

UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA GRADUATE COLLEGE

Negative expressions as parts of *logos* in Plato's *Sophist*

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

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Norman, Oklahoma

2025

NEGATIVE EXPRESSIONS AS PARTS OF LOGOS IN PLATO'S SOPHIST

A THESIS APPROVED FOR THE
SHYAM DEV PATWARDHAN DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

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Abstract

In the thesis, I offer an interpretation of the middle part of *the Sophist*, according to which its goal is to construct an account of meaningful language (*logos*) that welcomes negativity. I argue that *non being* is a part of *logos* in two senses: as negative predicates (257b-c) and as false statements (259e-263d). Following the incompatible property range view proposed by Lesley Brown, I argue that Plato's account of negative predication is about internal negation, as opposed to external negation defended by scholars such as G.E.L. Owen. Further, I argue that according to Plato, meaningful language is a proper mixture of heterofunctional parts of speech: subjects and predicates. The improper mixture of a subject with a predicate results in a false statement. However, a false statement is still a part of *logos*, because it takes the wrong predicate from the right predicate-range.

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Introduction

My thesis is dedicated to exploring the role of negative expressions in three sequential fragments of the middle part of the *Sophist*: 257b-c, 257c-259b, and 259e-263d. The first two fragments discuss negative expressions as predicative structures. In the first passage, we see an example of a predicative expression negative in form, *x is not large*, that is said to have a certain meaning: it can either mean that *x* is small or medium in size. To see how this example allows us to understand the meaning of negative expressions in general, I follow Lesley Brown's 'incompatible properties view' on negative predication in the *Sophist*. This is where her view first arises in my thesis, and then serves as a guiding thread to all its chapters. In every chapter, I arrive at my views concerning negative expressions in the *Sophist* by observing Brown's position, and positions that are alternative to hers. Thus, in the first chapter, I view her view in contrast to the famous interpretation proposed by G.E.L. Owen (Brown herself frames her interpretation as an alternative to Owen's) and come to the conclusion that Brown's interpretation is more informative—though, some of the aspects of Owen's view are worth preserving. At the end of the first Chapter, I arrive at the conclusion that the non large passage is demonstrating the sense of negative expressions in general, but it is also dedicated to simple cases of negation of speech. This is one and the same aspect of what Plato calls *non being*: negation in speech manifests itself through negative expressions. In the second Chapter, I proceed to the passage that offers us another example of negative expression: *not beautiful*. There, the main contenting views belong to Lesley Brown and Michael Frede. In my interpretation, which partially sides with both, the aim of this passage is to show that negative expressions are *real* in the sense that they are legitimate parts of language. I supply this part with a speculation that the passage demonstrates the parity of being and language: we can only grasp language through differences, such as differences between parts of speech and syntactical categories, but it stays elusive as a whole. The last chapter is dedicated to the account of false statement in the *Sophist*. I proceed to the next passage, which gives us the definition of false statement. It finally clarifies why predicative structures were central to the preceding fragments: the false statement is a statement with the right subject, but it attributes the wrong predicate to it, and this is what makes it false. These are the contents, to state them in the most brief and sketchy way.

Almost all of the scholars that I refer to in the thesis (with the exception of Samuel Meister) belong to the interpretative strategy that I call *syntactical interpretation* of the *Sophist*. I take it to be a vital alternative to the reading that focuses on metaphysical components of the middle part, namely the discussion of *megista gene*, the Greatest Kinds

(254d–255e) and the Communion of Kinds (255e–257a) and interprets negative expressions accordingly¹. The most recent position from this last trend tests out the hypothesis that negative expressions such as *not large* and *not beautiful* are negative Forms. I think that this line of interpretation might be correct, but it cannot provide as much helpful information on the pragmatics of the dialogue as *syntactical interpretation* does.

My thesis will only be focusing on the contents of the middle part of *the Sophist*. Scholars divide the dialogue into the middle part (236d–264b) and two surrounding outer parts (216a–236d and 264b – 268d)². The outer parts answer to the main dramatic aim of the dialogue: to provide a definition of the figure who is a contrary to a philosopher, a sophist. In the opening part it is announced that to capture the nature of the sophist, we should uncover the nature of false speech. In this way, the middle part, which concludes with the definition of a false statement, contributes to the main goal of the dialogue.

When it comes to epistemic method that is used in the middle part of the dialogue, I agree with Evan Rodriguez (2020). His research shows that it follows an aporetic method of ‘exploring both sides’. It is famous that the *Sophist*’s main antagonist in the Eleatic philosopher Parmenides, who used the metaphor of paths to talk about aims of inquiry. He said that there are two paths of knowledge, the path of being and the path of non being. Concerning the latter route, he announced that never should an inquirer embark on it: *Never shall it force itself on us, that that which is not may be; Keep your thought far away from this path of searching*. This quote from his mystical poem is ironically cited by Plato’s protagonist in the *Sophist*, Eleatic Stranger. But, as Rodriguez observes, the of the Stranger’s relation Parmenides is not fully antagonistic. In his method of inquiry, he does follow Parmenidean presupposition that there are two paths for any inquiry. The first path corresponds to the claim that ‘being is’ and its corollary ‘falsity is impossible’, and the second to the claim of that ‘not being is’ its corollary ‘falsity is possible’. After examination of both paths (in 236d–242b and 242b–250e), they end up in a state of ‘complete confusion’ (250e). They realize that it is as hard to conclusively take on the position that ‘being is’, as to take a polar position that ‘not being is’. This is the central case of arriving at an aporia that is usually referred to in the scholarship as ‘the parity of being and non being’. However, simultaneously with announcing the complete puzzlement, Eleatic Stranger also announces that finding yourself in an aporetic dead-end should make an inquirer hopeful. It only means that they need to redo the initial division that was used as a schema of the two-path inquiry and start all over again. This explains why the *Sophist*, and particularly its middle part, has such a rapidly varying conceptual landscape, stretching from the

¹ Ross 1951, M. E. Moravcsik, 1962, pp. 68–9, Alikan 2017, Meister 2025.

² See: N. Notomi 1999.

discussion of the topic in terms of being and not being (236d-250e), then moving to a two-sided inquiry concerning in the new conceptual field about the Greatest Kinds, whether they mix with each other or not (251c-259e), and, finally, to devising definitions of both true and false statements (262e-263d). The interlocutors just test out several inquiry schemes that all follow the same pattern of exploring both sides suggested by Parmenides. A reader should not give up in following the inquiry, even if its conceptual distinctions are being switched from time to time due to the aporetic results that are achieved in some of its points.

In the course of unfolding the middle part, the interlocutors first pursue their inquiry through the conceptual pair of *being* and *non being*. My analysis focuses on the parts about non being, where the Stranger traces several applications of *non being* in speech, therefore making expressions containing the copula 'not is' as they are used in sentences the subject of his investigation. *Non being* is explained in turn by another concept, *difference*, which is brought up to illustrate differences between types of sentences containing 'not is'. Finally, the difference between types of sentences is explained by an appeal to the so-called 'parts of difference', among which we find 'not beautiful' and 'not large', along with their pair and connected terms. These are the main terms that I am trying to elucidate in my thesis.

As I mentioned, my analysis follows the footsteps of Lesley Brown's incompatible properties range view on negative expressions in the *Sophist*. With the help of her work, I am aiming to clarify three things:

- a) The view on examples of negative predicates appearing in 257b-c and 257c-258b;
- b) the sense of difference at work in these examples;
- c) the sense of negativity in the *Sophist* in general.

To clarify these aspects of the *Sophist* would also mean to clarify the following conceptual vocabulary that Plato operates through in the middle part:

- a) *Parts of Difference*;
- b) *Difference*;
- c) *Non being*.

Consequently, the accounts of *difference* and *non being* (that are reliant on the *parts of difference* account) gives rise to the account of speaking falsely. This last account requires some additional syntactical conditions of a false statement to be unfolded which I'll go through in the last chapter. But Plato's point, for which he unfolds the complex dynamics of the middle part, seems to be that a careful syntactical analysis of a false statement ultimately presupposes understanding some core principles that turn a sentence into a

syntactically organized whole. It is these principles expressed through general terms 'difference' and 'non being', that I will try to explicate after giving an account of Plato's examples of negative expressions.

Chapter 1: Negative predicates in the *Sophist* 257b-c

After the Communion of Kinds passage, that ends with ES putting forward a hypothesis that the Kinds mix, such that *being*, in relation to other Kinds, *is not* (257a), two complicated passages follow that contain examples of negative predicates *non large* and *not beautiful*. I will call the first one The Example passage (257b-c), and the second one The Analogy passage (257c-258b). In my interpretation, The Example passage demonstrates how we achieve to say something even when we use predicative expressions negative in form. Just like there is something meant when we say ‘x is not large’, negative expressions of the form ‘not *F*’ in general must have their own positive meaning. In this chapter, we will look at The Example passage in detail and observe its common interpretations. The second passage containing the negative predicate ‘not beautiful’ reinforces the point defended in The Example passage that negative predicative expressions are meaningful, but it adds another turn to it: they are no less meaningful than the ordinary predicative expressions are. Thus, The Analogy passage demonstrates an ontological parity of negative predicatives and their ‘positive’ counterparts using the example of ‘non beautiful’ and ‘beautiful’. As ES puts it, negative predicatives are *no less in being* (257e) than other predicative, such as predicates ‘just’, ‘beautiful’, ‘pious’, and so on. I will get to the intricacies of The Analogy passage in my second chapter. Overall, it becomes clear after ES sums up the contents of the two passages, that negative predicates were used in them to clarify how *non being* shares in *being*. This is what ES clearly states after the discussion ends: ‘*non being*, as we have now seen, does indeed participate in being’ (260d). For me, this means that The Example passage offers us negative predicative expressions as examples of *non being*, while The Analogy passage makes a further point about their ontological status. Just like the representatives of syntactical interpretation, I use the term ‘ontological’ in the sense of the ontology of language: the point is to say that negative expressions should not be excluded from its operational range.

The most influential interpretations of The Example passage belong to G.E.L. Owen and Lesley Brown. They both share a broad linguistic framework that is juxtaposed to a metaphysical interpretation of the *Sophist*. In this sense, they do not discuss whether *non being* is one of the Greatest Kinds³, but specifically address ‘non large’ as a linguistic expression with a determined function. To put it shortly, the controversy between them is the following: Owen thinks that the passage is about external negation, while for Brown it is

³ Like, for example, Meister (2025) and Granieri (2021) do.

about internal negation. In this chapter, I am unpacking the contents of both views, and say how Brown's interpretation allows us to capture the internal relations between negative predicates and their referents. Owen's interpretation is too minimalistic to do that. For this reason, I side with Brown in my interpretation of The Example passage.

1.1 Brown's Incompatible properties view on negative predicates

In the following, I am discussing Brown's interpretation of negative predicates in the *Sophist* 257b1-d10, which she calls *a range of incompatible properties* view. As I mentioned, the view allows us to track inferential relations between the negated predicates and their referents. Brown explains both the reasoning behind using 'not large' alongside 'small' and 'equal' in The Example passage, and the sense of difference Plato implied between these predicative expressions. Overall, the main merit of her view is that it allows us to see negation of predicates as *an internal negation*.

The Example passage (257b-c)

ES: It seems that when we assert *non being*, we don't assert something contrary to *being*, but only something different from it.

T: Why?

ES: It's like this. When we speak of something as not large, does it seem to you that we indicate the small rather than the equal?

T: Of course not.

ES: So we won't agree with somebody who says that negation signifies a contrary. We'll only admit this much: when "not" and "non-" are prefixed to names that follow them, they indicate something *other* than the names, or rather, other than the things to which the names following the negation are applied.

T: Absolutely.⁴

⁴ Except when specified, I will use the translation made by Nicholas P. White in this thesis. However, sometimes I will substitute 'that which is not' with 'non being' and 'that which is' with 'being' for simplicity.

I cite the passage in full so we could make notice of the answers Theaetetus gives to Eleatic Stranger. As Brown suggests, his responses help us to keep track of the fragment's structure⁵. Theaetetus is only confused at one place, after ES says that 'when we say *non being*, we don't say something contrary to *being*, but only something *different* from it'. This implies that the preceding sentence is the *target claim*, and that the aim of the passage is to explain it. Then, ES offers an explanation with an example. Since this explanation is clear (young man is no longer confused), ES can then reiterate the target claim, now in an extended form using the resources that were offered with the explanation. Here are thus the main components of the passage:

C1. It seems that when we say *that which is not*, we don't say something contrary to *that which is*, but only something different from it. (—Why?)

E1. It's like this. When we speak of something as not large, does it seem to you that we indicate the small rather than the equal? (—Of course not).

C 1.1. So we won't agree with somebody who says that negation signifies a contrary; We'll only admit this much: when "not" and "non-" are prefixed to names that follow them, they indicate something other than the names, or rather, other than the things to which the names following the negation are applied. (—Absolutely).

For Brown, the term explained by E1 is the *different (heteron)* mentioned in the target-claim C1 in opposition to the *contrary*. From the outset, we see that these relations are reappearing at E1: small is the contrary of the negated term large, while equal is merely different from large. Plato's point, as we see from T's affirmative answer, is that the negation of large might indicate both terms, both the contrary (small) and the different ones (small and equal). But Brown notices another relation that takes place between these adjectives, which helps to clarify the term *different* in C1.

According to Brown, the passage offers an analysis of *difference* between the negated term and its implication as the difference within *the range of incompatible properties*. Her point is that the predicates offered in E1 are linked by an exclusionary relation. Nothing can be large and at the same time equal. Equally, nothing can be large

⁵ Brown 2013, pp. 274-275.

and at the same time small. So, these terms are involved in relations of *incompatible properties*. Here is how Brown puts and reinforces her point (2019 p. 331):

Here we are introduced to the idea of a range of incompatible properties or attributes F, G, and H, such that what is not F is either G or H. With this in mind, we can retain the translation “different” for *heteron* but recognize that an attribute different from F taken from that range will be incompatible with F. In support of this interpretation, think of how laughable it would have been if the ES has chosen a random attribute different from large, and said (for instance), “When we say not large, do you think we signify small any more than yellow?” Being yellow does not rule out being large, so appealing to it in the explication of what “not large” means would be ridiculous.

Thus, Brown highlights a semantic connection between the terms used as an example of different and contrary relations in E1: the connection of incompatibility. The *other* term must be related to the property of size just as the negated one, large is. In other words, no random attributes can be implied by the negative predicate. If someone says, for example, that Diogenes is not tall, it’s not very likely that they imply that Diogenes is smart, or funny, or fast—most probably, the saying implied that he is short, or, maybe of medium height. And of course, we do not go as far as to imply that the speaker meant that Diogenes is not a computer, not the bird a see outside the window, and not a shark. So, the negation of a predicate necessarily implies a) another predicate; b) that is likely to be taken from the determined predicate range.

Brown’s interpretation rests on a translation that she makes for the predicative terms in E1: by ‘large’, ‘small’, and ‘equal’, she says, Plato means the trio *larger than*, *smaller than*, and *same-sized as*. This could be contentious. After all, we don’t see the word ‘size’ in the text. However, she makes a good reason for this reading: Plato uses this trio frequently in other works, where their form of a comparative is more apparent. Thus, in the *Republic*, the property of size is explicitly mentioned as the object of measurement that comparatives indicate: ‘this part is measured and has indicated that some things are larger or smaller or *the same size as others*’ (602e4). In *Protagoras* we encounter it again: “Answer me this: Do things of the same size appear to you larger when seen near at hand and smaller when seen from a distance, or not?” (356c). Accordingly, Brown suggests, we should understand the terms in E1 as comparatives: X is smaller than Y, or X is larger than Y, or X and Y are of the same size. Crucially, in this interpretation the terms represent different points of the same continuum. As Brown puts it, ‘the contraries here are contraries at opposite ends of a single scale’ (p. 276)—and that which is different, we may add, *must be somewhere within* this scale. So, although in *the Sophist*, Plato is not using

the comparative form of the adjectives, it seems reasonable that Plato has in mind precisely this, the specifications of size realized by these terms.

The outcome of Brown's analysis of the passage is two-fold. First, her interpretation assumes that whenever we are applying a negation to an expression that stands for a property *p*, its implication is bound to a range of properties of the same kind as *p*. In other words, the set of predicates that can be implied by a negative expression is specifically determined. As I already mentioned, the other way to put this consequence is to say that large, small, and equal, and determinables of the same determinate, size⁶. This is an account of negation—however, as Brown herself notes, a weak one. It offers at best a sufficient condition, but not a necessary condition of being not *F* (p. 278). Although it makes sense to say that virtue is not red, it doesn't imply that virtue is some color other than red. But her interpretation explains very well in what sense E1 is an explication of C1. Other interpreters, in particular Owen, whose interpretation we'll see below, do not offer a good explanation of the example at E1: in particular, because they don't recognize *difference* in E1 as the target-term of the passage. If Brown's analysis does not offer a good account of negation, then, at least we can say that it offers a good explanation of the term 'difference' as the difference between determinables of the same determinable, size.

Secondly, Brown's interpretation presupposes that ES is not analyzing the term *non being* in the passage. Her interpretation of the passage rests on the "assumption that the passage is discussing negative expressions generally" (2013 p. 275). So non being (that which is not) in the target-claim is exemplified with a negative predicate at E1, and E1 for Brown is merely *an example*. "Just as 'not large' need not mean 'small' any more than 'same-sized,' so in general 'not *F*' means 'one of the others than *F*' (that is, one or another from the understood range of properties other than *F*, and not necessarily the contrary of *F*)"⁷. Brown's assumption makes the following identification:

Brown's Identification: Non being = not large [not beautiful, not just etc.]

But not everyone is ready to concede that the passage completely omits the analysis of *not being* in the target claim. Thus, G.E. L. Owen makes a rival interpretation, according to which the passage is about *negation*. Unlike Brown, who understands *οἷον* at the beginning of E1 as 'for example', Owen suggests that we should translate *οἷον* as 'just as' and read the passage accordingly. For Owen, the passage is about negation that we see in both 'not being' (that which is not) and 'not large'. He claims that the 'not' in 'not being' is

⁶ The latter terminology is more liberal than the incompatible properties one, because it allows for the determinables to be predicates without being properties. O'Conner makes a similar point: predicates in the determinate-determinable relation do not necessarily correspond to 'natural kinds'. See: O'Conner 1955.

⁷ Brown p. 279.

explained in E1 by analogy of the use of ‘not’ in the predicative expression ‘not large’. Therefore, for him, E1 is *an analogy*.

Owen’s Analogy:

‘Not-’ and ‘non-’ prefixed to names are *analogous to* ‘not-’ and ‘non-’ affixed to verbs

This analogy drives Owen’s interpretation of the passage, according to which it is only about negation, and not about negative predication. Only the ‘not’ is analyzed, but not cases of negative predication. As he puts it, Plato’s “argument is one from analogy. It illuminates a troublesome case by a tractable parallel: it draws a comparison between affixing a negative to the verb ‘to be’ and affixing one to a predicate such as ‘large’. Within the comparison the sense of the negated terms is not called in question. What it is designed to explain is the role of the negation sign itself.” (1999 pp. 423-424).

After saying that, Owen proceeds with a claim that serves as his general interpretation of the passage. For him, the passage is about negation (I agree with this part of his claim), but this negation ultimately boils down to negation of the verb ‘to be’ (this, I think, is weird, given what we have in the example). The ‘non large’ in our passage, Owen says, is not a case of negative predication, because what the passage is really conveying is the negative *participle* form of the verb ‘to be’. He draws his analysis from the assumption that *not large* can be rewritten as ‘not-is large’, where the verb ‘to be’ itself is modified by the affix. He refers to the classification of negations made by Aristotle in *de Interpretatione* and suggests that we should distinguish between ‘this not-is white’ and ‘this is not-white’ (p. 425). The latter stands for the negation of a predicate, while the former—for the negation of the verb ‘to be’⁸.

Owen writes that we should consider the case of negating the verb itself referring to the example from Aristotle: ‘this not-is white’ as opposed to ‘this is not-white’ (p. 425). The latter is the example of negative predication, while the former represents negation of the verb: ‘the negative modifies the verb and so imports the notion of not being’ (*Ibid.*). To think of an extended example, unlike ‘the snow is not white’, the ‘the snow not-is white’ is not a case of negative predication. It is the case of using the verb ‘to be’ in the negative form. Accordingly, for Owen, the role of ‘not-large’ in E1 is to demonstrate how a verb can carry the function of a participle, to say that the expression really means ‘not-is large’.

To clarify what this participle function might be represented, I will now give some examples referring to the previous fragments of the dialogue—however, I am not

⁸ That this is the correct interpretation of the classification of negations in *de Interpretatione* is itself disputed. The interpretation that Aristotle specifically singles out negations of the verb ‘to be’ was put forward by Ackrill and supported by Jones (2010).

completely sure that Owen himself would embrace them. Verbs that are less ubiquitous than 'to be' can serve as better examples of base vs participle form of verbs. For instance, 'to rest' in a sentence can be used in the sense of 'resting', and 'to move' in the sense of 'moving'. These expressions would answer not to the question *what is* but to the question *how it is*. Then, if something is said to be 'not moving', then it might mean that it is *nonmoving* without presupposing that it is resting. Correspondingly, the contrariety between non being and being that was rejected in C1 might presuppose that something is nonbeing in a participle form, which indicates *the being's mode of being*, but not something which is a polar opposite of being.

This might be the reasoning behind Owen's obscure remark that "to describe any thing or things as 'not being' is just to say that it 'is not' or they 'are not'" (p. 424). He goes on: "The verb is put in participial form here because Plato wants to draw a clear analogy with the negating of another predicate, 'large', but it is the negating of 'is' and 'are' that he is out to explain" (pp. 424-425).

But this is weird given that in the text, we don't see the explicit opposition of 'not-is large' and 'not large'. Instead, we see the tension between 'not large' meaning 'small' and 'not large' meaning 'equal'. If Plato simply meant to demonstrate the negation of the verb 'to be' using the example of 'not-is large', then why didn't he use this form of the verb negation in the example? Moreover, why did he additionally mention 'small' and 'equal'? How does Owen's interpretation make sense of the alternative predicates ES explicitly presented? Unfortunately, Owen's analysis does not offer a good explanation for the predicate range used in the example. It reduces the full claim in E1 to just one negation of a name. In this sense, Owen is only analyzing the passage in terms of a formal and external negation: negative grammatical *forms* of the verb 'to be' and predications.

Apart from overall obscurity, the serious drawback of Owen's interpretation is that he is completely neglecting the content of ES's example at E1. The semantic side of the example becomes irrelevant for Owen, since for him, it is not the otherness of large that is implied by the example, but the otherness of 'is'. Consequently, the words 'large', 'equal' and 'small' are recognized as connected predicates by Owen and an important message of the example is missed.

The usual conclusion drawn from *the Sophist* is that it does not rely on the *existential* usual use of 'is' to solve the puzzles of *non being* (since the verb is used as a participle). Independently from Owen, Michael Frede (1992/2022) arrived at the same conclusion: no *existential* usual use of 'is' needed to solve the puzzles of *non being*. However, his motivation is completely different: he rejects the existential use of the verb in favor of the predicative use of it. For Frede, expressions like 'x is not white' are used to

demonstrate how we are able to achieve saying something about something, that is, using ‘not is’ in a predicative sense. In a more general sense, the distinction he outlines is between identity sentences and predicative sentences, and our target passages are used to explicate predicative ones. So, again, it is not specifically about the senses of the verb ‘to be’, but about expressions that realize varying syntactical categories in general: “...it seems that Plato is aiming at a characterization of simple (i.e., nonmolecular) statements quite generally and really is looking for syntactical categories” (p. 451).

Brown’s interpretation combines more well with Frede’s, since both are revolving around negative predicates. Moreover, she focuses on the E1 explication of *non being* and pays attention to the specific terms used in Plato’s example. This is something that Owen’s interpretation completely lacks.

For the reasons of the obscurity of Owen’s interpretation, and since it ignores the semantic relations between the terms of the example, I think we should stick to Brown’s one. But Owen was right that the passage *is* about negation. A better way to argue for this than saying that it is about negation of the verb ‘to be’ is to notice how ES simplifies *non being* from the target-claim in his reiteration at C 1.1.

ES’s Simplification: Not being = ‘not- and non- prefixed to names’

This shows that Brown’s view is current, and that *not being* can simply be understood as a generalization for negative expressions that combine names such as predicate-names ‘large’ with a negative prefix.

Finally, Brown’s interpretation is better because it highlights the inferential connection *the negation* discloses when applied to a predicate (the connection between this predicate, and other predicates of the same semantic range). It goes beyond the formal sense of negativity of expressions, whether of the verbal or the adjectival category, and unpacks the negation of predicates as an *internal negation*.

1.2 Negation as Internal Negation

As we have seen, the opinions on the pragmatics of the passage are divided: it is either about internal mechanism of negation that negation of predicates utilizes (Brown) or an external negation that has to do with the form of an expression (specifically, of the verb in Owen's view).

I side with Brown: the passage uses expressions of a form 'not F ' to demonstrate the effect of negation on implications of such expressions. It shows what inferential relations take place between the members of a determined set of predicates. The example highlights relation:

If it's not large then it is one of the others within the range.

With his example, ES shows that inverting the truth-value of an expression that is usually taken to be the function of negation is not the only function of negation that happens in colloquial speech. It is not only a symbolic logic negation that modifies the truth-value of a subject-term, but also a linguistic negation, which utilizes a semantically connected range of predicates. Linguistic negation postulates something other from that range, and this is a function that negation lacks in symbolic logic. Of course, the inversion of the truth-value of an expression also happens with linguistic negation, since not large is marked as a false predicate with it. But this function is conjoined with the previous one: the negated predicate is a false predicate of the given predicate range.

In the 1929 symposium on negation that forms the backdrop of Brown's analysis of negative predication, J.D. Mabbott states that as applied to linguistic expressions negation has two functions: it negates something (as false), but it also asserts a disjunctive piece of discourse. Gilbert Ryle further reflects on the semantic content of negative sentences and concludes that:

- (a) The full explication of what is meant by a negative sentence necessarily takes the form of an assertion of otherness; and
- (b) and that the otherness asserted is not just otherness in general, but otherness as specified or made determinate by mention of the particular disjunctive set to which the "others" belong as members. (Ryle p. 89)

Both clauses I think very well fit with Plato's analysis of negation in discourse. The contrariety is rejected, and the otherness is asserted. This asserted otherness is the inference from the negation to a disjunctive set.

Let's take the example of a sentence of a general form 'x is not *F*', like 'the grass is not green'. This is a predicative sentence of a full form: it contains a subject and a predicate that is negated in it. It follows that there must be another predicate that must be appropriate in describing how the grass 'is', i.e. which is the true predicate of the subject 'grass' mentioned in the sentence. What could it be? Where should we look for this true predicate which is hidden from our immediate view? This is intuitively obvious: if the grass is not green, it must be of *some other color*. So, it could be yellow, orange, maybe even red. The predicate that we are looking for when the 'green' is negated must belong to the disjunctive set consisting of possible colors of grass: green, yellow, orange, etc. So, the otherness asserted with a negation of 'green' is the other instance of color (a). And simultaneously, since green is a color, the disjunctive set from which we'll pick the right predicate is specified: it is the disjunctive set of colors, and only colors, to which the negated green, along with the possible 'yellow', 'brown' and 'red' belong as members (b).

The simultaneous character of (a) and (b) is actually interesting. We can spell out what we just said through determinates-determinables terminology: yellow, orange, and green are all determinates of color. Moreover, color is a special kind of determinable: nothing can be yellow if it's not already colored. Nothing can have a form of sphere if it's not already shaped. These latter terms, such as size, color, and length, are usually called absolute determinables. Here is how John Searle defines them in his encyclopedia entry: "In short and general, determinates presuppose their absolute determinables. A term A presupposes a term B if and only if it is a necessary condition of A's being either true or false of an object x that B is true of x" (Searle 1967). The definition is also extendable to cases of negated predicates: "Negation of any determinate term [concerning an object] presupposes that the corresponding absolute determinable term is true of that object". Thus, the negation of 'large' concerning some object in our example presupposes that having size is true of that object. Other examples of determinables presupposed by predicates of negative claims might be:

Determinable	Color	Size	Mood
<i>Claims</i>	The sky is not blue	The portrait is not large	I am not sad

Or, if we want to be careful and avoid mentioning subjects of predication for now, we can say that the negation of the predicate ‘not large’ presupposes its implied predicate to be of the same range with it, i.e. the negated predicate and the implied one should express the same absolute determinable.

Although Brown characterizes her view through the expression ‘incompatible properties’, it is important to note that for her, the determinables are *not necessarily physical properties*. Usually, the relation of incompatibility was thought to be a relation between determinates of determinables which are physical properties. Thus, being green presupposes being colored, and being spherical presupposes having a shape. However, duration, which is a non-physical property is often discussed a determinable that might have incompatible determinables⁹. Indeed, duration might be seen through *difference instead of contrariety* model in Plato’s example. E.g., when I tell my movie night friends that the movie that I brought this time is not long, I do not necessarily imply that it’s short. I may also mean that it’s a normal 90-minutes movie: it will last roughly the same time as the one we watched before. What I would mean by saying ‘not long’ in this example is another expression of duration to which ‘not long’ refers to (‘short’ or ‘just the same length of the movie we watched before’). In a similar manner, Brown does not think that what should be determined according to ES should necessarily be a physical property, it just happens to be so in The Example passage. Later, she interprets ES’s claims Theaetetus flies and Theaetetus sits as indicating different point of the spectrum of *locomotive properties* possibly pertaining to Theaetetus. While the term ‘property’ is consistently used by her, it is not exclusively used in the sense of physical property¹⁰.

Overall, the analysis of negation in negative predication discloses an inference we can make from the negated predicate to its implied meaning, and presupposes that that meaning would be expressed by a predicate of the same determinate range:

⁹ See: “Determinates vs. Determinables” in Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Spring 2010 Edition.

¹⁰ Another analogue of Brown’s properties in need of determination might be found in philosophy of art. Frank Sibley (1959) put forward an idea of aesthetic concepts that supervene on physical properties, but cannot be reduced to them. Moreover, he suggested that some aesthetic concepts can be explained by other aesthetic concepts. Thus, we may attribute to someone the aesthetic property of ‘intelligence’ by saying that this person is *ingenious, inventive, acute*, and so on’ (p. 3). The explained-explainer relationship in this example is akin to the determinable-determinate relation in The Example passage, while the constituents of Sibley’s example are explicitly none-physical properties.

Inference: If not F then $G \vee H \vee \dots \vee K$,

Condition: where $F, G, H \dots K \in A$.

The Example passage clearly states the inference, but it doesn't explicitly mention the condition. The latter only emerges with *the analysis* of negation of predicates in ES's example. It's presence demonstrates that negation of *not large* is an instance of internal negation (aware of inferential relations that predicates of the same range have with each other), contrary to Owen's view.

Chapter 2: The Reality of Negative Expressions

In the previous chapter, we have seen how negative expressions can indicate something. Despite their negative form, they can have a positive meaning. Thus, a negation of a predicate ‘large’ indicates one of the other predicates within the predicate range that is positively asserted. This should have already given us a clue that negative expressions do not dwell in the place of total non-existence: they do share the semantic reality with other real expressions, such as predicates of the same semantic range. Thus, the reality of negative expressions has already been proven through their participation in meaningful language via inferential relations that they share with other expressions. In this chapter, we will look at the passage that immediately follows the discussed one, in which ES proposes another account of the reality of negative expressions. Just like in the previous passage, we will see that they are real because they are participating in inferential relations with other expressions.

In our current passage, ES puts forward an analogy between knowledge with its parts and difference with its parts (257c). Just like knowledge is one thing that has many parts, difference is also said to be one thing with many parts (257c-d). Then, just like parts of knowledge have their own names, difference, supposedly, also has parts, and these parts have their own names (257d). After claiming these similarities, ES makes the most important claim of The Analogy passage that links it to The Example passage. Here is this claim: negative expressions, such as ‘not large’ and ‘the not beautiful’ participate in *being* on par with their positive counterparts (257e-258a).

The structure of the Chapter is organized in this way. First, I will discuss how can we understand the example of a negative expression from the Analogy passage in line with what we discussed in the previous Chapter. I will claim that *the not beautiful* is a negative expression, just as *not large* is. The new sense that The Analogy passage confers about its status, is that negative expressions are legitimate parts of language, on par with other legitimate expressions of language that are not negative in form. Therefore, the main import of the passage is to say that negative expressions *are real*. Then, in a separate section, I will present my speculation that ‘difference’ in the passage might be read off as ‘language’.

Here is the entirety of The Analogy Passage (257c-258a):

The Analogy:

The nature of the different appears to be chopped up, just like knowledge. A2

Knowledge is a single thing, too, I suppose. But each part of it that has to do with something is marked off and has a name peculiar to itself. That's why there are said to be many expertises and many kinds of knowledge. (Of course). A2a

And so the same thing happens to the parts of the nature of the different, too, even though it's one thing. (Maybe. Shall we say how?) A2b

Parts of Difference example:

ES: Is there a part of the different that's placed over against the beautiful? (Yes) Shall we say that it's nameless, or does it have a name? E2

T: It has a name. What we call not beautiful is the thing that's different from nothing other than the nature of the beautiful.

Parts of Difference definition:

ES: Isn't it in the following way that the not beautiful turns out to be, namely, by being both marked off within one kind of those that are, and also set over against one of those that are? (Yes) D2

Then it seems that the not beautiful is a sort of setting of a being over against a being.

The main claim:

ES: Well then, according to this account, is the beautiful more a being than the not beautiful? (Not at all)

So we have to say that both the not large and the large equally are. (Yes) C2

And we'll speak about the others in the same way too, since the nature of the different appeared as being one of those that are. And because it is, we have to posit its parts as no less beings.

2.1 Negative expressions as Parts of Difference

The Analogy likens difference to knowledge. In A1, difference is portrayed as having parts, in analogy with knowledge and its parts. The initial picture of the Analogy from A1 looks like this, leaving us a blank to fill in:

The whole	DIFFERENCE	KNOWLEDGE
Parts	_____	fishery carpentry governance hunting

In A2a, Theaetetus readily understands the part of the analogy concerning knowledge. Indeed, it's not hard to come up with examples of carpentry, fishing, governance, hunting, as examples of expert knowledge that are mentioned in a vast variety of Plato's dialogues. The point so far is that these expert knowledges are distinct from each other, and at the same time all identical to the same thing, knowledge. This point echoes the earlier discussion of the relationship between Greatest Kinds in *the Sophist*: kinds of Rest and Motion are distinct from each other and yet they both 'are'—they both hold an identity-relation to the kind Being (254d¹¹, 255e-256a¹²). So ES already explained a similar complex relation, and it is not hard for Theaetetus to understand it.

However, another part of the analogy gives Theaetetus a surprise—presumably, because the parts of the different are not defined yet. Theaetetus stumbles on the Stranger's confusing claim:

A1b: And so *the same thing happens* to the parts of the nature of the different, too, even though it's one thing.

¹¹ VISITOR: The most important kinds we've just been discussing are *that which is*, *rest*, and *change*.

THEAETETUS: Yes, by far.

VISITOR: And we say that two of them don't blend with each other.

THEAETETUS: Definitely not.

VISITOR: But *that which is* blends with both of them, since presumably both of them are.

¹² Change is completely different from rest, but it is, because it shares in *that which is*.

My emphasis is on how to understand ‘the same thing happening’ to both parts of knowledge and parts of difference. What is exactly confusing in it? From A2a we learn that knowledge is a single thing, and from A2b that difference is also a single thing. This doesn’t seem to be problematic. We also learn that they both have parts, and that parts of knowledge are expert kinds of it, but we don’t know that parts of difference are yet, so this might be problematic. We also learn from A2a that parts of knowledge have ‘names peculiar to themselves’, so the same thing must also happen to parts of difference. So, the confusing claim is at this point is that *difference has parts, and these parts have their own names*. The next bit (E2) relieves Theaetetus from confusion: it gives us a thing ‘placed over against the beautiful’ as an example of parts of difference, and says that it has its own name, *not beautiful*.

E2: ES: Is there a part of the different that’s placed over against the beautiful?

T: Yes.

ES: Shall we say that it’s nameless, or does it have a name?

T: It has a name. What we call *not beautiful* is the thing that’s different from nothing other than the nature of the beautiful.

The striking part is that the expression *not beautiful* is intuitively derived by Theaetetus from the expression *the beautiful*. ES only named the latter, and said that there is a contrariety relation to it, which immediately leads to *not beautiful* for his interlocutor. Isn’t it strange, given what we covered in Chapter 1? When discussing the contrariety of ‘large’, the interlocutors have set with an understanding that it is not ‘not large’, but something within the same lines: ‘equal’, ‘same-sized’, or something similar. Why didn’t Theaetetus then give an example of ‘mediocre’ as the other of *the beautiful*? Didn’t he understand that the different of a term should not be a term that is opposite in its form, but rather connected to it through the semantic range to which they both belong? The most obvious explanation is that we are no longer dealing with the reality of negative expressions in the previous sense, and that now ES tries to convey another explanation of it.

In general, scholars express a concern regarding the continuity of The Analogy Passage with the previous one. Indeed, it seems to be divorced from the achievements of the previous passage because it re-introduces contrary terms. In this sense, Brown’s suggestion that The Analogy might convey just the same idea of incompatible properties range as The Example passage doesn’t sound convincing:

“How can we apply the moral of Stage 1 to this? One way to do so—though I don’t feel entirely confident it is right—is to carry over the idea that Plato has in mind a range of incompatible properties such that to be not *F* is to have some property *taken from that range* that is other than *F*ness. Thus the form *not large* is the form or property of being some size (relative to . . .) other than large. Likewise, the form *not beautiful* is the property of having some aesthetic property other than beautiful: perhaps plain, perhaps ugly”. (NB p. 283)

But we already noted that in the Analogy passage Theaetetus does not offer ‘plain’ as something different from ‘the beautiful’, but instead goes for the semantically contrary, which means that ES can’t be making the same point about Difference with the Analogy.

Nevertheless, Brown acknowledges the novelty of the Analogy passage and offers her explanation. In her opinion, its aim is “to introduce a novel notion, that of a ‘part of the different’” (p. 280). Difference, she says, is a form, its parts such as not beautiful are forms, and what each part of difference is set against, such as beautiful, is also a form (pp. 282-283). I agree with the first claim that the passage introduces the notion of a ‘part of the different’. However, I also think that we can explain this novelty in a better way than simply by calling them forms. First, I think that the form-explanation shifts our focus from the main idea of the passage. Usually, Plato’s Forms are taken to be autonomous entities that exist themselves by themselves. But the idea of the passage is that non beautiful has its being due to its *relation* to other meaningful expressions. And it is specifically through these relations that the new point is made: ‘non beautiful’ is a meaningful expression not just because it is different (Example passage), but also because it is a contrary (Analogy passage). Second, unlike saying that they are forms, saying that parts of difference are negative expressions in general preserves the continuity of two passages.

In the continuation of The Analogy passage, ES describes two relations that allow *the non beautiful* to participate in being:

D2: *Isn’t it in the following way that the not beautiful turns out to be, namely, by being both marked off within one kind of those that are, and also set over against one of those that are? (Yes)*

So, *the non beautiful* is described as ‘being both marked off within one kind of those that are, and also set over against one of those that are’. In his next claim, ES reiterates this: ‘it seems that *the not beautiful* is a sort of setting of a being over against a being’ (257e). It is clear from the context that these phrases are reformulations of the earlier claim about non beautiful: it is ‘a part of the different that’s placed over against the beautiful (257d).

As pointed out by Owen, Plato uses two different verbs in describing the relations of the *non beautiful* with other relata. In our translation, we see that on the one hand, it is *marked off* from something. On the other hand, it is *set against* something else. Owen comments that what we see as ‘setting against’ in the original is the same verb that was used to describe the rejected contrariety in the previous passage: ἀντιτεθέν. But as far as ‘marking off something’ is concerned, a new verb is used to describe it: ἀφορισθέν. This might suggest that there are two separate relations indicated with these two verbs. At least, this seems to be Owen’s view.

Indeed, *the not beautiful* might be involved into two relations: with the Kind Difference—signified with the phrase ‘marked off within one kind of those that are’; and with *the beautiful*—signified with the phrase ‘set over against one of those that are’. In other words, the *non beautiful* should be a part of difference—that is, from my understanding, a part of language¹³—that is related to another part of language, *the beautiful*, and also somehow related to the Kind Difference. But this puts things in a little awkwardly manner. Non beautiful, as a part of difference, is somehow related to the Kind Difference. As Samuel Meister rightly points out, it is simply related to Difference by being its part. So, the constitution of a part of different, according to Meister, can be explain as a *triadic participation relation*. He says that The Analogy introduces *the non beautiful* as participating in a *single* triadic relation corresponding to the following formula: “for any *x* and *y*, for *x* to be different from *y* is for *x* to partake of difference with regard to *y*” (p. 9).

I embrace Meister’s idea that there is a single relation instead of Owen’s implication that there are two, because it allows us to focus on the relationship between *beautiful* and *not beautiful* as the constitutive relations of The Analogy passage. It introduces a negative expression involved in inferential relations with other expressions, just like The Example passage. However, now it emphasizes the relation of contrariety as constitutive to being of negative expressions. Overall, the best way to describe *non beautiful* in this passage is to

¹³ One thing that might be immediately objected is this: why did I identify part of difference with part of speech? In the text, we only see that *the not beautiful* is a part of difference. There is no mentioning that it is a part of speech. I know that this is so, and still think that my identification is correct. In the second section of this chapter, I am offering my reasons for understanding ‘difference’ as ‘language’ in the passage.

say that is a real part of language, and this is so precisely for its contrary relation to another part of language, the predicate *beautiful*.

Then how should we understand the status of *non beautiful* appearing at E2? In my opinion, we can do it right in the same manner as we did with not large: *non beautiful* is a negative expression and a part of language, despite its negative form. In my opinion, *non beautiful*, just like not large, is a negative expression that is involved in inferential relations with other components of speech. These inferential relations are precisely what makes negative expressions meaningful, and for the reason of these relations negative expressions gain a place in Plato's linguistic ontology. The Example passage demonstrated that negative expressions can have meaning due to inferential relations with other expressions of the relevant range, but it didn't explicitly tackle the problem of *being* of negative expressions. This passage does two things: it continues to show the inferential relations negative expressions share with other expressions of language, but it also does so to demonstrate that negative expressions share in being: they are, in a way, real.

The main idea of the passage is formulated in the following tautological claims which finalize the Analogy passage:

C2 *ES: Well then, according to this account, is the beautiful more a being than the not beautiful? (Not at all)*

So we have to say that both the not large and the large equally are. (Yes)

And we'll speak about the others in the same way too, since the nature of the different appeared as being one of those that are. And because it is, we have to posit its parts as no less beings.

The first question gets the reality of negative expressions as consequential from what has been said earlier about them, and that was an overview of their relational standing with regards to *the beautiful*. Precisely because negative predicates share an inferential relation with their positive counterparts, they are legitimate parts of language.

The ending of the passage also allows us to fill in the gap:

The whole	DIFFERENCE	KNOWLEDGE
Parts	not beautiful not large etc.	fishery carpentry etc.

In my interpretation, *the non beautiful* is simply a negative predicate, just like ‘not large’ is. But what makes it a negative predicate and a part of speech, in the first place, is its legitimate place in language: *the not beautiful* is inferentially related to other legitimate expressions. Thus, it is related to the predicate ‘beautiful’ through opposition. This relation makes it a part of difference in the first place, because a part of difference is a part of language. And parts of language—that is, expressions that we use for any kind of talk, whether colloquial or academic, are linguistic expressions precisely because they are involved in inferential relations with other expressions. This is a thesis of Inferential role semantics that I embrace. At this point, the reader might think that I am making too many assumptions or that I’m moving too fast. However, that *the non beautiful* is opposed to *the beautiful* is directly stated in the text (D2, or 257e). That it is a part of difference is also stated (257d). The only assumption that I make is that part of difference should be identified with part of language¹⁴.

To sum up, I take this part of C2 as the main claim of The Analogy: *So we have to say that both the not large and the large equally are (258a)*. It demonstrates the reality of negative expressions. Negative expressions, such as ‘non large’ and ‘non beautiful’ are real and meaningful expressions due to their participation in inferential relations with other expressions of language: for example, because they are *placed over against* their positive counterparts (257d). Thus, when we say ‘not beautiful’ we mean that it is other than ‘beautiful’. We at least manage to convey this meaning. Then, ‘other than beautiful’ might be understood in two ways. When we say that something is not beautiful, we might mean that it is different from everything that is beautiful. Or we might think that it has an attribute incompatible with ‘beautiful’, such as an aesthetic property *ugly* or *mediocre*. In the first case, we would state that the Analogy ‘sets off a class of things, namely all those things that are not beautiful, over against another class of things, namely all those things that are beautiful’, and therefore agree with Frede (p. 446-447), who argues that *the not beautiful* is posited in the passage as a *class*. In the second case, we would agree with Brown, who interprets being other than beautiful as ‘having some aesthetic property other than beautiful: perhaps plain, perhaps ugly’ (p. 283). Finally, with the remark at 258a that ‘*we’ll speak about the others in the same way too*’, namely that we can ‘*put the not just on a par*

¹⁴ So much for the contents of my view. I don’t think it’s much outlandish. In fact, it has points of overlap with the famous view of Frede (1990) in the point that the passage introduces an example of negative predication. It also agrees with Meister (2025) in the point about a single relation that is constitutive of parts of difference.

with the just in that neither is any more than the other’, and ‘both the not large and the large equally are’, and that *the beautiful* is no more a *being than the not beautiful*, we can generalize that all negative expressions of the form ‘not *F*’, since convey something other than *F*, are parts of language.

I have used the terms negative predicate and negative expression interchangeably. To be clear, I think that the subject that ES is getting at in both passages is non being claims general, which he understands as expressions that include negative particles. It happens so that the examples that we see in the passages are specifically negative predicates, which does not necessarily mean that ES won’t count words of other syntactical functions as exemplification of non being in speech (in case if these words also contained negative affixes not- or non-).

So much for the contents of my view. However, I suggest that there the Analogy passage introduces a new general point about *Difference*.

Here is this point: the passage introduces a challenging idea of *Difference* as a ‘chopped up whole’. How can we contemplate something that is different and at the same time whole all over? This seems to be an inherently incongruent idea. But maybe this is exactly that ES would want us to acknowledge: that it is hard to contemplate language as a whole, because the only thing we can do is to grasp it through differences that are involved in it. Thus, we grasp language as a something that has subjects and predicates. Or as something that combines nouns and verbs. Or as something that is divided into negations and expressions without a negative prefix. Every time we try to explain the whole through some difference, and *Difference* takes the place primarily occupied by the whole. Thus, we are no longer seeing the subject under consideration as a whole, we only see its differences. Language can be such an elusive whole. In the following, I try to reinterpret the passage using this hypothesis the language as a whole is analogous to *Difference* as a whole.

2.2 The whole of parts: a unitary account of difference

Difference is Ariadne's thread that sews together the wearisome string of arguments of the *Sophist*, as well as its main interpretations. The difference, as a metaphysical concept, first appears in the intercommunion of kinds passages. Then, according to the majority of scholars, it gets analyzed into two distinct entities within the middle part. For them, two different senses of 'being' is what ultimately stands for difference in the dialogue. Thus, Owen thinks that these are two distinct senses of the verb 'to be' (*einai*): a predicative and an existential sense. He thinks that the main idea of the dialogue is that the existential sense of 'to be' is unhelpful for solving the problems of being and non-being. Michael Frede, independently of Owen, arrives at a similar conclusion that the dialogue is about two uses instead of senses of the verb: predicative use and an existential one¹⁵. He also thinks that an existential one is less important, and that the aim of the dialogue is to separate out the predicative use of the verb to be in speech, and then to construct an account of negative predication. Therefore, for Frede, the preceding fragment, 257b-c was offering an account of negative predication, and this one just makes further adjustments to it. By a slight contrast, Brown thinks that the main difference of the dialogue is between two forms of speech: "as I have argued, we don't have to construe the problem as a problem about meanings of "is" but, rather, as a problem about types of sentences: identity sentences versus predications" (2019 p. 315). In other words, the dialogue strives to isolate the expressions which confer identity of something to something (and a corresponding existential meaning of the verb used in these expressions) from expressions that are only saying something of something and use the verb 'to be' predicatively. The overall agreement is that the metaphysical concept of difference is understood concretely in these passages as an analytical tool to mark off predication from identity in speech. But I think that the analogy offered in the fragment below also offers a unitary—in addition to this analytical—concept of difference that brings us back to the problem of parity of *being* and *non being* stated in 250e-251a.

Let me clarify what do I mean by 'unitary' first. Before diving into four greatest kinds in their relation to being, ES makes an intriguing digression to talk about figures of the sophist and the philosopher. Philosopher, he says, is knowledgeable in dialectics, which is an acquired ability to correctly 'divide things by kinds' (253d). He offers an allegorical description of his two characters. The sophist, he says, has his refuge, a place well-familiar to him, which is nothing but darkness into which he runs off. When a sophist speaks, he speaks from this dwelling place of non-being, which is so dark that the speaker himself

¹⁵ See Frede, M. *Prädikation und Existenzaussage* (Göttingen, 1967).

becomes invisible. A philosopher, by contrast, does not run off anywhere. She stays in the wilderness such that she could be closer to being, and while she speaks, she lays out her ideas in the open, clearly putting one thing apart from the other, as they stand in the light of being. To do so, she applies the method of dialectics, which is a trained ability to divide things by kinds in accordance with how they stand in the light of being. As a special kind of knowledge, philosophy consists in knowing which kinds harmonize with which and which kinds actually exclude each other, or in correctly applying the methods of mixture (*metexis*) and division (*kat'eide* or *kata gene*¹⁶). From the standpoint of a person unexposed to the light of being, the results of work of both figures are identical. The brightness of light does not allow common folk to see the distinctions made by a philosopher so the things appear to them just as they are in the sophists' dwelling: all piled up, with no designed order. But if someone learns the method of the philosopher, they would be able to recognize forms that are invisible for the common folks and for the sophist equally. For example, they would be able to discriminate 'a single form spread out all through a lot of other things, each of which stands separate from the others' (253d-e), 'and forms that are different from each other but are included within a single form that's outside them' (253d). This is a natural prelude to the Analogy passage, and also a perfect reflection of what is being stated in it. So now we should behave as a philosopher and try to discern what form is being spread all over singular things that occur in the fragment as parts of difference.

I propose to identify Difference in the Analogy with language, and language with "*a single form spread out all through a lot of other things, each of which stands separate from the others*". The previous interpretation showed how parts of difference are "*forms that are different from each other but are included within a single form [Difference] that's outside them*". Language works for understanding Difference as "*a single form spread out all through a lot of other things, each of which stands separate from the others*".

Just as knowledge, language has conflicting parts, some of its expressions are opposed to others, and yet these expressions in tandem with the relations among them, constitute an elusive unitary entity: language as a 'chopped up whole'. While itself being simplistic (and purposively so: our dialogue itself is too sophisticated), the identification of Difference with Language allows us to clarify some of more complex interpretative problems of the dialogue. For one, it forms the intuitive background for asking what it means for a name to have 'its own nature' (the problem which comes very close to the problems of Theory of Forms identified by Aristotle). Moreover, it allows to draw a continuous link between the problems raised in the *Sophist's* extensive analytic part.

¹⁶ See Brown 2010.

Having this in mind, let's revisit the analogy:

The nature of the different appears to be chopped up, just like knowledge. A2

Knowledge is a single thing, too, I suppose. But each part of it that has to do with something is marked off and has a name peculiar to itself. That's why there are said to be many expertises and many kinds of knowledge. (Of course). A2a

And so the same thing happens to the parts of the nature of the different, too, even though it's one thing. (Maybe. Shall we say how?) A2b

To explain 'the same thing' in the confusing claim (A2b), ES turns to his not beautiful example (E2). It is true, as the discussed scholars pointed out, that the not beautiful emerges antithetically to the beautiful, suggesting the significance of relation between the two terms in the Analogy. But there is another feature of the two terms that is also present in the text: the not beautiful, ES says, is not nameless, it has its own name. My suggestion is that we should understand Theaetetus' remark that 'we call *not beautiful* is the thing that's different from nothing *other than the nature* of the beautiful' at E2 exactly as reformulation of the Stranger's question: for not beautiful to be *other than the nature* of the beautiful is for it to have a name of its own.

To have a name might seem philosophically innocent. I reader might think: 'if non beautiful is a name, it is, just like any other word, has a sphere of designation—so was the *Sophist* just about this? This seems to be even less radical than the claim that not beautiful is a Form shared by some recent scholars'. It turns out that name (*onoma*) was a sophisticated concept in ancient thought directly linked to the idea of essences of things. As Michael Frede writes, there was the view, attributed to Antisthenes, that no two statements can run into contradiction. "Antisthenes' view, according to Aristotle's testimony in the *Metaphysics* (1024b32–4), was that each thing has its unique *logos* or statement, which identifies or spells it out. This has always reminded scholars of the view expounded at the beginning of the last section of the *Theaetetus*, according to which, if a statement can be made about something at all, it must be its own statement, a statement proper and peculiar to it (cf., e.g., *Tht.* 202a6–8). And it also reminds one of the view attacked in the *Sophist* itself (251a5ff), according to which each thing should be addressed only by its own name, and not by the name of something else, so that we should not call, for example, an object "white," since "white" is the name of a color and an object is not a color." By devising a dialogue on the possibility of a false statement, Plato opposes Antisthenes' view. For him, a predicate not only can be attributed to a name (other than the

predicate itself), it can also be attributed correctly and incorrectly. Crucially, a name can be named correctly by a different name (e.g. snow is white). So if not beautiful is a name, it can name things correctly and incorrectly. In other words, it can participate in discourse and in formation of true and false statements. And so a name, from a philosophically meaningless statement, becomes a condition of false speech.

On the alternative interpretation, for predicative expressions ‘not beautiful’, ‘not large’, and ‘not just’ to have their own names is for them to form distinct classes. Thus, Frede suggests that not beautiful and beautiful are both classes whose members are defined through mutual exclusion: everything that belongs to the first class should be excluded from the other, and vice versa¹⁷. But maybe we don’t want to go as far as to define membership of these classes through opposition of their members. For now, we can simply emphasize the distinctive expressive abilities of expressions. Expressions of language, which contain negative ones, altogether constitute the domain of Difference. But what makes a negative expression truly significant is its ability to denote something which no other expression can denote. So when a negative prefix is applied to an expression, *the thing* to which the name is applied gets highlighted, i.e. a specific part of being which can only be denoted by that negative name gets marked off from the whole of Being. How this region of Being gets selected is explained by Brown’s incompatible property range interpretation (or incompatible predicate range), which is a natural alternative to construing membership in classes ‘not beautiful’ and ‘beautiful’ through the mutual exclusion of their members¹⁸.

¹⁷ Frede: “Thus there is difference from the beautiful, that is, from what is beautiful. It sets off a class of things, namely all those things that are not beautiful, over against another class of things, namely all those things that are beautiful. Since difference is perfectly real and the beautiful is perfectly real, difference from the beautiful, and hence being not beautiful, is perfectly real and unproblematic, as real as the beautiful. So, in this sense the not beautiful constitutes an unproblematic class of things, no less real than the beautiful. Similarly, with not being. It involves a difference, and, more specifically, a difference from what is or is being in a certain way. There is nothing mysterious about this. And this specific difference sets off a class of things, namely all those things that are not in the same way, over against another class of things, namely all those things that are in this way. To be not being just is to be something that is set off from what is in a certain way, something that is different from what is being in this way. In this sense not being is as real as being and hence a nature of its own.”

¹⁸ The problem regarding the criterion of class membership concerns universal quantification. As Frede writes: “non being... involves a difference from what is or is being in a certain way. ... And this specific difference sets off a class of things, namely all those things that are not in the same way, over against another class of things, namely all those things that are in this way.” But, Brown objects, the examples were not about ‘all the things that are not in the same way’, it is only about the things that are not in the same way that belong to a certain range. I agree with Brown here. The notion of class, at least in how it is formulated by Frede, dangerously borders cases of absurd Forms highlighted by Aristotle. If all Plato is talking about in the Sophist

I will close the explanation of the analogy by saying that its confusing phrase that ‘the same thing happens’ to parts of difference merely means that ‘they have names of their own’. After this, it will only be left to extend for ES to extend the idea to the previous examples containing only ‘seemingly’ opposite negative expressions:

ES: Well then, according to this account, is the beautiful more a being than the not beautiful? (Not at all)

So we have to say that both the not large and the large equally are. (Yes)

And we’ll speak about the others in the same way too, since the nature of the different appeared as being one of those that are. And because it is, we have to posit its parts as no less beings.

The meaning of ‘no less beings’ here is not enigmatic. Just like rest and motion shared in being, carpentry and fishery shared in knowledge, not large and large share in difference. Their ‘being different’ supplied their ‘being’, where the condition of being something was to be useful for naming a specific domain of things that can’t be named by something else. In this sense, beautiful and not beautiful, large and not large, are proclaimed to be ‘equal’ in being. Each and every of these terms represent difference, which is the whole of meaningful language (although, the conditions of the latter to meaningful and therefore allow for falsity will be named only in the later parts of the dialogue).

Also, difference *is* language due to its relations to its parts. Language does not exist without its expressions. All the linguistic expressions constitute what language is. So again, the difference that is nothing but all the different expressions of language, different syntactically, represents a determinate-determinable relation: nothing can be a negative expression without simultaneously being a legitimate expression of language.

are ‘all those things that are not in the same way’ opposed to ‘all those things that are in this way’, then we can think of not chair and chair as such opposites. Then, to the ‘not chair’ *everything* which is not chair will belong: my computer, purple sky, cosmos, the expression ‘green’. But we already clarified that Plato puts a limitation on meanings of a negated term. Only terms of the same semantic range represent difference, and this difference in turn stands for the meaning of negative expressions.

Of course, saying that not beautiful is a proper name that can be used later in meaningful statements is a weaker claim than to say, as interpreters do, that negative expressions participate in a dual relation with Difference and with positive expressions with which they are inferentially connected. But this allows us to see the big picture of the analogy, where it approximates the problem of language as contradictory difference that is also a whole.

This whole is inherently contradictory. It is ripped into sets of expressions whose forms, functions and implications we are able to distinguish, and yet we are unable to see them altogether as a whole. In trying to generalize claims about all expressions of language, all we can do is to point out their differences, and therefore specify the subject instead of generalizing it. In this sense, the problem of the whole of the different as the problem of the whole of language is akin to the problems of Being and Non Being from which the inquiry into Greatest Kinds started (243b-c). Particular beings can be defined through the common form in which they participate: redwood, oak, and maple participate in trees; trees, creeks, and coasts participate in nature; nature, minds, and souls participate in all there is, in Being; but what does Being participate in? Can we imagine an encompassing being for a being that includes all entities—for example, for the World Animal which is the Soul that encompasses all there is in Timaeus? There is a problem of the threshold of Being and the limits of intelligibility. Similarly, with linguistic entities: green, blue, and red participate in colors; colors sizes and duration participate in semantic categories; semantic categories, syntactical categories and morphological categories participate in differences that we can notice in language; but language as a whole remains concealed from thought: a whole of what language, English, Farsi, Russian? We know that the projects of identifying a universal grammar in scientific languages (Carnap), in-between natural languages (Chomsky), in the most abstract realm of thought (Frege) have collapsed. Maybe Plato knew the difficulty about them from the start: to contemplate the whole of language is as inherently problematic as contemplating the whole of Being.

With that we arrive at the additional unitary sense of Difference in the Analogy passage: it is a set of morphologically (from Claim 1 and the Analogy) and semantically (from Example1) different expressions. As we'll see later, together these diverse expressions constitute meaningful speech as a *syntactically heterogeneous whole*.

Chapter 3. Language as a syntactically heterogeneous whole

*The divorcement of everything from everything else amounts to a total annihilation of discourse of reason, for 'tis the intermarriage of form with form that gives us discourse*¹⁹.

The syntactical interpretation of *the Sophist* rests on the crucial role of the sentence structure for the false statement account. Essentially, falsehood is a secondary quality that can be applied to speech only when this speech is structured as a syntactically heterogeneous whole. In this section, I will give an account of false statement and say what does it mean for speech to be structured this way.

To make a statement that can be true or false, we first need to make statement that is meaningful. That is, we can't make absurd sentences like 'man mans', because there is no such a verb as *mans*. We can't also make absurd sentences like 'learn leans', because the subject of this statement is unclear. Consequently, we won't be able to say if such statements are true or false, because they do not make sense in the first place. The false or true quality can be attributed to a statement only when the statement as a whole forms a discourse. This is the first condition of a false statement: a statement can be true or false if it pertains to meaningful speech, *logos*, in the first place.

In the *Sophist*, Plato outlines two conditions of meaningful speech. It should contain expressions that are:

- i) heterogeneous in function;
- ii) heterofunctional expressions should be conjoined.

Words of language have different functions. That is, they pertain to different parts of speech. ES specifically discusses two parts of speech: names and verbs. At 261e-262a he states:

There are two ways to use your voice to indicate something about being. One kind is called names, and the other is called verbs.

The words of different parts of speech, correspondingly, have different functions: "a name is the kind of spoken sign that's applied to things that perform the actions" (262a), and "a verb is the sort of indication that's applied to an action" (262a). So, to use modern

¹⁹ 259e, A.E. Taylor's translation.

vocabulary, names serve the function of a subject of a statement, and verbs serve the function of its predicate. This is the first condition of meaningful speech: functional difference between parts of language.

With it, arises the second condition. The words of different functions should be properly *mixed* (metexis). Thus, no names that are simply put in a row would make sense. Similarly, no verbs conjoined together would mean something (262a). ES gives examples of ‘walks runs sleeps’ and ‘lion stag horse’ and remarks that they are unable to form a sentence that is either indicative of ‘the being of something’ or ‘of something that is not’, that is, they can’t be true or false. Only when we conjoin words with different functions, we are able to produce a bit of speech indicative of *logos*. Finally, ES gives an example of the shortest and simplest meaningful statement: “man learns” (262c). The criterion of the proper mixture, though, goes further than just conjunction of any verb with any name.

Scholars have argued that the proper mixture of parts of speech is reminiscent of harmony (Karagöz 2022). Indeed, ES talks about a musician who is an expert in how to mix high notes with low notes, and which of them mix with each other and which don’t (253b). This metaphor is given alongside the example of a person who knows how to bond letters of the alphabet, and link vowels and consonants, an expert in grammar (253a). But notice that there in the music example, some notes mix with each other, and *some don’t*. The same is repeated in case of letters: ‘Some of them fit together with each other and some don’t’ (253a). Therefore, we can expect of mixtures of sounds to produce harmony as well as disharmony, and of the mixtures of letters to produce words (*logoi*), as well as nonsense (*alogon*). Now, when ES proceeds to the discussion of mixture as a condition of meaningful speech, he reminds Theaetetus of this example (261d). Apparently, ES argues that speech is like music: there can be harmony in it if the speech is properly composed—or, otherwise, there will be a dissonance.

Here is the passage that approximates mixture of letters with mixture of parts of speech (261d):

ES: Come on, then. Let’s think about names again, the same way d as we spoke about forms and letters of the alphabet. What we’re looking for seems to lie in that direction.

T: What kind of question about them do we have to answer?

ES: Whether they all fit with each other, or none of them do, or some of them will and some of them won’t.

This exposition may remind one of the earlier discussion that precedes the negative predicate passages. The inquiry in the Communion of Kinds passages (251c-259e) proceeded in between two polar alternatives: either all kinds combine with one another or no kinds combine with one another. After exploring both sides, the interlocutors run into dead ends about both, since the alternatives entail unacceptable consequences. Therefore, they realize the initial division by two alternatives is wrong, and come up with a solution: there should be a third way to settle things, something in between the extremes of ‘all kinds combine’ and ‘none of them do’²⁰. Here is this alternative: some kinds combine, and some do not. Just the same third position, I believe, is utilized in the false statement passages, where we are working through a position that some parts of speech combine with one another, and some don’t.

Moreover, there should be some expert who knows how to mix kinds together. We have already seen this ability mentioned in the dialogue as an ability inherent to a philosopher. In connection to the account of false statement, the idea of mixing parts of speech into statements properly means allowing for a false discourse—that is, nevertheless, still a discourse, because the parts (*logoi*) are put together in an appropriate way. An ironic consequence of this, is that a sophist, as a person who denies that there is such a thing as falsity (260e) *does not even know how to properly speak*.

A more technical way to characterize the mixture as a condition of *logos* might be traced further in the dialogue. The first distinction (also pointed out by Brown and Frede) is that the proper speech achieves to say something and not just *name* something.

ES: [An expert in speech] doesn’t just name, but *accomplishes* something, by weaving verbs with names. That’s why we said he speaks and doesn’t just name. In fact this weaving is what we use the word “speech” for. (262d)

There, the condition of a meaningful statement is called a mixture of verbs with names. It is a mixture of *heterogeneous parts of speech*. As Frede notes, we can understand these parts more generally, and assume that by verbs and names Plato has in mind examples of parts of speech that can also include words of other functions.

“...as seems likely, ‘name’ (in the sense of the ancient grammarians) and “verb” here are supposed to refer to the respective word-classes, we, strictly speaking, only get a characterization of an irrelevant subclass of statements, whereas it seems that Plato is aiming at a characterization of simple (i.e., nonmolecular) statements quite generally and really is looking for syntactical categories” (Frede 2022 p. 451).

²⁰ Even Rodriguez explains this procedure as a type of Plato’s aporetic method in epistemic inquiry that follows the pattern of ‘exploring both sides’. See: Rodriguez 2020.

However, it looks like Plato achieves his goal by just mentioning two parts of speech, because what he really tries to analyze is ‘the simplest and smallest kind of speech’ (262c), which already includes for him the most important components: a predicate and a subject. Using a primitive statement ‘man learns’, he achieves to demonstrate the weaving together of elements of different word-classes that achieves to ‘say something’. The resulting mixture is the simplest kind of a whole where “one part whose function is to name, refer to, identify a subject, and another part by means of which we say something, state something, predicate something of or about the subject” (Brown 1990 p. 413). So a proper mixture should be a mixture of a subject with a predicate. A statement refers to a subject. It is about something. E.g.: ‘the lawn is F’, where ‘lawn’ is the subject. And with a predicate, we achieve to say something *of* that subject. ‘The lawn is green’ is a full statement that mentions a subject and says about it that it is *green*.

Even if for us, the mere presence of predication might be a too trivial thing to count it as a condition of meaningful speech, it wasn’t like this in the times of Plato. Frede makes a historical remark on why it was so important for ES to distinguish *logos* from ‘just naming’ in the quote above. According to the theory of meaning repeatedly attributed by Aristotle to Antisthenes, ‘each thing has its unique logos or statement, which identifies or spells it out’. This connects to the other part of *the Sophist*, where ES talks about the people he ironically calls late-learners, who ‘grab hold of the handy idea that it’s impossible for that which is many to be one and for that which is one to be many. They evidently enjoy forbidding us to say that a man is good, and only letting us say that that which is good is good, or that the man is a man’ (251c). According to late learners, each thing should be addressed only by its unique name. Therefore, late-learners do not only prohibit false speech (since what is said will always mirror the true name of the thing to which it refers), they also prohibit *predication*. To predicate something of something, is not to name it by its own name, but to say something else about it, something which is different from what the thing simply is. However, we should be careful with this formulation. If ES’s position was viewed in juxtaposition to the old theories of meaning such as Antisthenes’, then it is crucial that meaningful speech for ES necessarily presupposes otherness. Predicate is necessarily other from the subject, and the verb is necessarily other from the name. So, when we achieve to say something with a predicate, we achieve to say something else about something. In this sense, the predicative statement would include something ‘different from what the thing simply is’—it will include a predicate alongside its name.

However, it is unconvincing that the only conditions of logos that we need are i and ii, heterofunctionality and a proper conjunction. Consider the following statement.

A Tricky Example: ‘7 is not purple’.

Number ‘7’ looks like a subject of this statement. ‘Purple’ looks like a negative predicate. I have taken heterofunctional parts of speech and combined them. Is this *logos*? Did I produce a meaningful piece of speech? We have noted above that according to modern theory of negation, statements like ‘virtue is not red’ are both true and meaningful. But are they true and meaningful for Plato? I think that for Plato they can’t be neither true nor false, because they are not meaningful in the first place. Our Tricky Example is an example of deep disharmony. We cannot mix numbers with any color determinables, because numbers don’t have colors in the first place. The inference that we need to make from this statement is not:

7 is not purple → therefore, it is green

but

7 is not purple → numbers and colors *do not combine*.

With this example, we elucidated the third condition of meaningful speech (i.e. of statement-formation): the heterofunctional parts should be conjoined *properly*. In case if there is no initial connection between the subject and a predicate (of some predicate-range) that we are attributing to it, we fail to produce a meaningful statement, and our utterance is not a part of *logos*.

3.1 The Account of False Statement

As we have seen in the previous section, two conditions should be satisfied in order to call a piece of speech meaningful: it should combine syntactically differing components, and it should combine them with knowledge of what component can be combined with which in order to achieve harmony or disharmony. Next, we move on to the account of false statement itself. If there is a proper way of putting together words that produces *logos*, then how it is possible that some instances of *logos* turn out to be false?

At 262, ES distinguishes meaningful statements—predications—from the ones that can be true or false. With the first claim, he reminds T that meaningful statements are about something (262e-263a):

ES: Whenever there's speech it has to be about something. It's impossible for it not to be about something.

T: Yes.

ES: And speech also has to have some particular quality.

...

ES: Now let's turn our attention to ourselves.

I'll produce some speech by putting a thing together with an action by means of a name and a verb.

Here, ES gives examples of statements that have this *quality* (263a): "Theaetetus sits" and "Theaetetus flies". They go on to determine their truth-value (263b):

ES: What quality should we say each one of these has?

T: The second one is false, I suppose, and the other one is true.

There are two things happening in this bit. First, a further condition of meaningful statements is announced: to be a statement in the first place, it has to be about something. Theaetetus rightly identifies that both statements are about him. Frede finds this to be Plato's rule for any meaningful statement that is conjoined with the rule for its falsity: "to make a statement we have to do two things: (1) identify an item we mean to say something about, and (2) specify something we mean to say about it" (2022 p. 450). He explains that only the second condition has to do with Plato's account of falsity, while the first states the main condition of meaningful speech: "That a statement manages to single out a subject is a condition for having a statement in the first place." (*Ibid.*) Hence, both true and false statements are statements about a subject that is singled out or identified, they have to be with a reference to a subject. Statements 'Theaetetus sits' and 'Theaetetus flies' both mention something with reference to a single subject. Where they start to diverge is, then, in something that is said about that something. Therefore, we start to discern that falsity for Plato is a secondary quality that concerns something that is said about subject which is rightly identified. In other words, falsity is about *the predicate part* of a sentence: "the locus of truth or falsehood, as it were, is not the statement as a whole, but the predicative or stating part of it". (*Ibid.*)

Now, the next important thing to note is that ES gives an example of a false statement *Theaetetus flies* simultaneously with a true statement *Theaetetus sits*. They are, as it were, mirror statements, when it comes to their subject, which is the same subject in

both cases. Then, we encounter the account of a false statement that is offered by ES simultaneously with the account of a true one. Here are his definitions:

True statement definition (TS):

‘the true one says *those that are*, as they are, about you’ (263b)

False statement definition (FS):

‘and the false one says things different from *those that are*.

Hence it says of what is not that it is’²¹. (263b)

3.2 Parity of being and non being claims

Evan Rodriguez’s study of the methodological unity of the *Sophist* demonstrates why ES gives the two accounts simultaneously. Contrary to Frede, Brown, Owen, Ackrill, Hackforth, and other representatives of what I called the syntactical interpretation of the *Sophist*, who state that the dialogue first and foremost is about the account of a *false* statement, Rodriguez demonstrates with his study that it is about a false and a true statement simultaneously. This is a consequence of Plato’s Parity assumption that was stated long before in the dialogue, just after the interlocutors found out that they are in an equal state of confusion about *being*, as they were about *non being*. Owen first paid attention to this bit and proposed the term ‘parity assumption’ (PA) to describe the parity of *being* and *non being*. He assumed that the parity manifests itself in what he called ‘the prospect of joint illumination’ of *being* and *non being*, referring to ES’s claim: ‘That is, in so far as one of them is clarified, either brightly or dimly, the other will be too’ (251a). Further, other scholars analyzed the claim in terms of degrees of clarity and suggested that the claim assumes the existence of a common root that, once discovered as a good explanation to the problems of *being*, would also serve as a good explanation to the problems of *non being*²². Some also argued that this might be construed in either universal

²¹ I cite the last line in Frede’s translation.

²² See: N. Notomi 1999 p. 262: “Since the two difficulties are coupled, they must share a common root, and hence a common solution”.

or existential quantification form: PA either means that *any* clarificatory statements about being will also be clarificatory of non being, or that *some* clarificatory statements about being will also be clarificatory of non being²³. Rodriguez shows that all of these construals are wrong. They are wrong in that they are framing the parity of being and non being claims exclusively a common *clarity* that something might impart to them. In reality, Rodriguez discovers, the parity of being and non being concerns their equal illumination as well as obscurity. Before going further into explaining PA, I remind the reader that this assumption related to the fact that ES gives the account of false statement *alongside* the account of an alternative true one.

Rodriguez translates The Parity Assumption in this way (p. 178):

ES: Then indeed let this stand as containing a serious source of puzzlement; and since both being and not-being alike have had their share of puzzlement, already at this point there is an expectation that insofar as one of the two shows up as either more obscure or clearer, the other too shows up similarly. And if in turn we are not able to see either one of them, we will in this way push the account through both at the same time, however we are able to do so most appropriately (250e–251a)

The key sentence part here is: ‘insofar as one of the two shows up as either more obscure or clearer, the other too shows up similarly’. Rodriguez notes that the present tense of the verb ‘show up’ (ἀναφαίνω) in Ancient Greek implies that they will do so *simultaneously*. So as soon as some being claim springs up, the other one, some non being claim, springs up at the same time. Moreover, they might show up either clearly or obscurely. That is, some being claim might seem obscure, and in this case the relevant non being claim would seem obscure as well. On the other hand, if some being claim seems pretty clear, then the same would concern the relevant non being one. How does this apply to true and false statements?

My claim is that, if Rodriguez’ methodological reading of the dialogue is right (I think it is), then PA suggests that we cannot know if some statement is true or false unless and until we know that its counterpart is true or false. We learn that ‘Theaetetus sits’ is true simultaneously as we learn that ‘Theaetetus flies’ is false. Of some subject, we don’t even know what to say. But if we know what is true of some subject, e.g. that this table is white, we simultaneously know what is false of it, e.g. that this table is not green. Similarly, we

²³ On the universal vs existential quantification difference see: Granieri 2021 pp. 198-202. On the moderate reading of Parity assumption see: Thomas 2008.

might say that this is a plastic table, and simultaneously, that it is not a wooden table. The properties of the table—what is true of that table, and what is false of that table, both positive and negative ones—spring up simultaneously²⁴. Also, consider the opposite case of when we do not know even how to characterize the subject, we don't even presuppose any absolute determinable about it: we don't know if it has any size, or shape, or appearance even. Then we are in a state of total obscurity about it. Neither can we make positive statements about it, nor negative. But then some obscurity veils off. We know that the cup of coffee is not large. Then, it might be either small or medium. This is a little clearer. The traffic light is not green. Then, it's either red or yellow. The parity of being and not being claims shows up when the negation is applied to predicates: negative predicates drag along some possible positive claims that might be made about the subject. But negative predication is still a somewhat obscure instance of *non being*. *Non being* in a stronger sense, which is definite falsity, shows up once we know for sure what is true of the subject regarding some property of the same range that the negative claim talks about. Thus, if we know with certainty that 'the table is not green' is a false statement, we know it simultaneously with the fact that the statement 'the table is white' is true. The parity of being and non being claims, therefore, is the last component that binds together what we have learned about non being claims through the dialogue:

- a) they are predicative claims;
- b) they can manifest through negative predications;
- c) if *b* is the case, *a* involve incompatible properties, which drag along disjunctive sets of predications that might be true of the subject;
- d) they can manifest through false statements;
- e) if the falsity is certain, they show up simultaneously with some true claims concerning the property of the same range about the same subject.

²⁴ Arguably, the only thing we need to know are the absolute determinables: color, material, size and so on. But the 'know' here is more like a transcendental condition than an empirical one. We do not need to be aware of the absolute determinable that some properties realize to make an inference to another determinate of the same determinable. This is because absolute determinables are *presupposed* by their determinates: nothing can be a sphere without also being of some shape. Their presupposedness means that they can stay on the level of the unconscious (Freud), or of the transcendental (Kant).

PA and the mirror examples of negation of a predicate in the ‘incompatible properties range’ view

x is Not large	vs	t Flies
(Not being claim)		(Non being claim)
Negative expressions in general		False statement

PA is also helpful since it clarifies how the examples used in the middle and outer parts of the dialogue are demonstrating the same type of function of saying something which is not. It is not in two senses: it contains the copula ‘not is’, like in the examples of negative expressions (as parts of sentences) such as ‘not large’ and ‘not beautiful’. Or it is not because it’s a statement, and it’s false. However, according to Brown’s interpretation, the explanations of negative expressions and false statements follow similar lines. Both can be explained in terms of realization of the same function—negation of a predicate. Thus, in the first group (negative in form), the examples are not simply examples of negative predicates, but negative predicates as parts of ‘syntactically organized wholes’ – sentences, and as parts of sentences these expressions realize negation of a certain predicate within a range of incompatible predicates. ‘Large’ is negated in favor of something else concerning x’s size. In the second case (negative in truth-value), the same kind of negation happens. The predicate ‘flies’ is negated in favor of a predicate that is other than flies, i.e. not flies, and this predicate should be applicable to t in the same sense that F is. It should be incompatible with F. So, it should be another description of t’s movement. It can be argued on the basis of Brown’s interpretation, that both types of expressions, with an explicit negation and without, can be explained through an implicit negation of a predicate that they execute. Therefore, both being and non being claims are equally illuminated by a ‘range of incompatible properties’ view, and the symmetry requirement of PA is satisfied.

3.3 The False Statement analysis

To decipher the meaning of the false statement, scholars go back to the contents of The Example passage and The Analogy passage. Frede builds his interpretation on his reading of The Analogy passage. He states that we should apply universal quantification to the account of false statement: a false statement says *anything* that is different from what is true of the subject²⁵. Since he found the Analogy passage to be the source of the account of negative predication using the example of ‘not beautiful’, and since he construed this account in terms of class-membership: what pertains to the not beautiful is *anything* that is different from the beautiful, he finds the account of false statement to be utilizing universal quantification as well. That is, for Frede, difference of the other statement is the difference from anything that is beautiful. Brown occupies an alternative position. For her, the central passage is the Example passage. She finds the account of difference concerning negative predication in it. And, she says, that just like in The Example passage, the difference was a difference of a predicate from predicates of the same incompatible-property-range, ‘such that to be not *F* is to have a different property (taken from that range) from the property *F*ness’ (p. 278). The false statement for her utilizes the same function of *difference*. Theaetetus sits and Theaetetus flies, she says, ‘feature incompatibles sitting and flying’ (p.19). So, we should read FS as follows: ‘The false one says something different [from the relevant range of incompatible properties] from what is about you (because it says you are flying, which is a different one of the range of locomotive properties from the one that applies to you— namely, sitting’ (*Ibid.*)

Both Frede and Brown agree that there can’t be such a thing as a false predicate divorced from a subject. If a statement is false, it should state something false in relation to the subject. Also, there can’t be such a thing as a false predicate by itself, because all predicates are real: they belong to some subjects. As Frede puts it, the false one might be saying something false about this subject, but it doesn’t mean that it will be false applied to another subject. So when it comes to the reality of predicates that share in non being— namely, negative ones and the ones that are false in relation to some subject—I side with Michael Frede.

However, when it comes to the account of the False Statement, I side with Lesley Brown. This is due to the contents of The Parity Assumption. I think her interpretation is more informative in telling us what non being claims such as negative and false predicates

²⁵ To say what is not is to say of something other than whatever is in relation to a given subject that it is.

can tell us about the being claims. The being claims of negative and false predicates, the one that are truly belong to the subject, should be taken from the range of incomplete properties specified by these very negative and false predicates.

Moreover, as we have seen, negation of a predicate presupposes the disjunctive set from which this predicate is taken. So the false statement takes the wrong property or predicate from the right range: “Once again, the different thing, flying, is chosen from the range of incompatible locomotive attributes, so that if I attribute a different thing from what is, I am bound to say something false” (Brown 2019 p. 331). For example, we can take a statement ‘this person is timid’ from the range of character-attributes. If the person is not timid—they might be brave, might be confident—we have said something about something different from what is about them. Still, the true character of this person would be taken from the same character-range as the wrong attribute. So, when we are saying something false of the subject, we do so because something true can also be said of that subject. The false and the true predicates belong to the same range. This is why the incompatible properties range view combines with the parity assumption of being and non being claims.

The account of false statement allows us to see how the main themes of the *Sophist* are related. Negation and falsehood are two ways in how non being can take part in speech. Moreover, when we analyze falsehood, as some authors find and I agree, we encounter the same implication structure that we also see when we analyze negative predication in its relation to the implied predicates. But, most importantly, as the syntactical interpretation of the *Sophist* shows, negative expressions are parts of logos, they are the logoi of logos, and, as parts of logos, they can form statements that are, in the long run, true or false.

Conclusion

In the thesis, I followed the representatives of the syntactical interpretation of *the Sophist* (G.E.L. Owen, Michael Frede, Lesley Brown) to analyze negative expressions in two sequential fragments. Contrary to Owen, I do not think that negative expressions in the given passages are deemed to demonstrate different forms of the verb ‘to be’. Instead, I agree with Brown and Frede that these fragments are about negative predication. Moreover, I agree with Brown that The Example passage demonstrates a semantic connection between the negated predicate and its implication. For me, just like it is for Brown, and unlike it is for Owen, negation of a predicate is an instance of *an internal negation*. The gist of my internal negation view is that the negated predicate and the implied one belong to the same predicate-range. In the second chapter, I proposed that The Analogy passage reinforces the internal negation assumption, since it shows that for a predicate to be meaningful it should be inferentially connected to other predicates. In the third chapter, I proceeded to the account of false statement. False statements, according to the view that I infer from the research conducted by Michael Frede and Lesley Brown, are false in their predicative part. The false statement has the wrong predicate stated about the subject, but it’s still taken from the right range. Namely, the right range is the predicate-range that might be applied to the subject. If there’s no way to apply some predicate range to the subject, and we’re nevertheless taking a predicate from it to say something about the subject, then we are not really saying anything. We are only producing nonsense (*alogon*).

According to the representatives of the syntactical interpretation, the middle part of the *Sophist*’s is aimed at devising an account of false statement. My interpretation differs. I think that the main aim of the middle part is to construct an account of language that welcomes negativity. In *the Sophist*, Plato discusses two cases of negativity that he puts under the rubric of non being claims: claims that contain negative predicates and claims that are false. In the middle part, he successfully demonstrates that both can be parts of meaningful speech. They can participate in *logos*. Negative predicates participate in *logos* because they share inferential relations with other parts of speech: for example, they can share a semantic range with other predicates of the same predicate range (Chapter 1), or they can be opposed to their ‘positive’ counterparts (Chapter 2). Finally, false statements are parts of *logos* because they are meaningful sentences: they form meaningful wholes by conjoining predicates with subjects. Moreover, they are parts of *logos* due to Plato’s Parity Assumption. A false statement, if its falsity is known to us with certainty, shares its being with a true statement. That is, if we know that ‘brown’ is false of that book, we also know that something is true of it with certainty: that this book is white.

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