

**PLATO'S SOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM OF FALSEHOOD IN
THE *SOPHIST***

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ABSTRACT

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The main concern of this thesis is to show Plato's solution of the problem of falsehood in his dialogue of the *Sophist*. In the *Sophist*, it is argued that false statements are the expressions of something which are not real by Plato. On the other hand, what is not real has been considered as what does not exist, namely, as non-being in the ontological tradition until Plato. Furthermore, non-being can neither be thought nor be stated; since thought must be thought of something which exists. Therefore, to speak of the possibility of false statements is a contradiction because it means to attempt to state nothingness. However, Plato overcomes this difficulty by asserting a different definition of non-being. Plato asserts that non-being is not necessarily opposite of being. According to this, non-being is only 'different' from

being and exists as much as being and this is possible by the combination of ‘Kind of Being’ and ‘Kind of ‘Difference’. In this context, this thesis purposes to show firstly how Plato renders an ontological possibility to non-being and secondly how he applies this inference to statements in order to solve the problem in the *Sophist*. In addition, the results of Plato’s assumption that there is a correspondence between language and reality are discussed with respect to the problem of falsehood.

Keywords: Falsehood, Truth, Being, Non-being, Difference, Statement, Ontology.

ÖZ

PLATON'UN *SOFİST*'TE HATA KAVRAMI SORUNUNU ÇÖZÜM YOLU

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Bu tezin ana amacı Platon'un *Sofist* diyalogunda hata kavramı problemine getirdiği çözümü göstermektir. *Sofist* diyalogunda Platon yanlış bildirimlerin gerçek olmayan şeylerin ifadeleri olduğunu iddia eder. Diğer yandan, Platon'a değin gelen ontolojik gelenekte gerçek olmayanın var olmadığı, yani, var olmayan olduğu kabul edilir. Bunun yanında, düşüncenin varolan bir şeyin düşüncesi olması gerektiği için, var olmayanın ne düşünülebileceği ne de ifade edilebileceği öne sürülür. Bu nedenle, yanlış ifadelerin olanağından bahsetmek bir çelişkidir çünkü bu hiçliği ifade etmeye çabalamak anlamına gelir. Fakat Platon bu güçlüğü 'var olmayan'ın farklı bir tanımını yaparak aşmaya çabalar. Platon 'var olmayan'ın 'varolanın'ın zorunlu bir karşıtı olmadığını ileri sürer. Buna göre 'var olmayan' 'varolandan' sadece *farklı* bir şeydir ve onun kadar varlığa sahiptir ve bu durum 'varolan türü' ile 'farklılık türü'nün bir

arada bulunabilmesi ile mümkündür. Bu bağlamda, bu çalışma öncelikle Platon'un sorunu çözmek için *Sofist* diyalogunda 'varolmayana' nasıl ontolojik bir olanak kazandırdığını, ikinci olarak da bu çıkarımı ifadelere nasıl uyguladığını göstermektedir. Ayrıca Platon'un gerçeklikle dil arasında bir uyumlu bir karşılıklılık olduğu varsayımı hata kavramı problemi açısından tartışılmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yanlış, Doğru, Varolan, Varolmayan, Farklılık, Bildirim, Ontoloji.

To My Parents

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 The General Structure and Content of Plato's Sophist

The *Sophist* (Σοφιστής) is a dialogue belonging to Plato's later period. Participants of the dialogue are Theodorus, Socrates, an Elean Stranger and Theaetetus. Except the beginning part of the dialogue, the whole discussion is made by the Stranger and Theaetetus. The second title of the dialogue is ἡ περὶ τοῦ ὄντος λογικός: *or on being: logical*.¹ τοῦ ὄντος is the genitive form of the participium τὸ ὄν which comes from the Greek verb εἶναι that means 'to be'. This word can be translated into English as 'Being' briefly, though it has many different meanings. Such as it also has senses which mean *existing thing, the present*, but also *reality, truth*, opposed to that which is not.² λογικός, on the other hand, comes from the Greek word λόγος, which means *speech, reason, rational faculty and statement*, and is related with speaking or speech and also belonging to the reason.³ In this sense, at the very beginning of the dialogue, we can see that Plato admits 'Being' and 'speech' or 'statement' as reciprocal with each other. The reason is that, speech or statement must always be of something

¹ Plato, *The Sophist*, translated by Harold North Fowler, 1952, p. 265.

² Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 560.

³ *Ibid.* p. 476.

which *is*. This correspondence constitutes the main structure of the dialogue which shall be investigated in detail in the following chapters.

At the introductory part, Socrates asks the Stranger to explain that whether they make a distinction between Sophist (*Σοφιστής*), Statesman (*Πολιτικός*) and Philosopher (*Φιλόσοφος*) in his country:

Socr.: This: did they think of all these as a single type, or as two, or did they distinguish three types and attach one of the three corresponding names to each other? (217A).

The response of the Stranger is that they are, of course, divided into three different types. Yet, to give a clear definition for each one is not an easy task. He says that the definitions of them can only be gained in a long investigation (217E).⁴ Then they decide that the discussion will be made between the Stranger and Theaetetus. The conversation is guided by the Stranger and Theaetetus takes the role of a respondent in the dialogue.

The Stranger proposes to start with Sophist. Throughout the dialogue, the definition of Sophist will remain the main issue of the discussion. And the status of Statesman will be considered in the *Statesman* between the Stranger and young Socrates. It can be said that there is continuity between these two dialogues. The *Statesman* begins with

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 167.

Theodorus' wish from the Stranger to continue the discussion with Statesman and Philosopher. And the Stranger's response is:

Str: Well, then after finding the Sophist, the task we now have to face is to search out the statesman, or so it seems to me. (258B).

Hence we can think that Plato had in his mind a trilogy which ends with the *Philosopher*. Cornford says that there are some references which about that both in the *Sophist* (253E) and in the *Statesman* (257A-C, 258A).⁵ However, according to him, Plato never published the *Philosopher* in writing, since the Philosopher contemplates the nature of reality and for Plato “the ultimate truth could never be set down on paper, and ought not to be, even if it could.”⁶

Another important point is the method of the discussion. We know that the Stranger comes from the school of Parmenides and Zeno (216A).⁷ Cornford sates that Zeno had sometimes used the ‘*eristic*’ method. The word is derived from the Greek word (ἐρις) which means *battle* or *fighting* in general sense.⁸ The main purpose of the method is to find a contradiction in opponent's argument and to disprove it (*reductio ad absurdum*). In Plato's *Parmenides*, we can find the some examples of this method used by Zeno.

⁵ M. Francis Cornford, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge (The Theaetetus and the Sophist of Plato)*, 1957, p. 168.

⁶ *Ibid*, p. 169.

⁷ *Ibid*, p. 165.

⁸ *Lexicon op.cit.*, p. 314.

But the proper followers of this method are known as the Megarian scholars.⁹ This type of discussion ends with a negative conclusion so that no definition can be achieved. For Plato, however, a real investigation must be dealt with definitions of true nature of things. The choice of the Stranger is to define his nature in a clear formula:

Str.: The thing to which each of us gives that name we may perhaps have privately before our mind; but it is always desirable to have reached an agreement about the thing itself by means of explicit statements, rather than be content to use the same word without formulating what it means. (218C)

Thus, the method used to obtain the definition of Sophist is assigned as dialectic (*διαλεκτική*). At 253D, the Stranger defines this method as dividing the things in accordance with their kinds properly. The Stranger asserts that a real philosophical discourse can only be provided by means of this method, since it is a science which shows the way by means of which some kinds can combine together and some cannot. In this sense, we can say that Plato admits the philosophical investigation as the art of distinguishing, called dialectic in the dialogue, kinds without mistaking one form (*γέννη*) for another.¹⁰

⁹ Cornford *op.cit.*, p. 169.

¹⁰ W.K.C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy, Vol. V, The Later Plato and the Academy*, 1978, p.129.

After determining the method, the main route of the dialogue is turned towards to the nature of Sophist. However, instead of investigating the definition of Sophist directly, the Stranger chooses a sample model (*παράδειγμα*) in order to specify and make clear what they seek. The Stranger offers ‘angler’ (*ἄσπαλιευτής*) as the model because of the similarities between this craft or art (*τέχνη*)¹¹ and the sophistic process.¹² The stranger remarks three fundamental reasons to begin with this sample model. The first is that the angler and what he does are well known by everyone. Secondly, there is a convention that everyone means the same person when talking about an angler. And lastly there is a resemblance art of the Sophist and that of the angler:

Str.: But the other (*sophist*) turns toward the land and to rivers of a different kind_rivers of wealth and youth, bounteous meadows, as it were-and he intends to coerce the creatures in them. (222A)

Using the dialectic method, the angler is described as the craftsman of the acquisitive art in opposition to the productive art, a man which gains his victims not peacefully but by force, and by hunting without fighting, and his victims are water animals like fish but not like waterfowl, and his instrument is a hook (221B-C).¹³ In a very long discussion they reach several related analysis of the Sophist, but the last definition

¹¹ In Ancient Greek *τέχνη* implies both craft and art.

¹² Fowler, *op.cit.*, p., 272.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p., 281-283.

appears at 235A: “*He is a kind of a juggler, an imitator of realities.*”¹⁴,¹⁵ Like the Angler, the Sophist’s method is described as acquisitive and he uses his art for money by capturing youths of wealth. However, there is a difference between an angler and a sophist which is that while the Angler does not produce anything, the Sophist deceives his victims by making illusions which are not real.

This conclusion leads to a new discussion on how the Sophist can persuade his pupils by means of illusions. If his art is dealt with making appearances (*φάντασμα*) (236C), it can be said that he expresses or produces something which *are not real*. The Stranger and Theaetetus are now in an extreme difficulty. The Stranger asserts that to express something which is not real involves some contradictory statements with which they have to be faced, otherwise the definition of the Sophist, which they have made, could not be based on a reliable ground. The Stranger indicates the difficulty of the problem in these words:

Str.: The truth is, my friend, that we are faced with an extremely difficult question. This ‘appearing’ or ‘seeming’ without really ‘being’, and saying of something which yet is not true—all these expressions have always been and still are deeply involved in perplexity. It is extremely hard, Theaetetus, to find correct terms in which one may say or think that falsehoods have a real existence, without being caught in a contradiction by the mere utterance of such words. (236D-E)

¹⁴ μιμητής ὡν τῶν ὄντων. μιμητής is the man he uses the art of μίμησις which means imitation or the art of imitation.

¹⁵ Fowler, *op.cit.*, p., 331.

1.2 The Purpose of the Study

The last quotation contains the main concepts and the interest of this study. The concepts which shall constitute the structure of this study are ‘appearing’ or ‘seeming’ without ‘being’, ‘saying something what is not true’ and ‘falsehood’. The difficulty arises from the dictum of Parmenides that we cannot say or think something which *is not* (237A). The problem can be formulated as following; thought or speech must always have an object, and this object must be real, since no one can speak legitimately or think of something which simply is not.¹⁶ It can be easily noticed that Plato equates ‘is not’ with ‘to be false’ and implication of this equation will be discussed. At this point, the discussion focuses on Parmenides’ dictum mentioned above and the Sophist seems to have found a shelter. Since if it is not possible to talk about something which *is not*, there could be no room for falsehood. Therefore, Plato’s main issue is to show that ‘what is not’ has existence as much as ‘what is’.

The main purpose of this study is to show Plato’s approach to the problem of falsehood in the context of his ontological attitude in the *Sophist*. The importance of Plato’s consideration of falsehood in the *Sophist* is that Plato attempts to give an adequate reply to the Sophist without applying directly to his theory of forms. Instead, he mentions both Parmenides’ dictum about ‘what is not’ and the Sophist’s claims about falsehood one by one, and he establishes an ontological ground which will provide a possibility of ‘existence’ to ‘what is not’ consequently and a possibility

¹⁶ Cornford *op.cit.*, p., 206.

for falsehood. In this sense, Plato strongly believes that the problem of falsehood cannot be solved unless its ontological components are analyzed.

In the first chapter, I shall attempt to explain how Plato constitutes the existence of non-being (which is not). In order to provide that, he will first investigate the nature of being (what is) in the context of the previous thinkers. In this discussion, there will be five fundamental kinds which are being, change, rest, same and different and some of them can blend with each other. This combination of kinds gives the possibility to Plato to say that 'what is not' is not completely opposite of 'what is', but it is *different* from being. In this way, Parmenides' dictum could be refuted and 'what is not' has some sort of existence. This part will be the main part of this study, since this part, which begins with the discussion of 'what is not' and ends with the solution of the problem, takes almost the whole part of the dialogue. For this reason, I would not like to disorder the structure of the dialogue, so I will follow the order of discussion in accordance with the *Sophist*.

In the second chapter, I will first try to make clear what Plato means by statements. Plato asserts that a statement consists of at least one name and one verb. In addition, meaning is the basic features of the statements. That is, whether true or false, all statements are about something and they are meaningful. In this sense, meaning provides the possibility of statements, instead of truth or facticity. Finally, I will consider his application of 'what is not' to false statement and at the end of Plato's investigation possibility of falsehood will be provided.

In this study, I shall follow Plato's text from Cornford's translation in general and try to explain its parts with respect to the main concern of this study. For this reason, I will mainly attempt to focus on the text rather than secondary resources. I shall give original Greek words for crucial concepts in order to decrease the obscurity of some senses. The reason is that, sometimes translation does not give the whole meaning of a word. For example, τὸ ὄν has several different meanings in the dialogue like existence, what is existent, being, reality, what is real. In these situations, I will give the original word in parentheses in order to match English translations with original text.

CHAPTER 2
HOW PLATO DERIVES EXISTENCE OF NON-BEING (WHAT IS NOT)
FROM THE KIND OF DIFFERENCE

2.1 Parmenides' Dictum and the Problem of Non-Being

As we have mentioned above, the Stranger and Theaetetus are encountered with a difficulty in their inquiries. The Stranger expresses the difficulty of statement with a quotation from Parmenides:

Str.: The audacity of the statement lies in its implication that 'what is not' has being; for in no other way could a falsehood come to have being. But, my young friend, when we were of your age the great Parmenides from beginning to end testifies against this, constantly telling us what he also says in his poem:

'Never shall this be proved_ that things that are not are; but do thou, in thy inquiry, hold back thy thought from this way.' (237A)

In this way, two main concepts of our inquiry are introduced. First is being of '*what is not*' (τὸ μὴ ὄν εἶναι). Second is falsehood (ψεῦδος). The stranger holds that the possibility of falsehood is dependent upon the possibility of 'what is not'; since according to him, when one speaks falsely, he or she is talking about something

which is not real. Parmenides' dictum, however, insistently emphasizes that we cannot think of *what is not* or even utter it, since, in this situation, our thought or speech does not denote anything, it becomes senseless.

The same problem appears in the *Theaetetus*. The topic of this dialogue is what the true nature of knowledge (*ἐπιστήμη*) is. Three definitions of knowledge are suggested. The first is that knowledge is perception (151D-187A). The second is that knowledge is true opinion (187A-201C). And the third is that knowledge is true opinion plus *logos* (201C-210B). But none of them is admitted as a satisfactory definition, and each of them is rejected in their turn. The important point, however, is that if we can talk about true judgments, we could also talk about opposite ones. And again the false judgment is understood as thinking a thing that is not:

Socr.: 'Can any man think what is not, either about something that is or absolutely?' I suppose we must answer to that 'Yes, when he believes something and what he believes is not true' (188D)

Thus the problem becomes a vicious circle, since thinking falsely means thinking of what is not, and it means thinking nothing, because thought must be thought of something, and as a conclusion it is not thinking at all. Hence, nobody can think what is not, and it seems that there is no room for fallacy.¹⁷

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p., 115.

However, Plato leaves the problem unsolved in the *Theaetetus* and the dialogue ends with an aporetic final. This may be the reason why the same problem recurs in the *Sophist* and takes a very important place.

Thus, the problem becomes clear. We know that the aim of the discussion was to define what the Sophist in fact is. At 235A, the Sophist is defined as illusions or appearances maker which are not real. The Stranger accuses him for deceiving his pupils by saying bewitching untrue words on every subject.

Str.: Well then, may we not expect to find that there is another art which has to do with words, by virtue of which it is possible to bewitch the young through their ears with words while they are still standing at a distance from the realities of truth, by exhibiting to them spoken images of all things, so as to make it seem that they are true and that the speaker is the wisest of all men in all things? (234C).

From Parmenides' dictum, however, Plato maintains an ontological difficulty that it is not possible to say or to think what is false, since it requires *what is not*. Therefore, to maintain the possibility of falsehood leads a contradictory statement; because there cannot be anything except from 'what is' and 'what is not'. For this reason, the dictum of Parmenides must be circumvented in order to defeat the Sophist and gain a reliable definition of him.

From 237B to 239C ‘what is not’ and ‘the totally unreal’ (τὸ μηδαμῶς ὄν) are admitted as equivalent and Parmenides’ dictum is approved again.

Str.: You see the inference then: one cannot legitimately utter the words, or speak or think of that which just simply is not; it is unthinkable, not to be spoken of or uttered or expressed. (238C)

2.2 Non-Being Has Some Sort of Being

As we have seen the Stranger and Theaetetus cannot find a solution and confirm Parmenides. At this point, the Stranger offers a notion which can be discussed between sheer non-existence and full reality. The notion they introduced is image (εἰδῶλον) and was mentioned in the definition of the Sophist.

Theat.: Well, sir, what could we say an image was, if not another thing of the same sort, copied from the real thing?

Str.: ‘Of the same sort’? Do you mean another real thing; or what does ‘of the same sort’ signify?

Theat.: Certainly not real, but like it.

Str.: Meaning by ‘real’ a thing that really exists.

Theat.: Yes.

Str.: And by ‘not real’ the opposite of real?

Theat.: Of course.

Str.: Then by what is ‘like’ you mean what has not real existence, if you are going to call it ‘not real’.

Theat.: But it has some sort of existence.

Str.: Only not real existence, according to you.

Theat.: No, except that it is really a likeness.

Str.: So, not having real existence, it really is what we call a likeness?

Theat.: Real and unreal do seem to be combined in that perplexing way, and very queer it is.

Str.: Queer indeed. You see that now again by dovetailing them together in this way our hydra-headed Sophist has forced us against our will to admit that ‘what is not’ has some sort of being. (240A-C)

This passage is very significant, since as we have seen at the end of the discussion ‘what is not’ is combined with ‘some sort of being’. The statement can be formulated as following; images (*εἰδωλα*) are related to what they signify. In this sense, Plato asserts that although they are distinct from what they copy, they have some sort of existence. They are not real (*ἀληθές*), but they have at any rate existence of a kind. Therefore, it can be said that Plato holds that to resemble something means both to be (*ᾶν*) and not to be (*μὴ ᾶν*), since a statue of man, for example exists truly, whereas it is not a real man.¹⁸ So we can conclude that both are possible that an image or likeness has some sort of existence in so far as it represents something, and it does not exist in so far as it is not real.

It may be questioned, on the other hand, that whether Plato assimilates the distinctions between ‘to exist’, ‘to be real’ and ‘to be true’. It can be said that Plato seems to accept that ‘to be real’ means ‘to exist’. At 240C, where Theaetetus is

¹⁸ Runciman, W.G., *Plato's Later Epistemology*, 1962, p., 68.

talking about combination of real and unreal ($\tau\acute{o}\ \mu\eta\ \acute{\omicron}\nu\ \tau\tilde{\omega}\ \acute{\omicron}\nu\tau\iota$) denotes the existence of images.

Since, as we have mentioned before, $\tau\acute{o}\ \acute{\omicron}\nu$ means ‘being’, and this passage is translated as the combination of real and not real both by Cornford and Burnet.¹⁹ Therefore, it can be asserted that Plato does not make a sharp distinction between to exist, to be real and to be true.

2.3 The First Definition of Falsehood

In the previous section it was mentioned how the Sophist forces the Stranger and Theaetetus to admit that ‘what is not’ has some sort of being. Then, from 240C to 241A a detailed description of false statement ($\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma\ \psi\epsilon\upsilon\delta\eta\varsigma$) is introduced. In this context, statement ($\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$) can be understood as an inner speech, that is, it contains the features of an expression.

For Plato a ‘statement’ is simply the utterance in speech of a judgment made by the mind in its silent dialogue with itself.

False thinking ($\delta\omicron\zeta\acute{\alpha}\zeta\epsilon\iota\nu\ \psi\epsilon\upsilon\delta\eta\grave{\eta}$) is to think ‘what is not’ ($\tau\acute{o}\ \mu\eta\ \acute{\omicron}\nu$). In this sense, ‘what is not’ must have some sorts of being, otherwise anyone would ever be in error. Then the Stranger gives the definition of false statement that is to state things which are (do exist), are not, or to state things which are not (do not exist), are:

¹⁹ Burnet’s text is quoted from Runciman, p. 67.

Str.: And false thinking, again, will be thinking things contrary to the things that are?

Theat.: Yes.

Str.: You mean, then by false thinking, thinking things that are not?

Theat.: Necessarily.

Str.: Does that mean thinking that things that are not, are not, or that things that are not in any way, in some way are?

Theat.: It must at least mean thinking that things that are not, are in some way, if anyone ever to be in error even to the smallest extent. (240D-241A)

Plato argues that a true statement or expression must denote what is real. Furthermore, he asserts that what is real must be true. In the same way, a false statement is the statement of what is not real and does not exist. The difficulty, here, arises from that Plato accepts speech and 'being' as corresponding with each other. In other words, if a thing can be defined and stated, it must exist and be the real at the same time. The reason why Plato defines true and false statement in this way will be questioned in the next chapter.

In the dialogue *Cratylus*, Plato has questioned whether the correctness of names is provided naturally by things themselves and each thing has its correct name naturally, or things are named conventionally by human beings. However, the participants of the dialogue cannot solve this problem, and the dialogue ends with a suggestion that

things can be known without the aid of names by contemplating the things themselves.²⁰

In the *Sophist*, on the other hand, Plato seems to notice that truth and falsehood can only be attributed to statements. This will also be considered in detail in following discussions. However, Plato keeps the opinion that there must be a harmony between speech (*λόγος*) and ‘being’ (*τὸ ὄν*). Hence, he tries to derive truth or falsehood of statements from the ontological opposition between ‘being’ and ‘non-being’, instead of the concepts of truth and falsehood in logical sense. For this reason, Plato attempts to provide an ontological solution for the problem of falsehood.

2.4 The Nature of ‘What is’

After the Stranger and Theaetetus agreed to attempt to refute Parmenides’ dictum (241D), the Stranger asserts that they must firstly examine the status of ‘what is’. In this way, it can be made clear whether they are in a confusion about ‘what is’.

Str.: To take first things that are now supposed to be quite clear and see whether we are not in some confusion about them and too easily reaching conclusions on the assumption that we understand them well enough. (242C)

²⁰ Plato, *Collected Dialogues, The Cratylus*, translated by Benjamin Jowett, 2002, 438E, p., 472.

The discussion about ‘what is’ takes a very long place in the dialogue (242C-259D). It is mentioned with respect to the doctrines of the early philosophers, which are Parmenides himself, materialists and idealists, and they are generally criticized in respect of their approach to ‘what is’.

Theat.: Of course you mean we ought to begin by studying ‘reality’ (τὸ ὄν) and finding out what those who use the word think it stands for. (243D)

There are two important points introduced in the conclusion of this discussion. First, being (‘what is’) cannot be explained with one concept, that is, it cannot be reduced to one, since it carries some different features. And secondly, being (‘what is’) cannot be admitted as unchanging, it will be indicated that ‘being’ is not exempt from the state of change.

The critique of Parmenides’ doctrine that ‘all is one’ is given from 224B to 245E. Parmenides holds that the ‘whole reality’ is One Being in the form of existent unity. It implies absolute reality, that is, what is real is One (ἐν ὄν).²¹

Plato rejects this doctrine in two points. The first is that if there is One at all, it must be Real at the same time. Thus, ‘what is’ is named with two different names. As it has been mentioned Plato attributes separate existence to things and to names, namely,

²¹ Cornford *op.cit.*, p., 220.

they are distinct from what they name. Accordingly, when we name something, we naturally admit that there is name at one side; and there is thing at other side. In this statement, there are at least three entities; One, Real and 'what is named'. Therefore, it is inconsistent to give two names for One (244C). However, if anyone argues that a name is identical with what is named and they are not separated, there would be absurdity in that it is possible that we can totally know things by means of their names only (244D).

Str.: Again, there are those who say that the All is one thing.

Must we not do our best to find out what they mean by 'reality'?

Theat.: Surely.

Str.: Let them answer this question, then: 'You say, we understand, that there is only one thing?' 'We do', they will reply, won't they?'

Theat.: Yes.

Str.: 'Is it the same thing as that to which you give the name *one*? Are you applying two names to the same thing, or what do you mean?'

Theat.: What will their next answer be?

Str.: Obviously, Theaetetus, it is not so very easy for one who has laid down their fundamental assertion to answer this question or any other.

Theat.: How so?

Str.: In the first place, it is surely absurd for him to admit the existence of *two* names, when he has laid down that there is no more one thing.

Theat.: Of course.

Str.: And further, it is equally absurd to allow anyone to assert that a name can have any existence, when that would be inexplicable.

Theat.: How is it inexplicable?

Str.: If, on the one hand, he assumes that the name is different from the thing, he is surely speaking of *two* things.

Theat.: Yes.

Str.: Whereas, if he assumes that the name is the same as the thing, either he will have to say it is not the name of anything or if he says it is the name of something, it will follow that the name is merely a name of a name and of nothing else whatsoever. (244B-D)

The second critique of Parmenides' One is made by examining the concept of 'whole' (244D-16). The Stranger argues that according to Parmenides, One is a whole of parts. However, he says, if a thing consists of parts, it is divisible so it cannot be identical with Unity. That is, if there are parts of One, the plurality of beings is possible.

The next discussion is the dispute between materialists and 'Friends of Forms' (*οἱ τῶν εἰδῶν φίλοι*) which can be called idealists (245E-259D). Being a materialist is defined as follows:

Str.: For they hold upon every stock and stone and strenuously affirm that real existence belongs only to that which can be handled and offers resistance to the touch. They define reality (*οὐσία*) as the same thing as body (*σῶμα*) and as soon as one of opposite party asserts that anything without a body is real, they are utterly contemptuous and will not listen to another word. (246A-B)

And their opposites are described as;

Str.: Accordingly their adversaries are very wary in defending their position somewhere in the heights of unseen, maintaining with all their force that true reality (*ἡ ἀληθινὴ οὐσία*) consists in certain intelligible (*νοητά*) and bodiless (*ἄσώματα*) Forms (*εἶδη*). In the clash of argument they shatter and pulverise those bodies which their opponents wield, and what those others allege to be true reality they call not real being, but a sort of moving process of becoming (*γένεσις*). (246B-C)

As it has been seen, the dispute between materialists and idealists is quite clear. The former insists that only corporeal things exist, whereas the latter, on the other hand, claims that what are real and truly exist are incorporeal and thinkable Forms only.

In further discussions, we see that materialists admit that souls (*ψυχή*) exist, but they are also corporeal. However, the Stranger asserts that one soul may be just or unjust, or wise or unwise (247A). His counter argument to them is that they cannot prove that justice or wisdom is corporeal, although they can be present in souls. In this condition, materialists can neither venture to deny the existence of such kind of things nor want to accept the existence of such bodiless things (247C). Runciman argues that Plato seems here to have in mind an argument from the earlier version of his Theory of Forms; in short, the existences of such kinds of things like justice, wisdom, virtue etc. may be inferred from their sensible effects. For example, we can talk about white tables because of the existence of whiteness. In the same way, Plato holds that we can talk about virtuous men, because of the presence of virtue in their souls in the

*Sophist*²². As a result, if one asserts that there are only corporeal things, he or she is obliged to deny the existence of bodiless things like wisdom, virtue, justice which cannot be admitted in Plato's account.

The argument against the 'Friends of the Forms' is established at 248A-249D. It is reasserted that they separate becoming (*γένεσις*) from being (*οὐσία*). In addition, it is expressed that 'Friends of the Forms' hold that we can participate in becoming our senses (*αἰσθητικῶς*) by means of body (*σώματι*). On the other hand, we can participate in Real being (*ὄντως οὐσίαν*) with our thought (*διὰ λογισμοῦ*) by means of soul (*ψυχῇ*). According to them, while becoming is in state of change, real being is always in the same unchanging state.

The Stranger starts with examining the term of participating (*κοινωνεῖν*). This expression is used both to affect (*ποιήματα*) and to be affected (*πάθηματα*) as a result of power (*δυνάμεις*). The Stranger explains what he means by the action of knowing. According to that, to know something is to act on something. Since it is one of our actions, and though it is not a physical action, it changes some qualities of object of what is known. The object that which is unknown becomes what is known. Therefore, what is known should be explained as what is acted on by the action of knowing (248E). Consequently, when Reality (*οὐσία*) is known by the act of knowledge; "*in so far as it is known, be changed owing to being so acted upon; and that, we say, cannot happen to the changeless (τὸ ἠρεμοῦν)*" (248E). In other words, if knowing is an

²² Ruciman, op.cit., p., 77.

action, what is known must be affected by that action. In this situation, when Reality, which according to ‘Friends of the Forms’, is intelligible, bodiless, and out of the state of change, is known, it is effected by this action, so some qualities of it change. However, ‘Friends of the Forms’ would refuse this inference, in order to be consistent.²³ Otherwise, they would have to admit that Reality (*οὐσία*) is also in a state of change (*κίνησις*).

The importance of this part of this study is that Plato introduces change (*κίνησις*) into the realm of being (*οὐσία*) in this way. And this concept will take a crucial place to establish ontological ground for the possibility of falsehood in later sections. It will be one of fundamental forms, from which Plato deduces the existence of non-being.

Plato points out that if all things would be unchangeable, there would be no knowledge, since anything could not be known by the action of knowing. As it has been considered, there could not be any participation between knower and what is known. On the other hand, at 249C, he also says that all things are not changing, because if this would be so, we could not talk about intelligence (*νοῦς*), since its operations needs unchanging objects.²⁴

²³ Guthrie, op.cit., p., 139.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p., 142.

Str. Do you think that, without rest, there could ever be anything that abides constant in the same condition and in the same respects?

Theat.: Certainly not.

Str.: And without such objects can you make out that intelligence exists or could ever exist anywhere?

Theat.: It would be quite impossible. (249B-C)

Hence, it can be asserted that philosophers must admit that Reality or Being (*οὐσία*) covers both change and stability:

Str.: On these grounds, then, it seems that only one course is open to the philosophers who values knowledge and the rest above all else. He must refuse to accept from the champions either of the One or of the many Forms the doctrine that all Reality is changeless (*τὸ πᾶν*), and he must turn a deaf ear to the other party who represent Reality as everywhere changing. Like a child begging for ‘both’, he must declare that Reality or the sum of things is both at once-all that is unchangeable and all that is in change (*ὅσα ἀκίνητα καὶ κειννημένα*) (249C-D).

Yet, one may assert that there is an ambiguity in Plato’s usage of the concept of *κίνησις*. It should be pointed out that the concept *κίνησις* implies both spatial motion and qualitative change.²⁵ It can be said that Plato does not seem to make a clear distinction between them in the *Sophist*. It may be supposed that Plato opposes to his Theory of Forms by accepting change in the world of reality, since, Forms, unlike the

²⁵ Francis E. Peters, *Antik Yunan Felsefesi Terimleri Sözlüğü*, translated by Hakkı Hünler, 2004, p.

changeable objects of the sensible world, have immutable characteristics. The realm of Forms is accepted as the realm of reality in Plato's philosophy. Therefore, to place the concept of change into Reality could create a contradiction in this structure. Ruciman argues, however, that to be known by someone does not lead to forfeiting the permanent characters of Forms. He gives an example that when a Form is known by someone on Monday and known by another person on Tuesday, this does not mean that it has lost its immanent characters. It still remains identical with itself. It only shows that Forms have the capacity to affect and to be affected without forfeiting its immutable identity.²⁶

Nonetheless, it can still be claimed that to be identical with itself means to have same features. However, to be not known by anyone at time₁ and to be known at time₂ causes a qualitative difference between two situations. That is to say that 'this object is not known' is different from that 'this object is known'. Predicates have changed in time. Therefore, the identity of the object has been disappeared. Yet, one can argue that 'epistemic difference' does not cause 'ontological' or 'ontic difference'.

2.5 Five Greatest Kinds (*μέγιστα γένη*) and the Relationship between Them

In the previous discussion, we have seen that Plato asserts three main kinds or, as we shall see, Forms (*μέγιστα γένη*) and each of them is in the realm of reality. They are being (*τὸ ὄν*), change (*κίνησις*) and rest (*στάσις*). In the following discussion (250A-

²⁶ Ruciman, op.cit., p., 81-82.

259D), he also states two main kinds, identity or sameness (*ταύτόν*) and difference or otherness (*ἕτερον*), which will be deduced from the relations between first three. At the end of the discussion the Stranger would claim that the dictum of Parmenides may be challenged with the relationship between these five main kinds; and therefore there would appear a possibility for discussing the nature of Falsehood.

At 250A-D, it is expressed that change and rest are completely opposed to each other. On the other hand, we know from previous discussions that both are admitted as real, (*τὸ ὄν*). In this respect, when we explain that both change and rest are being, it means that being involves both of them at the same time, but this leads to a contradiction because they are opposed. Therefore, the Stranger claims that reality or being (*τὸ ὄν*) must neither be the same as change nor as rest, but it must be something distinct from them (250C). However, if both change and rest are real and they exist, there must be some conditions in which these two kinds have possibility to blend with being. From this point, the Stranger says that they must firstly investigate whether or not there is a possibility that renders some kinds to combine with others, and if there is, its conditions should also be investigated:

Str.: Are we not to attach Existence to Motion or Rest, not anything else to anything else, but rather to treat them in our discourse as incapable of any blending or participation in one another? Or are we to lump them all together as capable of association with one another? Or shall we say that this is true of some not of others? (251D-E)

The Stranger and Theaetetus examine these three assumptions in turn. The Stranger holds that the first can not be accepted as true since if it were true, anything could not be attached to anything else, any statement could appear. In other words, we cannot say, for example, that ‘This man is good’, since the name good could only belong to goodness. We can only say that ‘good is good’ which is a tautological expression and does not affirm a thing. In order to express a statement (*λόγος*), combination of kinds (*γέννη*) is required and this will be the main matter of the definitions of statements in later discussion. In addition, if anything could not be combined with any other, then anything would not be attached to ‘being’; so anything would not come into existence (252C).

On the other hand, the second claim is rejected on the following grounds; if one asserts that all things are capable of combining together, he or she had to admit that change and rest could be present in the same thing at the same time which is not possible.

Str.: Well, suppose we allow that all are capable of combining with one another.

Theat.: Even I can dispose of that suggestion.

Str.: How?

Theat.: Because then Movement itself would come to a complete standstill, and again Rest itself would be in movement, if each were to supervene upon the other.

Str.: And that is to the last degree impossible-that Movement should come to be at rest and Rest be in motion?

Theat.: Surely. (252D)

Furthermore, if this assumption were valid, then it could be said that contradictory statements for any same subject would be true. For example, there would be no criterion to evaluate the truth of these two expressions ‘Socrates is white’ and ‘Socrates is black’. Since Socrates cannot have the qualities ‘whiteness’ and ‘blackness’ at the same time, the second assumption must also be rejected.

Therefore, the third assumption is left according to which, something can blend together while some not. And this assumption must be true, because there is no other choice. The Stranger begins the examination with an analogy by using the letters of alphabet. He points out that while some letters can combine together and constitute meaningful unities, some cannot.

Str.: And the vowels are specially good at combination- a sort of bond pervading them all, so that without a vowel the others cannot be fitted together. (253A)

Vowels have privilege usage since they provide opportunity of fitting together to consonants. Without them consonants cannot be attached to each other and there cannot be any meaningful words. Everyone cannot know, on the other hand, which letter can combine with which, so it is needed some special art, art of grammar. With this analogy, the Stranger asserts that like vowels some certain or fundamental kinds (*μέγιστα γένη*) render relationships between other kinds, and to understand these relationships is defined as science of dialectic (*ἐπιστήμη τῆς διαλεκτικῆς*).

Str.: Well, now that, we have agreed that the Kinds (τὰ γένη) stand towards one another in the same way as regards blending, is not some science needed as a guide on the voyage of discourse, if one is to succeed in pointing out which Kinds are consonant, and which are incompatible with another; also whether there are certain Kinds that pervade them all (διὰ πάντων κεχώρηκεν) and connect them so that they can blend, and again, where there are divisions (separations), whether there are certain other that traverse wholes and are responsible for the divisions? (253B-C)

As we have mentioned before, to separate and to combine Kinds according with their proper divisions and joints is the task of the art of dialectic. In the *Sophist*, Plato clearly manifests that this ability which belongs to the Philosopher provides certainty for investigations about reality in any philosophical discourse. However, contrary to the Sophist who likes lingering in the darkness of non-being, the aim of the Philosopher is to contemplate the being of ideas or reality (ἡ τοῦ ὄντος ἰδέα).²⁷

In the next step, it is first attempted to demonstrate what the most important Kinds are, and secondly in what degree they can combine with each other (254C). At the end of this discussion Plato finally will show that non-being (what is not) is not completely opposite of being (what is), it is only *different* from being by partaking to Kind of Difference. Therefore, ‘non-being’ also *is* as much as ‘being’, and falsehood, which states *what is not*, is possible by means of the existence of non-being. Now we can see how Plato deduces these Kinds and constitutes the relationship between them.

²⁷ Cornford *op.cit.*, p., 262.

Being (τὸ ὄν), change ‘or motion’ (κίνησις) and rest (στάσις) are three familiar kinds mentioned before. As we have seen, last two cannot combine with each other, since they are opposite. However, Being can blend both since both exist. Therefore, each is different from other, but identical with itself.

Str.: And each one of them (Existence, Motion, Rest) is *different* from the other two, and the *same* as itself.

Theat.: That is so.

Str.: But what do we mean by these words we have just used- ‘same’ and ‘different’? Are they a pair of Kinds distinct from those three, though always necessarily blending with them, so that we must consider the Forms as five in all, not three? Or, when we say ‘same’ or ‘different’, are we unconsciously using a name that belongs to one or another of those three Kinds? (254D-255A)

The Stranger deduces from the relationship of these three kinds two further main kinds which are Sameness ‘or identity’ (ταυτόν) and Difference ‘or otherness’ (ἕτερον). Plato states that each one of the three kinds is different from one another. That is, change, rest and being are not same things, but they are same as themselves. He implicitly asserts that to be different from others and to be the same with itself comes from the kind of Difference. According to that the separation of things provided by the kinds of Sameness and Difference. That is, the first three kinds gain their independency from each other by sharing in Kinds of Sameness and Difference.

However, it must be examined whether difference and sameness are two distinct kinds. The Stranger asserts that although each one of being, change and rest are same

as themselves, they are not identical with Sameness. Otherwise, there would be no distinction between them, and change would be the same as rest and rest as change which is not possible. Therefore, Sameness must be taken to be as a fourth main kind, since everything have to be same as itself.

Str.: Well, Motion and Rest at any rate cannot be (identical with) Difference or Sameness.

Theat.: Why not?

Str.: Neither Motion nor Rest can be (identical with) anything that we say of both of them in common.

Theat.: Why?

Str.: Because Motion would then be at rest, and Rest in motion; for whichever of the two (Motion or Rest) becomes applicable to both (by being identified with either Sameness or Difference, which *are* applicable to both) will force the other (Rest or Motion) to change to the contrary of its own nature, as thus coming to partake of its contrary.

Theat.: Quite so.

Str.: But both do partake of Sameness or Difference is (identical with) Motion, nor yet with Rest.

Theat.: No.

Str.: Are we, however, to think of Existence and Sameness as a single thing?

Theat.: Perhaps.

Str.: But if 'Existence' and 'Sameness' have no difference in meaning, once more, when we say that Motion and Rest both 'exist', we shall thereby be speaking of them as being 'the same'.

Theat.: But that is impossible.

Str.: Then Sameness and Existence cannot be one thing.

Theat.: Hardly.

Str.: We may, then, set down Sameness as a fourth Form, additional to our three.

Theat.: Certainly. (255A-C)

The status of difference, however, is not so clear. It can be noticed that at first sight, the kind of Sameness does not imply any relative connection, since everything is the same as *itself*; to be different means that there is at least one different thing. That is to say that, anything can be different from *itself*, therefore, to be different has somewhat relative meaning. In this respect, Cornford asserts that, although the term difference denotes a relative connection between Kinds, kind of difference is not a relation. Since, as far as every Kind is same as themselves, they must be different from others. Therefore, to be different from others is peculiar to everything; however this is not provided by virtue of their own nature, but rendered by Idea of Difference (*ἡ ἰδέα τῆς διατέρου*) (255E).

Difference is a Form which ‘pervades’ all the Forms (*διὰ πάντων διεληλυθυῖα*), just as Existence pervades them all. In this way Difference can be said to be a character (*ἰδέα*) or nature (*φύσις*) ‘dispersed’ over the whole field of Reality. Every Form has its own peculiar nature, essence, constant identity, ‘sameness’, it always is what it is. But just because this nature is peculiar and unique, every Form has its ‘difference’ distinguishing it from any other.²⁸

Therefore, it may be concluded that since all kinds are separated from what they are not by means of the kind of Difference and it ‘pervades’ all things, this kind is accepted as a fifth kind (255D).

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p., 284-285.

2.6 Refutation of Parmenides' Dictum

Plato's next aim is to show that when one talks about 'what is not', he or she does not say something about 'absolute opposite of what is', but simply about something which is *different* from 'what is'. For 'what is not' expresses something, that is, it is not senseless. Falsehood has been defined as thinking or saying what is not true and this has been equated to think or say 'what is not' (non-being). But Parmenides' dictum does not allow thinking or saying of 'what is not', moreover, there cannot be any investigation about it without leading to a contradiction. For this reason, Plato will try to demonstrate that 'what is not' is not absolutely non-being (*μηδαμῶς ὄντα*), but it signifies something which is different from something else. As it has been mentioned, Plato maintains that Difference is a certain kind and pervades all the rest. He will also argue that 'which is not' comes into being by sharing in Kind of Difference and that 'is not' may only mean 'is different from'. In this way, Plato could disprove Parmenides' argument, and there would be a room for the possibility of falsehood. Therefore, in this section I shall try to show that Plato establishes a foundation for the existence of non-being.

At 256B, the Stranger deals with motion as an instance of real thing. He indicates that motion can be stated in more than one way. For example, it is same as itself, it is not identical with Sameness, because of its combination with Difference. In the same way, motion is not Difference, however motion is different from difference.

The Stranger maintains that the negative prefix ‘not’ (τὸ μὴ καὶ τὸ οὐ) signifies a difference from what is negated (257B). For instance, when we speak of not-beautiful (μὴ καλόν), it is not necessarily be about the opposite of what is beautiful, but it may express something which is different from what is beautiful (257D). There are innumerable things which do not signify the essence of beautiful like yellow, horse, table etc., but they also exist. Therefore, not-beautiful also has existence as well as beautiful. In the same way, other negative expressions like not tall (τὸ μὴ μέγα), not just (τὸ μὴ δίκαιον) should also be existent as things which are really existent.

The Stranger claims that the validity of their assumption is based upon their earlier proof that Difference is a separate kind which pervades all other:

Str.: ... we must also put the not-just on the same footing as the Just with respect to the fact that the one exists no less than the other.

Theat.: Certainly.

Str.: And we shall say the same of all the rest, since we have seen that the nature of the Different is to be ranked among things that exist, and, once it exists, its parts also must be considered as existing just as much as anything else. (258A)

Therefore, Plato argues that every negative expression like not-just, not-beautiful and even not-being exposes something which is different from what it negates by partaking of Kind of Difference. And once it has been indicated that Difference pervades everything as a distinct kind, it can also be claimed that every part which is participated in Difference must be real. Consequently, the nature of Difference does

not express the opposite of existent ($\tau\acute{o}\ \acute{\omicron}\nu$), but just what is different from that existent (258B).

With this inference, the Stranger considers that they are finally able to show that ‘that which is not’ ($\tau\acute{o}\ \mu\eta\ \acute{\omicron}\nu$) *exists* and has reality:

Str.: Has it than, as you say, an existence inferior to none of the rest reality? May we be bold to say that ‘that which is not’ unquestionably *is* a thing that has a nature of its own_ just as the Tall was tall and the beautiful was beautiful, so too which the not-Tall and not-Beautiful- and in that sense ‘that which is not’ also, on the same principle, both was and is what-is-not, a single Form (kind) to be reckoned among many realities? (258B-C)

Accordingly, it can be repeated that not-beautiful is something which is *different* from what is beautiful. Therefore, it is not necessarily needed that not-beautiful must be ugly, since Kind of Different provides a possibility in which existents can be different from others without being opposite. And, as it has been mentioned if the kind of Difference has a certain reality, parts of this kind, that is whatever is different from a thing and still belongs to it, must also be real. Hence, though it is a negative expression, not-beautiful also exists as much as beautiful in this structure.

Plato’s main concern, however, is not to show the existence of not-beautiful. As we know, his aim is to indicate that ‘what is not’ or non-being has existent like ‘what is’ or being has. Plato had asserted that some kinds can blend with each other while some

not. Moreover, he had also claimed that Difference was a fundamental kind and present at everything. On the other hand, being or 'what is' is another basic kind which has been mentioned before. In this respect, he establishes the existence of non-being as follows: if Difference is a kind which pervades all other, it must also pervade being. Therefore, when the kind of Being and kind of Difference are combined, non-being appears as an existent thing. For this reason, non-being should not be admitted as wholly negation of being and also not be considered as nothingness as is asserted in Parmenides' dictum (258D).

As a conclusion of this chapter, it can be said that Plato's attempt can be described as providing an ontological ground to 'what is not' or non-being in order to circumvent Parmenides dictum. For Parmenides (237A) the 'what is not' can never be proved or even be thought and uttered. Since it is absolutely nothingness and opposite of being, one would fall into contradiction, if he or she struggles to show that 'what is not' has existent.

According to Plato, however, to catch the Sophist is completely dependent upon this enterprise. As Plato maintains that the Sophist is an image maker who deceives his pupils by false sentences. Falsehood, on the other hand, means to show 'what is not' as if 'what is' and 'what is' as if 'what is not'. According to that, the Sophist could have a refuge in Parmenides' assertion by saying that it is not possible to talk about 'what is not'.

In order to secure the Sophist's refuge, Plato argues that 'what is not' does not mean the total lack of existence. It is only different from what there *is* by partaking of Kind of Difference. Eventually, 'what is not' is an existent thing which is thinkable and expressible like 'what is'. As a result, it can take part in everything, so there must be possibility for falsehood. Therefore, I shall attempt to show how Plato applies this conclusion to statements in order to make falsehood possible.

CHAPTER 3
HOW PLATO APPLIES NON-BEING (WHAT IS NOT) TO STATEMENTS
IN ORDER TO MAKE FALSEHOOD POSSIBLE

3.1 The Structure of Statements (λόγος)

After establishing the ontological background of the problem, Plato considers directly the structure of statements (λόγος). Before analyzing false statements, he wants to make clear what is meant by a statement, what its components are, and in what conditions these components can weave together.

At 259D, the Stranger maintains that a discourse (λόγος)²⁹ appears by virtue of weaving together (συμπλοκή) of the kinds:

Str.: Yes, my friend, and the attempt to separate everything from every other thing not only strikes a discordant note but amounts to a crude defiance of the philosophic muse.

Theat.: Why?

Str.: This isolation of everything from everything else means a complete abolition of all discourse we can have owes its existence to the weaving together of Forms.

²⁹ λόγος comes from verb λέγω which means to say, to speak, to declare. λόγος can be translated also as speech, discourse, conversation, and it also has senses of thought, reason and discourse.

Theat.: True.

Str.: Observe, then, how opportune was our struggle with those separatists, when we forced them to allow one Form to blend with another.

Theat.: In what respect?

Str.: In respect of securing the position of discourse as one of the kinds of things that exist. To rob us of discourse would be to rob us of philosophy. That would be the most serious consequence; but, besides that, we need at the present moment to come to an agreement about the nature of discourse, and if its very existence had been taken from us, we should naturally not be able to discourse any further. And that would have happened, if we had yielded the point that there is no blending of any one Form with another. (259D-260A)

According to that, what makes possible to state something is the combination of kinds. We know from foregoing discussion that non-being is a kind which consists of both the kind of Being and of Difference. The present interest of the Stranger is whether non-being can blend with thinking and discourse.

Str.: If it does not blend them, everything must be true (*ἀληθείης*), but if it does, we shall have false (*ψευδής*) and discourse (*λόγος*); for thinking or saying ‘what is not’ (*τὸ ψᾶρ τὰ μὴ ὄντα ἢ δοξάζειν*) comes I suppose, to the same thing as falsity (*τὸ ψεῦδος*) in thought and speech. (260C)

In order to understand the connection between ‘what is not’ and statement and thinking, the Stranger offers mentioning the nature of statement first. It is claimed that there are two signs to denote being; names (*ὀνόματα*) and verbs (*ῥήματα*) and

every statement consists of the combination of them. However, their combinations should occur in some conditions. They must be combined together to signify something (261D). Name is defined as something what performs action. And verb is admitted as what signifies these actions (262A).

Str.: Now, remembering what we said about Forms and letters, let us consider words in the *same* way. The solution of our present problem promises to lie in that quarter.

Theat.: What are you going to ask me about words?

Str. Whether they all fit together, or none of them, or some will and some will not.

Theat.: That is plain enough: some will and some will not.

Str.: You mean perhaps something like this: words which, when spoken in succession, signify something, do fit together, while those which mean nothing when they are strung together, do not.

Theat.: What do you mean?

Str.: What I supposed you had in your mind when you gave your assent. The signs we use in speech to signify being surely of two kinds.

Theat.: How?

Str.: One kind called 'names', the other 'verbs'.

Theat.: Give me description each.

Str.: By 'verb' we mean an expression which is applied actions.

Theat.: Yes.

Str.: And by a 'name' the spoken sign applied to what performs these actions.

Theat.: Quite so.

Str.: Now a statement never consists solely of names spoken in succession, nor yet of verbs apart from names. (261D-262A)

In order to be meaningful, every statement requires both of them together. An expression which consists only of names or verbs cannot be accepted as statement. For, if statements could appear by means of names solely, anything could not be inferred from statements, since, they did not inform what the subject *is*. On the other hand, if statement could be possible by means of verbs only, we could not know what the expression is about. Therefore, it can be said that, for Plato the simplest kind of the statement involves one name and one verb at least (262C).

It is important that Plato does not talk about truth or falsity of a statement at this stage. He just considers the components of a statement and what renders the possibility of combining them together. It can be derived from the discourse that meaning is the basic principle of a statement, but not truth or falsity. For instance, although the statement ‘justice is an egg’ is not true, it signifies something and when it is uttered, it will certainly have a meaning.³⁰

Plato states that if a statement consists of solely names or verbs, it would express anything. Since ‘what is’ or being always *is*. That is, when even we only say, for instance, ‘the man *is*’, it means that ‘there *is* a man’. It cannot be thought or said without weaving noun and verb together. In other words, a thing always appears with predicates and in order to state it with respect to its predicates, a noun and what it acts are required in the statement.

³⁰ Ruciman, op.cit., p., 109.

Plato gives the sentence 'A man understands' as the simplest example of a statement. It clearly involves two components; 'a man' which is noun, and 'to understand' which is verb. The statement signifies something meaningful from which we learn that one of the definitions of being a man is to understand.

Str.: Because now it gives informations about facts or events in the present or past or future: it does not merely name something but gets you somewhere by weaving together verbs with names. Hence we say it 'states' something, not merely 'names' something, and in fact it is this complex that we mean by the word 'statement.' (262D)

Therefore, the difference between naming and stating is that to name is only to denote a thing, i.e. man. When one utters 'man' we understand what he or she means. However, this expression does not give any knowledge about the man. When we say, on the other hand, 'A man understands', the noun 'man' is made to be connected to one predicate 'to understand' and expression becomes informative. According to Plato, any philosophical discourse owes its existence to this possibility of combination of noun and verb in a statement (261D). For, only with this combination, a thing can have some predicates which define it and differ from other things.

Thus, it can be said that Plato asserts that every statement which involves one noun and verb is meaningful by means of the structure of the expression, not by what is

represented. That is, meaning arises from the combination of components of the statements, not from nouns only.³¹

3.2 Definition of False Statement and the Solution of the Problem of Falsehood

Plato states that every statement must be about something (262E). Namely, there is at least one subject in every statement which is either true or false. He gives two sample statements by putting together a name and a verb. The first is that ‘Theaetetus sits’. It is clear that the statement is about Theaetetus and it defines him by the action of sitting:

Str.: I will make a statement to you, then, putting together a thing with an action by means of a name and a verb. You are to tell me what the statement is about.

Theat.: I will do my best.

Str.: ‘Theaetetus sits’-not a lengthy statement, is it?

Theat.: No, of very modest length.

Str.: Now it is for you to say what it is about-to whom it belongs.

Theat.: Clearly about me: it belongs to me. (262E-263A)

According to Plato this statement is true, since it signifies Theaetetus as he *is*. In other words, if Theaetetus is now acting the practice of sitting, a statement about him must indicate the relation between Theaetetus and the action.

³¹ Runciman, op.cit., p., 109.

Therefore, it must be repeated that for Plato the truth of a statement depends on its correspondence with facts as what they are. That is, the truth of a statement does not arise from whether or not its subject exists, but from the way of the combination of the subject with what is attributed to it. Consequently, if a statement shows the combination between its opponents in accordance with how it really *is*, it must be accepted as true.

The second example is the example of false statement that ‘Theaetetus (whom I am talking at this moment) flies’.

Str.: Now take another.

Theat.: Namely?

Str.: ‘Theaetetus (whom I am talking to at this moment) flies.’

Theat.: That too can only be described as belonging to me and about me.

Str.: And moreover we agree that any statement must have a certain character.

Theat.: Yes.

Str.: Then what sort of character can we assign to each of these?

Theat.: One is false, the other true. (263A-B)

In the discussion, Theaetetus accepts that this statement is also about him, namely, the subject of the sentence is himself. Therefore, this expression has two basic characters of being a statement by involving one noun and one verb. However, it is not true since the combination between subject and predicate exposes a wrong relation of components.

Str.: And the true one states about you the things that are (or facts) as they are.

Theat.: Certainly.

Str.: Whereas the false statement states about you things *different* from the things that are.

Theat.: Yes.

Str.: And accordingly states things that are not as being.

Theat.: No doubt.

Str.: Yes, but things that *exists*, different from things that *exist* in your case. For we said that in the case of everything there are many things that are and also many that are not. (263B-C)

Therefore, Plato finally provides a definition for falsehood by introducing ‘what is not’. As we have seen, a false statement is not true, since it states something other than as it is. However, as it was pointed out, ‘what is not’ does not mean non-existent. It is only *different* from ‘what is’ by partaking of the kind of Difference. Therefore, it is expressible in a statement.

Str.: So the second statement I made about you, in the first place, according to our definition of the nature of a statement, must itself necessarily be one of the shortest possible.

Theat.: So we agreed just now.

Str.: And secondly it must be about something.

Theat.: Yes.

Str.: And if it were about nothing, it would not be statement at all; for we pointed out that there could not be a statement that was a statement nothing.

Theat.: Quite true.

Str.: So what is stated about you, but so that what is different is stated as the same or what is not as what is- a combination of verbs

and names answering to that description finally seems to be really and truly a false statement.

Theat.: Perfectly true. (263C-D)

In this respect, it can be said that Plato's aim is to gain a ground for 'what is not' in which it does not mean nothingness. And he seems to believe that this can be made by transforming the meaning of 'what is not' into 'what is *different* from'. He attempts to overcome the problem of falsehood by introducing this ontological transformation into the nature of statement and establishing a correspondence between the field of reality and the field of speech.

CONCLUSION

Consequently, we can say that for Plato falsehood appears when one uses inapplicable predicates to the subject. The statement 'Theaetetus sits' expresses a true relation between the subject and the predicate. 'Theaetetus flies', however, is false, since, 'to fly' cannot be applicable to human kind, though it has a meaning. Namely, when action of flying (verb) and Theaetetus are combined together, there appears a false statement about him.

It is important, however, to notice that this false statement is also about 'what is' and it gives some information, but it expresses Theaetetus as other than he *is*. We know that the Sophist denies the possibility of falsehood by asserting that false statements state non-being, i.e., 'what is not'. He uses the Parmenides' dictum that to say of 'what is not' is not possible, since it denotes nothingness. Therefore, falsehood is not possible and all statements must be true.

As we have seen, Plato's main concern is to find a way to disprove Parmenides' dictum in order to provide an ontological validity to 'what is not' almost throughout the whole dialogue. He attempts to achieve that by claiming that 'what is not' is not completely opposite of being, but it is something which is *different* from 'what is'.

For Plato, this is possible since there are certain kinds of Forms (being, change, rest, same and difference) and some of them can blend with each other. In this investigation, Difference is the most important kind, since according to him this kind pervades all the rest and by means of it they can be different from others. Therefore 'what is not' arises from this connection by being existent.

At this point, one may argue that if kind of Difference pervades all, it must also pervade itself, therefore it must also be different from itself which is not possible. Plato is aware of this difficulty, but does not give a satisfactory explanation in the dialogue. This problem, that is, self-predication of forms is considered in the *Parmenides*, but no clear solution is offered in this dialogue either.

Eventually, Plato can provide a possibility for falsehood by applying the existent of 'what is not' to statements. When we reconsider our example of false statements that 'Theaetetus flies', it is noticed that the components, Theaetetus and to fly, are real. Moreover, the combination of them leads to a meaningful speech. However, the relation between them is established wrongly. For this reason, a false statement cannot be about nothing, but about something which is *different* from. Therefore, for Plato false statements are possible since their falsity does not arise from 'that which is absolutely not' like the Sophist says, but it arises from the combination between the kinds of Being and Difference.

In my opinion, Plato's main success is to show that false statements also have meaning as well as true ones in his long discourse of the *Sophist*. There may be many objections to his assumptions about the relation between ontology and language. In the *Sophist*, we have seen that Plato thinks that there is a constant harmony between facts and language. He often, implicitly or explicitly, argues if a thing *is*, it must also be stated and intelligible. In the same way, if a thing is thinkable and expressible in language, it must also have an existence. These assumptions can be open to objections. For example, one may say that ontological entities and linguistic entities cannot be considered as equal things. Therefore, the forms of the relations which appear in the former cannot be not valid for latter. However, it must be remembered that Plato is one of the earliest philosophers who struggles with the problems of linguistics like falsehood, nature of statement, reference of a sentence etc. Moreover, he may be the first philosopher who notices that meaning can only belong to the statements but not to individual nouns. A statement can be false, but it does not show that it is senseless. In this sense, the important advance of the *Sophist* is to remark complexity of expressions and consider truth and falsehood with respect to this relation. Until Plato, while truth and falsehood was the matter of ontological discourses, he achieved to put them into connection of the components of statements.

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APPENDIX A

GLOSSARY

ἀληθής: true, opp. to *ψευδής*

ἄσώματα: bodiless

γένεσις: becoming

γένος: a kind, class, sort, subdivision

διαλεκτική: dialectic

δοξάζειν: to think, to suppose

δοξάζειν ψευδῆ: false thinking

δυνάμις: power

εἶδος: form, idea

εἶδωλον: image, likeliness

εἶναι: to be

ἐπιστήμη: true knowledge, scientific knowledge, science

ἔρις: fighting, disputation

ἕτερον: different, other

κίνησις: change, motion

κοινωνεῖν: to participate, to take part in a thing

λογικός: for speaking or speech

λογισμός: reasoning, discursive

λόγος: statement, speech, discourse, conservation, thought, reason

μηδαμῶς ὄν: totally unreal

νοητά: thinkable, intelligible

νοῦς: intelligence, mind

ὄνομα: name, nomen

οὐσία: reality, existence, being

πάθημα: to be effected

παράδειγμα: sample model, a model of a thing, example

ποίημα: to effect

ῥῆμα: verb

στάσις: rest

συμπλοκή: combination

σῶμα: body

ταύτόν: same, identical

τέχνη: art, craft

τὸ μὴ : prefix of negation

τὸ μὴ ὄν: non-being, unreality

τὸ ὄν: being, reality

τὸ οὐ: prefix of negation

φάντασμα: an appearance, image, unreality

ψεῦδος: a falsehood, untruth

ψυχή: soul

χωρεῖν: to pervade, to spread abroad