

# The metamorphosis of change: a study of Plato's theory of change

Yue, S.

# Chapter III Plato's Reflections of the First Model in the *Theaetetus*, *Parmenides* and *Sophist*

As discussed in the previous chapters, Plato's exploration of change and motion finds it origins in the debates among pre-Socratic philosophers, and then brings forward the First Model as his primary attempt to deal with this problem. He adapts several insights from those early philosophers who were influential at his age: he concurs with the early Ionic thinkers that everything changes between opposites; and embraces Heraclitus' doctrine that every sensible thing is always in flux. At the same time, Plato is convinced by the Parmenidean principle that What-is always is and What-is-not is not, and which leads to the inherent generative essence of change; furthermore, he holds the conviction that soul is immortal and ever-moving. Plato synthesized these views, marking the onset of his dialectical inquiry. It necessitates him to rethink and re-evaluate these perspectives within his own theoretical framework. In presenting his first model of change and motion, Plato first delineates the concept of Form and the Two-World Theory. He advocates that Form always takes the role of What-is in the Eleatic philosophy, while the sensibles always oscillate generatively between opposites and never really are. Moreover, the mechanism underlying change is attributed to Form. Specifically, the sensible thing can only change generatively to be *F* by participating in the corresponding Form *F*-ness. This mechanism, in turn, establishes the classification of motion, indicating that changes resulting from sharing in a Form are generative, whereas motions independent of such participation—such as locomotion or that of the soul—are non-generative.

Though being quite subtle, Plato's first model of change and motion is unfortunately not flawless. He intensively examines its foundation and identifies several significant vulnerabilities in the *Theaetetus*, *Parmenides* and *Sophist*. Even though these dialogues do not belong to the same Platonic "tetralogy" arranged by Thrasyllus—according to him the *Theaetetus* and the *Sophist* are parts of the second tetralogy but the *Parmenides* is the first dialogue of the third one, their interconnectedness, both concerning the backdrops or scenes of the interlocutors' conversations and the substantial philosophical contents which we mainly care about, is undeniable. In the *Theaetetus*, Socrates announces that he is going to look into the doctrines of both the proponents of Flux theory and of Parmenides as well as his adherents who champion the immovable whole (*Theaet.* 180e-181a). But he does not deliver on this promise in the following text, refusing to examine Parmenides' theory after criticizing the extreme Flux (183d-184a). And Socrates claims, "Parmenides seems to me, in the words of Homer, to be 'reverend' and 'awful'. I met him when I was very young and he was a very old man; and he seemed to me to have a wholly noble depth. So I am afraid we might not understand even what he says; still less should we attain to his real thought" (183d-184a). This meeting between Socrates and Parmenides, as well as Parmenides' deep wisdom, is later revealed in detail in the *Parmenides*. And eventually, in the *Sophist*, the interlocutors continue to delve into the divarication between those who support the Flux theory and the Parmenidean school in the alleged "battle between gods and giants", culminating in a comprehensive reflection on the ontological foundation of Parmenides' doctrine (*Sph.* 246a-249d).

In this chapter, we will mainly focus on the reflections and critiques presented in these dialogues regarding Plato's first model of change and motion. This model is threatened in the following aspects:

(1) **The Two-World Theory.** The *Theaetetus* challenges Plato's assertion that the sensible are always in flux by changing ceaselessly and generatively. At the same time, the *Sophist* seems to contend that Forms are able to move by participation and being acted upon. This seriously blurs the lines between the realm of becoming and of being.

(2) **The Mechanism of Change.** The efficacy of Form, moreover, as the reason for the change is questioned. The *Theaetetus* and the *Parmenides* hint that the scope of Being might be restricted, preventing it from encompassing all sorts of changes. Besides, the participation of Form is also doubted whether it could serve as the core of the mechanism of change in the *Parmenides*.

(3) **The Classification of Motion.** According to the first model, the general change includes two sub-kinds, the generative change resulting from sharing in a Form and non-generative motion. But in the *Parmenides*, it is suggested that within the Parmenidean framework all motions must be generative and there is no room for the alleged non-generative motion. While in the *Sophist*, the Eleatic stranger argues that a kind does not undergo a generative change when combining with another kind. If so, the classification of motion must turn out to be untenable in the end.

And further, these reflections are built on two pivotal insights running through these texts:

(4) **The Scope and Structure of Form.** The concept of 'Form' is thoroughly rethought. Not only does Plato suggest a restricted scope of Form, but he also offers a renewed understanding of its ontological structure and essence.
(5) **The Reflection of Parmenidean Principle.** Correlatively, he shows that the inherent and fundamental flaw in his first model arises from its uncritical adoption of Parmenides' principle that What-is always is and What-is-not is not. This is alluded to in the *Theaetetus* and the *Parmenides* and then expounded upon in the *Sophist*.

Hence we see that each part of Plato's first model is more or less attacked in the three dialogues, and the foundation of this model is thoroughly examined. As subsequent discussions will elucidate, these critiques, carefully organized in a dialectical way and permeating these three dialogues, signify Plato's introspective criticism of his previous theory and lays the metaphysical groundwork for a revised model of change and motion.

## 1. The *Theaetetus* and the Flux theories

In preceding dialogues, Plato establishes the first model of change and motion accepting a flux theory influenced by both Heraclitus' opinion that all sensible entities are always changing and the Eleatics' insight that all these changes are generative. And now the *Theaetetus* provides a significant occasion to scrutinize this premise. For on the one hand, the

first part of the *Theaetetus* (*Theaet.* 151-186) delivers the richest detailed discussions of flux theory after the *Cratylus*. Yet on the other hand, this dialogue also includes Plato's prominent refutation of Heraclitean flux (179c-183c).

The central question then arises: How does Plato interpret the flux theory, and what is his real stance towards it in the *Theaetetus*? Cornford, representing the traditional Unitarianism position, posits that Plato, in this dialogue, continues to adhere to the Two-World Theory. And he does not entirely discard Heraclitus' flux theory but partly embraces it by confining it to the sensible realm. Then, for Cornford, what Socrates really criticizes is that Heraclitus and many pre-Socratic philosophers fail to recognize the realm of the unchangeable Forms. Therefore, Plato's position in the *Theaetetus* is not novel but just echoes his earlier dialogues.[154] By this interpretation, the Flux theory is not erroneous but merely incomplete due to its lack of Forms. Conversely, the Revisionism position diverges from Cornford and the Unitarianism reading. It argues that metaphysical theory in late Platonic dialogues does not rely on the middle theory of Form, especially after the critiques of Forms in the *Parmenides*. Importantly, Socrates never mentions the term 'Form' in the *Theaetetus*. Burnyeat further contends that in this dialogue Plato does not show any partial acceptance of the Heraclitean flux at all. The Heraclitean flux theory, then, is not rejected because of its neglect of the eternal Form. Instead, what Socrates precisely argues against is not this flux theory but the Protagorean epistemology built on this flux, and the latter in turn is

[154] Cornford, 1935.

self-refuted by leading to the 'impossibility of language' in an alleged *reductio ad absurdum* argument.[155]

Yet, both readings are questionable respectively. They all built on the assumption that Socrates simply addresses a singular and consistent Flux theory, and attributes it to Heraclitus. Based on this understanding, Unitarianism believes that Socrates' critique of this Heraclitean flux suggests his own metaphysical theory to save the world in flux, while Burnyeat and his followers intend to regard this Heraclitean flux merely as a premise of the whole reduction argument which is indeed irrelevant with Plato's own thinking of flux. However, this assumption warrants scrutiny. Upon close examination of this section, it is evident that Socrates does not limit his discussion to a single Flux theory in the *Theaetetus*, but underscores two versions of flux which are not entirely coherent with each other. Plato's nuanced stance is clear. Through a detailed analysis of Socrates' various flux discussions, it emerges that: the first flux aligns more with the historical Heraclitean flux, while the second and stricter one, which Socrates mainly criticizes, shares the common character of extreme ceaseless and generative change with Plato's own understanding of flux in his first model. Using a self-refutation argument regarding this second radicalized Flux, Socrates demonstrates that genuine knowledge—spanning epistemology, ethics and political thinking—cannot be based on the perpetually generatively-changing things. Consequently, unlike the Unitarianism

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[155] Burnyeat, 1990: 7-9. Burnyeat attributes the invention of this reading to Bernard Williams, but undoubtedly it is because of Burnyeat's effort that this view has gained wide influence. Cf. Burnyeat, 1990: xiii; 9. And Chappell summarizes the difference between Unitarianism and Revisionism reading of the *Theaetetus*. Cf. Chappell, 2004: 16-24.

interpretation which asserts that here Socrates repeats his theory presented in the middle dialogues and the new reduction reading which denies this argument includes any notable discussion of Plato's own flux theory, Socrates indeed does not solely reiterate previous ideas presented in prior dialogues. but also offer a potential rebuke of Plato's initial model of change and motion. For this purpose, this discussion will proceed in two steps: (1) A review of his elaboration of Protagoras' and Heraclitus' Flux theory; (2) an explanation of his reflection on this flux doctrine.

### 1.1 Multiple Flux Theories Argued in the *Theaetetus*

Contrary to prevalent opinion, Socrates successively delineates at least two kinds of Flux for distinct purposes in the *Theaetetus*:

(I) **The primary Heraclitean Flux**: everything is the result of motion.

(II) **The stricter Heraclitean Flux**: everything is motion and changes generatively.

The second Flux is obviously more radical than the first one. The key distinction is that the first flux more or less permits a degree of stability, while the second one mandates that everything is ceaselessly changing and continuously becoming a completely and substantially different thing—namely, it is always changing generatively. They serve not only to buttress Protagoras' epistemological theory, but also a wide-spread ethical and political view of the sophists. The stricter Heraclitean Flux is Socrates' main critique target. Let's examine them in turn and try to illuminate Plato's real perspective on the Heraclitean flux in the text.

(1) The Primary Heraclitean Flux

In the *Theaetetus*, Socrates introduces the primary Heraclitean flux when he and Theaetetus for the first time attempt to justify Protagoras' notable epistemological doctrine. Theaetetus defines 'knowledge' as 'perception' (151e), and Socrates claims this as identical to Protagoras' Man-Measure Doctrine, which posits that "Man is the measure of all things: of things which are, that they are, and of the thing which are not, that they are not" (152a). For instance, "the same wind is blowing, one of us feels cold and the other not", so it is cold to someone who feels the wind as cold while hot to another who feels it as hot (152b). Socrates then suggests that the essence of Protagoras' Man-Measure Doctrine, termed the 'secret doctrine', can be articulated as,

> "I will tell you; and this, now, is certainly no ordinary theory—I mean the theory that there is nothing which in itself (αὐτὸ καθ' αὑτὸ) is just one thing: nothing which you could rightly call anything or any kind of thing. If you call a thing large, it reveals itself as small, and if you call it heavy, it is liable to appear as light, and so on with everything, because nothing is one or anything or any kind of thing." (152d2-6)

Obviously, according to this secret doctrine, nothing is *per se* one thing. Accordingly, no object is intrinsically characterized by any property. Otherwise, it would imply that an object *per se* could possess contradictory attributes by being both large and small, heavy and light—Burnyeat calls them 'conflicting appearances'. Burnyeat asserts that, logically, the same entity cannot be both *F* and not-*F* at the same time, therefore the Protagorean doctrine requires every property to be relational and not intrinsic. Hence, the wind *is* not *inherently* cold or hot,

but *is* hot in relation to someone while cold in relation to another.[156] But what is the ontological foundation for this secret doctrine? The answer is indisputably the flux theory.[157] Indeed, being both *F* and not-*F* is the typical Platonic way to signify the change and flux of the sensible. In the *Cratylus* Socrates argues that it is not correct to describe the thing always in flux as "it first that it is this, then that it is such and such", because at the very instant we are speaking, it is inevitably and immediately becoming a different thing (*Crat*. 439d8-11). This is explicitly the same reason as it is argued in the *Theaetetus* cited above. Besides, in the *Symposium*, Diotima also suggests that the sensible things that are always in flux are both *F* and not-*F* at different times, in relation to different things, or for different ones (*Smp*. 210e-211b). And in the *Phaedo*, similarly, Socrates hints that the sensible which are always changing "never in any way remain the same as themselves or in relation to each other" (*Phaed.* 78e). Now in the *Theaetetus*, Socrates does continue to elaborate the flux as the metaphysical premise of the secret doctrine.

What is really true, is this: the things of which we naturally say that they 'are', are in process of coming to be (γίγνεσθαι), as the result of movement (φορά) and motion (κίνησις) and blending with one another. We are wrong when we say they 'are', since nothing ever is, but everything is coming to be. And as regards this point of view, let us take it as a fact that all the wise men of the past, with the exception of Parmenides, stand together. Let us take it that we find on this side

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156 Burnyeat, 1990: 12-14.

157 Fine correctly points out that Burnyeat's reading completely ignores the change and Heraclitean doctrine mentioned in the following text. And she further argues that according to Plato's Protagoras, "if an object appears different, then it becomes different and so it changes." Cf. Fine, 1996: 126-7.

Protagoras and Heraclitus and Empedocles; and also the masters of the two kinds of poetry, Epicharmus in comedy and Homer in tragedy. For when Homer talked about 'Ocean, begetter of gods, and Tethys their mother', he made all things the offspring of 'flux and motion' (ῥοῆς τε καὶ κινήσεως). (*Theaet.* 152d-e)

The primary Heraclitean Flux doctrine—that everything is the offspring of motion—is claimed to serve as the foundation of the secret doctrine and is a consensus among most pre-Socratic philosophers except for Parmenides. This Heraclitean doctrine may seem to be very familiar to us, for in the previous dialogues sensible things are always claimed to move and change ceaselessly. However, it is not difficult to realize that the Heraclitean flux doctrine here includes two essential differences.

First, in this dialogue, Socrates diverges from Plato's middle dialogues where he focuses on the notion that 'everything itself is changing'. Instead, now he posits that 'everything comes to be as the offspring of motion'.[158] Namely, everything, as he emphasizes, is not *per se* one thing, but comes to be as a result of motion. The sensible things that are in the process of becoming are produced by those 'movement, change and blending with each other'. Socrates further provides the following "good enough evidence" to substantiate this theory: (a) movement and friction give rise to heat or fire which in turn generate and control everything else; (b) the growth of living creatures also depends upon these movements and friction; (c) bodily condition deteriorates with rest and idleness while it can be preserved for a long time through exertion and motion; (d) learning and study as motions enable the soul to gain knowledge, be

[158] Cf. Bostock, 1988: 46-47.

preserved, and become better, but when the soul does not learn or study, being in a state of rest, it fails to acquire knowledge and forgets what it has already learned; (e) the conditions of land and sea will be destroyed because of rest but preserved by motions; (f) all things are preserved as long as the revolution of sun continues, but if it comes to a standstill, all things will be destroyed. (153a-d).

In these cases, the sensible things come to be and are sustained as the production of some change and motion. Concurrently, the picture of Homer, Protagoras and Heraclitus' flowing world is depicted. All things are predisposed to decline and destroy, unless they come to be and are preserved by specific changes and motions. As Socrates summarizes, "being and becoming are a production of motion, while not-being and passing-away result from a state of rest" (153a6-7). Even seemingly stable phenomena—such as healthy body condition, potent memory, and this enduring world—are not utterly static but only preserved by some changes and motions, analogous to a boat which, being static in a stream and propelled by its engine, sails against the current.

Another essential difference pertains to the ontological implication of change. In the first model, the change—at least the change between opposites—must be generative, compelling the sensible thing to become something completely and substantially different due to Parmenides' principle of What-is. However, here it is suggested that an entity, despite undergoing a change, might still retain its identity. This is evident when Socrates tries to explore how the Heraclitean flux could justify Protagoras' epistemology. He posits that the white colour, as an example, is not a

distinct entity unto itself, otherwise it would not be in the process of becoming (153d-e). He elucidates,

> "Let us follow what we stated a moment ago, and posit that there is nothing which is, in itself, one thing. According to this theory, black or white or any other color will turn out to have come into being through the impact of the eye upon the appropriate motion; and what we naturally call a particular color is neither that which impinges nor that which is impinged upon, but something which has come into being between the two, and which is private to the individual percipient." (153e4-154a3)

According to the primary Heraclitean flux doctrine, everything not really 'is' but 'comes to be' as the result of motions and changes. Thus, the white colour 'is' not intrinsically, but 'comes to be' as the production of the impact and motion between the eye and its observed object—say, a stone. Therefore, the stone is not one thing in itself as required by the secret doctrine. It might appear white to one observer and grey to another or under different circumstances. Thus, the stone becomes a white stone or grey stone when it is perceived as white or grey. However, it is crucial to note that in the meantime, Socrates does not contend that the stone or the eye itself undergoes any substantial and generative change in this process. Instead, what emerges during this change is the attribute or colour of whiteness. Consequently, even if the subject does become *F*, and even if it thereby ought to be said not to be in itself one thing or one kind of thing, it does not mean that this entity comes to be by substantially becoming something entirely different. This is explicitly the

aim of the whole argument. At the very beginning, when Socrates initially introduces Protagoras' Man-Measure doctrine, he elucidates it by arguing that "when *the same wind* is blowing, one of us feels cold and the other not" (152b2-3). Thus, the wind is not *one* thing by itself because it *becomes* hot or cold when it is perceived by someone. And during this process, the wind is still the same wind. These attributes, hot or cold do not reside inherently in this wind, but arise in the process of perception, explaining how the same wind can be both hot and cold.

So this primary Heraclitean flux markedly differs from Plato's first model of change and motion. In that model, change must be generative and deprive the self-identity of the entities, whereas here, the becoming of a subject seems to be compatible with its identity, allowing it to maintain being the same amidst change. This may align with the renowned fragment of Heraclitus: "*As [one] and the same thing* there exists in us living and dead, and the waking and the sleeping, and young and old: for these things having changed round are those, and those things having changed round are these ones." (DK22 B88) As we have sufficiently argued, Heraclitus does not advocate the incompatibility between change and identity, a stance which indeed deeply relies on the Eleatic ontology of What-is. Whether Plato himself is aware or not, he objectively portrays a version of Flux aligned more closely with the original thought of the historical Heraclitus. And moreover, these phenomena of flux—such as the wind appears to be hot to someone while cold to others (152b), or the large thing also appears to be small and the heavy thing to be light (152d)—as the private experiences of human beings are never refuted by Plato in this dialogue.

Through this meticulous effort, Plato constructs his understanding of the primary Heraclitean Flux theory, which he believes to be a shared view among most pre-Socratic philosophers. This emphasizes that things are naturally inclined to be destroyed and can only be generated and preserved through certain changes and motions. This primary Heraclitean flux is soon overshadowed in this dialogue where Theaetetus and Socrates' second attempt to justify the first definition of knowledge introduces a more recognized version of Heraclitean flux.

(2) The Stricter Heraclitean Flux

Socrates subsequently introduces the notorious Dice Puzzle (154b-155c) to further probe the Protagorean theory he just argued, but unfortunately, Theaetetus fails to comprehend. Thus, Socrates undertakes a second effort to justify Theaetetus' Protagorean definition of knowledge as perception by uncovering "the veiled truth" in the thought of Protagoras, Heraclitus and others (155d). Undoubtedly, this "veiled truth" also relies on a form of Heraclitean flux. However, this flux theory is much more rigorous than the one previously described. Firstly, the core of flux doctrine is no longer simply that everything is the offspring of change and motion. Instead, each thing itself is a motion.[159] Socrates claims, "These mysteries begin from the principle on which all that we have just been saying also depends, namely, **that everything is really motion, and there is nothing but motion.**" (156a3-5) The earlier Flux doctrine still accommodates some extent of stability. For instance, Socrates mentions the preservation of good condition of body and soul through physical exercise and learning (153b-c). But this new story expels any such possibility completely. Secondly, the changes are now strictly generative for the

[159] Similarly, cf. Crombie, 1963: 12.

subjects. Not only does the property come to be in the motions, but so do the subject and the object themselves. The development of this nuanced Heraclitean Flux theory from its predecessor will be elucidated immediately.

The new Flux theory, then, ties in closely with a refreshed interpretation of Protagorean epistemology's stance on perception. And to satisfy this goal, Socrates does not simply give up the previous flux doctrine. Instead, he redifines it to encompass every motion and change of the perceptual process. First, Socrates contends that according to the 'veiled truth', what is perceived and perception emerge in pairs as active motion and passive motions produced in the perceiving activity (156a-c). And he further elaborates,

> "All these things are in motion, just as we say; and their motion is distinguished by its swiftness or slowness. What is slow has its motion in one and same place, and in relation to the things in the immediate neighborhood; in this way it generates and the offspring are swifter, as they move (φέρεται), and their motion (κίνησις) takes the form of movement (ἐν φορᾷ)." (156c8-d3)

In this paragraph, the motions of these subjects and objects include swift motions and slow motions. According to the previous Heraclitean flux, everything is the offspring of some motion and change. So, the slow motion, confined to its locale nearby, generates the swift motion. These are the so-called 'twin motions'. But what are the slow motion and swift motion? Socrates continues to argue,

> "Thus the eye and some other thing—one of the things, commensurate with the eye—which has come into its neighborhood, generate both whiteness and the perception which is by nature united with it (things which would never have come to be if it had been anything else that eye or object approached). In this event, motions arise in the intervening, sight from the side of the eye and whiteness from the side of that which cooperates in the production of the color. The eye is filled with sight; at that moment it sees, and becomes not indeed sight, but a seeing eye; while its partner in the process of producing color is filled with whiteness, and becomes not whiteness but white, a white stick or stone or whatever it is that happens to be colored this sort of color." (156d3-e7)

In this described process, the eye and stone undergo what is termed as 'slow motion' while the perception and what is perceived are generated as 'swift motions'. The complete process of seeing, indeed, is a bit more intricate including several steps. First, (1) the eye "has come into its neighborhood", it and the stone *"approach"* by moving close to each other, indicating that the eye opens and starts to see. Subsequently, (2) this motion *generates* the perception 'sight' and 'whiteness'. And the perceptions sight and whiteness come to be "in the intervening" between the eye and the stone, as the swifter motion. Finally, (3) the 'sight' and 'whiteness' again, as a pair of motion, result in the *generation* of the seeing eyes and the white stone. Because by filling up with sight, the eye becomes a seeing eye while by filling up with whiteness the stone also becomes a white stone. Therefore, throughout the whole process, the eye undergoes a slow motion: seeing, by which it becomes a seeing eye. And

the becoming of stone is similar. They are termed ‘slow motions’ because, as is reasonable, their processes take a longer duration compared to the swift generation of sight and whiteness.[160] Therefore, a refined formulation emerges: everything in this process is nothing but motion. Namely, since every property generates in some motions according to the primary Heraclitean Flux, the subject or object that carries this property also comes to be in the generation of the property. Socrates postulates, “Nothing, as we were saying before, is in itself any of these. All of them, of all kinds whatsoever, are what things *become* through association with one another, as *the result of motion*” (156e9-157a2). And hence, by this process, no static state is permissible any longer. Everything is nothing but motion.

Moreover, diverging from the primary Heraclitean flux, Socrates’ new story holds that the eyes and stone actually become some completely new thing by becoming the seeing eyes and white stone. The ‘becoming’ here signifies more than a mere alteration of properties, rather it denotes a substantial generation. Socrates continues to assert, “For even in the case of the active and passive motions, it is impossible, as they say, for thought, taking them singly, to pin them down the being anything. There is no passive till it meets the active, no active except in conjunction with the passive, and what, in conjunction with one thing, is active, reveals itself as passive when it falls in with something else.” (157a2-7) Thus, the action of eyes and the stone eventually results in a substantial generation of themselves. Therefore, according to this new Heraclitean flux theory, everything is not just in motion but is continuously being generated, for

[160] Cf. van Eck, 2009: 233-236. But van Eck seems to go too far, for he claims that the eye and stone share some sort of stability during this process.

they only come to be when they become *F* by being in interplay with something else as the result of this corresponding change.

This ontological character is further clarified several pages later when Socrates endeavours to perfect the whole story. He asserts that the combination of different active and passive things will not generate the same things. (159a). Thus, the ill Socrates and healthy Socrates are unlike each other, and they cannot be conflated into one single identity (159b-c). Namely, the illness transforms Socrates, rendering him an entirely distinct individual. And further, when the healthy Socrates tastes the wine, he perceives it as sweet, and at that very moment he becomes a percipient while the wine becomes the sweet wine. In contrast, when the wine is tasted by the ill Socrates, since he is not identical with the healthy Socrates, the wine becomes the bitter wine and the ill Socrates also becomes another percipient who has the perception of bitterness (159c-160a). Thus, the ill Socrates as the percipient of the bitter wine emerges only when this ill Socrates experiences the bitter wine, and only generates in relation to this bitter wine (160a-b). Eventually, Socrates says,

> "It remains, then, that I and it, we whether are or become, are or become for each other. For our being is, by Necessity's decree, tied to a partner; yet we are tied neither to any other thing in the world nor to our respective selves. It remains, then, that we are tied to each other. Hence, whether you apply the term 'being' to a thing or the term 'becoming', you must always use the words 'for somebody' or 'of something' or 'relatively to something'. You must not speak of anything as in itself either being or

> becoming nor let anyone else use such expressions. That is the meaning of the theory we have been expounding." (160b5-c2)

Hence, nothing is able to exist merely in itself. Everything has to dissolute into countless pieces, and each of which only comes into being in relation to another entity. That is how the stricter Heraclitean flux theory can buttress the Protagorean epistemology and guarantee the infallibility of private experience. From this perspective, each fragment of a subject is exclusively linked with a corresponding specific piece of an object. No other individual can really perceive the very same piece of object and acquire the same perception. No one, hence, is able to judge whether another's experience is valid. Accordingly, every perception is unique, private and naturally true. This argument is clearly built on the premise that the process of activity—such as perception—results in the generation of the subject. In other words, all forms of activity, alterations or other changes are all generative, leading to the subject's substantially becoming another thing.

Therefore, this stricter version of Heraclitean flux distinctly diverges from the primary Heraclitean flux argued in the previous text. As previously outlined, the latter does not require the motion of the subject to be necessarily generative. Instead, it permits the subject to maintain its identity and stability throughout its process of motion. Significantly, these two Flux theories apply to different interpretations of Protagorean epistemology. Bostock expounds that there are two possible ways to understand Protagoras' infallibilism of private experience. One way, he claims, is the "solution by relativity". Namely, "there is some one object, the wind, which you and I are both judging about, but what each of us is

judging about it is how that same wind is related to himself. So I am concerned with how the wind is related to me, and you are concerned with how it is related to you, and that is why our judgments are not really in conflict after all." And the other way is called as "solution by private objects", which evinces that "the judgments are not really about the same object: my judgment concerns the wind-as-it-is-for-me, and this object genuinely is hot, but your judgment concerns the-wind-as-it-is-to-you, which genuinely is cold. On this approach, there simply is not such a thing as the wind itself".[161] If our reading is tenable, the 'solution by relativity' precisely aligns with the Protagorean epistemology anchored in the primary Heracltiean flux discussed earlier, whereas the 'solution by private objects' correctly interprets the mechanism of the Protagorean epistemology delineated here. Again, it is because of Theaetetus' failing to catch Socrates' interpretation of the Protagorean epistemology based on the primary Heraclitean flux that Socrates turns to reconstruct the foundation of the stricter Heraclitean flux and finally leads to a fresh understanding of Protagorean epistemology (155c-e).

In the meantime, it is imperative not to hastily determine whether Plato himself regards this stricter and extremer Heraclitean flux as a precise paraphrase of the historical Pre-Socratic philosopher's idea. But we should notice that notably he never cites any literal material or fragment of Heraclitus or other philosophers when discussing this stricter version of Heraclitean Flux. Central to this segment of text is Plato's endeavour to show how far the Heraclitean flux can bolster Protagoras' epistemology—irrespective of whether it is advocated by those Pre-Socratic philosophers themselves or not.

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[161] Bostock, 1988: 47-48.

And, upon further analysis, this stricter flux obviously recalls the assertion put forth by Diotima in the *Symposium*. In that dialogue, Diotima claims that mortal things are always changing generatively, and each of them is just said to be one thing but actually a series of substantially different things. The stricter Heracltiean flux here aligns metaphysically with Diotima's articulation, asserting the constant flux and generative essence of changes.[162] And in the subsequent section, we will explore how Socrates' following reflections on the Heraclitean flux also undermine his first model of change and motion.

(3) Conventionalism as the Political Flux

As a famous professional sophist, the historical Protagoras explicitly cannot be satisfied with merely constructing subtle epistemological models. Instead, these Heraclitean Flux theories do extend beyond the confines of epistemology. Socrates reveals what really concerns him and his followers—namely, the ethical and political issues.

After elaborating on the stricter Heraclitean Flux and the corresponding Protagorean epistemology, Socrates promptly underscores the potential extreme consequences and deductions of this theory (161c-165e).[163] For instance, if Protagoras' Man-Measure doctrine holds true, then Protagoras' opinion is not truer and more defensible than any other's. Consequently,

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[162] Though this stricter Heraclitean flux surprisingly bears resemblance to the one in Plato's first model of change and motion in this aspect, it should not be neglected that there is an essential difference between them. In Plato's first model, the subject undergoes the generative change because of participating the Forms, while here the cause of generative change is believed to be the passive subjects' physical interaction with the active object.

[163] A summary of these criticisms, cf. Sedley, 2004: 54-55.

his words are not trustworthy and he does not possess greater wisdom than anyone else (161d-162a). And besides, under Protagoras' theory, one would have to concede that we both see and not see the same thing when one of our eyes is covered (165b-c). Although these criticisms are always thought to be failed and ridiculous,[164] they successfully force Protagoras (in the tongue of Socrates) to dodge by replying in an ambiguous way (166a-c). Protagoras it thus compelled to recapitulate the central idea of his theory and challenges Socrates to a more direct refutation. He argues,

> "I take my stand on the truth being as I have written it. Each one of us is the measure both of what is and of what is not; but there are countless differences between men for just this very reason, that different things both are and appear to be to different subjects. I certainly do not deny the existence of both wisdom and wise men: far from it. But the man whom I call wise is the man who can change the appearances—the man who in any case where bad things both appear and are for one of us, works a change and makes good things appear and be for him…In education, too, what we have to do is to change a worse state into a better state; only whereas the doctor brings about the change by the use of drugs, the professional teacher [i.e. the sophist] does it by the use of words…Whatever in any city is regarded as just and admirable is just and admirable, in that city and for so long as that convention maintains itself; but the wise man replaces each pernicious convention by a wholesome one, making this both be and seem just." (166c9-167c4)

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[164] Burnyeat, 1990: 21-22; also cf. Lee, E. N., 1973: 225; 255-256.

Thus, the ontology of flux, alongside the epistemology of perception, is proved to have applicability in the political field as well, although this demonstration is built on the questionable analogy between sensible perception and political belief. Given the Heraclitean flux, every sensible thing is not *F* in itself but only becomes *F* when it confronts something else. In the process of perceiving, for instance, the eye only becomes the seeing eye and the stone only comes to be the white stone privately at the moment when the eye sees the stone. The stone appears to be white and then is white for this eye. Here Protagoras asserts that the political belief operates similarly. Though it is hardly conceivable that something is able to have any physical interaction with the political objects like the polis, Protagoras insists that what appears just and valuable for the polis is really just and valuable for the latter. Then obviously, this opinion must rely on a sort of political flux wherein nothing is innately and inherently just and valuable—there even does not exist the justice or the valuableness *per se*.[165] As a result, the same thing may be equally perceived as just by one individual and unjust by another, grounded solely in personal feelings and beliefs—undoubtedly a standard conventionalism.

Plato clearly discerns the essence of this political conventionalism. Socrates points out that according to this theory, the political virtues or properties—such as the just and unjust, pious and impious—do not possess any being (*ousia*) by their nature (*phusei*). On the contrary, "what seems to people collectively to be so is true." And this idea resonates with

[165] Concerning the relationship between Heraclitean flux and the Protagorean theory, also cf. 177c-d.

many, even those not wholly aligned with Protagoras' theory (172b). Therefore, the practical implications of the Heraclitean Flux in the real political world are profound, prompting Socrates to delve deeply into the following text, even if being a digression it diverts from the original argument of the interlocutors about the infallibilism of perception (177b-c).

Now we have sufficiently seen that Plato elaborates a two versions of Heraclitean flux. The primary Heraclitean flux, as we said, is less radical by mainly acquiring everything to be the offspring of motions and thereby more or less permitting the stability of subjects or objects amidst change. Thus it objectively aligns more closely with the views of historical pre-Socratic philosophers. This edition of flux, indeed, is hardly exhibited in Plato's previous dialogues. Conversely, the stricter Heraclitean flux, which we are more familiar with, emphasizes the universality of flux and the generative essence of change. And indeed, Plato's own view of the sensible things in the first model aligns with this stricter Heraclitean flux, highlighting the ceaseless and generative change of sensible things. At the same time, Socrates also investigates the conventionalism produced by introducing the Heraclitean flux into the political and practical fields—undoubtedly, a move he deems catastrophic.

### 1.2 Reflections of the Heraclitean Flux Theories

The detrimental impact of this political conventionalism, rooted in the Flux doctrine, is illuminated in the renowned digression of the *Theaetetus*. Within this section, Socrates delineates two distinct character types. The philosophers, exemplified by figures like Thales, are dedicated to

focusing on investigating "the entire nature of each whole among the things that are" (174a) and attain a state described as "the divine and supremely happy" (176e). In contrast, there are those who, failing to recognize and pursue those eternal beings, are preoccupied with "what lies near at hand" (174a). Socrates suggests that these individuals remain oblivious to the eternal and immortal things such as justice and injustice themselves, but miserably fall into the trivial and conventional topics—for example, the specific just or unjust behaviours (175c). These people, whom Socrates suggests are proponents of political conventionalism, may obsess about "the scrambling of political cliques for office; social functions, dinners, parties with flute-girls" (173d). And eventually, concerning their poor souls, Socrates incisively describes them as,

> "Such conditions make him keen and highly strung, skilled in flattering the master and working his way into favor; but cause his soul to be small and warped. His early servitude prevents him from making a free, straight growth; it forces him into doing crooked things by imposing dangers and alarms upon a soul that is still tender. He cannot meet these by just and honest practice, and so resorts to lies and to the policy of repaying one wrong with another…" (173a1-9)

Socrates unequivocally contends that political conventionalism will engender wretched and slavish souls (172d; 172e; 175e-176a). This is also confirmed by a similar argument in the *Republic*. In Book IX, Socrates argues that the soul which is fulfilled with the true beings is more like to enjoy genuine pleasure, while those who do not pursue the

real beings, “they feed, fatten, and fornicate. To outdo others in these things, they kick and butt them with iron horns and hooves, killing each other, because their desires are insatiable.” (*Rep.* 585d-586b) Plato here clearly asserts that the desires, stemming from a lack of knowledge and pursuit of real beings, can catalyze both personal unhappiness and broader political disasters. Although here Plato does not directly talk about the relationship between the pursuit of the soul and the reality of politics, his stance does not seem to deviate from the one articulated in the *Republic*.

The political results of Protagoras’ conventionalism are clearly one of the major things that concern Plato, which is the background of his whole argument and he means to extend the discussion from epistemology to political affairs (*Theaet.* 167c; 168b; 172a-b; 177c-e; 179a).[166] Through Socrates’ argument in the digression, the pitfalls of this conventionalism in political and ethical dimensions become highly discernible. But how about the flux theory which is the ontological foundation of this conventionalism? Which one(s) of these flux theories do Plato repudiate and criticize? And does Plato endorse any one of these flux theories? Furthermore, do these criticisms reveal any reflection of the flux theory in his first model of change and motion? Our examination will proceed in two phases. First, (1) we will elucidate how Socrates underscores that the Protagorean epistemology, anchored in the stricter Heraclitean flux, is somehow self-refuted. This criticism, however, seems not only to impugn

[166] Cornford claims that Protagoras himself may not go so far as the conventionalism does in the digression. And this extreme position is the same as the one formulated in the *Republic* by Thrasymachus. Cornford, 1935: 82. Sedley, further, believes that the digression is midwife of the political theory which Plato elaborated in the *Republic*. Sedley, 2004: 70-76. Also cf. Sedley, 2010.

the Heraclitean flux but also Plato's own understanding of motion and change in his first model (179d-183c). And then, (2) the final argument (184b-186e) suggests a reflection of the scope of Being, which potentially undermines Plato's own metaphysics of change theory presented in his previous dialogues.

(1) Arguments against the Heraclitean Flux Theory

In order to disprove the infallibility of the individual's private experience, Socrates turns to examine the flux theory proposed by Heraclitus and his proponents, which is claimed to be the underpinning of the Protagorean Man-Measure Doctrine (179d-181b). This refutation includes two steps. First, Socrates claims that there are two forms of motion (*kinesis*), namely alteration (*alloiōsis*) and spatial motion (*phora*) (181d). And he further posits that if we agree with the Heraclitean Flux that everything is in motion (*kinesis*), we must hold that it must concurrently move in both ways. Otherwise, "it will turn out that, in their view, things are both moving and standing still; and it will be no more correct to say that all things are in motion than to say that all things stand still." (181e5-7) Therefore, to state that all things are always in motion equates to suggesting that "all things are always in every kind of motion" (182a1-2). Second, if all things are both incessantly moving and changing at the same time, it becomes untenable to correctly ascribe any property to them, for the thing in such an extreme flux always quietly slips away when it is spoken (182c-d). And no perception can remain but they are also in motion (182d-e). Because if a perception—say, seeing—were to remain constant, even momentarily, it would come to a standstill. Therefore, as Socrates says, "we may not call anything seeing rather than not-seeing; nor indeed may we call it any other perception rather than not—if it be

admitted that all things are in motion in every way" (182e4-6). If so, we will never be more correct to say 'it is thus' according to our perception than 'it is not thus' (183a). The only appropriate description might be "not at all thus" (οὐδ' οὕτως, 183b4).[167] Then, perception is not knowledge.

How is the Protagorean epistemology disproved in this argument? And relating to what mainly concerns us, what role does the Heraclitean flux theory play here? Does Plato convey his own stance on flux? The traditional view tends to believe that this argument includes some constructive discussions of change. Cornford, for instance, advocates that while Plato acknowledges the flux as a valid description of the empirical world, the shortcoming and failure of Protagoras' theory underscores the necessity for Platonic Forms which are stable and immune to flux. He says, "The conclusion Plato means us to draw is this: unless we recognize some class of knowable entities exempt from the Heracleitean flux and so capable of standing as the fixed meanings of words, no definition of knowledge can be any more true than its contradictory."[168] McDowell holds a similar view.[169] On the contrary, Burnyeat, as the *de facto* founder of the new *reductio ad absurdum* reading, denies that Plato reveals any of his own thinking about change in this refutation. In Burnyeat's analysis, this argument merely demonstrates the logical self-refutation of the three-in-one theory—that is, Theaetetus' definition, Heraclitus' flux and Protagoras' Man-Measure Doctrine. Namely, in order

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[167] The manuscripts diverge from each other about this phrase. Different readings include: οὐδ' οὕτως (W), "not at all thus", which is followed by OCT, McDowell and Levett & Burnyeat; οὐδ' ὅπως (BT), "no how", which is accepted by Campbell, Jowett; Cornford rejects both readings and suggests οὐδ' οὐδέπως, "not even no-how".
[168] Cornford, 1935: 99.
[169] McDowell, 1973: 183-184.

to guarantee Protagoras' infallibilism of private experience, one has to admit that everything is moving and changing in an extreme way. And it inevitably leads to the impossibility of language as a necessary cost, which is obviously absurd. Therefore, Burnyeat contends that in this argument Socrates' intention is not to promulgate his own theory of change and motion but rather to highlight the fatal flaw of Protagoras' theory rooted in the Heraclitean flux. Plato's own thought will emerge later in the final argument (184b-186e) which notably omits any reference motion.[170]

Both of these opposing readings are reasonable in some respects. Yet, neither of them furnishes a comprehensive understanding of Plato's idea of flux presented in this text. Crucially, they both seem to overlook the fact that we have sufficiently shown that there are multiple versions of Heraclitean flux within this dialogue. These two types of flux, indeed, reveal Plato's complicated reflections on Heraclitean flux theory. Our inclination is that here Socrates provides a twofold reflection. On the one hand, as Burnyeat suggests, in this text Socrates delivers a direct, self-refuting argument against Protagoras' theory rooted in Heraclitean flux, and proves that authentic knowledge cannot spring from such a base. On the other hand, when viewing this argument in a broader context, Socrates does articulate his own critical thinking concerning Heraclitus' flux which actually challenges his previous doctrine of motion.

Let us elucidate this in more detail. First, at the direct and literal level of this argument, Burnyeat's opinion is somehow reasonable, interpreting it as a self-refutation of the Protagorean epistemology which is based on

[170] Burnyeat, 1990. Also cf. Polansky, 1992: 153-154.

some kind of Heraclitean flux. According to the Heraclitean flux, everything has to undergo all sorts of motions ceaselessly which eliminates all stability. And the Protagorean epistemology requires the flux theory to guarantee the infallibility of perception. However, if things change in such an extreme way, asserting '*x* becomes *F* for *a* at time *t*' is no more correct than saying '*x* does not become *F* for *a* at time *t*'. Therefore, this extreme Heraclitean flux inherently sabotages the possibility of the infallibility of perception. And hence, we are not able to correctly make any judgement. Just as Burnyeat comments, "the price to be paid for making perceptual judgements totally incorrigible is that they then have nothing to say to us".[171]

This aptly captures how Protagoras' epistemological theory is disproved. But this reading does not exhaust Socrates' entire agenda here. Burnyeat's *reductio* interpretation, though incisive, has two shortcomings: (1) It predominantly critiques the support this extreme flux theory lends to Protagoras' epistemology rather than addressing the Heraclitean flux doctrine *per se*. Burnyeat even does not think that the extreme flux here necessarily belongs to any real member of the historical group of Heraclitus and his followers. Instead, he believes that this text, as a reduction argument, mainly "offers a reason why a Heraclitean would be committed to accepting further elements of change into the theory of perception" and thus this extreme flux is only "reached by argument".[172] Yet, the text suggests Plato's intention is not merely to counter Protagorean doctrine, but also to challenge Heraclitean flux theory itself as well. Socrates explicitly asserts that he is examining Heraclitus' and

[171] Burnyeat, 1990: 46. Other possible readings of this argument, cf. Chappell, 2004: 137-140.
[172] Burnyeat, 1990: 47.

his followers' idea of flux (179d-180d; 181a), which clearly indicates that Socrates seriously aims at criticizing Heraclitean flux directly. And the impossibility of language, though fatal for Protagorean epistemology, may not be an outrageous description of Heraclitus and his adherents. In the text, the character Socrates attributes to them that they are unable to say any explicit and definitive words (179d-180b) recalls us of Aristotle's famous report of Cratylus—"who finally did not think it right to say anything but only moved his finger" (*Metaph*. 1010a12). Thus, the reduction argument is not Socrates' refutation of Heraclitean flux, and he must deal with the latter in another way. And further, (2) Burnyeat posits that this argument lacks Plato's own insight of motion, contending that this reduction argument is a deduction of Protagoras' doctrine. He says that "its starting point is not some alien Platonic premise they need not bother with, but a careful analysis and elaboration of their own initial conviction that the senses provide us with knowledge and certainty."[173] But given that the flux which Plato himself holds in the first model—as we have already argued—shares some foundational essence with the stricter Heraclitean Flux, if the flux refuted here is closely related to the stricter Heraclitean flux, it hardly denies that what Socrates argues about flux in this text is also tied to his own thought of flux. And then the weakness that attaches to this flux can also be found in Plato's first model of change and motion. So, Socrates' critique of the extreme Heraclitean flux actually involves Plato's own reflection of his first model.

Plato's deeper and implicit reflection on flux, then, emerges if the text is read within the broader context of Platonic dialogues. Contrasting with Burnyeat's reading which remains tethered in the literal interpretation of

[173] Burnyeat, 1990: 47.

this singular text, Cornford and other proponents of the traditional reading prioritize Socrates' criticism of the Heraclitean flux itself beyond its failed support for Protagorean doctrine. As noted earlier, Cornford claims that from Plato's perspective, this Heraclitean flux aptly characterizes the sensible realm but lacks grasping of the stable Form. Therefore, Plato's underlying philosophy in this text is coherent with the position taken in the middle dialogues. Besides, some scholars, such as Bolton, propose that this refutation hints at a kind of moderate Heraclitean Flux that Plato tacitly endorses. Bolton contends that while this moderate flux permits objects to remain over time while moving through space and changing some of their characteristics, the extreme flux disallows any consistent characteristics over time and is thus refused by Plato.[174] In parallel, some scholars claim that Plato subscribes to the belief that objects always undergo changes in *some* respects, while he rejects the idea of constant change in *all* respects.[175] These moderate flux theories, they believe, prevent Plato from becoming mired in the linguistic morass of "not at all thus". As Burnyeat correctly summarizes, according to this sort of view, "[t]he absurdity will demonstrate where limits must be imposed on the Heraclitean flux of becoming; within these limits, the earlier theory of perception can stand unimpaired, a firm Platonic basis for the proof that perception is not knowledge."[176]

Nevertheless, such a sort of traditional reading is not wholly defensible. Like Burnyeat's reduction reading, it also neglects the multiplicity of Heraclitean Flux versions Socrates elaborates upon in the *Theaetetus*. They may not precisely delineate the essence of Plato's dissatisfaction. A

[174] Bolton, 1975: 75.
[175] Cf. Bostock, 1988: 109.
[176] Burnyeat, 1990: 46.

closer analysis of which specific flux Socrates challenges and his method of refutation reveals that Plato does not repeat what he repeatedly argued in the middle dialogues, but rather implicitly suggests a serious reflection of it.

Let us be more specific. It has been firmly established that compared with the primary Heraclitean flux that everything comes to be from change and motion, the stricter Heraclitean flux doctrine that everything is nothing but motion from the previous possesses two critical characters. On the one hand, it deprives everything of any stability; and on the other hand, all changes are generative, for nothing retains its identity during its changes. These two deceived characters also appear in Socrates' refutation of Heraclitean flux.

When introducing the primary Heraclitean flux, Socrates characterizes it as "nothing ever is, but everything is coming to be" and cites Homer's verse "Ocean, better of gods, and Tethys their mother". Through this, Socrates underscores that according to this version of flux, all things are the offspring of flux and motion (152e). However, at the onset of this refutation, Socrates revisits Homer's verse but refrains from equating it to "everything is the offspring of motion" as in his prior elucidation of the primary Heraclitean flux. Instead, he says, "that Ocean and Tethys, the origin of all things, are actually flowing streams, and nothing stands still…even shoemakers may hear and assimilate their wisdom, and give up the silly idea that somethings in this world stand still while others move, learn that all things are in motion" (*Theaet*. 180d1-7). Indeed, during the refutation Socrates highlights that the Heraclitean flux requires the removal of any standstill. Entities must undergo both locomotion and

alteration ceaselessly concurrently, otherwise the proposition "all things are in motion" would not be satisfied (181e-182a; 182d-e). As Theodorus describes, "if, being in flux, it is always quietly slipping away as you speak" (182d7). This is not what the primary Heraclitean flux mainly argues, for it even allows some sort of stability of the subjects. On the contrary, the stricter Heraclitean flux is more closely aligned with the one discussed in the refutation, in which Socrates emphasizes that "everything is really motion, and there is nothing but motion" (156a), negating any terminology that instills stability such as "'something', 'of something', or 'mine', 'this' or 'that', or any other name that makes things stand still" (157b). Concerning this aspect, the flux in question even goes one more step by being more radically flowing than the stricter Heraclitean flux. As Bostock rightly points out the stricter Heraclitean flux, though announcing that everything is in motion, does not require entities to undergo locomotion and alteration at the same time.[177] Now in this refutation, Socrates demands the flux to obey the principle of the stricter Heraclitean flux more radically and strictly to eradicate any stability. Therefore, in the refutation, Socrates scrutinizes a radical version of the stricter Heraclitean flux, grounded in the principle that "everything is in motion".

At the same time, this radical flux also concurs with the stricter Heraclitean Flux in the aspect that things are always in generation by becoming something completely new. This becomes apparent as Socrates delves into Heraclitus' theory attempting to radicalize the flux by deducing that everything should be always in all kinds of change

[177] Bostock, 1988: 107-109.

(181c-182a). Specifically, this argument could be divided into the following steps:

(I) Heraclitus and his followers: “all things are in motion” (181c);

(II) Socrates: Motion has two kinds—namely, one thing can move in two aspects, spatial motion (*phora*) and alteration (*alloiōsis*) (181c-d);

(III) Socrates: Everything is in motion in both ways, otherwise it would be standing still in some aspects which conflicts with (I) (181d-e);

(IV) Conclusion: All things are always in every kind of motion (182a).

It is clear that (III) is the most pivotal step. And it is undoubtedly built on the logical foundation that it is self-contradictory if “things are both moving and standing sill” (181e). Namely, motion is inherently incompatible with rest. Accordingly, if something moves, then it cannot be stable in any aspect. This moving thing, hence, is unable to retain the same with itself, since to remain identity is explicitly to keep stable. This leads to the evident deduction that things are always undergoing generative changes. It is thus logical to assert that this refutation adheres stringently to the stricter Heraclitean Flux concerning the generative nature of change in the strictest sense. Additionally, (III) also suggests that this generative character is more fundamental than the ever-moving in this refutation. For based on his reasoning, it is because of this incompatibility of motion and rest that necessitates what moves to change in all aspects.

Therefore, the flux theory refuted here is an extreme and radical edition of the stricter Heraclitean flux rigorously adhering to its stipulation that

all things are incessantly in motion and moving generatively. Since this flux is soon proved to be absurd, Socrates highlights a fundamental flaw in the stricter Heraclitean flux that it would be too flowing to be spoken about.

Consequently, compared with the primary Heraclitean flux, the stricter Heraclitean flux is what Plato seeks to criticize in this argument. Especially, he suggests that the critical characters of the stricter Heraclitean flux—ever-moving and generative characters—are the fundamental weak points of this doctrine. And naturally, any theory grounded in the same foundation with the stricter Heraclitean flux is logically and potentially susceptible to the same challenge.

This flux theory, undoubtedly, resonates with Plato's own thinking about change in his middle dialogues, for there he argues that everything is always in motion and all changes are generative. In the *Cratylus*, Plato introduces a flux theory akin to the stricter Heraclitean flux. Socrates cites Heraclitus' river fragments that "everything gives way and nothing stands fast" and "you cannot step into the same river twice" (*Crat.* 402a). And he also asserts that we are unable to say something "first that it is this and then that it is such and such" because at the moment we are speaking, the subject is "inevitably and immediately becoming a different thing and altering and no longer being as it was" (*Crat.* 439d). This expression explicitly matches with the stricter flux examined in the refutation. And though Plato may not show his own stance on the flux of the sensible things in the *Cratylus*, in the *Symposium*, Diotima posits without any doubt that all things are always being renewed and never consist of the same things (*Smp*. 207c-208b). Similarly, in the *Phaedo*,

Socrates also characterizes sensible things as something always varying from one time to another and never being the same both in relation to themselves and to each other (*Phd*. 78c-e).

Therefore, Plato's first model of change and motion hardly avoids Socrates' refutation in the *Theaetetus*, for it shares the same foundation with the stricter Heraclitean flux concerning the change of sensible things. Although Plato does not fully align with Heraclitus and others in asserting that genuine knowledge pertains to the flowing entities, he nevertheless also faces the difficulty that we are unable to efficiently name the ever-changing sensible things—also establishing opinions about them would be impossible. This result, importantly, clearly creates tremendous tension with Plato's epistemology in the *Republic* where opinions hold legitimacy to some extent. Thus, contrary to the traditional interpretations suggesting that Plato's refutation of Heraclitean Flux in the *Theaetetus* alludes to a moderate Flux with he might endorse, we posit that Plato's actual intent in this text is to highlight the potential flaw and his corresponding criticism of the motion theory presented in earlier dialogues. Kahn also advocates that the flux theory in this refutation parallels the flux in the *Cratylus*, and suggests that Plato here distances himself from, rather than embraces, this flux doctrine as a representation of the sensible world.[178]

One might question whether the flux theory Socrates refuted in the *Theaetetus* matches Plato's interpretation of motion and change in his first model, since Plato's first model does not appear to mandate perpetual change in all aspects—it even permits non-generative motions. However,

[178] Kahn, 2014: 55.

as previously discussed, the flux refuted in this argument is an extreme deduction from the stricter Heraclitean Flux, sternly meeting its criteria for ceaseless and generative motions. And if these principles are strictly obeyed, nothing can be said any more. Plato's first model also satisfies these criteria, so it clearly faces this potent critique.

In sum, here Socrates provides a twofold critique. On the one hand, as Burnyeat rightly points out, the Heraclitean flux cannot buttress Protagoras' epistemology. On the other hand, Plato seems to hint that his own interpretation of flux in the first model, being aligned with the ceaseless and generative characters of the stricter Heraclitean flux, also faces the puzzle of "impossibility of language". Currently, Plato seems to refrain from positing any definitive solution. He does not allude to any restricted flux of the sensible. The ontological resolution will be suggested in the *Sophist*, and a physical one expounded upon in the *Timaeus*.

(2) "The Common Term"

Socrates further provides the final argument directly against the Protagorean definition that perception is knowledge. Notably, this argument relies on a fresh concept: the "common term" (*to koinon*). The "common term", as we will discuss, poses a potential challenge to the foundation of Plato's first model in another way.

Socrates argues that with the soul, we perceive all that is perceptible through the body as instruments—for example, the eyes and ears (184d-e). And then, what is perceived through one power cannot be perceived through another. Such as, we cannot see through the power of hearing,

and vice versa (184e-185a). And the what-is of a sound and a colour, as well as "the same", "the different", "one" and "two", "the like" and "the unlike", termed as common terms (*to koinon*), are perceived by soul through the soul itself rather than through the power of hearing or seeing (185a-e). Further, only by getting at what-is can we get at the truth and then acquire knowledge (186c). So knowledge cannot be found in perceptual experiences but only in the reasoning about them. Perception is thus proved not to be knowledge (186d-e).

What then is this critical 'common term"? Cornford declares that the common term is identical with the Form. Acquiring knowledge, then, is to grasp these changeless common terms.[179] Conversely, Burnyeat and some other scholars avoid equating the common term with the Form. In their interpretation, the reason perception fails to get at being is merely that it cannot make any proposition without the help of the soul to make the use of 'is'.[180] Indeed, although Plato never uses the term 'Form' in the *Theaetetus*, the close connection between Form and the common term can hardly be denied. As Chappell highlights, the common term outlined in the *Theaetetus* bears notable resemblance to the lists of Forms in other dialogues. For instance, in the *Parmenides*, the Forms similarly encompass likeness and unlikeness, multitude and oneness, rest and motion (*Prm*. 129d-e). And in the *Sophist*, being, sameness, otherness, rest and change also appear as the 'greatest kinds' (*Sph.* 254b-258e).[181] Hence, even if the 'common term' is not synonymous with 'Form', it must be closely related to it.

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[179] Cornford, 1935: 102-109. Similar, Chappell, 2004: 146-149.
[180] Burnyeat, 1990: 59-60; Bostock, 1988: 125. And also cf. Moss, 2021: 226-227.
[181] Chappell, 2004: 147.

But it does not imply that there is no difference between the 'common term' and the Form in Plato's middle dialogues. As McDowell astutely observes, the perceptual Form is excluded by the mechanism of a common term.[182] For in this argument, Socrates explicitly emphasizes that only the "common term" constitutes knowledge. And he makes an explicit comparison between the alleged "common term" and perception. What we perceive are "some things which all creatures, men and animals alike, are naturally able to perceive as soon as they are born; I mean, the experiences which reach the soul through the body" (186b-c). And each perception can be perceived by only one organ (185a). For instance, black and white can only be seen by eyes, while the sound exclusively by ears. In contrast, the "common term", which the soul investigates through itself, is the "being" (*ousia*) common to sight, hearing and all other perceptions (185b; 185e; 186a). As such, the "common term" refers not to the perceptions but their "the fact that they are, their opposition to one another, and the being, again, of this opposition" (186b). Hence, the scope of "common term" is more constrained than the Forms in Plato's middle dialogues. According to the *Phaedo*, *Republic* and other middle dialogues, there always exists a Form *F*-ness corresponding to each property *F*, like Hotness, Hardness, Lightness, etc. Yet, the "common term" does not encompass these sensible Forms, since the sensible Forms are clearly not universally applicable to multiple perceptions. Consequently, if the "common term" of the *Theaetetus* represents Plato's new understanding of Form, then the scope of Form is seriously restricted compared to the middle dialogues.

[182] McDowell, 1973: 189.

Furthermore, this shift potentially undermines Plato's first model of change and motion. Because the mechanism of change in this model presupposes that each property *F* has a corresponding Form *F*-ness. And it is the *F*-ness that results in the generative change of an entity when it becomes *F*. But now, the "common term", according to its definition, excludes the sensible Forms, making it insufficient to account for all changes any longer. This mechanism of generative change, hence, is not of validity in the meantime.

It is, therefore, reasonable to assert that the *Theaetetus* offers two pivotal considerations of Plato's previous thinking of change and motion. On the one hand, the refutation of the stricter Heraclitean flux suggests the potential difficulty in the notion of the sensible always undergoing generative changes. On the other hand, the theory of the 'common term' undermines his first model of change and motion, compelling him to explore a new mechanism of change. The *Theaetetus* marks the onset of Plato's ambitious project to thoroughly reflect his previous theory, which will culminate in the revelation that the Parmenidean principle indeed undermines Plato's first model. In this dialogue, Socrates announces his intention to scrutinize both the fluent fellow and the school of Parmenides, and to discern which aligns closer to the truth (181a-b). He promptly dismisses the former, referencing the aforementioned self-refutation of Heraclitean flux. Then Socrates immediately interrupts this plan and keeps Parmenides' theory unrevealed, because "Parmenides seems to me, in the words of Homer, to be 'reverend' and 'awful'. I met him when I was very young and he was a very old man; and he seemed to me to have a wholly noble depth. So I am afraid we might not understand even what he says; still less should we attain to his real thought." (183e-184a) This

in fact suggests Socrates' inclination towards Parmenidean thought. The examination of the Parmenidean school subsequently unfolds in the *Parmenides*, a conversation between Parmenides and the young Socrates. As we will discuss in the ensuing section, this dialogue underscores the inexistence of so-called non-generative motion, arguing that all motions are inherently generative, just as Socrates' premise represented in the stricter Heraclitean flux. Moreover, as we will discuss, in the *Sophist*, which is designed to happen on the next day of the meeting of the *Theaetetus*, Plato further clarifies that Parmenides' theory of What-is, as the foundation of Plato's first model, is problematic. And in the examine of the *Sophist*, the incompatibility of motion and rest—which as we have argued is also the ontological premise of Socrates' refutation of Heraclitean Flux in the *Theaetetus*—plays a very important role and is one of the main targets for the interlocutors to overcome.

## 2. Further Reflections in the *Parmenides*

As we have seen, in the *Theaetetus*, Socrates mentions a meeting with Parmenides when he was young, noting the profound depth of Parmenides' wisdom. So he refrains from discussing Parmenides' theory to prevent lamentable misunderstandings (*Theaet.* 183e-184a). Nevertheless, the meeting as well as the theory of Parmenides and his followers are immediately uncovered in the *Parmenides*. It is widely held that the young Socrates in the *Parmenides* portrays a theory of Form advocated in Plato's middle dialogues, and this theory undergoes thorough scrutiny in this work. Given that Plato's first model of change and motion intrinsically relies on the middle theory of Form, the critiques of this theory consequently lead to potential and direct difficulties of Plato's previous theory of change and motion.

After listening to Zeno's poem, the young Socrates summarizes its leitmotiv as "if things are many, they must then be both like and unlike, but that is impossible, because unlike things can't be like or like things unlike" and so it is impossible for unlike things to be like and like things unlike, then it is impossible for them to be many, otherwise they would have incompatible properties (*Prm.* 127e). By this logic, if the things were many, they had to be both *F* and not-*F*, undoubtedly contravening the law of non-contradiction, and hence it is apparently ridiculous. Obviously, this idea is basically in accord with the Eleatic principle of What-is previously discussed that What-is must be and cannot not be. Yet, the young Socrates is not completely satisfied with this doctrine. In his view, this principle is precisely apt for the Forms, but not for the sensible. He says,

> "[D]on't you acknowledge that there is a Form, itself by itself, of likeness, and another form, opposite to this, which is what unlike is? Don't you and I and the other things we call 'many' get a share of those two entities? And don't things that get a share of likeness come to be like in that way and to the extent that they get a share, whereas things that get a share of unlikeness come to be unlike, and things that get a share of both come to be both? And even if all things get a share of both, though they are opposites, and by partaking of them are both like and unlike themselves, what's astonishing about that? If someone showed that the likes themselves come to be unlike or the unlike like—that, I think, would be a marvel; but if he shows that things that partake of both of these have both

> properties, there seems to me nothing strange about that…But if he should demonstrate this thing itself, what one is, to be many, or, conversely, the many to be one—at this I'll be astonished." (128e6-129c1).

This is young Socrates' reply to Zeno's puzzle, explicitly illuminating how Plato's philoshophy presented in his middle works developed from the Parmenidean theory. In this reply, he agrees with Zeno that the Form or the thing itself cannot possess opposite properties by being both *F* and not-*F*. But diverging from Zeno, young Socrates advocates that the other things (namely, the sensible) can be *F* and not-*F* with no difficulty. Needless to repeat, sensible things are able to receive opposite properties through change—no matter in relation to themselves or to others. This view of young Socrates precisely mirrors the emphasis placed by the old Socrates, prior to his death in the *Phaedo*, on the idea that the sensible things are always coming from the opposite, while the opposite itself could never become opposite to itself (*Phd.* 103b). And further, in line with what is argued in the *Phaedo* and Plato's first model of change and motion, here young Socrates also views Form as the cause of change. A sensible thing comes to be *F* by participating in the corresponding Form *F*-ness, and comes to be not-*F* by the opposite Form. The notion of Form in pairs, as we have seen, is the core of the mechanism of change in Plato's first model.

Therefore, in this dialogue, Plato succinctly encapsulates his middle theory's response to the Eleatics. Young Socrates, representing the middle Platonic theory, admits the logical efficiency of the Parmenidean principle to some extent that What-is always is and cannot possess

opposite properties. But he does not concede its ontological result held by Zeno and Parmenides that all is one and 'many' is absurd (*Prm*. 128a-e). For these Eleatic philosophers, this sensible world, which is full of multitude and variety, is merely illusory. Conversely, young Socrates—also, the middle Platonic theory—admits the existence of a flowing and variable world. It suggests that this Parmenidean view should be confined to the Forms as the real beings, while the sensible things can legitimately be both *F* and not-*F* by participating in the opposite Forms. As discussed earlier, sensible things are not real beings and they are naturally self-contradicted due to their constant oscillation between the opposites. These changes are generative, caused by the participations of Forms. These entities, when coming to be *F* and not-*F* generatively, do not possess these properties internally and permanently.

However, this subtle solution is promptly challenged by Zeno and Parmenides in this dialogue, signalling systematical critiques of the Platonic middle theory of Form. Inevitably, this leads to a deep examination of the first model. The potential and direct criticisms at least encompass: (1) The scope of Forms. The first model requires Forms in pairs to encompass all kinds of changes. However, the scope of Forms is proved to be questionable. (2) The participation puzzles. The mechanism of change in the first model relies on the participation of Forms, which is argued to be ambiguous in the text. (3) The classification and essence of motions. In the first model, all changes are the results of Forms and are thus generative, while the motions being irrelevant with Forms are non-generative. But this classification appears problematic in the *Parmenides* when the essence of motion and change is expounded upon. These points will be sequentially addressed.

## 2.1 The Scope of Forms

Parmenides then begins to challenge young Socrates' theory that each predicate or property is associated with a corresponding and separate Form (130a-b) by examining the scope of Forms. As noted in the previous section, Plato suggests that the sensible Forms should be excluded. Now he further rejects the negative Forms.

In this passage, Parmenides discusses three possible categories of Forms according to young Socrates' view. He first questions Socrates whether he accepts the existence of the Form Justice, Beauty and Goodness, etc. Socrates responds affirmatively. Therefore, the first category encompasses moral, political and aesthetic forms. Most scholars concur that these are undoubtedly the most prominent Forms discussed in Plato's middle dialogues, especially in the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*.[183] Then, Parmenides asks whether there also exist Forms of concrete things such as human beings, fire, and water. Thus, the second category is the Form of natural kinds. Forms of this category are also occasionally mentioned in Plato's other dialogues. In the *Timaeus*, for instance, the interlocutor mentions "Fire just in itself or any of the other things" which are clearly Forms of natural kinds (*Tim*. 51b). However, here young Socrates concedes that he often feels uncertainty regarding these Forms. He says, "I've often found myself in doubt whether I should talk about those in the same way as the others or differently." (*Prm.* 130c3-4) This attitude may imply that the middle Platonic philosophy is also ambivalent to the Form

[183] Such as, Cornford, 1939: 83; Gill, 1996: 21. But these Forms, strictly speaking, may not represent all kinds of Forms discussed in the middle dialogues. For in the *Parmenides*, these Forms may not exist in pairs as it is suggested by Socrates' rejection of the negative Forms, which we will soon discuss.

of natural kinds. Indeed, in the *Phaedo*, the fire is/becomes fire not because of the Form Fire but the Form Hotness (*Phd.* 103c-d), suggesting Plato's reluctance to introduce the Form of natural kinds in this phase.[184] Finally, Parmenides enumerates some undignified and worthless things—hair, mud, and dirt. And this time Socrates unequivocally denies the existence of their corresponding Forms, asserting "these things are in fact just what we see" (*Prm*. 130b-d). This last category, as young Socrates claims, troubles him from time to time and so he hurries away (130d). These things should have corresponding Forms according to young Socrates' principle of Form, but he still deems acknowledging such Forms as outlandish.[185]

So why does Socrates find it difficult to embrace the second and the third categories of Forms? Some scholars simply attribute this to young Socrates' immaturity and lack of philosophical training (130e), positing that he will eventually accept those Forms after adequate training and growth. This is how they interpret Parmenides' commentary on young Socrates' evasive attitude towards those Forms, "that's because you are still young…and philosophy has not yet gripped you as, in my, opinion, it will in the future, once you begin to consider none of the cases beneath your notice. Now, though, you still care about what people think, because of your youth." (130e)[186] However, this saying does not really confirm the existence of Forms for natural kinds and undignified things but only

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[184] Contra., Plato does talk about the Form of concrete things in some dialogues. Such as, *Meno*, 72b-c, Form of bee; *Cratylus*, 389d, Form of shuttle; *Rep*. 596b, Forms of bed and table.

[185] These three categories, indeed, do not cover all Forms which the interlocutors have already mentioned—such as, likeness and unlikeness, oneness and many, rest and motion, etc.

[186] Allen, 1997: 119-124. Also cf. Chen, 1982: 56

indicates Socrates might address this issue in the future. And if we accept that young Socrates' viewpoint mirrors Plato's theory of Form preseneted in his middle works, Parmenides' questions undeniably indicate the reflections on the scope of middle Platonic Forms.

Thus again, why cannot young Socrates, as well as the middle Platonic dialogues, recognize those two categories of Forms? Rickless offers us a possible alternative. He contends that this text reveals a tension between the principles of Self-Predication and Separation in the middle theory of Forms. The former principle requires every Form *F*-ness to possess the corresponding property *F*, so the Form Justice is just, Goodness is good, etc. And the latter, certainly, insists that Forms should be separate and numerically distinct from sensible things and are only grasped by reasoning (130a). Consequently, natural kinds and the undignified things cannot satisfy both principles at the same time. For if the Form Human Being is a human being and the Form Mud is muddy, then these two Forms must be sensible since it is difficult to conceive them as non-sensible.[187]

Though young Socrates' theory seems not to rely on the principle of Self-Predication—this principle is undoubtedly correct—and does not mention the latter in this text, Rickless' understanding is still plausible to a degree. This is because Parmenides, in this segment of the dialogue, appears to primarily focus on the issue of separation. Before delineating those three categories of Forms, he especially asks "have you yourself distinguished as **separate** (χωρίς)…certain forms themselves, and also as **separate** the things that partake of them? And do you think that likeness

[187] Rickless, 2007: 54-55; 2020.

itself is something, **separate** from the likeness we have?" (130b2-4) Then, he repeatedly questions whether the Form of human beings, or other natural kinds, or the undignified and worthless exists by **separating** from all sensible things (130b-c). And young Socrates' assertion that the undignified and worthless things "are in fact just what we see" (130d3-4) also suggests that they fail to have separated and imperceptible Forms. This assertion also implies that these things are not becoming human beings, natural elements or undignified and worthless by participating in the namesake Forms. And this is probably the reason young Socrates concedes that he is doubting whether to talk about the natural kinds "in the same way as the others or differently" (130c-d). Gill's interpretation may provide a clear picture. The middle Platonic Form is supposed to elucidate the compresence of opposite properties within sensible things. So the Forms are always in pairs. Yet the natural kinds and undignified things lack clear opposites, so they have no corresponding Forms.[188] This negates the necessity for a Form specifically for natural kinds. As we have seen in the *Phaedo*, fire comes to be fire because of the Form Hotness rather than a Form Fire, and it passes away not because of the Form Snow but because of Coldness.

However, these interpretations, though providing some insight, fail to elucidate why young Socrates is more opposed to the Forms for undignified and worthless things than to natural kinds. While he displays ambivalence toward the latter, he dismisses the former without any doubt. This suggests an underlying and additional reason behind his rejection of the third kind of Form. The reason might be found in a literal interpretation. According to young Socrates' intuition, there should not

[188] Gill, 1996: 22-23. Also cf. Coxon, 1999: 102.

exist any negative Form for the undignified and worthless things. It's hard to conceive that hair, mud, dirt and other similar things have their own separated Forms, not solely because they are concrete things rather than opposite properties, but also due to their undignified and worthless character. If such Forms were to exist, these Forms would be the reason for them to become so undignified and worthless. Considering that the Forms are self-predicative, so those negative Forms themselves would be undignified and worthless, which is ridiculous. An ideal Form should resemble the first category Form Justice, Beauty and Goodness which are so sublime that their existence is unwaveringly confirmed by Socrates. As a result, young Socrates asserts that "it is too outlandish to think there is a form for them [viz. the undignified and worthless]" (130d4-5). This could be verified by Plato's discussion of negative Forms in the middle dialogues. As cited at the end of the last chapter, Plato posits that the Forms are the son of Goodness (*Rep.* 508c), and hence they are unlikely to be negative and undignified. Notably, he does refrains from mentioning such negative Forms in the core books of the *Republic*.

If so, the negative Forms are highly suspicious, then the scope of Forms is significantly limited. Although in this part of the text Parmenides does not directly critique young Socrates' theory of change which undoubtedly symbolizes Plato's middle theory and his first model, the limitation imposed on Forms does critically challenge them. As we have argued, the mechanism of change in Plato's first model of change and motion relies on the Forms in pairs. Each change of becoming *F* is resulted by participating in a corresponding Form *F*-ness. However, without negative Forms, sensible things cannot come to possess negative properties through participation. Consequently, the mechanism of change, and by

extension the whole model of change and motion, is profoundly disrupted by the restriction of Forms suggested here.

### 2.2 The Participation Puzzles

Parmenides subsequently turns to challenging the participation theory, revealing its inherent contradictions. This once again casts double on the first model of change and motion is potentially threatened, given that participation is undoubtedly central to its mechanism of change.

He elucidates that the process of participation, known as 'one-over-many', can only be sound in one of the two ways: either (I) the sensible thing *x* comes to be *F* by participating in the namesake Form *F*-ness as a whole, or (II) it only shares a part of this Form (131a). Parmenides first delves into the first possibility where Form is one and the same while sensible things are many. But if so, during the participations, the one and same Form *F*-ness would be shared by many sensible things $x_1$, $x_2$, $x_3$, …, $x_n$. And in each of these sensible things, then, there has to be one Form *F*-ness, since the Form is shared as a whole. As a result, the Form *F*-ness "would be separate from itself" (131a-b). Namely, if Form is participated as a whole by various sensible things, it must be both one and many—a self-contradiction. Young Socrates still attempts to save this position with a metaphor of day, suggesting that just as a day is "in many places at the same time and is nonetheless not separate from itself", so can a Form remain one and the same when being partaken (131b). Parmenides, however, finds this metaphor unconvincing. He claims that the day metaphor unavoidably results in proposition (II), for it is just like covering many people with a sail which is a whole and over many. In this analogy, it is not the sail as a whole over each person, rather a part of it

would be over one person and another part over another (131b-c)—which is precisely advocated by (II). Accordingly, young Socrates has to concede that Form is divided and not being one during participation. Yet this proposition is also problematic. Parmenides offers young Socrates four puzzles:

(i) If *x* becomes large by participating in the Form Largeness, according to the proposition (II), it participates a part of Largeness. And the part is undoubtedly smaller than the whole. So *x* becomes large by something small, which is obviously absurd. (131c-d)

(ii) If *x* becomes equal to something, it has to share a part of the Form Equalness. But a part of Equalness is explicitly less than Equalness, and hence it has to be unequal. So *x* becomes equal by participating in something unequal. (131d)

(iii) If *x* becomes small, it has to participate in a part of the Form Smallness. Then, the Smallness as a whole must be larger than the part of it. So, *x* becomes small by participating in something large. (131d)

(iv) If *x* participates in the Form Smallness, it should become small. But by this participation, a part of Smallness is added to *x*, hence *x* becomes larger than it was. So *x* seems to become both small and large during this process. (131d-e)

It is of no difficulty to notice that according to these arguments, Forms are forced to be both *F* and not-*F* at the same time—which precisely mirrors the ridiculous result of proposition (I), wherein a Form is both one and many. And moreover, the Form *F*-ness itself is proved to be not-*F* as well. And a sensible thing *x* may become *F* by participating in a

Form which is not-*F*, obviously contradicting the mechanism of change in Plato's first model.

As challenges to young Socrates' Form theory, these arguments work in two relevant aspects. On the one hand, that the Form is both *F* and not-*F* is precisely what Parmenides is asked to prove in order to refute young Socrates' argument against Zeno. Zeno claims that (1) if things are many, they must be both like and unlike, but (2) it is impossible for anything to be both like and unlike, thus (3) it is impossible for things to be many (127e). As previously noted, premise (2) draws from the Eleatic principle that What-is always is and cannot be What-is-not. However, young Socrates partly rejects premise (2), restricting the applicable scope of this Eleatic principle only to the fields of Forms. In his theory, sensible things are many and able to possess opposite properties by changing, while Form always is and cannot be both *F* and not-*F*. By the end of his speech, young Socrates challenges Zeno and Parmenides to contest his solution by demonstrating that Forms can also combine and separate like sensible things—thereby, being both *F* and not-*F* (129e-130a).[189] If they succeed in doing so, then young Socrates' distinction between Forms and sensible things is untenable, and hence his denial of Zeno's premise (2) as well as his whole idea will fail. Now, Parmenides successfully meets this challenge, overturning Socrates' stance.

On the other hand, those *reductio ad absurdum* arguments of Parmenides also threaten the foundation of Plato's theory of change and motion, particularly when one considers that young Socrates' assertion indeed represents middle Platonic metaphysics and his first model of change and

[189] Cf. Allen, 1997: 99-102.

motion. In the *Phaedo*, the old Socrates posits that the Forms obey the Eleatic principle of What-is for they always remain the same and in the same state, while the sensible particulars change between opposites from time to time (*Phd*. 78c-e). This stability of Forms then qualifies them as the cause of change in Socrates' safe answer. He is not satisfied with the natural philosophers' explanations of the cause for everything to come to be and pass away. The causes they provide, such as natural elements, seem paradoxical to Socrates as the same cause may produce opposite effects on the same thing, or opposite causes may generate identical outcomes. For instance, one can be considered as the reason for things to be one when they are separate from each other, but it may also be the cause of their becoming two when they come near to one another. And moreover, one's becoming two could be caused both by division and by being added to another (97a-b). A head could both make the man taller than one and shorter than another at the same time (100e-101a). Therefore, Form is Socrates' safe answer for the cause of change. Because Form always remains the same, and it will necessarily cause a sensible thing to become *F* and never force it to own the opposite property. Beauty, for instance, is the reason for a thing to become beautiful and it will by no means make something ugly (100d-e). Obviously, the Eleatic principle of What-is paves the foundation for the Form to become the core of the mechanism of change in Plato's first model. However, now Parmenides' arguments fundamentally dismantle this foundation. He shows that based on young Socrates' theory—as well as middle Platonic metaphysics—a Form has to be both *F* and not-*F*. Moreover, a thing could be both *F* and not-*F* by participating in the same Form *F*-ness, and it may also be *F* by partaking in opposite Forms of

not-*F*-ness. Consequently, Form can no longer be the reason of change as articulated in Plato's first model of change and motion.

It is clear that young Socrates' solution, as well as Plato's first model, includes the following four core premises:

(a) the existence of Form;
(b) the character of Form that it always is—namely, it cannot be both *F* and not-*F*;
(c) the participation relationship between Form and the sensible thing;
(d) the mechanism of change based on partaking a Form.

Given our preceding analysis which renders Socrates' solution untenable, these four premises cannot all be accepted at the same time. Does Plato suggest giving up one or more of these four premises to resolve this conundrum? In other words, where does the flaw of Plato's first model lie in the light of the participation puzzle?

Evidently, Plato does not discard the existence of Forms. At the end of his objections, he says, "if someone, having an eye on all the difficulties we have just brought up and others of the same sort, won't allow that there are forms for things and won't mark off a form for each one, he won't have anywhere to turn his thought, since he doesn't allow that for each things there is a character that is always the same. In this way he will destroy the power of dialectic entirely." (*Prm.* 135b-c). Thus, Form does exist and it is always the same, just as presented in Plato's first model. Young Socrates' comprehension of them is not wrong but inaccurate because of his lack of proper philosophical training (135c-d). And besides,

the premises (c) and (d) also appear in the text. For instance, in the so-called Appendix, getting a share of being is called 'coming-to-be' and parting from being 'ceasing-to-be' (156a). Hence, the reason of change continues to rest on the participation of Form.[190] Therefore, the premise most likely to be given up is (b): the Form cannot possess opposite properties by being both *F* and not-*F*.[191] If so, although Plato still maintains the idea that by participating in a Form the sensible thing comes to possess the corresponding property, the mechanism of change may no longer be based on the assumption obeying the Eleatic principle of What-is, from which Socrates argued in the *Phaedo* that the Form always is and cannot be both *F* and not-*F*. Thus, the participation puzzle implies that the Eleatic principle which is the foundation of Plato's first model may be problematic.

To be precise, this is at most merely an implication in the *Parmenides*, where the interlocutors never directly argue for this point. Notably, the Eleatic principle explicitly constitutes the bedrock of Zeno's argument. A detailed argument addressing this will not be offered until the *Sophist*—a dialogue aiming to make a thorough reckoning of Parmenides' metaphysical legacies. This issue will be further explored in the subsequent section.

### 2.3 The Classification and Essence of Motion

Most scholars agree that the second part of the *Parmenides*, as the philosophical training, includes eight Deductions and one additional

[190] But as we will argue in the discussion of the *Sophist*, to participate a Form is no longer necessarily causing a generation.
[191] Also cf. Rickless, 2007; 2020.

Appendix to the first two Deductions—the issues of motion and change are also involved in this part of the text. Rather than focusing on the conclusions of those deductions—which may indeed have no specific conclusion—we need to pay more attention to their premises. Our intent is to analyze and probe the concepts of all kinds of motions and changes embedded in these premises. As will become evident, in this text the interlocutors introduce the discussions of the classification and the essence of motion. They intimate an ontological and reflective insight into the metaphysics of Plato's first model of change and motion. Specifically, the Eleatic principle of What-is will eventually ruin the distinction between generative change and non-generative motion. If the Parmenidean doctrine is strictly obeyed, the alleged non-generative motions should not exist, since all motions are posited to be generative.

Let's first examine the classification of motion. In the first deduction, Parmenides provides a systematical account of a variety of motions:

> "Then consider whether, since it is as we have said, it can be at rest or in motion (ἑστάναι ἢ κινεῖσθαι) … Because if it moves, it would either move spatially or be altered (ὅτι κινούμενόν γε ἢ φέροιτο ἢ ἀλλοιοῖτο ἄν), since these are the only motions." (*Prm.* 138b7-c1)

It is clear that motion is claimed to be the genus, branching into spatial motion and alteration as its only species. Next, the division is supplemented in the following aspects. First, spatial motion further bifurcates into rotation and displacement (138c4-6). The former signifies a motion 'spin[ning] in a circle in the same location', while the latter is

‘chang[ing] from one place to another’. Second, numerous paired motions are designated under alteration: becoming one and becoming many; becoming alike and becoming unalike; increasing and decreasing, etc. (156b1-8; 157a4-b5) Especially, as Cornford argues, assimilation and dissimilation seem to be alterations in quality, while increase and decrease are alterations in quantity.[192]

This formulation obviously recalls the similar one found in the *Theaetetus* (*Theaet*. 181c-d). And it is also reiterated elsewhere in this dialogue. For instance, in the fifth Deduction, Parmenides enumerates locomotion, rotation and alteration as the sole possible approaches to movement (*Prm.* 162b9-e3). Moreover, this classification is also echoed in the *Laws* X 893b-e. Besides, the classification may be confirmed by Parmenides’ descriptions of those motions as well. In the second Deduction, he posits that what moves is (always) in a different thing and never in the same thing. When it moves, it will stir from itself (*Prm.* 145e-146a). This description explicitly covers his definitions of locomotion and alteration. For in the first Deduction, he claims that what undergoes an alteration must alter from itself and not be the same one (138c). Locomotion is also argued to be change of place by going somewhere and coming to be in something (138d-139a). By this logic, through locomotion, an entity enters into another thing and leaves the previous one or itself. And given that what has a rotation must spin in a circle and be “poised on its middle and have other parts of itself that move round the middle” (138c), it is reasonable to infer that these rotating parts—and the subject as a whole—come into something else and leave themselves too. Therefore, all these kinds of changes satisfy Parmenides’ definition of motion by

[192] Cornford, 1939: 197.

owning the crucial character that they make the subject come to be in a different thing stirring from itself.

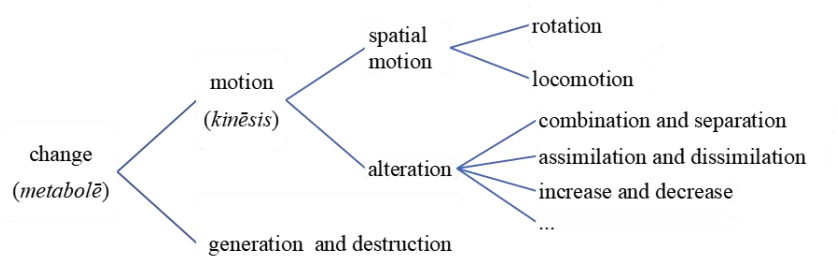
But where shall we place coming-to-be or generation and destruction? As noted before, in this dialogue coming-to-be is unsurprisingly defined as "getting a share of being" while ceasing-to-be as "parting from being" (156a; 163d). These definitions are undeniably based on the participation theory. Some scholars, such as Allen, refuse to classify generation and destruction as two species of motion, for in the Appendix they are discussed distinctively from motions such as alteration and locomotion (156a-b).[193] This judgment is not unreasonable. Indeed, when outlining his plan of deductions, Parmenides explicitly treats generation and destruction alongside motion and rest, saying that "[i]f you hypothesize, if likeness is or if it is not, you must examine what the consequences will be on each hypothesis…and the same method applies to unlike, to motion, to rest, to becoming and destruction (καὶ περὶ κινήσεως καὶ περὶ στάσεως καὶ περὶ γενέσεως καὶ φθορᾶς), and being itself and not-being" (136b). This parallel may echo the poem of the historical Parmenides in which the latter enumerates these categories in a similar way. He writes that, "[t]herefore all those things will be a name, which mortals, confident that they are real, suppose to be coming to be and perishing (*gignesthai te kai ollusthai*), being and not being (*einai te kai ouki*), changing place and exchanging bright colour (*kai topon allassein dia te chroa phanon ameibein*)" (B.8.38-41).

Then, in the *Parmenides*, Plato proposes a more inclusive categorical term encompassing both motion and generation. In the Appendix, when

[193] Allen, 1997: 233.

juxtaposing coming-to-be and ceasing-to-be with motions, he designates the former as “the other changes” (156e). Clearly, both motions and generations belong to the alleged “changes”. Thus, though Plato always uses these terms κίνησις, μεταβολή and even ἀλλοίωσις interchangeably without clear demarcations, within this text of *Parmenides* the term change (μεταβολή) is explicitly used to denote a most general genus containing all sorts of motions as well as generation and destruction as its species.

This may be further solidified by Parmendies’ definition of change. He seems to consider change as something that occurs between two opposite states (156d). And it is more explicitly expressed by his formulation “which is both so and not so signifies a change” found in the fifth Deduction (162b-c). Generation, then, is undoubtedly a kind of change, for it represents a shift between non-being and being (156a-b; 156e-157a; 162c, etc.). Alteration also satisfies the criterion for change by being a transition between opposite properties *F* and not-*F*—such as many and one; like and unlike; small and large (157a-b). Even locomotion, as previously discussed, is understood as coming to be here at one time and there at another (138d). Therefore, all sorts of generations and motions can be described as transitions between so and not so, hence they all belong to the common genus change. Consequently, we now acquire a seemingly complete picture of Parmenides’ classification of changes and motions:




Until now, this picture appears roughly compatible with Plato's first model of change and motion at first glance. Given that generation and destruction are separated and independent categories paralleling with motions that encompass spatial motions and alterations, it may suggest that some of the motions may be non-generative. And further, here Parmenides admits that the thing comes to be by participating in a being, but at the same time he does not guarantee that all motions result from such kind of participation. This appears to be quite similar to Plato's first model of change and motion, in which he advocates that some motions, like locomotion and activities of the soul, are non-generative for they don't partake in the Forms.

However, this hypothesis cannot be confirmed at all. The system of change delineated in the *Parmenides* does not follow Plato's first model but seriously challenges it. The classification alone does not tell the complete story. Indeed, as illuminated in the text of the fifth Deduction, Parmenides negates the possibility of non-generative change by representing and analyzing the essences of changes and generation.

Within this Deduction, Parmenides first initiates a discussion on the relationship among various sorts of changes by claiming that,

> "Can something that is in some state not be so, without changing from that state? –It cannot. –So everything of the sort we've described, which is both so and not so, signifies a change (μεταβολή). –Doubtless. –And a change (μεταβολή) is a motion (κίνησις)—or what shall we call it? –A motion (κίνησις). –Now wasn't the one shown both to be and not to be? –Yes. –Therefore, it appears both to be so and not so. –So it seems. –Therefore the one that is not has been shown also to move (κινεῖν), since in fact it has been shown to change (μεταβολή) from being to not-being. –It looks that way." (162b-c)

Three kinds of change are mentioned in this text. Change is probably the most general genus that we discussed above because it is described as being "both so and not so"—that is, being one state and not being this state—which is precisely how the genus change is defined in the Appendix (156d). Then, the text also mentions a change transforming being to non-being, which unmistakably refers to the concept of ceasing-to-be. And clearly this sort of generation is believed to be one species of change, for the transition between being and non-being is a special case of change between so and not so. What the term 'motion' refers to remains unspecified in the meantime. But since he immediately continues to analyze that one cannot move if one neither alters, rotates in the same things, nor switches place (162c-e), 'motion' must refer to the one which is defined as not being in the same thing in the first Deduction encompassing both spatial motion and alteration.

But the relationship among these terms may be problematic, because in the passage cited above Parmenides says that "a change is a motion" (162c). If 'motion' in this passage refers to a category parallel to generation and if 'change' refers to the most general genus, how could they be identified with each other?[194] According to the classification of change, motion should logically be a species of the genus change. The interlocutor soon informs us of the answer in the following text,

> "Furthermore, if in fact it moves (κινεῖν), it certainly must be altered (ἀλλοιοῦσθαι); for however something is moved, by just so much it is no longer in the same state as it was, but in a different state. –Just so. –Then because it moves (κινεῖν), the one is also altered (ἀλλοιοῦσθαι). –Yes. –And yet, because it in no way moves (κινεῖν), it could in no way be altered (ἀλλοιοῦσθαι). –No, it couldn't. … –Must not that which is altered (ἀλλοιοῦσθαι) come to be (γίγνεσθαι) from what it was before, and cease to be in its previous state; and must not that which is not altered (ἀλλοιοῦσθαι) neither come to be (γίγνεσθαι) nor cease to be? –Necessarily." (162e-163b)

In short, all sorts of changes share the same nature that all of them are essentially generations. A motion must be an alteration, regardless of whether it is a spatial motion or an alteration. Based on the definition of motion, whatever undergoes a motion cannot remain in the same thing, then it apparently comes to refresh its state, so it alters from its previous state to this new state. Even when undergoing a spatial motion, the

[194] Cf. Chen, C.-H., 1982: 334-336.

subject has to change its locational state such as ‘here’ or ‘there’ during this process. So all motions are basically some sort of alteration. Moreover, alteration inherently contains generation and destruction as its essence. An alteration is understood as the ceasing-to-be of its previous state and coming-to-be of its new state, indicating that the previous one perishes and a new similar one generates its fresh state. This generative nature underscores the essence of all motions and changes.

Indeed, this generative essence is consistently alluded to throughout the deductions. In the first deduction, Parmenides asserts that a subject, when undergoing an alteration, cannot still be one (138b-c). And the locomotion, again, is to change places by coming-to-be here at one time and there at another (138d).[195] He further posits that a subject in motion is never in the same thing. It has to stir from itself during the motion (145e-146a). Besides, in the Appendix, it is noted that when one thing becomes many, it must cease to be one and come to be many (156a-b). Namely, the new many thing comes to be and replaces the previous one which perishes immediately. Finally, in the sixth Deduction, Parmenides overtly contends that without coming-to-be and ceasing-to-be by getting a share of being and losing it, nothing can possess an alteration nor move at all (163d-e). Throughout all these arguments, Parmenides persistently reinforces this foundational ontological proposition time and again: all sorts of motions and changes will force the subject not to be the same one and undergo a generative becoming.

[195] This is similar to the argument of Gorgias (Ps.-Arist. *MXG* 980a = LM. D.26, 14) as we have cited in the first chapter.

Therefore, although Parmenides provides a systemic classification of changes, all these changes basically share the same essence and are all generations. How, then, does it threaten Plato's first model of change and motion? In brief, this model allows the existence of non-generative motion, while this dialogue seems to refute it. According to the first model, anything that partakes in a Form undergoes a generative change, while a motion unrelated to the participation of a Form is a non-generative motion. Alteration is apparently generative, but spatial motion and the activity of the soul fall within the category of non-generative motions. And as we have argued before, this model is somehow built on the restrictive and adoptive acceptance of the Eleatic principle of What-is. That is to say, What-is must always be and cannot not be what it is. If it undergoes a change and comes to be what is not, it has to perish and be replaced by a fresh similar one. At the same time, the spatial motion and activity of the soul, since they are not associated with any share of Forms, will not affect the status of What-is by making the latter become What-is-not. Hence the entity could remain the same during these motions, and thus the latter are considered non-generative. However, in the *Parmenides*, it is contended that even the smallest locomotion necessitates a change in state and compels the entity to come to be a new one, denying that any motion is non-generative. The fundamental ontological reason is that no matter what sort of motion must change the entity's state according to the definitions of changes, as detailed in our prior analysis. Consequently, no motion—even spatial motion—can escape from the effect of the Eleatic principle of What-is. This challenges the distinction Plato's first model draws between generative change and non-generative motion, undermining its validity. Indeed, this is exactly the same as the idea of the historical Parmenides and the Eleatic

School—especially of Melissus who asserts that even the slightest change, as minuscule as becoming different by a single hair in thousands of years, results in destruction (DK30 B7).

Thus within the *Parmenides*, it appears Plato seeks to elucidate that the rigorous adherence to the Parmenidean principle renders the first model untenable. This tension will be further explored in the *Sophist*. Additionally, as discussed in this section, Plato implies the flaws of the concept of Form and the doctrine that it cannot be both *F* and not-*F*, and the dialectic reflection of these two points will be revealed in the subsequent dialogue.

## 3. The *Sophist* and the Parmenidean Doctrine

The story of the *Sophist* directly succeeds the *Theaetetus*. While the *Theaetetus* contains a discussion about the definition of knowledge between Socrates and Theaetetus, the subsequent conversation of the *Sophist*—occurring one day later—features Theaetetus and the Eleatic Stranger as its principal interlocutors. The latter's familiarity with the theory of the Parmenidean school is quite evident, as Theodorus claims "[h]e's from Elea and he's a member of the group who gathers around Parmenides and Zeno" (*Sph*. 216a). Therefore, after the beginning of introspection in the *Theaetetus* and the detailed review in the *Parmenides*, in the meantime we the audience are finally qualified to reflect on the Parmenidean doctrine and the ontological basis of Plato's first model, guided by the arguments of the Eleatic Stranger.

The reflection in the *Sophist* is quite profound, inspecting every premise regarding motion in Plato's first model. The interlocutors even attempt to

prove the mutability of the Forms. In his arguments against the Friends of Forms, the Eleatic Strangers says,

> "—We have to reply that we need them to tell us more clearly whether they agree that the soul knows and also that being is known. –'Yes', they say. –Well then, do you say that knowing and being known are cases of doing, or having something done, or both? Is one of them doing and the other having something done? Or is neither a case of either? –Obviously neither is a case of either, since otherwise they'd be saying something contrary to what they said before. –Oh, I see. You mean that if knowing is doing something, then necessarily what is known has something done to it. When being is known by knowledge, according to this account, then insofar as it's known it's changed by having something done to it—which we say wouldn't happen to something that's at rest. –That's correct." (*Sph*. 248d-e)

In this conversation, the Stranger seeks to establish that being can be changed and moved. For it is obviously able to be known and to be known is to be affected, hence being is changed by being affected and known. The Stranger further enhances this argument by immediately forcing Theaetetus and the Friends to concede that the movable things, such as change, life, soul, and understanding, must be present in "what completely is" (248e-249b).[196] Therefore, being is able to move or even change.

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[196] The phrase τὸ παντελῶς ὄν has two main possible translations. Some scholars translate it as "what perfectly is". And the other prefer the translation "what completely is". Cf. Politis, 2006: 160-163; 173, n.7-8; Wiitala, 2018: 187-192.

Yet, scholars widely concur that this perspective stands in contrast to Plato's middle metaphysical theory, prominently articulated in the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*. In those dialogues, as we have sufficiently seen, Forms, as beings, are always stable and never change, while sensible things are always in flux and coming to be. How, then, shall we understand this apparent disaccord between the view of the Eleatic Stranger and Plato's middle theory? There are at least three kinds of influential interpretations, all of them aiming to bridge this philosophical disparity. First, some scholars, such as Malcolm, seem to simply advocate that neither the Stranger nor Plato himself endorse the argument of mutable beings at all.[197] Similarly, Vlastos provides his arguments against the view that Plato accepts the critical premise "to be affected is to move". This premise, he believes, is ascribed to the Friends of Forms to explain why the Friends—rather than Plato himself—would run into fatal self-contradiction by eventually conceding that the changeless knowledge has to be mutable.[198] Besides, some opinions tend to concede the incongruity between Stranger's argument and Plato's own theory, but regard it as predominantly superficial. Wiitala outlines two representative opinions.[199] On the one hand, some support a relational change reading, where those changes (i.e. to be known or to be affected) are just relational and extrinsic, allowing the Beings themselves to remain unchanged during those changes. So the Forms, even if they are in motion with respect to others by being known, are strictly remaining static and changeless in relation to themselves. Therefore, the puzzle ascribed to the Friends of the Forms can be immediately solved by introducing relational

[197] Malcolm, 1983.
[198] Vlastos, 1970: 309-317.
[199] Wiitala, 2018: 172-173.

predicates.[200] On the other hand, another perspective contends that the puzzle arises from the Friend's overly narrow understanding of Beings. Instead, alongside the changeless Forms, some movable bodies (such as the ensouled living bodies) also should qualify as beings, though distinct from the Forms. Therefore, while certain beings are movable, others—namely the Forms—still remain unchanged and are the objects of knowledge as claimed in Plato's middle dialogues.[201]

Despite technical differences among them, these views converge on a common foundational belief. Each, to varying degrees, posits that the arguments of the *Sophist* cited above remain consistent with the framework of Plato's middle metaphysics. According to these viewpoints, the alleged mutable being either signifies relational change rather than real change, or refers to the bodies instead of Forms, if Plato himself does endorse these ideas. They all concur that Form must avoid undergoing any real change. Thus, the arguments in the *Sophist* can be seen as a continuum of Plato's middle theory and especially his ontological understanding of change, at most with some slight improvements.

However, this view may not capture the truth. On the contrary, the Stranger's arguments highlight foundational shortcomings in Plato's metaphysical theory presented in his previous works, laying the groundwork for a fresh interpretation concerning the ontology of being.

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[200] The relational change theory, of course, could be traced back to Geach and Irwin. Cf. Geach, 1969: 71-72; Irwin, 1977; 1992: 55; 1995: 161-163; Fine, 1993: 54-57; 1996: 105-133; van Eck, 2009: 210. Those who use this concept to interpret the text of the *Sophist*, cf. Reeve, 1985; McPherran, 1986; Lentz, 1997; Buckels, 2015. A more complete list cf. Wiitala, 2018: 172-173, n.5.

[201] Such as, Cornford, 1935: 239-248; Keyt, 1969; Ketchum, 1978; Brown, 1998. Further, cf. Wittala, 2018: 173, n.7.

This clearly brings with it a novel understanding of motion. Indeed, the dialectal arguments that concern us in the *Sophist* can be characterized as a ring-composition.[202] First, (1) the interlocutors examine the puzzle of "What-is-not is" stemming from the Parmenidean principle. (2) The Eleatic Stranger further argues that this difficulty also manifests prominently in the issue of motion. As Wiitala elucidates, the Stranger's arguments against the Friends of Forms on the mutability of Beings, always neglected, are part of his broader endeavour to show that What-is-not is.[203] Thus finally, (3) the discussion of motion, revealing the ontological structure of Being, helps to solve the primary difficulty of What-is and What-is-not.

### 3.1 The Stranger's Puzzle of What-is/What-is-not and the Parmenides' Doctrine

At 235a, affirming the sophist as an imitator and magician, the interlocutors turn to clarify the specific craft of imitation inherent to the sophist. The craft of imitation includes two kinds of arts: likeness-making and appearance-making. The former, according to the Stranger, is an imitation produced "by keeping to the proportions of length, breadth, and depth of its model, and also by keeping to the appropriate colours of its parts" (235d-e). And the latter is employed by someone who sculpts or draws very large works. As the Stranger describes, "[i]f they reproduced the true proportions of their beautiful subjects, you see, the upper parts would appear smaller than they should, and the lower parts would appear larger, because we see the upper parts from farther away and the lower parts from closer…So don't those craftsmen say goodbye to truth, and

[202] Similarly, Kahn, 2015: 122.
[203] Wiitala, 2018.

producer in their images the proportions that seem to be beautiful instead of the real ones?" (235e-236a) Succinctly, the likeness-maker imitates the real proportion of the subject, while the appearance-maker merely imitates its seeming proportion.

This dichotomy, obviously, recalls us Plato's assertions in the Book X of the *Republic*, in which Socrates claims—as a metaphor—that there are three kinds of beds. The bed in nature is created by a god, the one produced by a carpenter is the imitation of the first bed, and the last one made by the painter has to be an imitation of the second bed by imitating the appearance of the bed (*Rep.* 597b-598b). The story of Three Beds undoubtedly relies on the metaphysics argued for in the *Republic* and other middle dialogues: only the Beings or the Forms really and permanently are, whereas the sensible beings only come to be by participating in the corresponding Forms. These sensible things, hence, can be both being and not-being, both *F* and not-*F*. For instance, a beautiful sensible thing can be beautiful in some aspects but ugly in other aspects, or beautiful at one time but become ugly later (478e-479d). As underscored in the previous chapters, this view is built on Plato's acceptance of the Parmenidean principle that What-is always is and it cannot be What-is-not. Plato deems this a fitting description of Forms. Concurrently, he concedes to Parmenides' doctrine to some extent. He agrees that the sensible, as What-is-not, are never the real being, but they can be both *F* and not-*F* by participation.

It is apparently the same in the *Sophist*. The products of both likeness-making and appearance-making are not real Beings but their imitations—though meanwhile the Stranger hasn't specified which craft

belongs to the sophist. Therefore, the Stranger summarizes, "this appearing, and this seeming but not being, and this saying things but not true things." (*Sph.* 236e) This is undoubtedly true for Plato's middle works. However, the Stranger now exposes the fundamental frailty of this metaphysics of What-is and What-is-not presented in the *Republic* and other middle dialogues.

In the *Republic* and other middle dialogues, a foundational depiction of the sensible can be summarized as:

(1) The sensible being *x* is *F* and is not-*F*.

A sensible thing is *F* by imitating the corresponding Form *F*-ness, yet at the same time it is not truly *F*—as only the *F*-ness can be permanently and really *F*—so it is both *F* and not-*F*. And at the same time, a more general formulation could be derived from (1) that,

(2) The sensible being *x* is and is not.

As delineated in the *Republic* or other middle dialogues, "*x* is and is not" does not only signifies that *x* is both *F* and not-*F*, but also it exists and not exists.[204] The *x* as a sensible thing is not What-is or the real Being, so it is not. But it can participate in the latter, hence it also is to a degree. So, in the *Republic*, the sensible is construed as the intermediate between the real Being and nothing (*Rep.* 478c-e).

[204] The existential and predicative senses of Being, cf. Kahn, 2009. And also our previous analysis in the first chapter.

However, in the *Sophist* the Stranger immediately emphasizes that to say the sensible thing *x* is "seeming but not being" (*Sph.* 236e) will be extremely confusing. Indeed, this premise cannot be true under Parmenides' doctrine. Because premise (2) has to contain that,

(3) What-is-not is.

For *x* is undoubtedly a What-is-not, but it is required to be to some extent. So it must result in the formulation that "What-is-not is" (236e-237a). But Parmenides requires that "[n]ever shall this force itself on us, that what is not may be." (237a) As a result, Parmenides' principle that "What-is is" and "What-is-not is not" appears contradictory to the interlocutors' primary attempt in the *Sophist* to grasp the imitations of Beings—an attempt, as we have discussed, rooted in Plato's understanding of the sensible in his middle dialogues.

But the sensible beings seem to avoid directly conflicting with Parmenides' principle in Plato's previous dialogues by asserting that the sensible are not real What-is, why does the similar theory now fail to be compatible with Parmenides' verse? There must be evident reason for the Stranger's dismissal, and it is illuminated in his subsequent arguments.

According to the Stranger's current argument, the sensible things, or What-is-not, cannot have any meaningful predication. For based on the Parmenidean principle, such a sensible thing, as a What-is-not, cannot be applied to any of What-is or Being (237c). And since it is not What-is, it is not something, because a thing is unable to be isolated from Beings (237c-d). So, a sensible thing cannot really be a beautiful, just or other

similar thing, given that the beautiful and the just are clearly not isolated from Beauty and Justice. So, it leads to the proposition,

(4) What-is-not is not an *F* thing.

If (4) stands, it suggests that What-is-not cannot be said to be *F*. Strengthening this view, the Stranger further introduces a supplementary argument. He posits that if x is something or x'es are something(s), one must accede that *x* is one thing or x'es are plural things (237d). But the quantities—one, plurality, or others—are Beings (238a). So it is fallacious to claim *x* is anything. For if the sensible x is one thing, it necessarily indicates that x (What-is-not) is one (Being). Then, What-is not has to be a Being—the difficulty of (3) appears again (238b-c). Consequently, What-is-not can neither be one thing nor plural things, and similarly, it can neither be just nor unjust, beautiful nor ugly. This results in a counter-proposition to (1):

(1*) *x* is not *F* and is not not-*F*.

Thus, any attribution to a sensible thing has to become impossible. As the Stranger articulates, "[d]on't you understand, then, that it's impossible to say, speak, or think What-is-not itself correctly by itself? It's unthinkable, unsayable, unutterable, and unformulable in speech." (238c) This judgement, ironically, recalls Socrates' criticism of Heraclitus and his followers, suggesting their doctrine of flux undermines the very possibility of language (*Theaet*. 179d-180c; 183a-b). Now, the Stranger's argument implies that Plato's middle theory may also produce the same situation. This analysis points out the critical flaw in Plato's middle

theory: it hardly achieves its goal of allowing the sensible being to be *F* by participating in the Form *F*-ness rather than becoming a real Being. Because this formulation unavoidably contains the assumption that What-is-not is—which of course diametrically opposes the Parmenidean principle.[205]

The Stranger goes one more step in his next argument, contending that even (1*) is not sufficiently precise. This is because by asserting that What-is-not is unutterable, unsayable and inexpressible, we inadvertently attribute being to What-is-not by appending "is" to the What-is-not in this formulation (238e-239a). In short, "to be" indicates "to be something", which further alludes "to be a Being". From this, we derive a counter-proposition to (3):

(3*) What-is-not (*x*) cannot be.

In other words, any attempt to predicate the What-is-not—no matter in a positive or negative sense—initially presupposes that What-is-not is something or Being by attaching the "is" to What-is-not. Thus, if we persist in predicating the imitations or the sensible, we have to make an apparent self-contradictory formulation that What-is-not is (240a-b).

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[205] Strictly speaking, in the *Republic* Socrates does not call the sensible being "What-is-not" but rather something between What-is and What-is-not. In this text, Socrates also recognizes that What-completely-is-not is impossible to be known or opined for it does not exist at all (*Rep.* 478b-479d). But this does not indicate that Socrates in the *Republic* shares the same opinion with the Stranger in the text of the *Sophist* discussed here. Because apparently in the *Republic* the "What-is-not" merely refers to what completely does not exist, while in the *Sophist* What-is-not refers to the sensible beings, or more literally, the imitations of the real Beings.

Therefore, the Stranger's arguments reveal the critical dilemma. The effective predication of What-is-not and the Parmenidean doctrine that "What-is is and What-is-not is not" cannot be reached at the same time. Obviously, Plato's middle theory of sensible being is built on these two points. Now, since these two foundational principles have been demonstrated to be mutually exclusive, the Stranger, without any hesitation, proposes attacking the Parmenidean principle and arguing for the seemingly self-contradictory premise that What-is-not is (241d-e).

### 3.2 The Issues of Motion and the Mutable Being

The Stranger, then, announces to "begin this dangerous discussion" against the Parmenidean principle (242b). In order to achieve this goal, he endeavours to probe the meaning of "being", shedding light on how the Parmenidean principle essentially leads to the self-contradiction of Plato's first model of change and motion.

In this part of text, the Stranger first tries to elaborate the different opinions of Being(s) espoused by the pre-Socratic philosophers. And then, he claims that "[i]t seems that there's something like a battle of gods and giants among them, because of their dispute with each other over being." (246a) The "giants", he notes, solely admit the body (*sōma*) which is visible and tangible as being and vehemently rejects the notion that "something without a body is" (246a-b). On the contrary, the "gods" or the "Friends of the Forms" are portrayed as proponents of the belief that,

> "Therefore the people of the other side of the debate [viz. the Friends of the Forms] defend their position very cautiously, from somewhere up out of sight. They insist violently the true

> being is certain nonbodily forms that can be thought about. They take the bodies of the other group, and also what they call the truth, and they break them up verbally into little bits and call them a process of coming-to-be instead of being." (246b-c)

In this passage, the interlocutor presents the opposite ideas advocated by two distinct groups of philosophers. One believes that only material things can be beings, while the other maintains that the Form which does not suffer any process of becoming is the real being. And moreover, the Stranger points out that "the giants" or the former philosophers can hardly answer whether the invisible virtues such as justice and intelligence could be deemed as being (247b-c). So he tries to persuade them to accept a refinement of their theory by conceding that being is a thing owning the capacity to do or to be done (247d-e). Namely, being is what is mutable. On the contrary, the Friends of the Forms appear to dichotomize everything into two categories: becoming and being. They are said to believe that "by our bodies and through perception we have dealing with becoming, but we deal with real being by our souls and through reasoning…being always stays the same and in the same state, but becoming varies from one time to another." (248a)

This battle among them clearly recalls Socrates' earlier unfinished endeavour to scrutinize the theories of "the fluent fellows"—namely, Heraclitus and his followers—and the Eleatic philosophers who champion "the whole" (*Theaet.*179d-184a). And previously argued, in that place Socrates, asserting that he may not understand Parmenides' genuine intent, refuses to critically examine the doctrine of Parmenides after he seriously criticised Heraclitus' Flux theory (184a). However, after

hearing the conversation in the *Parmenides*, we the audience are now prepared to journey with the Stranger in further examining Parmenides' doctrine. Obviously, the giants criticized here are closely related to "the fluent fellows", as they both are purported to believe in the perpetual becoming of beings.[206] Moreover, we have argued in the previous section that in the *Theaetetus* Plato implies that the generative character of flux does not originate from Heraclitus but is rooted in the Parmenidean principle (pp. 105-106). And in the meantime, the Stranger directly asserts that this character of becoming is underscored by the Friends of Forms in their arguments against the "giants". For it is from the Friends' perspective, the becomings are "little bits" (*Sph*. 246b) and vary "from one time to another" without having any stability and identity (248a). 'Friends of Forms', then, clearly refers to those who are deeply influenced by the Eleatic school—such as Plato's middle dialogues. The strict dichotomy of being and becoming is quintessential to Plato's first model of change and motion which is built on the foundation of Plato's acceptance of the Parmenidean principle of What-is.[207]

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[206] Cornford argues that the Giants, or "materialists", include all philosophers and average people who believe that tangible body is the only reality. This opinion becomes dominative later, but before it many scholars prefer to identify the giants with some particular philosophers or schools, such as Antisthenes, Aristippus, the Atomists, and even Melissus. Cf. Cornford, 1935: 231-232; Bluck, 1975: 89; de Rijk, 1986: 100-102. We ought not to overly commit to the term "materialist", for this is not the only label the Stranger gives to the giants. They are also said to somehow hold the idea of flux (246b ff.). And indeed, in the *Theatetus* the fluent and the philosophers who agree with the flux theory share these two characteristics, too. They also advocate that the beings are sensible and flowing (*Theaet*. 152d-153e; 155e-157c; 180c-d; 182a-b, etc.).

[207] The Friends' theory undoubtedly represents Plato's philosophy as presented in the *Phaedo* and *Republic*. Cornford furthers claims that the Friends refers to all idealists who believe in unseen intelligible realities including Parmenides himself. Cf. Cornford, 1935: 242-243; Bluck, 1975: 93-94; de Rijk, 1986: 102.

Therefore, in the Stranger's subsequent reflection on the theory of the Friends of the Forms, he highlights a flaw inherent in Plato's first model presented in his middle dialogues. Namely, it would unfortunately culminate in the notion of the mutable being, as we briefly discussed at the beginning of this section. The Stranger posits that, according to the Friends of the Forms, the capacity to do something and have something done to itself ought to be owned by becoming rather than being (248c). This immediately precipitates the following dilemma. The Friends are compelled to acknowledge that "the soul knows and also that being is known" (248d). And this premise is proved to be highly problematic under their theoretical framework. On the one hand, if a being is known, it is acted upon and thus it is moved, but according to the Friends, the beings should be absolutely at rest (248d-e). On the other hand, the soul is also moving in its process of knowing the object. So if one strictly adheres to the Friends' theory, one must concede that "change, life, soul, and understanding are not present in what completely is," and Being should neither live nor think, but be "changeless, solemn, and holy, without any intelligence." (248e-249a) This is ridiculous for Plato and the interlocutors, because they clearly advocate that the soul is always moving and is definitely the real being. Plato not only accentuates the soul's ever-moving character in his middle dialogues such as the *Phaedrus*, but also elaborates upon it at length in his later works the *Timaeus* and the *Laws*. The Stranger also argues that it is fallacious to say that being "has intelligence, life, and soul, but that it's at rest and completely changeless even though it's alive" (249a). Therefore, the essential problem is that according to the Friends' theory, the mutable soul and the concept of being cannot be compatible with each other. The

Stranger posits that if the intelligence really is, it has to be the same, in the same state in the same respects (249b-c).

This predicament stems from the generative character of motion and change. The Friends advocate that the object of reasoning should be entities that always stay the same and in the same state (248a; 248e; 249c). Then, they apparently believe that any form of motion, such as knowing and being known, would force the being not to remain in the same state. In other words, from their perspective, these motions are unavoidably generative. Then, to repeat it again, this generative character of motion is a result of the Parmenidean principle of What-is. For given that "What-is is and What-is-not is not", anything divergent from What-is is inevitably What-is-not. Consequently, any motion, even the slight and subtle motion such as being known and knowing, would compel the entity to become something distinct from What-is or being. This presents a dilemma when considering the possibility of motion of the Form or Soul.

Then, since the position of the Friends is very close to Plato's first model, we can reasonably argue that here Plato provides a potential reflection of this model. He shows that the Parmenidean principle of What-is, as the foundation of the first model, will result in the dilemma discussed above. Namely, the first model has to face the difficulty that the soul cannot know the Form and the Form cannot be known. Otherwise, we are forced to accept the idea of a mutable being which is definitely rejected by Plato's first model and theory presented in his middle works.

One may doubt this view that the Friends' theory is not a precise representation of Plato's first model, because it is more extreme than the latter. As we have said in the previous chapters, according to Plato's first model, he advocates that some motions are not generative if they do not result from participating in a Form. But according to the Friends, the motion of being moved and acted upon by being known or the motion of the soul, for which participation is not relevant, is also thought to be generative. This observation is undoubtedly true. However, the possibility of non-generative motion has already been disproved in the *Parmenides*. In this dialogue, it is clarified that in accordance with the Parmenidean principle, strictly speaking, all kinds of motion will make the object become more or less different, and any difference of an object will definitely deprive it from its identity and force it to become a completely different thing. So, there is no room for the alleged non-generative motion, for all motions and changes are generative. Therefore, in the meantime, if we still insist on the Parmenidean principle of What-is, we have to concede that it is impossible for anything to move or be moved without undergoing a generative and becoming something it was not.

And as we have mentioned at the beginning of our discussion of the *Sophist*, some scholars advocate that this difficulty of mutable being could be easily overcome by considering those motions of soul and Forms as merely relational change.[208] According to this view, the motion of the soul and Forms should not be counted as the real change or motion. This idea, to repeat again, clearly tries to strike a compromise between the issue of the mutable being of the *Sophist* and Plato's first model. But it lacks a clear interpretation of how any motion can be relational and not

[208] Cf. Reeve, 1985; McPherran, 1986; Lentz, 1997; Buckels, 2015, etc.

real without conflicting with the Parmenidean principle. Even by undergoing an alleged relational change, the thing would clearly become something it was not. So, it does not provide the ontological tool to prove that some motions will not force What-is to become What-is-not and avoid the impossibility of non-generative motion.

In the text, this difficulty is obviously a special example of the more general problem which is revealed in the previous discussion of "What-is-not is". Then, as we will soon see, it will be solved in the Stranger's exploration to solve the difficulty of "What-is-not is" by reflecting on the Parmenidean principle.

### 3.3 The Stranger's Solution

Now, Plato's first model of change and motion is teetering on the edge because the foundation of it—especially the Parmenidean principle of What-is—has been seriously challenged. The Stranger has proved that though this principle plays a pivotal role in Plato's first model and theory presented in his middle works, it indeed destabilizes the entire theory. This is primarily because any predication of What-is-not unavoidably entails the proposition "What-is-not is", a direct contradiction to the Parmenidean principle. And the notion of a mutable being is, apparently, quite questionable in Plato's middle works. Consequently, the Parmenidean principle, as the interlocutors suggest, must be overturned. Addressing this is undeniably not an easy task, prompting the Stranger to propose a three-step solution. First, (1) the Stranger provides a primary attempt to solve the puzzle of mutable beings, which in turn lays the groundwork for the forthcoming argument of "What-is-not is". And then, (2) this puzzle remains unresolved until the Stranger introduces a novel

logical and ontological structure of Kind by distinguishing its properties acquired by nature and by combination. Finally, (3) this innovative structure, then, directly helps to argue against the Parmenidean principle and allows What-is-not to be. We shall delve into these arguments sequentially.

In the previous texts, the Stranger compels the Friends of the Forms to concede the dilemma that the absolute and motionless Beings must be able to move (248d-249b). An intuitive but superficial solution is soon proffered: What-is encompasses both what never changes and what changes (249d). Namely, both the mutable things—such as the soul—and the motionless things fall under the alleged being. The Stranger, however, immediately identifies a difficulty for this perspective. It indicates that everything (What-is) is motion and rest (250a) which seems to suggest that Motion and Rest equally are (250a). In other words, according to this opinion, Motion and Rest are Beings in the same sense. Then, we have to face the ridiculous deduction that Motion is identical with Rest. For if Motion is and Rest is, then Motion equals to Rest. This deduction is obviously built on the omitted premise that "to be" refers to a strictly identical relationship between the subject and the object. Namely, according to this premise, *a* is *b* if and only if *a* is completely identical with *b*, according to which only if $a_1$ and $a_2$ are respectively and completely identical with *b*, then can we reasonably say that $a_1$ is $a_2$. Therefore, since Motion and Rest both are (beings), it is undoubtedly indicated that Motion is equal to Rest.

The interlocutors obviously cannot accept this deduction, prompting the Stranger to claim "do you conceive What-is as a third thing alongside

them which encompasses Rest and Motion? And when you say that they both are, are you taking the two of them together and focusing on their association with being?" (250b) Thus, neither Motion nor Rest are identical with Being, and they only participate in Being. However, though this proposition is correct and is later endorsed by the interlocutors (254d; 259a), meanwhile this interpretation is soon revealed to be untenable within the current metaphysical construct. Because it results in the premise that "What-is doesn't either rest or move" (250c), but it seems to be impossible for anything to neither rest nor move (250c-d). This absurd deduction, again, also stems from the omitted premise previously mentioned. According to this premise, if *x* is *F*, it should be completely identical to *F*, and hence it necessarily owns the property of *F*. Then, since Being is not Motion, it cannot acquire the property of Motion—namely, moving, so Being is not moving. And similarly Being is not rest because it is not Rest. This leads to the ridiculous conclusion that Being neither moves nor rests.

Therefore, given this current understanding, the proposition that "Everything (or Being) is motion and rest" cannot be meaningful in any way because of this omitted premise. And this premise is clearly coherent with the Parmenidean principle. For according to this principle, an entity can only be recognized as What-is if it is wholly identical to What-is, otherwise it can only be What-is-not. Hence, the Stranger needs to find a new way to interpret how the mutable things (such as the soul and known Forms) qualify as beings and how What-is-not is. And clearly, this new approach ought to exclude the omitted premise which only admits the strict identity sense of "Being".

To meet this stipulation, the Stranger restarts his exploration by asking how could the same thing be predicated by several terms (251a). Both interlocutors agree that this sort of predication is possible, otherwise we could only repeat the self-predication proposition "*F* is *F*" like the young people and old late-learners who only permit this sort of predication (251b-c).[209] And this view, undoubtedly, has already been rejected in previous discussions against the Stranger's first attempt to justify "everything is Motion and Rest" which merely permits the strict identical predication of "Being". Now, the Stranger advances by asserting that if only such self-predication is permissible, then we are unable to make any meaningful prediction for it actually forbids the combination between "Being", "Motion", "Rest" and all other Forms (251d-252c). Then, the interlocutors turn to examine how could these Forms associate with each other, which indeed emerges as the key to resolving the general puzzle of their whole discussion.

The solution includes three main sub-arguments. The Stranger first demonstrates that Being, Motion, Rest, Sameness and Difference are the five "most important" and independent kinds (*megista genē*). And then, by taking Motion as an example, he shows that those five kinds are able to associate with each other. Motion can even be combined with Rest. Thus, Motion, as a What-is-not, is. Finally, he proves the general premise that What-is-not is and then overturns the Parmenidean principle.

In the first sub-argument, the Stranger enumerates the five most important and independent kinds, and suggests the ontological structure

[209] The old late-learner, many scholars agree, is pointed at Antisthenes, a sophist contemporary to Plato and a student of Gorgias. Cf. Cornford, 1935: 254; de Rijk, 1986: 115.

of Being which foreshadows the key to solving the puzzle of the Friends. In the previous discussion, the Stranger has already mentioned three of them: Being, Motion and Rest. And now, he claimed that there are two more important kinds hidden in the relationship among them—namely, Sameness and Difference. The Stranger, further, argues that both Sameness and Difference are not identical with those three kinds (255a-e). And when he distinguishes Difference from Being, he indeed reveals Plato's new understanding of the beings:

> "But I think you'll admit that some of What-is's are said by themselves, but some are always said in relation to other things…But Difference always is in relation to another…But it wouldn't be if What-is and Difference weren't completely distinct. If Difference shared in both kinds the way What-is does, then some of the things that are different would be different without being different in relation to anything different. In fact, though, it turns out that whatever is different definitely has to be what it is from something that's different." (255c-d)

There are two main interpretations of this argument based on different readings of the Stranger's distinction between Being "by themselves" (*kath hauta*) and "in relation to another" (*pros alla*). The traditional one, which can be traced back to Diogenes Laertius, asserts that here the Stranger argues two senses of predications: the absolute and the relational. The former needs no other thing to clarify itself, such as in the case "Socrates is a man", whereas the latter can only be given with an additional interpretation or compare with others, such as "Socrates is

shorter than Theaetetus".[210] And the other interpretation, mainly argued and championed by Vlastos, believes that the aim of the Stranger is to make a division between the existence sense and copula sense of Being. "Being by itself", from this perspective, refers to a self-predication of Being, and "Being in relation to another" to the Being's being predicated of another thing.[211] We prefer the latter reading. This reading is more natural in the context of the Stranger's argument. The Stranger embarks on his argumentation by announcing that he is going to "give an account of how we call the very same thing, whatever it may be, by several names" at 251a. He first criticizes the idea of the young people and old late-learners who exclusively embrace self-predicative propositions such as "good is good" or "man is man" (251b-d). Then he underscores that we ought to also use "being" as a copula, only by which can we be able to state the proposition that "*x* is *F*" and allow one thing to associate with another in the way of participation (252a-c).

This dichotomy between self-predication and copula sense of Being, from our perspective, is might be the background of the Stranger's introducing Sameness and Difference as the most important kinds. At the beginning of this argument, he recapitulates the most important kinds which they have just been discussing—Being, Motion, and Rest—and the relationship among them: (a) Motion is Motion; (b) Rest is Rest; (c) Motion is different from Rest; and (d) Rest is different from Motion. Each of those three kinds "is different from two of them, but is the same as itself" (254d). It is obvious that in the cases "Motion is Motion" and

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[210] Malcolm, 2006: 275-277. Others, cf. Cornford, 1935: 282-285; Bluck, 1975: 148-150; Buckels, 2015: 320-322, etc.
[211] Ackrill, 1957: 1-2; Vlastos, 1970: 287, 288 n.44; 1973: 323-326; Reeve, 1985: 54-55.

"Rest is Rest", Being is used in the sense of self-predication. On the contrary, Being in the "Rest is different from Motion" and "Motion is different from Rest" is a copula signifying that Motion and Rest are not identical to each other. The former self-predication of Motion and Rest introduces the kind Sameness, while the copula Being in the latter case introduces the kind Difference. Then, when he attempts to prove the difference between Being and Sameness, he says, "if Being and Sameness doesn't signify distinct things, then when we say that Motion and Rest both are, we'll be labelling both of them as being the same" (255b-c). This suggests that in some cases (such as "Motion is Motion") Being, when referring to the self-predication of the subject, is quite similar to Sameness by signifying the identical relationship in the statement "Motion is the same as Motion". But apparently Being must be dissimilar with Sameness in some other aspects, otherwise Motion would be identical with Rest when we say "Motion is *F*" and "Rest is *F*". And clearly Being does not refer to a relational relationship but a copula predication in these propositions. Thus, the difference between Being and Difference lies in this: unlike Being both can signify the self-predication of the subject in a proposition and a copula predication, Difference is never used in a subject's self-predication for nothing is by itself different from itself.

This argument is pivotal for two main reasons. On the one hand, it elucidates the essence of Difference, which soon plays an irreplaceable role in his later argument regarding the combination relationship among all five most important kinds. For it allows every kind to be by participating in Being without being identical with Being because they are different from Being. On the other hand, it unveils the ontological

structure of these kinds, which is also the key to solving the Parmenides' puzzle. Given that Being has already been demonstrated to possess dual senses, every kind that could combine with Being embodies two corresponding layers. Take Motion as an example, in the case "Motion is Motion", Being is used in its self-predicative sense, emphasizing the mere and core property which the kind Motion itself owns—namely, motion. Conversely, in the case "Motion is different from Rest", Being is used in the role of the copula, implying the corresponding property of Motion, "being different", does not exist inherently in the kind Motion. And such sort of property is attainable by the subject solely through a combination with other kinds, just as Motion is different not by itself but by associating Difference (255e).

This dichotomy is not only linguistic or logical. Instead, the Stranger directly designates the self-predicative property as the nature of a kind. At 255a-b, he suggests that the nature of Motion is Motion and Rest is Rest. And he also asserts that the nature of Difference is "to be different from another" which is not the nature of other kinds (255e). Several pages later, he explicitly points out the nature of Largeness is the large, Beauty the beautiful, Not-Largeness the not-large, Not-Beauty the not-beautiful, and eventually Not-Being the not-being (258b-c). Therefore, in the text, the Stranger presents the ontological structure of kinds. Each kind includes at least two main layers, the essential one which is the nature of a kind and appears to be a self-predication of this kind, and a subordinate one (my term) which is not inherently owned by the kind but acquired through combination with others. And this ontological structure of kind or Form, obviously, is never clarified and provided in Plato's previous dialogues and the first model of change and motion.

Next, how can this structure of kind, as well as the discussion of Difference, help to solve the Stranger's original puzzle? This becomes evident in the Stranger's ensuing argument of the combination relationship among the five most important kinds by taking Motion as an example. He argues that Motion is both Rest and not Rest (255e; 256b)[212]; both Being and not Being (256a; 256d); both Sameness and not Sameness (256a); both Difference and not Difference (256c).

This format instantly reminds us of the Stranger's primary and failed attempt to deal with the mutable being which we just discussed: Being encompasses both the movable and unmovable things (249d). At that place, the Stranger highlights that this view is no more than reiterating the unsuccessful idea that "everything is hot and cold" which is held by the early philosophers (250a). The Stranger criticized that any proposition in the form of "*x* is both *F* and not-*F*" has to face the following difficulties: If so, *F* would be identical with not-*F* (243e-244a); and further, if *x* is understood as something other than *F* and not-*F*, it must be neither *F* nor not-*F*, but what is not *F* has to be not-*F* and vice versa (250c-d). And we have analyzed that this is because in the meantime "*x* is *F*" can only mean "*x* is identical with *F*".

Therefore, according to the Stranger's previous arguments, it appears implausible for Motion or other kinds to be both *F* and not-*F*. So how could this proposition suddenly become legitimate at 255e-256d? The critical reason is expounded upon in the following text:

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[212] Though Theaetetus denies that Motion can blend with Rest in the previous discussion (252d) here after a dialectical progress this combination is possible. The puzzle about the combination of Motion and Rest, cf. Reeve, 1985: 47-49.

> "We have to agree without any qualms that Motion is the same and not the same. When we say that it's the same and not the same, we aren't speaking the same way. When we say it's the same, that's because it shares in the same in relation to itself. But when we say it's not the same, that's because of its association with Difference. Because of its association with Difference, Motion is separated from Sameness, and so becomes not it but different. So that it's right to say that it's not the same." (256a-b)

Thus, thanks to the Stranger's new analysis of the ontological structure of kind, we are currently able to posit that Motion is both the same and not the same. For it is same and not same in different levels. As we have just analyzed, every kind has two main layers, the nature layer which represents the self-predication of the kind, and the subordinate layer which contains the properties acquired through associating with other kinds. And according to this text, "Motion is same" because itself always remains the same with itself. So it is clear that because the nature of Motion is motion, then it is by nature combined with the Sameness. At the same time, Motion is different not because of its own nature, but due to its association with Difference when being compared with other kinds—as the Stranger claims, Difference is always in relation to another (255d). Therefore, the layered structure of a kind allows it to become both *F* and not-*F* so long as these two opposite properties reside on different levels or aspects.

This is further reinforced by the cases of Motion's combinations with other kinds. Motion is not Rest because it is different from Rest by its association with Difference when being compared with Rest (255e). But at the same time, Motion itself can partake in Rest (256b), for its nature is always Motion and never changes. Similarly, Motion can combine with Being because of its nature (256a).[213] While it also is not because it is different from Being by participating in Difference (256d-e).

In summation, we have attained a comprehensive understanding of the ontological structure of a Kind or Form. It encompasses two distinct levels. The essential one is the nature of this kind and invariably presents as its self-prediction. For instance, the nature of Motion is motion and Sameness is sameness. And the other one is subordinate and it contains properties which do not inherently exist in the kind but are acquired through combination. These properties could be further divided into two sorts: some properties are acquired because of the kind itself or its nature; the others because of the kind's relationship with other kinds. Take Motion as an example again:

| **Motion** | |
|---|---|
| **level** | **property** |
| nature | motion |

[213] Although here the Stranger does not directly say "Motion is" because of its nature, this is quite self-evident in the text. At 258a, he says that "the nature of Difference appeared as being one of Beings". And later he also asserts that since What-is-not always is not, it has not-being as its own nature and hence is one kind of Beings (258b-c). So it is natural that "Motion is" also due to its self-predictive essence.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| subordination | because of its nature | sameness<br>rest<br>being |
| | because of its relationship to others | difference |

This structure elucidated above is notably absent in the early philosophers' doctrines, and even never clarified in Plato's middle dialogues. Yet it is the very key to solving their difficulty. Indeed, it suggests a resolution to the Friends of Form's puzzle of the mutable being. As we have seen, their difficulty is two-fold. On the one hand, the soul itself should be able to move, while at the same time as a Being it ought to always remain the same. On the other hand, the Forms, as what is grasped in the cognitive activity, should both be moved during the process of the soul's cognition and motionless as the object of Intellect (248d-249c). In the meantime, the new structure of kind seems to help us respond to this double dilemma.

The reason for both the Intellect and the Forms to be able to remain stable and be the same during their motions, then, is that their nature never changes in these processes.[214] For instance, the nature of the Form *F*-ness is always *F*. And when it is acted upon when being known by the soul, it does not alter its own nature and not move inherently, but only moves in its relation with the soul and merely acquires the property motion at the

[214] Similarly, Bluck, 1975: 106.

level of subordination by combining with the Motion. It is the same for the participation, another sort of motion of Forms mentioned by the interlocutors. When the Form *F*-ness participates in another Form (say, *G*-ness) and undergoes some motion in this process (say, *F*-ness comes to be *G*), it only shares in the Form Motion at the level "because of its relationship to others", but the nature of *F*-ness always remains to be the same.

In this way, Beings can change. And this further helps to satisfy the Stranger's original target to argue against the Parmenidean principle by proving that "What-is-not is" and "What-is is not". Indeed, we have already seen that the case of Motion is an example of "What-is-not is". The Stranger then turns to figure out the more general and complete interpretation of "What-is-not is". He first emphasizes the essence of What-is-not, positing that What-is-not refers to the kinds that are able to differentiate from Being by partaking in the "Difference" (256e). Then, due to this participation of "Difference", What-is-not does not signify an extreme opposite of Being—namely, non-existence—but indicates something different from Being (257b-c). Thus, these What-is-not's are still able to be shared in Being. At the same time, though they only "are" by associating with Being, those What-is-not's have their own inherent and self-predicative nature. The nature of Largeness is large, the Beauty is beautiful, so the nature of What-is-not is not being (258b-c). Given their intrinsic nature, those What-is-not's consistently retain being the same as themselves. And when they participate in Being and "are", they only acquire "being" at the level of subordination, and during this process their nature of not being remains unchanged. The Stranger claims that "What-is-not also was and is not being, and is one form among the many

What-is" (258c). Thus, "What-is-not is" is justified, successfully refuting the Parmenidean principle. This view may seem to be trivial to the contemporary eye. However, as we have argued in the first chapter, during Plato's era, this principle was so powerful that it was not only obeyed by the Eleatic scholars but also by Anaximander, Empedocles and many other philosophers. Therefore, Plato's endeavour to overturn the Parmenidean principle is undoubtedly groundbreaking and revolutionary in the early fourth century BC.

In summary, the keystone for overturning the Parmenidean principle lies in a profound re-examination of the core concept "Being". As articulated by the Stranger, "What-is indisputably is not millions of things, and all of the others together, and also each of them, are in many ways and also are not in many ways" (259b). In essence, What-is is not a general genus or entity encompassing various things, but merely a kind in which many others—as What-is-not—participate. So What-is-not is. And this understanding is based on Plato's new analysis of Being's ontological structure. Without this layered structure, each kind would contravene the Law of non-contradiction, being compelled to embody both *F* and not-*F* (such as Being and not-Being, Motion and Rest, Same and Different, etc.) On the contrary, now the Stranger clarifies that the kind can be *F* and not-*F* at different levels, allowing even Motion to combine with Rest.

How, then, does this theory undermine Plato's first model of change and motion? As we have consistently posited, according to this model, Plato's theory of change and motion is founded on Parmenidean principle of What-is. He accepts Parmenides' doctrine of What-is as a precise description of Form, viz. that it always is and never changes. And at the

same time, the Parmenidean principle also provides the foundation for his understanding of the generative character of change. Plato, then, considers the Form as the reason for the mechanism of generative change, which vouches for the legitimacy of non-generative motion which is irrelevant to the participation of a Form. But now, with Parmenides' fundamental principle of What-is overturned, the Forms are not only able to move, they can even come to be their opposite. Additionally, the Forms or Kinds are proven to be able to participate in each other due to their layered structure. So to participate in a Form does not necessarily result in a generative change.

And evidently, Plato does not confine this novel explanation and mechanism to the five most important kinds discussed above. Towards the end of this discussion, the Stranger suggests that this new theory is equally applicable to all kinds. For instance, he claims that What-is is What-is-not because it is not "an indefinite number" of others, rather than merely other four most important kinds (257a). Furthermore, he also enumerates the Beautiful and the not-Beautiful, the Large and the not-Large, the Just and the not-Just as forms of What-is and What-is-not (257d-258c). In this way, not only the five most important kinds but also all other kinds are capable of breaking Parmenides' prohibition that What-is cannot be What-is-not (258c-e). Consequently, all these kinds, akin to the five most important kinds, are able to change by participating in each other, without undergoing any generation. Therefore, the first model's interpretation of change and motion is no longer tenable. And the Stranger's original puzzle regarding how Beings can avoid undergoing generative changes when they are affected or known (248b-e).

## 4. Philosophical Results of Plato's Reflections

Therefore, at the end of this three-dialogue dialectical progress, in the meantime, Plato's first model of change and motion inevitably collapses. But the analyses and arguments within these dialogues are not exclusively negative, instead, they also hint at the potential path towards Plato's subsequent systematical interpretation of change and motion.

**First, the flux phenomena.** Though in these dialogues Plato undermines his first model, he never denies the empirical phenomena of flux which the first model seeks to interpret. Namely, he does not negate the experience that sensible things are always in flux, oscillating between opposites. As we have discussed, in the *Theaetetus* the interlocutors merely dismiss the stricter Heraclitean Flux—a doctrine which extremely negates stability, compelling the sensible to change ceaselessly and undergo generations. However, they still leave the room to the primary flux to some extent. And further, given that in the *Theaetetus* and the *Parmenides* the scope of Form has been seriously narrowed, now the Forms can no longer cover all changes between opposites. So it suggests that there are many changes between opposites of the sensible which may not result from participation in the Forms, and hence they may not be generative. If so, even though the sensible particulars are always changing, they do not necessarily alter generatively as proposed in the first model. And in the next chapter, these changes are further clarified as disorderly motion resulting from the inherent nature and necessity of the sensible.

**Second and relatedly, the nature of the sensible.** In the *Sophist*, Plato argues that the Form has several layers including the nature and the

subordination. This structure, so far as we have seen, is never clarified in his previous works. Ìn this way, the Form is able to keep its identity during its change so long as its nature remains the same. This raises the question: How about the sensible particulars? Do they also have their own nature? Plato does not explicitly apply this novel analysis to the interpretation of the sensible in this dialogue. But the nature of the sensible will be a central issue that Plato intends to deal with in his subsequent understanding of change and motion represented in later dialogues.

**Third, the real Form and generation.** And moreover, based on Plato's current analysis, there should not exist any negative and sensible Forms. At the same time, it is demonstrated that participating in a Form does not necessarily result in a generation. Nevertheless, these premises do not negate that a real generation is caused by sharing in a real Form. In the following dialogues, Plato will show the refined relationship between the real Form and real generation. The essence of generation, as well as the process of generation under the effect of Form, will eventually be elucidated.

**And last, soul and the cause of motion.** In the first model, Plato asserts that Form is the reason for generative changes, and at the same time, he also claims that the soul is the cause of all motions. But he never clarifies the relationship between these two mechanisms of change and motion. This relationship, indeed, may be hardly interpreted under the framework of the first model. For all changes between opposites are said to be caused by the Form, but many of them—such as the hot wind becoming cold—seem to be irrelevant to the work of the soul. Now, given that the

previous views concerning the scope of Form and the mechanism of change have been challenged, Plato is going to provide a new perspective, finally unveiling the soul's ultimate role in generations.