all is the same as all the parts, Socrates asks Theaetetus if it is "possible that a part is the very thing that it is as belonging to anything else whatever than to the whole?"[18] Accepting this would then mean that the parts belong to a whole, and hence would make the whole and the all the same. Theaetetus avoids this by suggesting that a part can be a part of an all as opposed to a whole. This response is in the right vein, as Socrates indicates by telling Theaetetus that he is battling in a "manly way"[19] and abandoning this line of argument in favor of another approach.

Immediately after abandoning the first argument Socrates turns to the second. The all is whenever nothing is lacking. A whole is that from which nothing is lacking. That from which something is missing is neither an all nor a whole, "the same thing, having become together, from the same thing."[20] Thus, the all and the whole don't differ in any way. This second argument seems to me to be a relatively obvious fallacy, along the lines of A is B, C is B, therefore A is C, though one could probably deny that this is how the argument is to be read. The evidence for reading it as fallacious, however, can be found by looking back at the examples used in Socrates' previous attempt to prove the identity of the all and the whole.[21]

The four examples (six, the plethron, the stade, and the army) used in the first argument are all distinct from each other, and represent a kind of progression into multiplicity. With each successive example it becomes more difficult to identify the whole with all the parts.

Beginning with six, we should notice that the term "part" is being used in a particular way. In the discussion of the aviary, Socrates made the distinction between a number itself, and a number of things.[22] Assuming he is talking about six itself in the current example, it is hard to understand what it means for 3x2 to be a part of six. He is not simply saying that three and two are parts of six, i.e., when you have six that three and two are divisible out of it. The claim also involves the operation of multiplication. So, too, 3+2+1 involves the operation of addition. In what way are multiplication and addition parts of six? Are division and subtraction parts of six as well, or does the fact that you have to begin those operations with a number larger than six preclude them from being parts of six? The difficulty is connected to the attributing of parts to that which is not material. 3x2, 2x3, 5+1, and all the other formulae do not seem to be actual parts of six, but rather they are different ways that six can be expressed. Each is a particular *logos* of six, and as such fails to capture all the other *logoi* belonging to six.

One might suggest that the parts of six are the units. The problem with this is that we then have to say that six is equivalent to six units. But this means that we have to use six in the definition of six, a problem which Socrates raises with both the first and last attempts at a definition of knowledge in the *Theaetetus*.[23] The identification of the whole and the all in the case of six is pretty clearly the easiest to swallow of all the examples Socrates uses, but it is easy to swallow

precisely because it is far from clear what, if any, parts six actually has. In other words, not only is it hard to argue against the all and the whole being the same in six, it is hard to argue against the all and the single look being the same!

The plethron (which is equivalent to one hundred feet) also represents a quantity, but unlike six the plethron includes a measure as well. In other words, the plethron is a number as it applies to something (in this case a distance). What then are the "parts" of the measure of a distance? Should we divide the plethron into measure (feet) and number (one hundred)? Or should we think of the parts as some smaller units into which the entire plethron is commensurable? For example, since the plethron is one hundred feet, then the plethron is composed of single feet, contiguously arranged, and one hundred in number. This, however, would mean that the all and the whole differed, for even though the all and the whole both are one hundred feet, the whole must also include a contiguous arrangement. The plethron as a measure of what is spatial requires a certain sort of structure that is at best difficult to see in the number six.

The stade (which is six plethra, or six hundred feet) has all the same issues as the plethron, with the additional fact that the measure became identified with a specific thing; as Joe Sachs points out, the stade "is not only 6 plethra, but the length of the race track at the Olympic games, and hence a standard word for a race course; it is not a mere aggregate."[24] The stade is no longer simply a measure of something like the plethron; it is also the material thing having that measure. What then qualifies as a part of the stade? Not only is it number, measure, and contiguous arrangement, there are now also material components to consider.

The examples of the plethron and the stade raise serious concerns with identifying the all and the whole, but the example of the army shows the identity to be blatantly false. An army is clearly more than its parts. Simply having ten thousand men does not an army make. There need to be particular roles and a principle of order setting each role to its task. Something must allow the infantry and the archers to operate together as a single group. Go to a boxing match, and you'll have ten thousand men together under one roof, but you won't have an army. The "soldiers" won't even be rooting for the same end. Something must be added to the mere multiplicity. Something must unify them into a oneness. This distinction, the presence of a single unifying principle, is precisely the difference between the all and the whole that Socrates is arguing against. One of his own examples seems to clearly undermine the equivocation he is making between the all and the whole. This is why the second argument is a fallacy; the all is that from which no parts are missing, and so is the whole.[25] But the whole requires something else besides just the all. It requires a form, or a single look.[26]

Thus, the examples Socrates uses to identify the all and the whole, and thereby leave us with only the all and the one single look as ways of understanding what the compound is, undermine that very identity. Instead of showing that there is no way to differentiate between the all and the whole, the

examples Socrates uses seem to depend on just such a distinction, and in so doing they offer further evidence for the levels of being that I have been arguing for. This leaves us with the third option for what the compound is, a third option that is some combination of the other two options. There is, besides the many and the One, a one that is many. Indeed it is obvious that an argument identifying the all and the whole will fail, just as it is obvious that an argument identifying the whole and the single look will fail; clearly the whole cannot be identified with the all or the single look because it must be both of them.

Again, the reason that Plato puts such poor arguments and examples in the mouth of Socrates, using an argument that explicitly undermines the need for the whole while implicitly supporting it, has to do with the nature of *logos* in general. Making the argument dealing with alls, wholes, and single looks blatantly fallacious is one way Plato has of indicating to us that there is no consistent account that can be given of them. Any attempt to capture them in language is bound to fail because the being of something is fundamentally one, while *logos* requires multiplicity. Thus, every *logos* must fall short of the being of that which it is trying to express. Choosing this argument to point to the incompleteness of *logos* is particularly striking because, as we've seen, denying the existence of wholes undermines meaningful *logos* entirely.[27] The poorness of Plato's argument makes it difficult for the reader to fail to see that something is not being grasped here. What direction then has Plato given us to navigate the stormy waters associated with these issues?

It is far from a new claim in this book that the all and the single look are fundamentally unaccountable. The fact that this may also be the case for the whole is disturbing. The whole is supposed to be the fertile middle ground between flux and the One, and its fertility was thought to be a direct result of our ability to think, and talk, about it. But what are we actually grasping when we think about a whole? It has been argued that any object of thought or *logos* must be one to some degree, and hence must have a principle of unity. It has also been argued that any object of thought and *logos* must also be many to some degree, and hence is some kind of compound. The whole has both of these aspects, but how does that make it knowable?

It is as if the knowability of anything is always slipping just beyond our grasp, or perhaps more accurately, it is always just beyond our *logos*. The all is grasped only insofar as it can be seen as a whole. This was seen in the refutation of Heraclitus; if there is no principle of unity and stillness, then anything is everything. The whole, likewise, is only grasped when its principle of unity is found, the relation between unifier and unified found in the whole being the ground for the levels of being, and hence, for the possibility of false opinion. The single look and the commons are doubly problematic in regards to *logos*. If they are treated as entirely one, which is akin to them being treated simply as the source of unity for compounds, then they admit of no *logos*. If we recognize that they too must be many (as the multiplicity of commons present to the soul, and

the discussion of six, suggested) then we are left scratching our heads as to what the multiplicity is. Saying what this multiplicity is would amount to giving a *logos* of an all, which is not something that can be done. And yet despite all of this we are capable of forming different kinds of grasps, and we are capable of giving many types of *logoi*.

The relation between our grasps[28] and our *logoi* is at the focus of the rest of the dialogue, and according to my account is really at the heart of every dialogue. The grasp and the *logos* seem to be mutually exclusive. The grasp is always of what is one, and hence slips away when we seek to give a *logos* of it. *Logos* is inherently multiple and hence would seem to prevent any possibility of a grasp. This problem finally comes to the forefront of the discussion now because Theaetetus' final definition of knowledge as true opinion with an account requires the unification of a grasp and a *logos*.

Having eliminated the whole as an option, the dream's first attempt at an explanation of Theaetetus' final definition of knowledge has fallen back on the horns of the dilemma; the compound is only as knowable as either the elements or the single look. Since we cannot know either of those the dream remains unable to account for knowledge as true opinion with a *logos*. The failure is actually so extreme that Socrates reverses the entire account.

The dream reversed (206a-c)

Using our childhood experiences in learning grammar and music as evidence Socrates points out that

> In learning them [the letters of the alphabet] you persevered in nothing other than trying to distinguish each of the letters, itself by itself (αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτὸ ἕκαστον), by sight and by hearing, in order that their arrangement would not confuse you when they were spoken or written. . . . Therefore in those things in which we ourselves are experienced with the elements and the compounds, if one ought to conclude from evidence from these things to everything else as well, we'll assert that the class of elements has a more distinct and more authoritative recognition than that of the compounds, for getting hold of each learnable thing perfectly, and if anyone claims a compound is more knowable, and an element is by its nature unknowable, we'll consider that, willingly or unwillingly, he's being playful.[29]

Judging by the things we first learn it is the elements that are the more knowable since they make possible the "getting hold of each learnable thing perfectly." Judging by these kinds of past experiences we come to learn things well only by grasping their elements. Hence, since the grasp of the elements appears to be the cause of our grasp of the compound, we must say that the element is more knowable than the compound.

This argument from experience is also problematic (even if we ignore the fact that it is based on experience). Clearly it is insufficient to call knowledge of the notes knowledge of music. A musician is able to interweave the notes. Just like the writer creates a *logos* by interweaving names,[30] so too the musician creates a musical *logos* by interweaving notes. It is granted that in order to be able to do so, he must have a grasp of the notes; but this grasp is not in itself knowledge of music. The grasp of the elements is something akin to a material condition for the knowledge of music; the ability to create the compound by interweaving these notes is closer to the final end. Learning to identify the elements is part of the process of becoming knowledgeable, just as Socrates asserts, but it is only *part* of the process. Indeed what is missing here is precisely what was missing in the examples identifying the all and the whole. The army is not simply its parts or elements it is also some structure or form taken on by those parts. We must build up to knowledge of the compounds through some kind of incomplete grasp of the elements.

This raises the question of what an incomplete grasp may be. This question is closely connected to the question of how it is possible that we can not know what we know (raised in chapter 2). The argument for the incompleteness of our grasps (an argument which does not explain the "how" we grasp incompletely, but only insists that we do) is that the element is what it is in virtue of its place in the compound of which it is a part. Socrates suggests as much in the dialogue.[31] Accepting this means that since we grasp the element through our grasp of the compound, and we grasp the compound initially through our grasp of the elements,[32] we must (assuming the possibility of knowledge) grasp the element prior to our grasp of the element. Hence, we must grasp the element only partially prior to our grasp of the compound.

The issues at work in the relation between the dream and its reversal are familiar to readers of Plato's *Meno*. The famous paradox from that dialogue focuses on the same basic opposition that we find when we relate the dream and its reversal.[33] The paradox argues that learning is impossible because one must either learn what one does not know or what one already knows. One cannot learn what one does not already know because one needs to know it in order to be able to think it, and one cannot learn what one already knows because what is already known cannot *become* known. In other words, we cannot learn something by starting with what is not known or by starting with what is known. The dream suggests starting with the unknowable elements, while its reversal suggests starting with the known elements. To recognize the issues in *Meno's* paradox is to recognize that neither the dream nor its reversal will lead us to knowledge. Socrates' response to the paradox also suggests what needs to be changed to overcome the problem.

The "solution" to the paradox lies in the doctrine of recollection, which holds that the potential objects of knowledge are known (present in our souls) but have been forgotten.[34] We must be reminded of them by seeing images or

representations of them in other things.[35] Recollection is present in the *Theaetetus*, but it is stripped of all its mystical overtones. The commons, as we saw, must be a priori, for they are the grounds for the possibility of intelligible experience. We grasp the objects of experience by unifying commons and sense-content. Knowledge of these objects requires grasping their principle of unity (the commons themselves). Thus, in our initial intelligible experience we grasp the objects without fully knowing them, i.e., we know them without knowing them. This simultaneous knowing and not knowing supplied us with the solution to the problems of false opinion. We also saw in chapter 2 that this knowing what is not known (or not knowing what is known) requires levels of being. The two poles (knowledge and ignorance) must be combined to allow for coming to know.

Considering all this, we should ask ourselves what kind of middle ground there is between the dream and its reversal? The dream suggests a movement from unknowable elements to knowable compounds, while the reversal suggests a movement from known elements to less known compounds. The overcoming of Meno's paradox, as well as the solution to the problem of false opinion, hinges upon beginning with an object of judgment that is both known and not known. To apply this to the dream and its reversal requires finding a way in which the element is both known and not known. This would correspond to an initial stage in coming to know, a stage that on its own must fall short of knowledge, and yet is not completely other to it. Following the movement in the dialogue, we can then see in what way this initial grasp of an element that is not fully grasped (i.e., not known) is developed by the generating of a compound out of it. And we can also see in what way our grasp of the compound is developed by recognizing the role of the element in it. This is what I take Plato to suggest in the dream and its reversal: the beginning in the simple is developed by an analysis of the compound, which in turn is then furthered by a look back at the simple. There is, to use an analogy, a kind of accordion motion being suggested. A movement from the one to the many and then back to the one. For this to be valuable there must be some development from the initial grasp to the later grasp that is accomplished by breaking the initial grasp into parts. This is what I intend on showing, though it will take the entire chapter to do so. The accordion motion corresponds to oneness grasped on a lower level of being, which is broken apart through *logoi* in order to lead to a grasp of the initial grasp's principle of unity.

There is a problem here though. How can the initial grasp of an element lead to a grasp of the compound? Or in other words how does the student of music move from "knowledge" of the notes to the knowledge of a musician? How does one who "knows" the letters learn to construct syllables, and then words, sentences, and *logoi* in general? How does one construct a *whole*, let alone a single look, out of the elements as opposed to constructing an *all*? How does a person construct something that has a nature (i.e., *ousia*) as opposed to a

mere collection of parts? These are the issues that are at stake in the movement from the element to the compound and from the compound to the element.

These problems of relating the *ousia* to the all are familiar from both chapter 2 and earlier in the present chapter. We must remember that everything grasped by the soul is present only insofar as it is seen as being one. This emerged from the refutations of the first definition of knowledge as perception. Without a principle of unity, everything is in constant flux. This recognition makes it difficult to see how we can relate the all to anything, for what sets the all apart from the whole is that it lacks a principle of unity. How then do we have any sort of grasp of the all? We grasp it only insofar as we think it unified. But it is the *ousia* itself that supplies the principle of unity for the all. Thus, in thinking the relation between the *ousia* and the all, we need to have previously thought the relation between the *ousia* and the all. To say the same thing another way: *to think the relation between the ousia and the all, we need to have previously thought the ousia itself and the all itself.* But to think the all itself we need to supply it with a principle of unity. The principle of unity of the all is the *ousia*. Thus, to think the all itself we need to think the all in relation to the *ousia*. Therefore, to think the relation between the *ousia* and the all we must have previously thought the relation between the *ousia* and the all.[36]

Accepting this argument means that if we come to know an *ousia* through the all, then in doing so we must be coming to know what we already knew. For the knowledge derived through all the parts is of the *ousia*, but simply grasping all the parts as an all requires a previous grasp of the *ousia*. What then is the mechanism behind this learning what one already knows? What activity is the soul engaged in that allows it to recollect? In one sense the answer is no mystery. Socrates concludes the discussion of the *Theaetetus* with a lengthy examination of it. *Logos* is the name of the activity that moves from the element to the compound and back again. It is *logos* that allows one to turn back into oneself and recollect what one has always known. The investigation of *logos* that concludes the dialogue, which we will turn to in a moment, examines in what way *logos* does this.

One more thing worth noting about the relation between the dream and its reversal[37] is that the dream's assertion that there is no *logos* of the elements is brought into doubt by the dream reversal's assertion that, based on our past experience, there is no grasp of the compound without some grasp of the element. Reason for doubting that it is possible to give a *logos* of the elements was present, however, prior to the dream's reversal. Looking back to the dream, Socrates, after getting Theaetetus to agree that the letters and the elements are the same, asks Theaetetus to give a *logos* of the letter sigma. Theaetetus responds:

> How is anyone going to state an element of the element? And in particular, Socrates, the sigma is one of the unvoiced ones, only a

> sound, as of the tongue hissing; and for beta, in turn, there's neither voice nor sound, nor is there for most of the letters. So it holds up quite well for them to be called inarticulable (ἄλογα), when the most distinct of them are the very seven that have voice only, and no articulation (λόγον) whatever.[38]

Paying some attention to Theaetetus' short grammar lecture, we should notice that his account of why the elements have no account has actually given an account of the elements! He has not given elements of the elements, but he has nonetheless differentiated the elements into three groups: the first being the unvoiced and sounded, the second being the unvoiced and unsounded, and the third being the voiced seven. He has divided the elements into classes.[39] This is not the first time Theaetetus has defined something with this method. Going back to the beginning of the dialogue, we should recognize this method of definition as the one Theaetetus used in defining commensurable and incommensurable number, the kind of definition that Socrates asked him to duplicate in his defining of knowledge. This kind of definition, as we saw back in chapter 1,[40] was opposed to the example Socrates used in defining mud as water mixed with earth. The two different modes of definition have once again moved to the forefront of the dialogue's discussion.

To review: One method of definition works by listing all the elements. The main problem with this type of definition is that it loses sight of the "single look," which, as the principle of unity of all the parts, serves to make the whole what it is. The second method of definition is to gather a multitude "into one."[41] This amounts to finding the single class which captures all the particulars falling under it, i.e., it is to find the "single look" that is shared by a multiplicity. Thus, our two methods of definition seem to operate in opposite directions. The first moves toward Heraclitus by breaking the compound into its parts. The second moves toward Parmenides by finding the class into which the compound falls. This is clearly parallel to the movements laid out in the dream and its reversal: there is a movement from the elements to the compound, and from the compound to the elements. Turning now to an investigation of *logos* (as the dialogue itself does), we will see that these two methods hold the key to understanding the type of knowledge that the *Theaetetus* suggests we are capable of.

Logos (206c-210b)

The explicit reason the dialogue gives (206c) for the examination of *logos* is as an attempt to complete the investigation into the definition of knowledge as true opinion with an account.[42] I will be arguing that the implicit reason is that *logos* holds the key to understanding (insofar as it is understandable) the transitioning between the grasping of something as an element and the grasping of it as a compound, and between grasping something as a compound and

grasping it as a single look. In other words, it is *logos* that fills the spaces between the grasps.

There are three definitions given for *logos* added on to the definition given earlier in the dream.[43] The first has to do with making what is present to the soul apparent. The second takes us back to the dream by making *logos* a division into elements. The third pushes us toward the definition through division that the stranger focuses on in the *Sophist,* and that Theaetetus himself has already given us two examples of.[44] Each of the three fall within the original definition of *logos* as an intertwining of names. There are many ways of reading this section of the dialogue, and many difficult issues come to the surface. Is Plato's *logos* of *logos* in accord with one of his three definitions of *logos*? Is the section on *logos* merely a collection of distinct parts (i.e., an all)? Is it a whole? Or does it reflect some single look?

I will argue that each definition of *logos* represents a distinct part of the process we've been laying out in this account. Each *logos* is a moving-toward-oneness, either by moving away from multiplicity or by generating a multiplicity for the sake of establishing a unity within it. Its position in the middle ground between the one and the many leaves it always transitioning between the two. Thus, while each of the definitions is distinct, they all fall under the same kind, namely, the relating of the one and the many. This kind of definition is reflected in the definition of *logos* given earlier in the dream. The idea of "intertwining" carries with it an expression of a manyness somehow being held together as one and, yet, still having parts that remain separate. The dialogue shows us with the lengthy refutations of Heraclitus and Protagoras that the beginning point to any *logos* is a grasp of oneness. The discussion following the definition of knowledge as true opinion shows us that this oneness (or these onenesses) admits of division. The dream then focuses on the unifying of parts. This movement is mirrored in the definitions of *logos* that conclude the dialogue. We begin with an empty grasp of a simplicity, then divide it into parts so that we can bring these parts under a single look that is their source of unity.

First definition of *logos* (206d-e)

The first definition Socrates offers for *logos* is "making one's thinking [διάνοια] apparent through sound with phrases and words, molding [ἐκτυπούμενον] one's opinion [δόξα] into the stream flowing through the mouth as if into a mirror or water."[45] This definition is quickly dismissed by Socrates' assertion that everyone can do this (sooner or later),[46] while not everyone can turn their true opinion into knowledge. This brief refutation is left unquestioned in the dialogue. In spite of its quick dismissal this definition of *logos* contains several key points to understanding the movement between levels of being that Plato is characterizing for us. Two of these are particularly relevant to the current investigation. The first has to do with what is being assumed by Socrates when he claims that everybody is able to perform this type of *logos*. The second,

which becomes clearer after thinking through the first, is what role this type of *logos* has in relation to the acquiring of knowledge as it is characterized in the dream and its reversal.

The reason for the widespread and common ability to give this type of *logos* is not difficult to grasp. In order for the expression of thought and opinion to follow so quickly on thought and opinion themselves it must be the case that there is little or no significant difference between thought and expression of thought, and between opinion and expression of opinion. Everyone who can think can speak their thought because thought and speech are fundamentally the same, and so too are opinion and speech. The difference between thought and expression is the "making apparent through sound," while the difference between opinion and expression is the "stream flowing through the mouth." Other than the making external, expressing is fundamentally the same as thinking and opining.

This is confirmed by noticing that previously in the dialogue Socrates defined both *dianoia* and opinion for us in terms of *logos*, and now he is defining *logos* for us in terms of opinion and *dianoia. Dianoia*, in the discussion of false opinion, was defined as "*logos* that the soul itself goes through with itself[47] about whatever it considers,"[48] while opinion was defined as "a statement [*logos*] that's been made though not to anyone else or with sound, but in silence to oneself."[49] *Logos* is somehow the same as *both dianoia* and opinion, differing from them in this final section only insofar as it is "out loud."

We have seen previously (in the discussions of Heraclitus and Protagoras) that both *dianoia* and opinion rely upon the presence of a principle of unity. So, too, here in the initial discussion of *logos* we are pointed back to this most fundamental feature. Even the imagery Plato uses in this first definition of *logos* evokes our earlier account. To mold (or "set in relief")[50] one's opinions into the stream from the mouth congers up an image of putting form to the Heraclitean flux.[51] We once again are being reminded that any account (as well as any thought or opinion, or anything else for that matter) can only *be* through the presence of oneness, and that this oneness is the root and beginning of any and all intelligibility. And yet this oneness alone cannot be enough to allow for the interweaving that is a *logos*. There must also be a manyness capable of being interwoven. Here again, as in any discussion of *logos*, we see the now familiar need for the combination of common and sense-content. What sets this definition of *logos* apart from the others is the ease, and naturalness, with which it is accomplished. Indeed this is its downfall as a definition of knowledge. Just as with Heraclitus and Protagoras earlier in the dialogue, this definition of *logos* results in everyone having knowledge.

The refutation of "knowledge is perception" made it clear what it would mean for a *logos* to lead to knowledge: it must be able to make graspable the *ousia* of whatever is in question. Knowledge is only had when one grasps being.[52] But how can a *logos* do this? It is certainly no easy matter to either

recognize the necessary parts of what is combined to make an *ousia*, or to order those parts in a way as to make the *ousia* visible within them. This requires more than the ambiguous unity and multiplicity necessary for the simple speech of the first definition. Indeed, since grasping the *ousia* is a grasping of what makes something one, it must require a thoroughgoing disambiguation of the relation between the principle of unity and the parts. So while this first definition of *logos* reminds us that our investigation will involve some kind of relation between the one and the many, and that grasping this ambiguous relation is enough for opinion without knowledge, it falls to the two definitions of *logos* that follow to introduce the methods for accomplishing the disambiguation necessary for moving from opinion to knowledge.

The recognition that this initial *logos* falls short of the *ousia*, along with the recognition that the ability to give this *logos* is basic (because everyone can do it sooner or later), helps us see what role this type of *logos* has in coming to knowledge as it is characterized in the dream and its reversal. This first definition of *logos* incorporates the idea of mirror reflection in it, inasmuch as the audibility of the *logos* reflects thought or opinion. But there is another layer to the reflective "nature" of this *logos*. The thought and opinion of this definition do not capture an *ousia*, and yet it is only in virtue of a connection to an *ousia* that a thought or opinion has meaning. Just like a reflection in a mirror, the reflective nature of thoughts and opinions suggests that they lack that in the originals which makes them be what they are. What then is the thought or opinion that is verbalized according to this definition? It is a reflection of what can be known, not the knowable itself by itself; it is the knowable object as represented on a lower level of being. Everyone can perform this type of *logos* because it deals with being at its least real, i.e., being as the objects of perception and experience. The disambiguation necessary for moving from opinion and thought to knowledge is supplied in the upcoming definitions of *logos*. It involves raising our grasp up to a higher level of being. To say the same thing, the disambiguation between opinion/thought and knowledge corresponds to the disambiguation of sense-content and *ousia*, which is accomplished by grasping the *ousia* itself and leaving the sense-content behind.

Second definition of *logos* (206e-207b)

The second definition of *logos* is supposed to take us back to the dream, as Socrates makes clear.[53] Socrates suggests that having a *logos* is being able to answer the question about what something is by listing the thing's elements.[54] This explanation of *logos* thus orients us around the distinction between an asker and an answerer. The definition suggests that what differentiates the answerer (i.e., knower) from the asker (i.e., non-knower) is that the latter cannot list all the parts of what he is asking about.

For the answerer to actually answer the asker's question, the two must share some common notion about the object being asked after; yet, despite

sharing a commonality their notions also must differ precisely insofar as one is a knower and the other is not. The asker has a grasp without knowledge, while the answerer has a grasp with knowledge. A grasp without knowledge is another expression for opinion, and is at least something like the object of the previous definition of *logos*. The answerer's *logos*, as a listing of parts, must therefore be in addition to the opinion, since it is the opinion that gives us something to give a *logos* of. Thus, in order to list the parts of the wagon one must have a prior grasp of the wagon (in the form of opinion).

As Socrates says the knower is the one who has:

> The power to go through the very being (*ousia*) of it [the wagon] by way of those hundred things, who by adding this has added a *logos* to his true opinion, and instead of being capable of opinion has become artful and a knower about the very being of a wagon, having gone all the way through the whole by way of its elements.[55]

The going through the elements is supposed to allow someone to become (γίγνομαι) a knower of the *ousia* of the wagon. This *logos*, therefore, marks the transition from the grasp of the asker to that of the answerer. What, then, can we say about the grasp of the wagon prior to the going through the elements, and what can we say of the grasp of the wagon after the going through of the elements?

Though we cannot "know" the object that is only an object of opinion and not an object of knowledge, we have nonetheless determined something (actually quite a bit) about its character. The object of opinion shared by the asker and the answerer is a combination of commons and sense-content grasped ambiguously as one thing. It must be a combination of the two because, as was argued at length, *all* opinions are a combination of the two. It must be an ambiguous relation because if the difference between the sense-content and the *ousia* were clear then both the asker and the answerer would be knowers, which is not the case. The grasp of the asker can be something as simple as pointing to a wagon and saying "what is that?" This would still be an application of commons to sense-content, for simply picking out *one* object from the manifold found in the perceptual field requires commons. This picking out one object, as the combination of a common and sense-content, is then a recognition of a whole, though it is a recognition of the whole ambiguously (i.e., without distinguishing between the *ousia* and the parts).

The disambiguation of the common and the sense-content is essential to knowing. I have argued at length that knowledge must involve the grasp of a common, or specifically the grasp of *ousiai*. This definition of *logos* once again makes that claim; as Socrates says, this *logos* is "the power to go through the very being (*ousia*) of it [the wagon] by way of those one hundred things." What is the relevance of the one hundred elements? The listing of the one hundred

elements is opposed to dividing the wagon up into merely the "wheels, axle, box, poles, crossbar."[56] The first person knows the being of the wagon, the second person merely has a true opinion regarding the wagon. Socrates connects this back to the dream by making a similar claim in reference to spelling. He says:

> But the questioner for his part might perhaps suppose, as he would if we had been asked your name and had answered by its syllables, that we were ridiculous, even though we have a correct opinion and articulated the things we articulated correctly, if we supposed that we were literate people and that we had and gave the articulation of the name Theaetetus in a literate way; he'd suppose there couldn't be any articulating of it knowledgeably until one had gotten all the way through each name by way of its letters along with a true opinion, as was surely stated in what went before.[57]

The discussion of spelling takes us back to the dream, but the difference between knowledge of spelling and wagons brings a new point to bear. The "wheel, axle, box, poles, crossbar" are compared to the syllables, while the one hundred parts are compared to the letters (or elements). Taking the letters to be fundamental and indivisible is one thing,[58] but taking there to be one hundred indivisible parts in a wagon is impossible. The whole notion of material indivisibility is problematic. If matter takes up space it must have extension, and to have extension is to be potentially divisible. But then what difference does it really make if I list five, ten, twenty, one hundred, or one thousand parts of the wagon? No matter how many I list I will not exhaust the wagon's number of material parts. Recognizing the infinite divisibility of material parts seems to undermine any real distinetion between five or one hundred parts.

What, then, is the difference between listing five or one hundred parts? The definition in question really gives us the answer explicitly; the knower is the one who grasps the *ousia*. In some sense this makes the number of parts irrelevant, for after all the *ousia* is the principle of unity and hence must be one. Fundamentally there is no difference between listing five parts or one hundred parts so long as the list is generated through a grasp of the *ousia*. The difference is really only significant from within the asker/answerer relation. What makes a listing of some number of parts better than a listing of some other number of parts can only be that the one reflects the *ousia* better than the other. The asker has identified a something to ask after. The answerer (assuming he has knowledge) has identified the *ousia* of that something. To get that *ousia* across to the asker the answerer divides the object up into parts, but not just any number of parts, the appropriate number of parts. The appropriateness of the number of parts can only be determined by what is needed to convey the *ousia*, since that is the goal of the listing of parts.

There are several significant metaphysical issues at work in these passages, all of them revolving around the question of what an *ousia* is. In one sense we've had an answer to this for quite some time. *Ousia* is a oneness that is applied by the soul allowing for the intelligibility of anything present to the soul. The problem is that Socrates and Theaetetus keep talking about particular *ousiai* (the wagon for example), and what makes each particular *ousia* distinct cannot be *ousia* itself, for *ousia* itself is common to all *ousiai*. If it is not the *ousia* that differentiates between the particular things, or types of things, then it must be the parts. This becomes the central issue in the final definition of *logos* to be discussed shortly, and it will be the primary focus of the fourth chapter. That it is the parts that differentiate the *ousiai* from each other is not at all a new claim, it is actually what we've been claiming since the argument for the existence of the soul. The commons provide sameness and stillness to intelligible objects, while sense-content provides the difference and movement.

This is our old opposition between one and many come back to the forefront, only this time the discussion is explicitly within the confines of *logos*. In chapters 1 and 2 we saw that meaningful *logos* requires a mixture of one and many. What Plato is wrestling with now, with the dialogue's concluding three definitions of *logos*, is what relation *logos* has to the levels of being/oneness. How does *logos* relate to and reflect the different ways in which objects present to the soul exist? The second definition of *logos* describes it as going through the whole by way of the elements thereby providing knowledge of the *ousia*. This is the mystery; how does going through the whole by the elements leave one knowing the *ousia*? Actually, this is two mysteries; how does going through the elements leave one with a grasp of the whole? and how does a grasp of the whole allow one to know the *ousia* itself by itself? There is a leap being made in each of these transitions. The arrangement of the multiplicity somehow allows the soul to see the oneness that makes all the elements and the whole be what they are: we think some kind of intelligible (and hence unified) manyness and thereby end up knowing a oneness!

Socrates had actually said something to this effect back in the discussion of false opinion. Thinking (*dianoia*) was defined as "speech that the soul itself goes through with itself about whatever it considers . . . asking itself questions and answering them itself. But whenever it has made a determination *whether more slowly or with a quicker leap* [ἐπάξασα], and it asserts the same thing and is not divided [διστάζῃ], we set that down as opinion."[59] Taking "opinion" as a generic way of referring to any grasp made by the soul, this passage is telling us that grasping a oneness requires a "leap," and we can now see why. Thinking, or internal *logos*, must move through multiplicity, but grasping must be of principles of unity. The overcoming of the multiplicity is a grasping of its principle of unity, and this requires some kind of jump. This newly grasped unity is then divided by another *logos* and the process repeats.

Taking all this into consideration, we can reorient ourselves in the current investigation of *logos*. The first type of *logos* begins from a grasp that is an ambiguous relation of common and sense-content, i.e., some most basic form of opinion. The *logos* then makes this multiple by "molding one's opinion into the stream flowing through the mouth as if into a mirror or water,"[60] as characterized in the first definition of *logos*. This multiplicity is then arranged by the answerer of the second type of *logos* in such a way as to allow the asker to see the oneness underlying it. This seeing of the underlying oneness is the disambiguation of the common and the sense-content that remain ambiguously connected in the first definition of *logos*.

To put it in terms of the image used by Socrates, there is some initial grasp of the wagon that need be nothing more than recognizing "that thing over there." This relatively empty grasp corresponds to the ambiguous relation of sense-content and common mentioned above. The examination of this grasp allows for division into parts (five or fifty or one hundred or any other number), which hopefully allows for the leap to the grasp of the *ousia* of the wagon; the grasp of the *ousia* being the disambiguation of the common and the sense-content. This is the basic movement thus far.

We should pause for a moment and ask what is entailed in the grasp of the parts? After all, to grasp each part is to grasp one thing, and this would seem to require grasping another *ousia*. Or to say the same thing in another way, every part is also a whole. This was seen earlier in the discussion of the dream and its reversal. Not only did the dream and its reversal show us that every grasp is of a whole, it also demonstrated that every whole is composed of a single look and an all. To be something intelligible (i.e., to be an object capable of being grasped) requires being both one and many; this applies just as much to the part as it does to the whole. What, then, differentiates the part from the whole? Or for that matter what differentiates one part from another part, or one whole from another whole?

These questions can be stated more generally. Since all intelligible objects (whether a part or a whole) are the same insofar as they are all a unity of manyness, we are left with the problem of understanding how we can account for the difference between them? There are two kinds of difference. The first difference lies in the distinction between levels of being; the wagon is differentiated from the axle because it is the *ousia* of the wagon that makes the axle what it is. This was the focus of the second half of chapter 2 and the first half of chapter 3. The second kind of difference is that between objects on the same level of being. For example, what accounts for the difference between the axle and the wheel? Both are what they are in virtue of the same thing (i.e., the *ousia* of the wagon), and yet each differs from the other in spite of sharing a common principle of unity. These differences will be the focus of chapter 4. The distinction between the part and the whole asked about above obviously lies in

the first kind of difference. The part is different from the whole because the part gets its being from the whole.

This difference between the part and the whole, however, ends up once again being a similarity between the two as soon as we recognize that the wagon itself also derives its being from something else; the wagon's being, as with all artifacts, comes from human activity, which in turn is tied to man's *ousia* or soul. This once again points to the sameness of all objects. Every object that derives its principle of unity or being from something outside of itself will necessarily be both one and many. Indeed, it may be worth noticing (in passing) that objects can have more than one principle of unity. Since the principle of unity accounts for an object's being, this amounts to saying that an object can be more than one thing.[61] This is easily seen as soon as we recognize that every material thing is a part of nature. Thus, the axle qua axle derives its *ousia* from the wagon (which in turn derives its *ousia* from man), while the axle qua wooden derives its being from nature.

The second definition of *logos* starts with a whole and attempts to grasp it by dividing it into parts. Taking into account that every part is also a whole, and every whole also a part, we can see that there is another possible kind of *logos*. Instead of breaking into parts that which one seeks to know, we can also grasp that of which it is a part. This makes much more sense as an attempt to come to know since we have seen that to know something is to know its principle of unity or being, and the principle of unity for a part lies in that of which it is a part. This is precisely what the third definition of *logos* attempts to do.

Third definition of *logos* (207c-210b)

The third and final definition of *logos* is "having some sign to say in what respect the thing in question differs from all things."[62] Socrates goes on to explain that

> as soon as you grasp the difference of each thing, by which it differs from everything else, you'll grasp an articulation, as some people claim; but as long as you hang on to anything that's shared in common (κοινοῦ), your articulation will be about those things among which the commonness is shared.[63]

After proving in the refutation of "knowledge is perception" that knowledge is only had of the commons, the dialogue's final attempt to account for knowledge asserts that knowledge of something is only had when one moves away from what it shares in common with everything else and grasps its difference. Based on what has come before, this simply cannot be. Can Plato seriously take this as a plausible definition of knowledge after building an entire account around the claim that to be is to be one, and knowledge is of what is? A definition of knowledge that invokes difference is dead from the start because it is not of

what is one, and hence not of what the thing is. Indeed, the hanging on to what is common is precisely where we should expect to find knowledge. In a way, the definition is entirely backwards; knowledge is acquired when we overcome the difference, not when we recognize it. This is why it is only the commons that are knowable, or more accurately, it is only *ousia* that is knowable, i.e., because there is no difference within it. The necessity for difference lies only in the lower levels of being, and any grasp of what belongs to the lower levels must always fall short of knowledge insofar as its principle of unity must lie in a higher level of being. This is what the *Theaetetus* has been showing us. The final definition of *logos* and knowledge are confirmation that there is no knowledge of particulars or individuals, nor is there even knowledge of universals. Genuine knowledge belongs only to the One of Parmenides, that terrifying object of reverence,[64] and yet that too we have found to be unintelligible. What Parmenides missed,[65] to speak far too disrespectfully, is that false opinion is possible and that in order for that to be the case there must, in some way, *be* that which *is not*. Even if motion and change are an illusion, the being of the illusion must still be explained.

A look at the two examples that Socrates uses to illustrate this final definition of *logos* bears this out. The first example, the sun, is used as an example of what this kind of definition looks like when it is successful. The second example, Theaetetus himself, is used in the refutation of the definition. What is striking about both examples is that they are individuals. There is only one sun, and only one Theaetetus.

The definition of the sun offered by Socrates is that "it is the brightest of the things going across the heavens around the earth."[66] There are two primary parts to this definition: a class ("things going across the heavens around the earth") and a differentia ("brightest"). The final definition of *logos* claims that it is the differentia that makes a true opinion knowledge, and the differentia offered by Socrates (both for the sun and for Theaetetus) is a perceptible quality. This amounts to a reaffirmation that grasping difference cannot lead to knowledge, because it amounts to claiming that perception can turn a grasp into knowledge.[67] This is the very opposite of what we have been seeing. Perception is the corrupting of the commons. Or to put it another way, perception keeps one from grasping a common itself by itself.

The difficulty arises here, at least in part, because Socrates has used two individuals as his examples of what this definition makes knowable. To grasp an individual requires a grasping of what separates that individual from all other individuals, but it is precisely in doing so that one fails to grasp the *ousia* itself by itself. Or in other words, the *ousiai* of individuals must incorporate difference, but it is this very difference that makes them unknowable. This is actually the criticism that Socrates raises with his own definition. Without difference there is no grasp of any individual thing; so, to say that knowledge of Theaetetus is having a true opinion of Theaetetus and adding to that a *logos* of

his difference is self-refuting, for without already having the difference incorporated into the opinion there is no way that the opinion could be about Theaetetus. And yet this grasp of Theaetetus that is not a grasp of *Theaetetus as an individual* is really what we've been looking for along! The doing away with individuality, which coincides with a moving away from difference, leaves us simply with *ousia* itself by itself. In fact, taking this into consideration, we can see that the recognition of difference is confirmation that knowledge has not been reached.

Another way to say the above is that fundamentally there is no knowing of *ousiai*, there is only knowing of the *ousia*. What may be Plato's most famous image reflects this idea, an image which also invokes one of the two individuals used as examples in this final definition of *logos*. In *Republic* Book VII Socrates says that the sun is the source of both the being and the knowability of all that is and is knowable.[68] The same idea is at work here: there is *ousia* itself by itself that is responsible for the being of all *ousiai*. That is actually part of what is so striking about the examples Socrates uses to illustrate this final definition. The sun is perhaps Plato's most well-known image for the One, while Theaetetus (as the human soul under investigation) has been the source of all *ousiai* throughout the *Theaetetus*.

Looking at the other side of the current definition (i.e., the class instead of the differentia) we can see this same idea. The class is common to all that belongs to the class. It captures the being of what is investigated in a way that is the same for all objects falling within the class. In the example of the sun, the class is the heavenly bodies moving around the earth. This class, however, can also be divided into parts. The new, broader, class would be the heavenly bodies and the differentia would be moving around the earth. And again this step can be repeated by dividing the new class into the class of bodies and differentiating them by heavenly and terrestrial. This is precisely the kind of definition that Theaetetus offers of commensurable and incommensurable numbers way back in the beginning of the dialogue,[69] which is the form of definition that Socrates asks Theaetetus to emulate in his attempts to define knowledge. It is also the form of definition that is examined in Theaetetus' discussion with the stranger that takes place in the *Sophist*. Why is this form of definition so sought after if it is clear that it does not, of itself, provide us with genuine knowledge?

The classes, like the individuals they contain, are ways of referring to particular *ousiai*, each successive definition being a more common representation of what is sought after. It is precisely this kind of movement that, when repeated enough times, will take us all the way back up to the commons, for each movement up a class identifies the principle of unity that is common to all the classes below it. And to take it even further, the commons themselves constitute a class, and their principle of unity will contain their truth in it. Thus, the repeated application of such a definition will, in principle, eventually lead us beyond difference to that which is not in need of any principle of unity itself.

What does all this tell us about the grasp of alls, wholes, and single looks? Every one of them falls short of knowledge in exactly the same way as they fall short of oneness. A grasp of anything that falls in between the flux of Heraclitus and the absolute One of Parmenides requires a recognition of their difference, which in turn undermines any genuine knowledge we can have of them. In one sense there are really two kinds of grasps at work here for every object. The first, which we have been calling knowledge, is fundamentally the same for everything. Knowledge of everything is the same for "all things are one."[70] This is the truth of father Parmenides. The second, which I have simply been referring to by the generic term grasp, is a recognition of some thing as distinct from other things. This kind of grasp is the one that corresponds to the objects of perception in the lowest level of being, the objects of opinion and thought in the realm of opinion, and even the judgments about the commons themselves in the activity of the soul itself through itself. The movement between these levels is what Plato has been characterizing (insofar as it can be made intelligible) in the definitions of *logos*. The first *logos* is a reflection and dividing of what is grasped in a confused way. The second is a laying out of the multiplicity so as to grasp the *ousia*. And the third is a classifying of a kind of *ousia*.

There are many more issues at work in these passages of the *Theaetetus*, and much more to be said about every aspect of the account given. The goal of this chapter is to have shown how the *Theaetetus*' supposed failure to give an account of what knowledge is really constitutes a kind of success. This follows from the fact that any grasp, or any object of "knowledge," requires recognizing how it entails difference, a recognition which undermines genuine knowledge. This is seen by realizing that any grasp requires recognizing how the object grasped is different, a recognition which undermines genuine knowledge. In spite of these limitations any grasp on any level of being does allow for a kind of imitation of knowledge. Each grasp is a grasp of oneness, and it is grasping oneness itself that constitutes genuine knowledge. Thus, even though the knowledge we acquire is corrupted by the distinctness (or difference) of each of our grasps, it still follows that every grasp attaches us to oneness to a greater or lesser degree, and hence, that every grasp, of whatever kind, is a knowing.

Notes

1. The two arguments against "knowledge is perception" that directly precede the final refutation of "knowledge is perception" revolve around the possibility of false opinion and the meaningfulness of language respectively. These arguments, while not sufficient on their own to move us out of the realm of perception, are generally held as the most persuasive arguments of the section (excluding the final refutation, which is also an argument for substance/soul). M. J. Levett refers to them as the "serious refutations" of Protagoras and Heraclitus (Levett, p. 252).

2. The separation of these two questions cannot be complete, for at the heart of this account is the recognition that intelligibility depends upon both sameness and difference. So any investigation of sameness or difference (or oneness and manyness) will have to involve the other. Thus, the difference between the chapters really amounts to which of the two is being focused on.
3. By genuine knowledge I mean knowledge that meets the two criteria laid out early on in the dialogue, i.e., that knowledge be of what is and that it be unerring (152c).
4. This was part of the argument from chapter 2.
5. 201e. The fact that in this definition Theaetetus is remembering something said by another indicates that the definition can only be something that falls under the realm of opinion, for knowledge, as the argument for the soul showed us, can only be found in the recollection of the commons that have always been present to every soul. The inclusion of externality in the form of something heard indicates that the definition for Theaetetus can only correspond to that which is a mixture of commons and sense-content, which we have argued at length cannot entail knowledge. Burnyeat (1990) points this out as well (p.129).
6. The terms used for element and compound also mean letter and syllable, as Socrates himself later points out (202e). This points back to the discussion in chapter 2 in which it was noted that the opposition between the subject and object disappears in Plato's account. So too here, one can speak of the parts and wholes of the objects themselves or we can think about how we think (through language) about those parts and wholes. It amounts to the same thing. The new addition here is *logos* itself, which we will see is not to be understood simply as an operation of the mind, but also as a part of being as it "is" in multiplicity.
7. 202b.
8. In response to the suggestion that the unknowable elements become knowable when held together Theaetetus says, "But that's a terrible (δεινόν) and unspeakable (ἄλογον) thing Socrates" (203d).
9. "μίαν τινὰ ἰδέαν" (203c). This is exactly the same expression used in reference to the soul in the argument that undermines "knowledge is perception" (184d). This is no coincidence, as we shall see.
10. Socrates and Theaetetus actually spend more time entertaining the idea of the compound as the whole than they do discussing the all or the single look. The compound as the all stretches from 202e-203d. There is some overlap between the discussions of the whole and the single look, but a reasonable way to divide them is to say that the discussion of the whole stretches from 204a-205a, and the discussion of the single look stretches from 205c-d.
11. 204a.
12. I am not entirely alone in this reading. See Miller (1992) p. 93.
13. It is problematic to refer to perception and sense-content as representing a level of being, as we discussed in chapter 2 (p. 36-37). What we will see in the upcoming investigation is that referring to each of them as a level of being is a way to refer to the least intelligible of intelligible experience.
14. 204b.
15. 205a.
16. 204d-204e.

17. 204e.
18. Ibid.
19. 205a.
20. 205a (my translation).
21. A brief way to state the two arguments is that the first argues that both the all and the whole are identical with all of the parts, and therefore they must be the same. The second is that the all and the whole are both identical to that from which nothing is missing, and therefore they must be the same. For either argument we come to the conclusion that the all and the whole are all the parts and that from which nothing is missing.
22. 195e-196a.
23. 147a-b, 210a-b.
24. Sachs (2004), p. 118 note 60.
25. An issue can be seen here that will arise explicitly just a few pages later in the dialogue. How many parts are needed to make up the all, and is this the same number of parts that is needed to make up the whole? An army can lose some number of soldiers and still be an army, but can an army lose all of its archers and still be an army? Or all of its infantry? Or its generals?
26. Mitchell Miller makes a similar argument (Miller [1992], p. 93-95).
27. We will spend quite a bit of time arguing that it is not only the *logos* that falls short of a particular object's being, but also *the particular object itself falls short of its own being* insofar as its being is dependent on a principle of unity lying outside of it.
28. Again, "grasp" is a generic term for anything that is recognized by the soul. For example, seeing Theaetetus walking toward you is a grasp, and so too is remembering Theaetetus, and so too is having an opinion about Theaetetus, and so forth.
29. 206a-c.
30. 202b.
31. "But is it possible that a part is the very thing that it is as belonging to anything else whatever than to the whole?" 204e.
32. This is the case in both the dream and the dream's reversal.
33. *Meno* 80d-e.
34. *Meno* 81b-e.
35. *Phaedo* 74a-75d.
36. The difficult issues regarding recollection are evident in all this.
37. It is worth noting because it will show itself to be helpful in understanding the definitions of *logos* to come.
38. 203b2-7.
39. Benardete (1994, I.171) recognizes this too.
40. See p. 20-21.
41. 147d8.
42. This reason is highly dubious, for accepting the identification of the all and the whole makes it very difficult to see how any account of accounts could possibly salvage the dream. See Miller (1992), p. 89.
43. "The very being (*ousia*) of a *logos* is an intertwining of names" (202b).

44. The first example is incommensurable and commensurable numbers (147d-148b). The second is his definition of the letters (203b).
45. 206d.
46. 206d.
47. "αὐτὴ πρὸς αὑτὴν ἡ ψυχὴ" in contrast to the "αὐτὴ δι' αὑτῆς ἡ ψυχὴ" (185e) which referred to the judgments about the commons.
48. 189e.
49. 190a.
50. The word for "to mold" is from ἐκτυπόω which can also be translated as "to work in relief."
51. Benardette (I.176) and Tschemplik (130) both point this out as well.
52. This is indicated at 152c in the discussion of perception, and it is stated more explicitly at 186c-d in the argument for the existence of the soul, and yet again in the discussion of false opinion at 188e-189b.
53. 207b.
54. 206e.
55. 207b-c.
56. 207a.
57. 207a-b.
58. The Greek term translated as "element" (στοιχεῖον) in this section can also mean "letter."
59. 189e-190a (my emphasis).
60. 206d.
61. It should come as no surprise that objects can be more than one thing. After all it has been argued at length that the objects of our grasp are incompletely one.
62. 208c.
63. 208d.
64. 183e.
65. This, again, is just Parmenides as he is represented in the *Theaetetus*. Part of his poem, after all, is "the way of opinion."
66. 208d.
67. This is the same thing that the refutation of the second proper definition of knowledge does. The refutation claims that the true opinion of the jury cannot be knowledge because they did not witness the crime (201a-201c).
68. "In the knowable region, the last thing to be seen [i.e., the sun], with great effort, is the look of the good, but once it's been seen, it has to be concluded that it's the very cause, for all things, of all things right and beautiful, that it generates light and its source in the visible realm, and is itself the source that bestows truth and insight in the intelligible realm" (*Republic* 517b-c. Sachs translation).
69. 147d-148b.
70. 180e.

Chapter Four

The Difference Between the Levels of Being

The previous three chapters have argued that an understanding of anything, while it can be better or worse, will always be incomplete. The incompleteness results from the recognition that the intelligibility of every distinct thing lies outside of itself;[1] the intelligibility of every distinct object, as a collection of parts, lies in its principle of unity. This principle of unity, in turn, as a distinct thing, finds its principle of unity in something else as well. The only way for the intelligibility to remain "within" that which it makes intelligible is for the principle of unity to be internal to that which is unified. But this can only be possible in something that has no parts, for involved in the paradox of a distinct existence is that it really *is not* what it *is*.[2] So in anything that has parts the principle of unity and that which is unified must be different, for the principle of unity is properly what the collection of parts is, while the collection of parts is not properly what it is. Thus, the only way for intelligibility to be internal is for there to be something that has absolutely no parts.

That which has absolutely no parts, however, cannot be any distinct thing. All we really need to recognize as justification for this is that to be distinct requires difference and to be different requires (minimally) both a genus and a differentia.[3] Thus, that which is absolutely One cannot entail difference and, hence, cannot be a distinct thing. This was part of what was recognized early on in the laying out of the dialogue's framework and part of the reason why Plato is carving out a middle ground between Heraclitus and Parmenides. For, on their own, neither the Heraclitean flux nor the Parmenidean One allow for any sort of intelligibility.

So, on the one hand, the intelligibility of any distinct thing (which is anything that can be spoken/thought of) must lie outside of itself. On the other hand, that which has its intelligibility within itself cannot be distinct in any way, and hence cannot be the subject of any *logos*. This is why knowledge is always slipping away from us; whenever we find the principle of unity of whatever the object of our grasp is, we are once again left grasping something whose principle of intelligibility lies outside of itself. This is why the dialogue must end without a completed *logos* of knowledge: anything that is distinct and hence graspable will always require another *logos* for its intelligibility. If these continuing *logoi* were then somehow to lead us to that which is absolutely One, there would be no way to think that which would result from all *logos*. In short,

anything distinct and thinkable falls short of what is knowable, and what is knowable must be entirely indistinct and, hence, unthinkable.

Making the unintelligible intelligible, and vice versa

These claims are clearly paradoxical. After all, that which is utterly One (and hence utterly indistinct) is being distinguished from that which is distinct (any *thing*) precisely in regards to its indistinctness! This paradox again points us back to the overarching structure of the *Theaetetus*, as I described it in chapter 1. The utterly distinct (the One) and utterly indistinct (pure multiplicity) are beyond any account. Thus, anything we say about either cannot really be true of either, and yet nothing *is* that does not entail one or both of these. This poses significant difficulties for any ontological account. The account, to be meaningful, must be unified or one in some way, yet it cannot be completely so for that would both undermine the possibility of *logos* and also fail to be able to account for any of the distinctness that we experience or think. What we need is a partially intelligible and partially unintelligible account if we are to grasp how things (i.e., the many things) are. But how can we possibly find the proper balance between intelligibility and unintelligibility? To do so would seem to require making the unintelligible intelligible, and hence making it not what it is.

The meat of Plato's ontology as presented in the *Theaetetus* gets off the ground with an assumption: there is meaning in what we can think and say. It is this assumption, as we saw,[4] that gets us away from Heraclitus, and leads to the argument for the existence of the soul as "some one look" that has within it the power to determine sameness and difference. The oneness of the soul also applies to the object grasped by the soul. Every grasp, like every being, only is insofar as it is one. So every grasp is the same as every other grasp insofar as it is one, and yet is different from all other grasps insofar as it is distinct.

We have actually seen multiple ways in which grasps must be the same and different, along with the related recognition that they must be one and many. A fundamental distinction between ways in which the one and many are related is whether the relation takes place within one level of being, or whether it extends over different levels of being. We saw in chapter 2 that for false opinion to be possible, the *same* thing must exist on *different* levels of beings. For example, it must be true that Theaetetus is both some unified collection of physical properties (i.e., an object of perception) and a unifying soul (i.e., an object of thought) if it is possible to make true and false judgments about him. Further, it is also the case that certain collections of attributes will apply to him, and certain collections will not. For example, it is true to say that Theaetetus has a snub-nose and bulging eyes, and false to say that he has an aquiline nose and deep-set eyes. Or to say this another way, there are onenesses that exist on the same level of being and differ from each other because of their relations to a different (higher) level of being. Stated more generally: some unified collections

of properties must be connected with certain principles of unity, and other collections with different principles.

Denying the existence of multiple levels of being does away with truth and falsity, and establishes us firmly in the Heraclitean flux. That is to say that when limiting ourselves to one level of being not only is the wagon in the field utterly distinct from the horse, as it is from the plow, as it is from every other object of perception or judgment, it is also utterly distinct from itself. There is no sameness between any objects when our attention remains on any single level of being; indeed, objects are not even the same as themselves. For sameness, or any other common, in picking out a principle shared by several objects at once or by one object through time, always points to a transcendent principle of unity, and a transcendent principle of unity always points to a higher level of being. This process applies not just to the relation between different objects, but also to the relation between the (supposedly) "same" object from moment to moment. This is why for Heraclitus there is no true or false judgment: there is no sameness. There is no sameness for Heraclitus because he recognizes no levels of being. It is only once we accept higher principles that the objects on the same level of being actually stand in any relation to each other. These relations are then determined by the relations between the objects on the higher level of being. Utter difference and its corresponding denial of levels of being, therefore, puts us back in the utterly meaningless realm of Heraclitus. Indeed, we have already seen that neither difference nor sameness alone (i.e., one without the other) can constitute a relation. Difference requires sameness, for, at the very least, two objects must both share being (and oneness) in common in order to stand in a relation. On the other hand, if two objects were entirely the same they would not be two and hence be unable to be distinct terms in a relation.

The picture we have arrived at in this account of Plato's ontology is layered. The grasp of objects belonging to a higher level correspond to the (incomplete) knowing of the objects on the lower level.[5] Further, within each level there are distinct objects standing in various relations of sameness and difference. Any object of judgment, as distinct, is grasped as a particular instance of a more general class.[6] As the final definition of *logos* says, any grasp approaching knowledge must be able to say "in what respect the thing in question differs from all things," and more specifically in what respect it differs from that to which it is most similar. The object is the same as other instances falling within that class and different from objects falling outside of the class. So too the class itself, like the object, will be similar to and different from other classes, and those classes will in turn be the same as and different from yet other, more general, classes. Following this pattern, we must either continue infinitely seeking more and more general classes or we must come to the class that includes all other classes. For Plato this is the One. Since knowledge of something is achieved by grasping its principle of unity, and essentially everything shares the same principle of unity (the One), it becomes obvious that

nothing is truly known until we know the One, and as soon as the One is known everything is known. Yet in knowing oneness we overcome difference, and in so doing there is no way for us to know any of the many *different* objects of judgment. However, it is obvious that we do grasp many different things, and in so doing we grasp how these things are the same and different in the ways outlined above. How do we recognize these relations?

The One both makes possible and undermines the grasp of any distinct thing. It makes possible the grasp of any thing because to be grasped (and simply to be) requires being one. It undermines the possibility of distinct things because distinctness depends on multiplicity and is thereby not knowable. Sameness and difference, in turn, depend upon the levels of being. As argued in chapter 3, the sameness between levels is explained by recognizing that the higher levels supply the principles of unity for the lower levels, meaning that the levels are reflections of the same thing because of their "degree" of oneness. Yet some lower level "onenesses" are not reflections of certain other higher onenesses. For example, we can give a list of the parts of a wagon that is true or false. The "one hundred elements" of the wagon that is grasped by the person who actually knows wagons is both the same as and different from the *ousia* of the wagon. Or to use another example from the text there are certain physical characteristics that can be truly ascribed to Theaetetus (say snub nosed and bulging eyes) and others that cannot. If the connection between the levels of being is oneness then shouldn't it be the case that anything that we can think, since it must be one, will be a reflection of everything else? What can possibly differentiate the ones that belong to the same level of being?

The same difficulty can be seen in another (perhaps even more bothersome) way. How do we distinguish between different grasps at all? Every grasp *is* insofar as it is *one*. Since our grasp is always of oneness, what could possibly account for the difference between onenesses? Only plurality could, and yet plurality as distinct from oneness *is not*. Yet we nonetheless are able to grasp distinct onenesses. How is this possible?

This issue has been with us since we began the account of false opinion in chapter 2 (and really since we left Heraclitus behind).[7] We saw in chapter 2 that false opinion requires the mistaking of one level of being for another. Even the mistaking of one set of characteristics for another set of characteristics (i.e., the mistaking of two things belonging to the same level of being) can only be false if the sets of characteristics are held in relation to a higher principle of unity.[8] The possibility of this depends upon certain distinct sets of characteristics having connections to certain distinct principles of unities and not others, and yet the possibility of this is highly mysterious.

All these issues raise the question: to what extent is it possible to give an account of the relation between levels of being? It is relatively clear (for reasons about to be given) that it is not possible to make absolutely intelligible the connection between that which makes things intelligible and that which is made

intelligible. This is what we seek to do by trying to answer how the principle of unity is connected to that which it unifies. The difficulty is that in differentiating "that which is unified" from its principle of unity, you simultaneously strip it of its intelligibility, for as we've seen repeatedly intelligibility is inherently tied to oneness. Once you've stripped one of the terms in a relation of its intelligibility you would seem to have done the same thing to the relation itself. It is like treating an army as merely an assortment of ten thousand parts. Without a principle of unity, the multiple parts exist only independently and, hence, cannot be intelligible as parts. The argument, again, is that setting a higher and a lower level of being in relation requires separating them, and separating a lower level from the higher amounts to separating the lower level from that which makes it intelligible. Thus, setting a higher and a lower level of being in relation must make one of the terms in the relation (i.e., the lower level of being) unintelligible. But if one of the relata in a relation is unintelligible the whole relation will be unintelligible, for in such a relation what is grasped (i.e., intelligible) will simply be one of the relata and hence not the relation itself.

Perhaps, though, it is incorrect to think about the connection between the unifier and unified as a relation. A relation may well require two independent relata, and this is not the case in the levels of being. The levels of being are not independent, for the being of each of the lower levels depends upon all of the levels above it. This is why an understanding of anything requires the grasp of that thing's principle of unity. The principle of unity is most properly what the thing is, but then the thing itself is not properly what it is. Moreover, the thing's principle of unity is a principle for all things of that sort. This is why every grasp must be incomplete. Either we grasp the thing's principle of unity and not the thing, or we grasp the thing without its principle of unity and fail to grasp its *ousia*. To say the same thing from the perspective of knowing (instead of grasping), immediately upon coming to know something (i.e., grasping its principle of unity) knowledge of it is lost, for the principle of unity is itself some other thing that exists on a higher level of unity.

So in one sense we should not think about the levels of being as standing in relation to one another, but what is our alternative? We have seen that our ability to give any *logos* at all depends precisely upon the relation in question; for *logos* requires both a collection of parts and a principle of unity *somehow* conjoined. Thus, thinking of the levels of being as a relation makes them partially unintelligible, and yet our thinking nonetheless depends on accepting such a relation because the intelligibility of each level depends upon its connection to the level above it.

Every grasp is knowing and no grasp is knowing

The relation (and opposition) between the unifier and the unified is the same as the relation (and opposition) between an object as known and the same object as grasped.[9] Knowing and grasping are really two sides of the same coin,

or perhaps more accurately, two poles of the same relation. To grasp an object is to see some unified thing. To know that same object is to grasp that unified thing's principle of unity. The grasp of this higher principle is then both the knowledge of the lower grasp and also itself the grasp of an object that is seen as some unified thing, which in turn will be known only by grasping its principle of unity. Thus, one and the same representation to the soul can be a grasp and a knowing depending on what it is held in relation to (i.e., whether it is held in relation to that which it unifies, or that which unifies it). Once again, we see the same progression in coming to know seen above, a progression that entails a steady movement up the levels of being.

Thus, in one sense the grasp and the knowledge are both of the same oneness, and in another sense they are of different onenesses. For example, I can recognize that the wagon is some one thing with or without having knowledge of what that one thing is. Both of these (the grasp and the knowledge) are of the same thing, i.e., the wagon; but they are each different insofar as they entail the multiplicity of wagon in different ways. The first grasp is something like the first *logos*; it is prior to any understanding. It corresponds to a simple recognition of a distinct being, without any idea as to what that distinct being is. The knowing is post-*logos*, only having the multiplicity potentially within it, as the teacher who is able to show the essential parts to the student. As argued in chapter 3, the movement from a grasp to a knowing is accomplished through *logos*. The grasp associated with the first kind of *logos* is divided through the final two kinds of *logoi* in order to find a principle of unity for the parts produced by the division. This principle of unity, despite being the source of knowledge for that which it unifies, will then likewise require a seeking out of its own principle of unity, and so forth. Thus, the dialogue suggests a method for acquiring knowledge, but stops short of actually presenting us with the sought after knowledge of knowledge.[10]

The reason for the dialogue's stopping short of knowledge has already been explained. Only that which has parts can have a *logos*, and as long as there are parts, there cannot be knowledge. Knowledge only arises when the *logos* as applied to the grasp has been left behind. And yet as soon as the principle of unity is grasped as an independent thing it ceases to be knowledge, and once again is just some object grasped as distinct from other objects. That which allows a grasp to be known becomes not known at precisely the moment it makes the original grasp known!

This problem, that that which makes things known is not itself known, was actually one of the primary difficulties raised in reference to the dream. To recall, the refutation of the dream raised two related problems: either the compound is merely the aggregate of the elements, or it is some one look arising out of them. In either case the compound will be unknowable in the same way as the elements. If it is merely the aggregate, then the compound will have the same nature as the elements and, hence, be unknowable in precisely the same

way. If the compound is some one look arising out of the interweaving of the elements, then the compound will necessarily have the same character as an individual element (i.e., it will be one and indivisible), and as a result it would be unknowable in the same way as well. So, too, on my account the higher unity that serves as the knowledge of that which it unifies ends up having the same character as that which it unifies; for it too, insofar as it is an object of thought at all, must be a combination of one and many. Because the higher unity has the same character as that which it unifies, it shows itself to be not-known in precisely the same way as that which it is supposed to make known.

The problem with the dream is that it makes the elements the fundamental basis for being and thought. This is completely backwards, as the argument for the existence of the soul shows us. The higher principles, not the parts that are interwoven, are the fundamental basis for being and thought.[11] The elements account for the multiplicity, but it is the oneness that allows for being and knowledge. The dream, therefore, inverts reality.[12] But how does this inversion of the dream help us avoid the problems raised earlier? Isn't the present account still making knowledge of things rest upon that which is not known, even if it does so in a way that is different than the dream?

The recognition that the basis of knowledge and being lies in the principle of unity, as opposed to the unified parts, gives us a way to avoid the dilemma that undermined the dream. The grasp of the higher unity arises out of the multiplicity recognized in the parts. The single grasp arising out of the perceived multiplicity (which is the *knowledge* of the original grasp) is of what is one, but since the grasp of it has arisen out of the multiple parts it is also something over and above the empty oneness of the grasp of an element. The wagon as a simple, contentless, object of perception is an element. The wagon as an object of knowledge is still simple and one, but it also has content, content that is implicit in the knowing and can be laid out in all its parts (through *logos*) if the knower so chooses. The principle of unity is like the element of the dream insofar as it is one and fundamentally indivisible, but it differs from the element in that its indivisibility nonetheless has the possibility of division within it. The seeming contradiction of saying that the indivisible object of knowledge is nonetheless potentially divisible is not really a contradiction at all, for the division of the object is not the knowing of the object, even though the proper division does depend upon the knowledge. This is central to understanding the account being offered as it points us right back to the levels of being.

The recognition of knowledge's need for higher principles of unity avoids the pitfalls of the dream's elements only by accepting that even though every object on every level of being only exists in virtue of its oneness, there is nonetheless a difference in degrees of oneness. This is connected to the seeming contradiction pointed to above that the more one (i.e., that which supplies the principle of unity for something else) has "within" it that which is less one. That one and the same thing can be represented in ways that are more and less one

was at the center of what allows for the possibility of false opinion (as was argued in chapter 2). There are two requirements here: (1) Oneness on each level is fundamentally the same, for it is oneness that makes everything be. (2) There are levels of this oneness, despite oneness being fundamentally the same. In grasping a principle of unity, we are grasping something like an image of the One itself. Yet each movement upward, while always incomplete, is not merely a movement toward the One, it is also a *knowing* of the One; for without the oneness there would be no grasp at all. However, each of these grasps, as grasps of distinct things, undermines itself as knowledge just at the moment it is grasped. In other words, despite the fact that every distinct grasp falls short of knowledge, each one, nonetheless, must be a grasp of some degree of oneness. As such each grasp is a knowing, for all knowing is of oneness. The levels of being, not surprisingly, correspond to levels of knowing. But since each principle of unity has its source of intelligibility outside of itself, each of these instances of knowing is also a ceasing to know.

Good *logos* and bad *logos*

The above argument concluding that knowledge is never complete rests upon a claim about knowledge. Specifically, it rests upon the claim that to know something is to grasp its principle of unity. Does this mean that the argument undermines itself? (After all, the claim that "to know something is to grasp its principle of unity" must itself, if the conclusion it grounds is true, be at best only partially true.) The answer to this question must be yes. The claims made about the incompleteness of every grasp is a *logos*, and we have seen that any and every *logos* must be incomplete. More specifically, we have seen that every *logos* must undermine the multiplicity inherent in it in order to lead to a grasp of a principle of unity. In other words, not just this one, but every *logos* is self-undermining! Actually, the irony here is that it is only the meaningful logoi that undermine themselves. The meaningless logoi, because of their lack of meaning, are unable to undermine themselves. There is no utterly true *logos*, there are only better and worse *logoi*. A good self-refuting *logos* leads to a principle of unity while a bad *logos* does not.

Thus, to distinguish between a good *logos* and a bad *logos* we must be able to identify principles of unity, and this requires being able to determine how levels of being relate to each other. Yet, making intelligible the relation between levels of being seems to be impossible. So the question becomes: how can we possibly deem one *logos* good and another bad? This, again, applies no less to this book's *logos* than it does to any other. How can we know that one account is any better than any other? The position of Protagoras, where no judgment was truer than another, is brought to mind here. Moving beyond his *logos* required the recognition of substance, which translates into an acceptance of oneness. The same principle applies now in differentiating one *logos* from another.[13] The

better *logoi* are the ones that can supply (or lead to the grasp of) a more unified and more unifying principle. The question is how we can recognize this.

A brief investigation of how my account of accounts applies to itself will be included in the conclusion of the book, but the general idea of how to differentiate accounts should be evident. Differentiating between better and worse *logoi* is akin to differentiating between higher and lower levels of being. While we cannot differentiate the levels of being from one another in virtue of their oneness, for it is their oneness that makes them *all* levels of being, we can recognize that certain lower onenesses are contained in certain higher onenesses. The being shared by the objects of experience is contained in the soul itself through itself, for the objects of experience *are* in virtue of the commons supplied by the soul itself through itself. The being of the whole of the wagon is contained in the single look, *though it is not contained there as a wagon,* for to be the wagon requires a multiplicity that a single look cannot have. The individual is contained in the species which is contained in the genus. This is what accounts for the difference between the levels of being, i.e., the higher levels contain the being of the lower and not vice versa. Thus, the differences between the levels of oneness is understandable in terms of their content, or lack thereof. The lack of content of the lower levels of being allows us to understand the being and not being (and corresponding knowing and not knowing) that we saw in chapter 2 was necessary for the possibility of false opinion. Judging Theaetetus as ugly is false when we hold the judgment in relation to what Theaetetus more truly is (i.e., a beautiful soul). Judging Theaetetus' appearance to be ugly without holding it in relation to what Theaetetus more truly is is not a false judgment, it is just a mostly empty judgment.

Thus, although each grasp is one, it is still the case that each single object can be grasped in a multitude of ways. All of the ways are both the same as each other and different from each other. The sameness is supplied by their shared oneness, which is supplied, in the *Theaetetus*' limited account, by the commons.[14] The commons, we have seen repeatedly, are the source of all intelligibility. What, then, is left to be said about the difference between the grasps? If the source of intelligibility is responsible for the sameness, it would seem to follow that the source of the difference, or distinctness, must be unintelligible. This means that we should not expect an intelligible answer to the question of what connects a distinct principle of unity to some distinct set of parts, for distinctness is inherently unintelligible.

And yet, we can, and do, distinguish between principles of unity and parts. You cannot articulate the difference between the levels of being from the perspective of the lower levels. This is understandable through the standard Platonic distinction between forms and imitations (which is relatively easy to read into this account). For example, you cannot say how the particular tree differs from the universal tree by articulating what it is about the particular that differs, for the particular differs from the universal only insofar as it is an

imitation of the form. But to imitate the form is to lack the form (i.e., the principle of unity) in some way, for if there were no lack then the particular would not be an imitation of the form; it would be the form itself. But the form is responsible for the being of that which imitates the form. Hence, what makes the particular different from the universal is a lack of being, and since non-being cannot be (nor be articulated) it is not possible to say what the particular has (or rather, lacks) that makes it differ from the form. The only way to distinguish the two is to recognize that, while still being one, the form must contain the being of the particular while the particular cannot contain the being of the form. The difference is in the richness of the oneness, a oneness that they both must have to be graspable at all. To say that the lack in the judgment of the particular is a lack of oneness is in one sense true, but it is also, like every other statement, partially false. Both grasps are one. They have to be in order to be at all. But the oneness of the higher level being includes the oneness of the lower level. This inclusion, however, is not to be interpreted as a multiplicity, for it is precisely in the lack of multiplicity, or the lack of non-being, that the higher level is able to include the lower. Rather, the inclusion of the lower level being in the higher is only in terms of its *being*, not in terms of it being some distinct thing.

This takes us back to *logos*, for it is *logos* that somehow holds the distinct onenesses belonging to separate levels of being in relation to one another, whether by modeling them in a stream through the mouth, listing elements, dividing into genus and differentia, or more generally interweaving names. Every *logos* is a reflection of whatever it is a *logos* of, and every *logos* works by having a starting oneness and breaking that oneness apart. This act of division, however, can have two different ends or directions, one corresponding to the role of the asker and the other to the role of the answerer. The grasp of the asker is empty, though there must be some minimal unity being asked after, for questioning itself (at least of the form "what is . . .?") is a recognition of some oneness that the asker cannot identify other than to (somehow) point out the object in question to the answerer. The answerer in turn takes the oneness in question and makes clearer what it is by pointing out what it is composed of. Both *logoi* are divided representations of the same thing, but the same thing grasped at different levels of being. The asker's attempt to divide the object fails to allow him to recognize the (first level) underlying unity of what he asks after, though it is possible that in the act of formulating the question the unity becomes clear,[15] while the answerer's *logos* arises out of a grasp of that very unity which the asker's *logos* seeks.

Part of the challenge here is that once we accept this movement between different degrees of oneness being mediated by different types of *logoi* we are forced to conclude that nothing can actually be said of *any* of the degrees of oneness themselves, which in turn means that nothing can be said of the things that we are actually grasping or knowing. For as soon as we say something about the oneness itself we are no longer dealing with that oneness alone but

only with a *logos* of that oneness. As we argued earlier *logoi* all require not just oneness but also multiplicity. The grasps are one in a way that the *logoi* cannot be, and hence the *logos* must undermine a unity.

The flip side of this is also true: in seeking out knowledge of what a *logos* is, we are turning *logos* itself into an object to be grasped or known, but by making *logos* an object to be grasped or known it ceases to be that which unifies the grasp and the known. But if knowing the relation between grasps or knowings requires knowing *logos*, and knowing *logos* requires making *logos* an object to be grasped or known and hence not *logos*, then it is not possible for us to know the relation between a grasp and a knowing. This is yet another argument for what we saw earlier in this chapter: what is knowable cannot be spoken of, and what can be spoken of is not knowable.

At the crux of all of these difficulties is the recognition that difference is inherently unintelligible, and yet necessary for the possibility of any thought. This has been an underlying problem throughout the dialogue; indeed it has been the underlying problem at every turn in the dialogue's *logos* (or *logoi*). The levels of being, which I have been arguing are indispensable for understanding the *Theaetetus* as a whole, remain unclear in their details because to supply details would require explaining difference. All we really get explicitly in the dialogue as a representation of the levels is a distinction between the soul itself through itself and the soul itself through another.[16] Yet there are hints throughout the *Theaetetus* at several distinctions within the soul through another. As examples, the dialogue gives us images. The wax block (memory) and the aviary (thought) are both distinct representations of the soul through another, so too is the image of the wooden horse with the soul sitting inside[17] (perception). Each of these images in some way corresponds to grasping a distinct level of being, and each falls short of the sought after knowledge (which itself somehow corresponds to a distinct level of being). To make the differences between these levels clear would require distinguishing difference from difference, for as pointed out earlier, each level must be one insofar as it is, and hence it is precisely in their oneness that they remain indistinct from each other. This is why the only meaningful way of distinguishing levels of being is by recognizing that one type of being supplies the principle of unity for another, for in so doing we focus on the oneness of both the levels in question as opposed to their multiplicity. Yet, as soon as we recognize that the object of judgment has a principle of unity that lies outside of itself (i.e., is different from itself), we recognize that that object of judgment fundamentally isn't, and that there is no actual thing itself there for us to judge, and that what is actually being judged belongs to something else. Thus, when we pay attention to each of the levels we notice that they (as intelligible in any way) are always vanishing into the level above, which in turn will vanish into the level above it, and so forth. Each of these vanishings is as close to a grasp of difference as we get; we recognize that what we took as one is not really one, i.e., it *is* many. In this sense difference

ends up being "the same" as non-being, for difference here represents what is not the oneness.

This is not something that is particular to the *Theaetetus*. There are several dialogues in which Plato explicitly notes that *logos* requires hypothesizing an intelligibility to difference or non-being. Both in the *Sophist* and the *Parmenides*, Plato has the discussion leader hypothesize difference and non-being for the sake of allowing for meaningful discourse.[18] In the *Theaetetus* the hypothesizing is not as explicit, but no less necessary. In the pivotal argument refuting "knowledge is perception," difference is taken to be one of the things common to all the senses, a claim which is accepted without reservation by Theaetetus. Claiming that difference is a common, or a form, is immensely problematic. As we've seen in chapter 2, the commons are the ground for all intelligibility. Their role in supplying intelligibility is connected to their role as the unifier of that which is conveyed through the senses, the soul being the point at which all the senses "converge into some one look." Difference[19] and unlikeness[20] are both listed among the commons. The difference between difference and unlikeness (or the unlikeness between them) is very hard to understand, but both of them, regardless of their relation to each other, appear to be unintelligible as commons (i.e., unintelligible as principles of intelligibility): commons are by definition what the objects of experience share, i.e., what is the same for all of them. How can difference, as a common, possibly be responsible for what is the same in all objects of experience? In short, what is different cannot be shared, for in being shared it is made the same.

One of the paradoxes of the account I've been offering is that it treats difference (or distinctness) as *the* non-common. To say the same thing in a slightly different way, difference seems to be the common responsible for non-commonness. One way to see this is to recognize that the levels of being correspond to varying relations between one and many, and to be many is to have a multitude of *different* parts. As we've noted several times, to speak of the many is to apply oneness to it (otherwise we are left with the *logos*-less account of Heraclitus). To speak of difference is to speak of difference with sameness, or in other words, to speak of difference is in some sense to not speak of it.

The whole adds another layer to the issue when thinking through the need for sameness within difference. There are two layers of onenesses in the whole. There is an all, i.e., a collection of parts, and there is the single look that turns the all into the whole. This is the quintessential example of a distinction between levels of being. What is the difference between the onenesses? Each of the parts of the all must be one in order to be, and the single look must be one in order to be the principle of unity of the whole. This means that both the part and the whole must be one. This, again, is the source of the dilemma that arises out of the dream; either the compound is an all (i.e., a bunch of ones) or a single look (i.e., a single one), and in either case it is only as knowable as the elements.

What then is left to differentiate between the part, the single look and the whole (which is supposed to be the combination of the two)?

What is so striking here is just how difficult it is to find anything to say about these onenesses, so much so that it is very difficult to make any meaningful distinction between them. Once again, as I've been arguing from the beginning, what we need is a combination of the two, but since each of the pair seem to be the same, it is not clear how we have two here, nor is it clear how if we do have two how our unifying of them won't make them one again. We have a series of problems all revolving around an attempt to make difference intelligible, which is all the more striking because we've seen that, as a common, difference is required to make things intelligible. Somehow the ones that correspond to the parts are different (without us being able to say how). Somehow these ones are unified into a one that includes them all, with the character of the newly formed one being knowable in a way that the elemental ones are not, and hence having a different character from them. Somehow the principle of unity allowing for the one that is a compound is partless and hence different from itself within the unified object. These are all necessary for the account offered, which in turn is claiming that they are necessary for meaningful discourse to be possible. The inability to give a *logos* of oneness means that that which makes *logos* possible also limits the scope of *logos* because no *logos* can be given of it.

The dialogue ends with precisely these issues at the forefront. The problem raised with defining Theaetetus by starting with a true opinion of Theaetetus and then adding how he differs from what he is most similar to is that *there is no opinion (true or false) without first grasping the object of opinion's difference.*[21] Opinion entails difference. In fact any grasp of something entails difference, and yet it is precisely in the failure to overcome difference that knowledge is undermined. The end of the dialogue, however, makes it seem like the failure to know arises from not recognizing difference's fundamental role in knowledge. As Socrates says:

> as soon as you grasp the difference of each thing by which it differs from everything else, you'll grasp an articulation (λόγον), as some people claim; but as long as you hang on to anything that's shared in common [κοινοῦ], your articulation will be about those things among which the commonness is shared.[22]

Taking this passage as telling us that knowledge is grasping difference is a misreading, or at best an incomplete reading. Difference is most certainly fundamental, but not to knowledge in an unqualified sense, for knowledge is of oneness. Difference is fundamental to opinion, or to grasping and thinking in general. The turning of opinion into knowledge takes place precisely in the overcoming of difference, i.e., it lies in grasping being as a common, and in so

doing we must leave the object as distinct from its being behind. The grasping of the common is knowing in one sense, as it is a grasp of a principle of unity, but as a distinct grasp it immediately reincorporates the difference it had overcome, only this time on a higher level of being.

This points to a progression from a particular to its species to its genus, etc., and this progression will remain incomplete (i.e., short of knowledge) for as long as a principle of unity must be found for whatever is grasped. Each of these grasps will entail difference until we come to the One itself. I have been arguing that each of these grasps is of something that is both one and many, i.e., a whole. The knowledge of the whole depends upon grasping its principle of unity, which itself will be another whole, and hence will also require a principle of unity. Each grasp of a principle of unity that is itself a whole is both a knowing and a not knowing. It is a knowing of the being of that for which it supplies the principle of unity, and it is a not knowing of its own being. This amounts to saying that each grasp is a knowing insofar as it is of a principle of unity (i.e., insofar as it is of what is one), and it is a not knowing insofar as it is of that which requires a principle of unity (insofar as it entails plurality).

Notes

1. To be distinct here means to be some thing and not some other thing. This entails some kind of limitation and multiplicity (a little more will be said regarding this in the next paragraph). Distinct, in the sense used here, applies as generally as the term "grasp" does. The term grasp is a way of referring to all of the many ways the soul can attach to an object. Perceiving (insofar as there is minimal intelligibility involved), opining, and knowing are all forms of grasping. Distinctness is the same notion applied to the object being grasped instead of to the faculty grasping it. Distinctness is one of the two criteria for an intelligible object, the other being oneness.
2. This was argued for in chapter 2.
3. This is a version of the one/many requirement we have been seeing from the beginning of the investigation.
4. Chapter 2, pp. 21-24.
5. This knowing has been seen to be incomplete in two ways. The first is that the grasp of the object on the higher level, insofar as it is a grasp at all, will show itself to be a multiplicity in need of a principle of unity lying outside of itself. The second is that the grasp of the object on a higher level leaves the distinctness of that object as it exists on the lower level behind. For example, the knowing of Theaetetus as a human being does not tell us about Theaetetus as a distinct individual.
6. There have been many examples given in the dialogue. The sun is an instance of heavenly bodies moving around the earth. Sigma falls into the class of unvoiced letters. Theaetetus is an instance of human being, etc.

7. With Heraclitus, of course, we had the opposite problem. Now we are struggling to account for difference, while at the beginning of the dialogue the struggle was in accounting for sameness.
8. The example used in chapter 2 was judging Jo to not be Smith when really Jo and Smith were simply two different sets of characteristics that belong to the same person (Jo Smith).
9. This follows from the recognition that being is supplied by the soul itself. The objects being judged by the soul are the objects that are.
10. I argued in the previous chapter that the final section of the dialogue is simply the last example (or step) in a series of onenesses divided by a *logos* in order to be overcome by a higher oneness. Each of the definitions really accomplishes this. The first oneness is perception by the soul. We see that this is really a combination of the work of the many senses and the commons. This recognition leads us to opinion as the higher unity. Opinion is then shown to be multiple insofar as any opinion is only one of any number of possible representations of a higher unity. The final definition's inclusion of *logos* then indicates the way we are to move upward toward that higher principle.
11. This was actually pointed out in chapter 3. The dream talks about elements (στοιχεῖον) as a "lot like" (στοιχεῖα) the "first things" (πρῶτα). The first things, I'm suggesting, are the principles of unity. The above, hopefully, shows both how the elements of the dream are similar and different to the principles of unity.
12. This is a possible reason that Socrates refers to it as a dream.
13. It is interesting that this is reminiscent of the defense that Protagoras gave of his position (through the mouth of Socrates) back in the second definition of knowledge. He says in regards to education that "one should produce a change from one condition that holds to a better one, but while a doctor produces a change with drugs, a sophist does so with speeches. One does not, however, make someone who's been having some false opinion afterward have some true opinion, for there is no power to have as opinions either things that are not, or other things besides those one experiences, and the latter are always true" (167a). The difference between Protagoras' position and the one we are looking at now arose out of the refutation of "knowledge is perception," the argument which showed the need for a principle of oneness and levels of being.
14. Limited because, as discussed in chapters 2 and 3, the commons themselves also require a principle of unity, and this/these higher principle(s) are not explicit in the *Theaetetus*.
15. This is not an uncommon event in a philosophy course: the student, in composing the question, comes to see what she is really asking after. When this doesn't happen the teacher as answerer must replace the *logos* of the asker with another *logos* that makes the underlying oneness somehow more obvious.
16. 185d-e.
17. 184d.
18. This is a major theme of the discussion in the second half of the *Sophist*. See 236e-241e in particular. Also see *Parmenides* 135b-c.
19. ἕτερον (185a). This is commonly translated as "otherness."

20. ἀνομοίω (185b). This is also commonly translated as "otherness." Sach's translates it as "unlikeness" and I kept it here since most of the translations I've been using have been his.
21. 209c.
22. 208d.

Conclusion

What, then, have we learned about knowledge? Every act of knowing is a simultaneous act of not-knowing the very thing known. The reason for this, stated simply, is that every knowing is of what is and every being (except One) both is and is not. To put the argument in the terms used in the *Theaetetus*, in order to know what a whole is it is necessary to grasp the one look that allows it to be. But the whole cannot be identified with the one look, for the whole has parts while the one look does not. Thus, in coming to know the whole I grasp one look, and in so doing cease grasping the whole. The grasp of the one look, as something intelligible, will then have its own principle of unity which must be grasped if knowledge is to be had of it. Thus, every act of knowing leads directly into the need for higher knowledge, and every grasp of higher knowledge is, in some sense, a grasp of a oneness that was already known, though to a lesser degree. Coming to know can, therefore, be taken to be a continual distancing from multiplicity for the sake of richer and richer grasps of oneness.

This conclusion, that knowing is a grasping of oneness that leads to the need for new grasps of oneness, arose out of an attempt to understand (i.e., know) the dialogue as a whole. The attempt to understand the dialogue as a whole amounts to trying to see how the many parts of the text fit together into one thing. This means that the dialogue is reflexive: coming to know what knowledge is, we engage in the sort of inquiry that is necessary for any particular knowledge, but is here an inquiry into knowledge itself. This means that in some sense the conclusion that we need to seek out oneness in order to come to know was assumed at the very beginning of the investigation. Indeed, the seeking out of oneness, the dialogue argues, is the ground for the possibility of any meaningful investigation. This is what the refutation of the first proper definition of knowledge, and its corresponding refutation of Heraclitus, taught us. There was within us, at the very beginning of the investigation, a grasp of what we had to do in order to come to know, despite the fact that figuring out what we had to do in order to come to know was the explicit topic of the investigation. The knowledge being sought after was, in some lesser sense, known prior to the search.

I have argued that this coming to know what is to some degree already known is made possible by the levels of being (as represented by the all, the whole and the single look). The initial grasp of something is an ambiguous relation of the principle of unity and the parts; some ambiguous oneness with minimal content present to the soul. This minimal grasp is necessary merely to be able to ask after the being of something. *Logos* allows for the recognition

that the ambiguous oneness is a whole, which involves a kind of disambiguation of the single look and all the parts, which in turn entails a kind of grasp of the single look itself. Thus, the knowledge of the principle of unity (i.e., the single look) of the wagon is preceded by an empty grasp of the wagon as an object of experience. Both of these are a grasp of oneness, and hence both of them mark a kind of knowing. The difference between the two is that the grasp of the principle of unity includes the being of the grasp of the object of experience; and since knowledge is of being this makes it a more complete knowing. Yet the more complete knowings are also incomplete, for, as has been argued, the knowledge of any distinct thing must involve multiplicity, and hence must appeal to a higher principle of unity for its being.

So, too, for the insights the dialogue has to offer; they must be present to us in order for us to be able to discover them in the text. Socrates is relatively explicit about this in his conversation with Theaetetus; his art of midwifery is only capable of birthing what is already present. The refutation of "knowledge is perception" showed us this as well. It demonstrated that all intelligibility is rooted in being and oneness which are supplied by the soul itself. This applies to being on any level. This means that the movement from the initial (mostly empty) grasps of the objects of experience to the grasp of wholeness, and the movement from the grasp of wholeness to the grasp of *ousia*, are really movements back to the soul: each grasp of oneness on any level is the soul returning to a greater or lesser grasp of itself. To use the terms of the dialogue: each act of knowing is an act of the soul itself through itself. What the account has shown us is that every intelligible experience of the soul is a returning to itself, some returnings being more circuitous than others. *Logos*, as the relation between the levels of being/oneness, can be thought of as the otherness that the soul passes through in returning to itself. In other words, successful *logos* is the movement from oneness to oneness through multiplicity.

As the expression of being, *logos* must always fall short of that which it seeks to express. This incompleteness of *logos* is both epistemic and ontic. Not only does a grasp of being overcome *logos*, being itself requires the overcoming. To state this simply: the lower levels of being fall short of the higher similarly to how *logos* falls short of being. Or, looked at from the other direction, the inability of *logos* to ever fully capture being is tied to a lower level being's inability to be fully one.

My *logos* of the *logos* in the Theaetetus, like all *logoi*, is incomplete. The goal has not been to give a definitive account, for, according to my own position, there is no such thing as a definitive account. Rather, I have tried to show what all accounts, in their quest for knowledge, seek to accomplish. One of the repercussions of my account is that a good account will always lead to the need for another, new, account. Hence, at the conclusion of their long examination of Theaetetus' soul Socrates says "at dawn, Theodorus, let's meet here again."

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