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Negative Forms in Plato's *Sophist*: A Re-Examination

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In Plato's *Sophist*, a visitor from Elea (henceforth, 'the Visitor') and his interlocutor Theaetetus set out to answer Socrates' question what the sophist is (218c5–7). Because the Visitor casts the sophist as one who thrives on what appears to be but is not, and who says things that are not true (236e1–2), the Visitor must vindicate 'is not' claims and the possibility of false speech. This, in turn, requires him to argue against Parmenides that being and not-being mix: being is not, and not-being is. On an increasingly popular view, in arguing that not-being is, the Visitor posits negative kinds or forms, such as the not-beautiful.[1] In this paper, I will oppose this trend to argue

[1] See, e.g., J. M. E. Moravcsik, 'Being and Meaning in the *Sophist*' ['Being'], *Acta Philosophica Fennica*, 14 (1962), 23–78 at 68–9; M. Frede, *Prädikation und Existenzaussage* [*Prädikation*] (Göttingen, 1967) at 92–4; E. N. Lee, 'Plato on Negation and Not-Being in the *Sophist*' ['Negation'], *The Philosophical Review*, 81 (1972), 267–304; J. Szaif, *Platons Begriff der Wahrheit* [*Wahrheit*] (Freiburg/München, 1996) at 434–45; L. Brown, 'Negation and Not-Being: Dark Matter in the *Sophist*' ['Dark Matter'], in R. Patterson, V. Karasmanis, and A. Hermann, (eds.), *Presocratics and Plato: Festschrift in Honor of Charles Kahn* (Las Vegas, 2012), 233–54; P. Crivelli, *Plato's Account of Falsehood: A Study of the* Sophist [*Falsehood*] (Cambridge, 2012) at 204–14; P. Crivelli, 'Negative Kinds in Plato's *Statesman*' ['Negative Kinds'], in S. Delcomminette and R. Van Daele (eds.), *La méthode de division de Platon à Érigène* (Paris, 2020), 19–40. – It used to be common to dismiss the attribution of negative forms to the Visitor out of hand (see, e.g., F. M. Cornford, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge* [*Knowledge*] (London,

that, in the *Sophist*, the Visitor relies only on positive kinds or forms, especially the kind or form difference, to confront Parmenides.

It is worth reconsidering the issue of negative forms in the *Sophist* for at least two reasons. The first touches on Platonic metaphysics at large. Already Aristotle objected to the Platonists on the grounds that they are committed to negative forms (*Meta*. A.9, 990b13–14=M.4, 1079a9–10; *De ideis* 80.16–81.8), and regardless of whether his objection is a good one, it shows that the stakes

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1935) at 292–4; H. Cherniss, *Aristotle's Criticisms of Plato and the Academy* [*Criticisms*] (Baltimore, 1944) at 262–8; W. D. Ross, *Plato's Theory of Ideas* [*Ideas*] (Oxford, 1951) at 167–9), but resistance to negative forms has waned more recently, with a few exceptions (M. Dixsaut, 'La négation, le non-être et l'autre dans le *Sophiste*' ['Négation'], in P. Aubenque and M. Narcy (eds.), *Études sur le Sophiste de Platon* (Napoli, 1991), 165–213; G. Fine, On Ideas*: Aristotle's Criticism of Plato's Theory of Forms* [*Forms*] (Oxford, 1993) at 113–16; S. Berman, 'Plato's Explanation of False Belief in the Sophist' ['False Belief'], *Apeiron*, 29 (1996), 19–46; M. L. Gill, *Philosophos: Plato's Missing Dialogue* [*Philosophos*] (Oxford, 2012) at 162). The two main objections to attributing negative forms to the Visitor in the *Sophist* have been that, in principle, negative forms are unpalatable and should not be ascribed to Plato (T. Penner *The Ascent from Nominalism: Some Existence Arguments in Plato's Middle Dialogues* [*Ascent*] (Dordrecht, 1987) at 369, fn. 53; Berman, 'False Belief', 35–7), and that the Visitor supposedly rejects negative forms in the *Statesman* (Cornford, *Knowledge*, 293; Ross, *Ideas*, 168; Dixsaut, 'Négation', 195–7; Fine, *Forms*, 113–16; Gill, *Philosophos*, 162). As they stand, these objections are not persuasive (see section 1), which has surely contributed to the renaissance of the attribution of negative forms to the Visitor.

are high: it is important for our understanding of Plato whether he countenances negative forms. The second reason concerns the *Sophist* itself. Since the Visitor engages with Parmenides to vindicate 'is not' claims and false speech, it would be a weakness of his account if he made gratuitous appeal to entities that are not needed for this vindication. A proper appreciation of the Visitor's account, then, calls for a careful examination of whether he is committed to negative kinds or forms.

My argument against the attribution of negative kinds or forms to the Visitor in the *Sophist* has a textual and a philosophical side. On the textual side, I will argue that the Visitor does not posit negative kinds or forms. On the philosophical side, I will argue that the Visitor does not *need* to posit any such entities because he can reach his goals by appeal to difference. The latter conclusion suggests that an appeal to negative kinds or forms would be gratuitous and hence weaken the Visitor's account. The textual result implies that we need not saddle him with this unsatisfactory view. Rather, by appeal to difference, the Visitor offers a unified account of 'is not' claims and false speech that relies on remarkably economical ontological resources.

Notably, the issue of negative forms intersects with another problem, namely whether, in the *Sophist*, we get an account of Platonic forms at all. The Visitor uses the words *genos* and *eidos* (and occasionally, *idea*) to refer to the entities under discussion, such as the 'greatest of the *genōn*' (μέγιστα τῶν γενῶν) (254d4): being, rest, change, sameness, and difference. But *genē* or *eidē* could be either Platonic forms or simply kinds. My opponents disagree on this issue. For instance, Frede (*Existenz*) claims that the Visitor posits negative forms, whereas Crivelli (*Falsehood*; 'Negative Kinds') argues merely that he posits negative kinds and Szaif (*Wahrheit*) speaks neutrally of negative *eidē*. I will translate *genos*, *eidos*, and *idea* as 'kind' but without taking a stand on whether, ultimately, this talk of 'kinds' should be understood in terms of forms.

I assume only that *if* there are forms in the *Sophist*, they are referred to as *genē* or *eidē*, or in my translation, 'kinds'. Thus, I will argue that the Visitor does not posit negative kinds which implies also that he does not posit negative forms, regardless of whether *genē* or *eidē* are forms.

In the following, I begin by introducing the issue of negative kinds in the *Sophist* (section 1), before working my way through the Visitor's argument against Parmenides. First, I address his discussion of the communion of kinds and the argument that being is not (255e8–257a12). These passages matter because, as I argue, they introduce the resources on which the Visitor relies later in his argument that not-being is and his vindication of 'is not' claims and false speech. These resources include the kind difference as well as a triadic participation relation by which one entity partakes of difference with regard to another entity, but not negative kinds (section 2).

Against this backdrop, I turn to the Visitor's argument that not-being is (257b1–258e5), which contains the main evidence for negative kinds in the *Sophist*. First, I discuss the *introductory exchange* (257b1–c4) where, in my view, the Visitor begins to vindicate negative predication without negative kinds (section 3). Second, I argue that the account of entities such as the not-beautiful in the *passage on the parts of difference* (257c5–258a10) does not introduce negative kinds (section 4). Third, I extend my argument to show that the kind not-being in the *passage on not-being* (258a11–e5) is not a negative kind either but rather identical with the positive kind difference (section 5). Finally, I sketch how the Visitor can vindicate negative predication and false speech with recourse to difference and without appeal to negative kinds (section 6).

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1. The *Sophist* and Negative Forms

According to the Visitor, the claim that the sophist 'says things but not true things' (τὸ λέγειν μὲν ἄττα, ἀληθῆ δὲ μή, 236e2) relies on the assumption that not-being is (237a3–4).[2] Hence, the project of the dialogue, namely, to say what the sophist is (218c5–7), requires a refutation of Parmenides who argued that only being is, and not-being is not (237a4–b3). Against Parmenides, then, the Visitor concludes both that being is not (257a1–7) and that not-being is (257a11–258e8). The goal of his arguments for these conclusions is to vindicate 'is not' claims and false speech, and thus to allow the Visitor to complete the definition of the sophist.[3]

Prominent scholars have claimed that, in arguing that not-being is, the Visitor posits negative kinds or forms (Moravcsik, 'Being', 68–9; Frede, *Prädikation*, 92–4; Lee, 'Negation'; Szaif, *Wahrheit*, 434–45; Brown, 'Dark Matter'; Crivelli, *Falsehood*, 204–14; 'Negative Kinds'). Since most recent interpreters who consider the issue of negative kinds or forms in detail hold this view, I will call it the *standard interpretation*. There are textual and philosophical grounds for

[2] All translations are mine, but I have greatly profited from other translations, especially C. Rowe, *Plato:* Theaetetus *and* Sophist [Theaetetus *and* Sophist] (Cambridge, 2015). For the Greek text of the *Sophist* (and the *Statesman*), unless noted otherwise, I rely on E. A. Duke et al., *Platonis Opera, Tomus I* [*Opera*] (Oxford, 1995).

[3] For the question whether there can be a genuine definition of sophistry and the sophist, see J. Beere, 'Faking Wisdom: The Expertise of Sophistic in Plato's *Sophist*', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 57 (2019), 153–89.

adopting the standard interpretation. The chief textual evidence is contained in two contiguous passages where the Visitor introduces parts of difference (257c5–258a10) and a kind not-being (258a11–e5). The philosophical motivation is harder to gauge because the advocates of negative kinds disagree on their import. A motivation implicit in most discussions is that negative kinds are needed to vindicate negative predication (Frede, *Prädikation*, 94; Lee, 'Negation', 288–98; Szaif, *Wahrheit*, 243–5; Crivelli, *Falsehood*, 5–6, 220). For instance, one may argue that it is permissible to say that Socrates is not beautiful because this claim can be spelled out in terms of Socrates' partaking of the negative kind of the not-beautiful.

A second philosophical motivation for the standard interpretation is more controversial among its proponents. It would be natural to use negative kinds to give an account of false speech. For instance, one could argue that the claim that Helen is guilty is false just in case Helen partakes of the negative kind of the not-guilty. But although Crivelli (*Falsehood*, 5–7, 256–7) proposes such an application, other advocates of the standard interpretation do not bring in negative kinds to explain the account of false speech (Frede, *Prädikation*, 94–5), or even argue against the application (Szaif, *Wahrheit*, 486, 500). Still, I will assume that there are, in principle, two ways of motivating the standard interpretation philosophically: first, the Visitor needs negative kinds to vindicate negative predication, and second, he needs them to vindicate false speech.

All that said, what even are negative kinds? Since, in my view, the *Sophist* does not give an account of negative kinds, this question is not easy to answer. But we can get a sense of these entities if we consider how they might be introduced (or discovered). One option is to assume a stock of positive kinds, such as the human kind, and posit negative kinds that include all the entities that are not members of the relevant positive kind. For instance, one can posit a non-

human kind which includes all entities that are not human.[4] Another option is to generate negative kinds (or forms) by means of the One-Over-Many argument: just as there must be a human kind for all things that are human, there must be a kind non-human for all things that are not human (Aristotle, *Meta*. A.9, 990b13–14=M.4, 1079a9–10; *De ideis* 80.16–81.8).

There are two classic objections to the standard interpretation. The first rests on Plato's own remarks elsewhere. In the *Statesman*, the Visitor argues against dividing the human kind into Greek and barbarian kinds (262c8–d6). This may be read as an objection to negative kinds, such as the barbarian or non-Greek. Hence, one may infer that he cannot posit negative kinds in the *Sophist* either (Cornford, *Knowledge*, 293; Ross, *Ideas*, 168; Dixsaut, 'Négation', 197; Fine, *Forms*, 113–16; Berman, 'False Belief', 36, fn. 39; Gill, *Philosophos*, 162). I am not persuaded by this objection. For in the *Statesman*, the Visitor rejects primarily the claim that every part of something is a kind (263b7–10). The rejection of this claim may rule out a negative kind of the non-Greek, but it need not prohibit negative kinds in general. After all, it is hardly obvious that, if only some parts of a kind are themselves kinds, there are no legitimate divisions that lead to negative kinds. Generally, in the *Statesman*, the Visitor seems to object to a misapplication of the method of division, not to negative kinds as such (cf. Crivelli, *Falsehood*, 212–13; 'Negative Kinds').[5]

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[4] See, e.g., Crivell (*Falsehood*, 205): 'for every kind there is another kind that is its complement, namely a kind that holds of all and only the things of which the given kind does not hold'.

[5] Crivelli ('Negative Kinds', 31–6) argues that the *Statesman* rules out that certain parts of a kind are species *of* that kind, but *not* that they are kinds. Thus, the not-beautiful is a part of difference, but not a species of difference, and yet the not-beautiful is, on Crivelli's view, a kind. This

The second objection is a philosophical one that targets the profligacy of an ontology that includes negative kinds. Aristotle is a famous representative of this objection (see also Penner, *Ascent*, 290–1; Berman, 'False Belief'). Indeed, in the passages cited above, he considers it a strike against the Platonists that that they are committed to kinds (or forms) of negations (*Meta*. A.9, 990b13–14=M.4, 1079a9–10; *De ideis* 80.16–81.8). As it stands, this objection is not effective either. For if the standard interpretation is true, negative kinds are needed to vindicate negative predication and perhaps also the possibility of false speech. In that case, the introduction of negative kinds is not profligate but well-motivated.

However, as I hope to show, there is a more powerful version of the profligacy objection. This version does not assume that it is in principle ontologically profligate to posit negative kinds but rather shows that, by the Visitor's own lights in the *Sophist*, it would be profligate to do so. For in fact, he does not need negative kinds to reach his argumentative goals. The kind difference is sufficient not only to show that not-being is but also to vindicate negative predication and the possibility of false speech, and thus to lay the foundations for defining the sophist.

Of course, these considerations alone do not rule out that the Visitor posits negative kinds. For he might well be a profligate philosopher. Hence, the profligacy objection has to be paired with a detailed analysis of the text. Our focus will be on the argument that not-being is (257b1–258e5) which contains the main evidence for negative kinds. But first, we should consider the context from which this argument arises, namely, the Visitor's discussion of the communion of kinds and

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reading requires a distinction between a kind and a species or kind *of* a larger kind (Crivelli, 'Negative Kinds', 30). But even without this distinction, it remains far from clear that rejecting the view that every part of a kind is a kind implies that there cannot be any negative kinds.

the claim that being is not (254d4–257a12). For I will argue that, in this stretch of text, the Visitor introduces the ontological resources on which he will later rely in his argument that not-being is, prominently including the kind difference but excluding any negative kinds.

2. The Communion of Kinds (254d4–257a12)

At 254b8–d2, the Visitor singles out some kinds that are considered the greatest to ask 'of what sort' (ποῖα) they are, and 'how they are capable of being in communion with each other' (κοινωνίας ἀλλήλων πῶς ἔχει δυνάμεως) (254c4–6). An answer will allow us to get clearer on being and not-being (254c5–8), and to show that we can say that not-being (τὸ μὴ ὄν) *is*, as when we say that it *is* (ἔστιν) something that is not (μὴ ὄν) (254d1–2; cf. Cornford, *Knowledge*, 273; Szaif, *Wahrheit*, 443). Hence, before arguing that not-being is (257b1–58e5), the Visitor embarks on a long discussion of the communion of kinds (254d4–257a12), which includes arguments for distinguishing the five greatest kinds (being, rest, change, sameness, and difference) (254d4–255e7), an explanation of how they are related (255e8–256e8), and the conclusion that being is not (257a1–12).

Almost every turn in this discussion of the communion of kinds is controversial, and I cannot address all these debates in detail. My goal is rather to defend two general claims. First, the Visitor analyses what I call 'difference claims' in terms of a triadic participation relation: for any x and y, for x to be different from y is for x to partake of difference *with regard to y*. Second, he vindicates non-identity claims by appeal to difference, and thus begins his broader vindication of 'is not' claims. Both results will be crucial for understanding the later argument that not-being is.

The Visitor begins the discussion of the communion of kinds by recalling the three kinds to which he has appealed so far: being, rest, and change (254d4–5). He concludes that 'each of them is *different* from the other two, and *the same* as itself' (αὐτῶν ἕκαστον τοῖν μὲν δυοῖν ἕτερόν ἐστιν, αὐτὸ δ' ἑαυτῷ ταὐτόν) (254d14–15). This prompts him to launch a series of arguments that distinguish sameness and difference from being, rest, and change as two further kinds (254e17–255e7). For us, the most interesting argument is the final one that distinguishes difference from being (255c8–e2) and thereby elucidates the character of the kind difference.

The argument rests on a distinction between entities that are said 'themselves by themselves' (*auta kath' hauta*) and entities that are always said 'towards others' (*pros alla*) (255c12–13). The Visitor claims that being can be said either itself by itself or towards another, whereas difference is always said towards another (255d4–6) – and hence the two kinds must be distinct (255d6–7). The *auta kath' hauta* / *pros alla* distinction, especially as applied to being, has proven extremely controversial.[6] But we do not need to enter this debate to learn something from the Visitor's argument about his construal of difference claims.

[6] On a classic view, the *auta kath' hauta* / *pros alla* distinction is between absolute and relative predicates (Cornford, *Knowledge*, 282; Szaif, *Wahrheit*, 353–4, fn. 31; R. M. Dancy, 'The Categories of Being in Plato's *Sophist* 255c–e', *Ancient Philosophy*, 19 (1999), 45–72; J. Malcolm, 'A Way Back for *Sophist* 255c12–13', *Ancient Philosophy*, 26 (2006), 275–89). Both M. Frede (*Prädikation*; 'The *Sophist* on False Statements' ['False Statements'], in R. Kraut (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Plato* (Cambridge, 1992), 397–424) and G. E. L. Owen ('Plato on Not-Being' ['Not-Being'], in G. Vlastos (ed.), *Plato I: Metaphysics and Epistemology* (Garden City, 1971), 223–67 at 252–8) opposed this view. In application to being, Frede took the *auta*

According to the Visitor, 'what is different is always said towards something different' (τὸ δέ γ' ἕτερον ἀεὶ πρὸς ἕτερον) (255d1). Moreover, 'whatever is different, it simply turns out from necessity to be this very thing it is relative to another' (νῦν δὲ ἀτεχνῶς ἡμῖν ὅτιπερ ἂν ἕτερον ᾖ, συμβέβηκεν ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἑτέρου τοῦτο ὅπερ ἐστὶν εἶναι) (255d6–7). In the first of these claims, *to heteron* seems to refer to an entity that is different from another, not difference itself, which in this passage is marked as *to thateron* (255d3).[7] Something that is different is different relative to,

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kath' hauta / *pros alla* distinction to amount to a distinction between essential and non-essential predication, whereas Owen understood it in terms of the distinction between the 'is' of identity and the 'is' of predication. See L. Brown, 'Being in the *Sophist*: A Syntactical Enquiry', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 4 (1986), 49–70, for influential criticisms of Owen, and Gill, *Philosophos*, 173–6 for a survey. Recent readings include F. Leigh's ('Modes of Being at *Sophist* 255c–e' ['Modes of Being'], *Phronesis*, 57 (2012), 1–28 at 11–17) who takes the *auta kath' hauta* / *pros alla* distinction to be between absolute and relative properties, and Crivelli's (*Falsehood*, 144–5) who argues that the Visitor distinguishes things that are beings only relative to something else (namely, perceptible particulars) from things that are beings also by being identical with kinds (namely, kinds). See also M. Wiitala, 'That Difference is Different from Being: *Sophist* 255c9–e2', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 62 (2022), 85–103.

[7] At 255c9, the Visitor said that *to thateron* is 'the fifth' (sc. kind). Hence, it is quite clear that *to thateron* in our passage refers to the kind difference. – As for *to heteron* at 255d1, I partially agree with Leigh ('Modes of Being', 18) who says that it does not refer to the kind (or form) of difference. However, on her view, *to heteron* refers not to an entity that is different but to the *property* difference. Thus, the Visitor says that the property difference is always said towards

or from, another. The Visitor spells this out further: '[we will say that] each one thing is different from the others not because of its own nature but because it partakes of the idea of difference' (ἓν ἕκαστον γὰρ ἕτερον εἶναι τῶν ἄλλων οὐ διὰ τὴν αὑτοῦ φύσιν, ἀλλὰ διὰ τὸ μετέχειν τῆς ἰδέας τῆς θατέρου) (255e4–6). Thus, difference claims involve three relata: a first entity is different from a second entity, and third, there is the 'kind' (ἰδέα) difference of which the first entity partakes. But this picture raises the further question whether these relata are all related by a single triadic relation or by two distinct dyadic relations.

There are good reasons to think that it is a single triadic relation. Suppose we want to analyse the claim that apples are different from oranges. In the Visitor's terms, the kind apple partakes of difference. Moreover, the difference in question is difference from the kind orange. But there are not two facts: the fact that the kind apple partakes of difference and the fact that the difference in question is difference from the kind orange. Rather, there is a single fact, namely that the kind apple partakes of difference from the kind orange. Hence, the three relata are related by a single

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something different: difference is always difference from something different. The resulting reading of 255d1 is difficult. Although it is plausible that difference is difference from *something*, it is hard to make sense of the claim that difference is difference from something different. For what is the latter entity different from? If it is difference, the Visitor says that difference is difference from something different *from difference*, which seems beside the point. If it is an entity that is different, he says that difference is difference from something that is different, and we will keep asking what the latter entity is different from. It is more natural, then, to take *to heteron* to refer to an entity that is different which is always said towards something that is different from it. E.g., Socrates is different from Kallias who is different from Socrates.

triadic participation relation, where the first entity partakes of difference from the second entity. Triadic participation can be expressed as follows (where e_1, e_2, and e_3 are any entities):

Triadic participation: e_1 partakes of e_3 with regard to e_2.

In the case that interests us, we can substitute 'difference' for e_3 and thus get differential triadic participation:

Differential triadic participation: e_1 partakes of difference with regard to e_2.

The ensuing 'change passage' (255e8–256d10), as I will call it, supports this reading. There, the Visitor uses change to illustrate the communion of kinds. Change is different from rest, and hence *is not* rest (255b11–15). But change *is* because it partakes of being (256a1–2). Further, change is different from sameness, and hence *is not* sameness, but it also partakes of sameness because it is the same as itself, and thus, change *is* the same (256a3–b5). Indeed, if change partook of rest, it would not be surprising to say that change *is* at rest, although it *is not* rest (256b6–7).[8] Also, change is different from difference, and hence *is not* difference, although

[8] At 252d2–11 and 255a7, the Visitor denied that change and rest partake of each other. Since G. Vlastos ('An Ambiguity in the *Sophist*' ['Ambiguity'], in G. Vlastos, *Platonic Studies*, 2nd edn. (Princeton, 1973), 270–322), there has been a debate on how to reconcile these remarks with the claim that every object of knowledge is at rest (249b12) and whether the latter claim is consistent with the view that an entity is affected and changed when it is known (248d4–e4). See C. D. C.

change is different insofar as it partakes of difference (256c6–10). Finally, although change partakes of being, it is different from being, and hence *is not* being (256c11–d).

According to the Visitor, then, seemingly inconsistent claims (e.g., that change is the same and that change is not the same) turn out to be consistent. Scholars disagree on his explanation.[9] But what concerns us is again the role of difference, especially in the following segment:

Reeve ('Motion, Rest, and Dialectic in the *Sophist*', *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, 67 (1985), 47–64 at 47–9) for a statement of these issues and T. Irani ('Perfect Change in Plato's *Sophist*', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 60 (2022), 45–93) for a recent discussion.

[9] On one reading, he distinguishes the predicative 'is' from the 'is' of identity. For instance, change is the same (as itself) in the predicative sense of 'is', but change is not identical with the same (J. L. Ackrill, 'Plato and the Copula: *Sophist* 251–9' ['Copula'], *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 77 (1957), 1–6; Owen, 'Not-Being'; Vlastos, 'Ambiguity'; J. van Eck, 'Plato's Logical Insights: On *Sophist* 54d–57a', *Ancient Philosophy*, 20 (2000), 53–79). A related view locates the ambiguity not in the copula but the predicate, for instance, 'the same': change is the same (as itself), but it is not sameness (L. Brown, 'The *Sophist* on Statements, Predication, and Falsehood' ['Statements'], in G. Fine (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Plato* (Oxford, 2008), 437–62; cf. D. Bostock, 'Plato on "Is Not"' ['Is Not'], *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 2 (1984), 89–119 at 97–8). Frede's (*Prädikation*; 'False Statements') alternative reading utilizes the distinction between essential and non-essential predications mentioned above. For instance, change is non-essentially the same because it partakes of sameness, but change is not essentially the same because sameness is not part of the essence of change (cf. Crivelli, *Falsehood*, 149–66; Leigh,

> ΞΕ. Τὴν κίνησιν δὴ ταὐτόν τ’ εἶναι καὶ μὴ ταὐτὸν ὁμολογητέον καὶ οὐ δυσχεραντέον. οὐ γὰρ ὅταν εἴπωμεν αὐτὴν ταὐτὸν καὶ μὴ ταὐτόν, ὁμοίως εἰρήκαμεν, ἀλλ’ ὁπόταν μὲν ταὐτόν, διὰ τὴν μέθεξιν ταὐτοῦ πρὸς ἑαυτὴν οὕτω λέγομεν, ὅταν δὲ μὴ ταὐτόν, διὰ τὴν κοινωνίαν αὖ θατέρου, δι’ ἣν ἀποχωριζομένη ταὐτοῦ γέγονεν οὐκ ἐκεῖνο ἀλλ’ ἕτερον, ὥστε ὀρθῶς αὖ λέγεται πάλιν οὐ ταὐτόν. (256a10–b4)
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> V: It should be agreed, then, without chagrin that change is the same and not the same. For when we say that it is the same and not the same, we do not speak in the same way, but when [we say that] it is the same, we speak in this way because of its participation of the same towards itself, and when [we say that] it is not the same, [we speak in this way] because of the communion in turn with difference because of which it is separated from the same and turns out to be not that but something different so that it is in turn again correctly said to be not the same.

Change is the same, namely, the same as itself, because it partakes of sameness ‘towards itself’. Change is not the same because it ‘communes’ with difference by which it is ‘separated from’ sameness. In the terminology from above, change partakes of difference ‘towards’ something

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‘Modes of Being’). I will shortly return to one aspect of this debate, namely whether ‘is not’ claims here are non-identity claims.

else, namely, sameness.[10] Thus, change, difference, and sameness are related by a triadic participation relation: change partakes of difference with regard to sameness.[11]

The passage also sheds light on the Visitor's treatment of 'is not' claims. After all, in arguing that change 'is the same and not the same' (ταὐτόν τ' εἶναι καὶ μὴ ταὐτὸν) (256a10), he seems to vindicate the claim that change is not the same: we can correctly say that change is not the same since this is just to say that change partakes of difference with regard to sameness. One might object to this reading because the Visitor attaches negations not to 'is' but to kind terms.[12] For

[10] I assume that *methexis* (256b1) and *koinōnia* (256b2) have the same meaning since *koinōnia* is construed with the genitive (see Ackrill, 'Copula', 5–6; Szaif, *Wahrheit*, 414, fn. 92). For an overview of participation language in this part of the *Sophist* (249d9–264b8), see F. J. Pelletier, *Parmenides, Plato, and the Semantics of Not-Being* [*Not-Being*] (Chicago, 1990) at 106–13.

[11] One might wonder whether sameness claims are also analysed in terms of a triadic participation relation, as is suggested by the expression 'participation of the same towards itself' (256b1): change is the same (as itself) because it partakes of sameness towards itself. This account of sameness claims implies that every kind or form is related to itself (assuming that every kind or form is the same as itself) but not that it partakes of itself in the dyadic sense of 'participation' required for self-participation. For example, change partakes not of itself but *of sameness with regard to itself*. Notably, as tempting as it may be to extend my account of difference claims to sameness claims, this is not required for the purposes of this paper. Many thanks to an anonymous referee for bringing the issue to my attention.

[12] See J. McDowell, 'Falsehood and Not-Being in Plato's *Sophist*' ['Not-Being'], in M. Schofield and M. Nussbaum (eds.), *Language and Logos* (Cambridge, 1982), 115–34 at 117–18;

instance, he does not say that change is-not the same, but that it is not-the-same. Hence, it may seem misleading to say that the Visitor is concerned with the vindication of 'is not' claims in the change passage.

However, as we will see in section 3, it is a feature of the Visitor's account of 'is not' claims that negations (μή and οὐ) are 'put before the subsequent expressions' (προτιθέμενα τῶν ἐπιόντων ὀνομάτων), or the entities to which those expressions refer (257c1–2). For instance, 'not' (μή) is attached to 'large' or the large (256b6). Hence, in the change passage, 'is not' claims are construed in just the way we should expect. This holds even though later the Visitor twice attaches a negation to 'is' rather than a kind term when he says that 'however many the others are, as many times [being] is not' (ὅσαπέρ ἐστι τὰ ἄλλα, κατὰ τοσαῦτα οὐκ ἔστιν) (257a4–5) and that being 'is not the others' (τἆλλα οὐκ ἔστιν) (257a6). These sentences do not contain a kind term to which the negation can be attached since the Visitor says generically that being is not the other kinds. Hence, he attaches the negation to 'is'. But this does not undermine the point that, *typically*, negations are attached to the kind term. Overall, then, there is little reason to doubt that the Visitor begins to vindicate 'is not' claims in the change passage, and that he does so by appeal to difference.

This reading of the change passage also helps us understand the transition to the next passage where 'not-being' (τὸ μὴ ὄν) is explicitly mentioned and the Visitor concludes that being is not:

J. van Eck, 'Not-Being and Difference: On Plato's *Sophist* 256d5–58e3' ['Difference'], *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 23 (2002), 63–84 at 69; Crivelli, *Falsehood*, 170–1.

ΞΕ. Ἔστιν ἄρα ἐξ ἀνάγκης τὸ μὴ ὂν ἐπί τε κινήσεως εἶναι καὶ κατὰ πάντα τὰ γένη· κατὰ πάντα γὰρ ἡ θατέρου φύσις ἕτερον ἀπεργαζομένη τοῦ ὄντος ἕκαστον οὐκ ὂν ποιεῖ, καὶ σύμπαντα δὴ κατὰ ταὐτὰ οὕτως οὐκ ὄντα ὀρθῶς ἐροῦμεν, καὶ πάλιν, ὅτι μετέχει τοῦ ὄντος, εἶναί τε καὶ ὄντα.

ΘΕΑΙ. Κινδυνεύει.

ΞΕ. Περὶ ἕκαστον ἄρα τῶν εἰδῶν πολὺ μέν ἐστι τὸ ὄν, ἄπειρον δὲ πλήθει τὸ μὴ ὄν.

ΘΕΑΙ. Ἔοικεν.

ΞΕ. Οὐκοῦν καὶ τὸ ὂν αὐτὸ τῶν ἄλλων ἕτερον εἶναι λεκτέον.

ΘΕΑΙ. Ἀνάγκη.

ΞΕ. Καὶ τὸ ὂν ἄρ' ἡμῖν, ὅσαπέρ ἐστι τὰ ἄλλα, κατὰ τοσαῦτα οὐκ ἔστιν· ἐκεῖνα γὰρ οὐκ ὂν ἓν μὲν αὐτό ἐστιν, ἀπέραντα δὲ τὸν ἀριθμὸν τἆλλα οὐκ ἔστιν αὖ.

ΘΕΑΙ. Σχεδὸν οὕτως. (256c11– 257a7)

V: From necessity, then, it is possible that not-being is both in the case of change and for all kinds. For, for all things, the nature of difference makes each thing something that is not by fashioning it different from being, and along the same lines in this way, we will correctly speak of all things as things that are not, and again, because they partake of being, [we will correctly say that] they are and [speak of them] as things that are.

T: Probably.

V: Concerning each of the kinds, therefore, there is a lot of being, and an unlimited amount of not-being.

T: So it seems.

V: So, it has to be said that being itself, too, is different from the others.

T: Necessarily.

V: And therefore we [have to say that], however many the others are, as many times being is not. For not being those, it is itself one, and again it is not the others that are unlimited in number.

T: Presumably.

Commentators have been puzzled by the Visitor's reasoning in this passage (see van Eck, 'Difference'; Crivelli, *Falsehood*, 168–75). Initially, he appears to say that, just like change, any kind is not because it is different from *being* (256d11–e3). But the claim that there is an unlimited amount of not-being concerning each kind (256e6–7), including being (257a4–6), seems to presuppose that a kind is not because it is different from *all* other kinds – not specifically from being. What, then, underwrites 'is not' claims here: difference from being or difference from *any* other kind?

Van Eck ('Difference', 64–72) responds that, even in 256d11–e3, what is at stake is difference from *any* kind. His reading rests on translating κατὰ πάντα τὰ γένη at 256d12 as 'in respect of all the kinds': change is not 'in respect of all the kinds', and hence is not because it is different from all kinds. But as others have noted, *pace* van Eck ('Difference', 69–71), since ἐπί τε κινήσεως and κατὰ πάντα τὰ γένη are linked by τε … καί ('both … and'), these two expressions here seem to play parallel syntactic roles: not-being is both in the case of change and 'for' or 'in the case of' (κατά) all other kinds (D. O'Brien, *Deux études sur le* Sophiste *de Platon* [*Études*] (Sankt Augustin, 1995) at 52, fn. 1; Crivelli, *Falsehood*, 173–4). In turn, Crivelli (*Falsehood*, 171) suggests that, once a negation has been attached to being, one can infer that each kind is not *any*

other kind. But it remains hard to see how the claim that each kind is different from being is supposed to *imply* that it is different from all kinds, and thus that there is an unlimited amount of not-being concerning it, as the 'therefore' (ἄρα) at 256e5 requires.

Instead, we can draw on my interpretation of the change passage. At 256d8–9, the Visitor concludes that change is not because it is different from being, and this result is generalized at 256d11–e3: each kind is not because it is different from being. But the claim that change is not because it is different from being was only one of the 'is not' claims defended in the change passage. The Visitor also argued that change is not the same because it is different from the same (256a10–b4), and so forth for each of the greatest kinds. My suggestion, then, is that the explicit generalization of one 'is not' claim concerning change (namely that change is not because it is different from being) implicitly serves as a generalization of all the 'is not' claims established in the change passage. Just as change is different from all other kinds, each kind is different from all other kinds, and thus, just as change is not any of the other kinds, each kind is not any of the other kinds. Hence, at 256e5, the Visitor can conclude that there is an unlimited amount of not-being concerning each kind, even concerning being.

On the proposed reading, then, the Visitor offers a vindication of 'is not' claims that begins in the change passage and continues through the argument that being is not. But what sort of 'is not' claims are we dealing with here? On the majority view, in the passages surveyed so far, 'is not' claims are non-identity claims, and it is only from 257b1 that the Visitor begins to tackle negative *predicative* claims (Owen, 'Not-Being'; McDowell, 'Not-Being'; Szaif, *Wahrheit*, 428–33; Gill, *Philosophos*, 157). But Frede (*Prädikation*; 'False Statements') has argued that already in the argument that being is not, 'is not' claims are negative predicative claims. One of his main arguments is that we cannot explain how not-being has a single nature (258a11; 258b10) if, at

257b, the Visitor moves from non-identity claims to negative predicative claims ('False Statements', 407–8).

However, when 'is not' claims come to the fore in the change passage, the Visitor recapitulates his arguments for distinguishing the five kinds (255e11–12). In these arguments, he concluded that each kind is *distinct* from, or not identical with, the other kinds. Hence, the 'is not' claims in the change passage should also be non-identity claims, as should the conclusions drawn from the change passage, including the claim that being is not the other kinds. Moreover, it is not difficult to see why, although he moves from non-identity claims to negative predicative claims at 257b, the Visitor thinks that not-being has a single nature. For one kind, namely, difference, is enough to vindicate both sorts of 'is not' claims (see section 6 below; cf. J. van Eck, 'Falsity without Negative Predication: On *Sophistes* 255e–63d' ['Falsity'], *Phronesis*, 40 (1995), 20–47).

Overall, then, we can draw two conclusions from the Visitor's discussion of the communion of kinds: first, he construes difference claims in terms of a differential triadic participation relation, and second, he vindicates non-identity claims by appeal to difference. Negative kinds have not played any role so far. Next, I want to show that, in arguing that not-being is, the Visitor extends his account to negative predicative claims with the same resources, including the kind difference and the differential triadic participation relation but *not* negative kinds.

3. Not-Being Is: First Steps (257b1–c4)

After he has concluded that being is not, the Visitor argues that not-being is (257b1–258e5). It is based on this argument that scholars have attributed negative kinds to the Visitor in the *Sophist*.

In the next three sections, I will revisit the argument and oppose the attribution of negative kinds to the Visitor. Instead, I will argue that he continues to operate with the kind difference alongside the differential triadic participation relation.

I divide the argument that not-being is into three sections. In an introductory exchange, the Visitor argues that, when we speak of not-being or the not-large, we refer not to their opposite but to something different from them (257b1–c4). Next, he analyses entities such as the not-large as parts of difference (257c5–258a10). Finally, he concludes that not-being is and that there is a kind not-being (258a11–e5). The last two passages are the main evidence for negative kinds. But first, let us look at the introductory exchange which sets the tone for the entire argument. I want to show that the Visitor extends his vindication of 'is not' claims to negative predicative claims by appeal to difference, not negative kinds. Hence, the set-up of the argument that not-being is should not make us expect the imminent introduction of negative kinds.

The introductory exchange reads as follows:

> ΞΕ. Ἴδωμεν δὴ καὶ τόδε.
>
> ΘΕΑΙ. Τὸ ποῖον;
>
> ΞΕ. Ὁπόταν τὸ "μὴ ὂν" λέγωμεν, ὡς ἔοικεν, οὐκ ἐναντίον τι λέγομεν τοῦ ὄντος ἀλλ' ἕτερον μόνον.
>
> ΘΕΑΙ. Πῶς;
>
> ΞΕ. Οἷον ὅταν εἴπωμέν τι "μὴ μέγα", τότε μᾶλλόν τί σοι φαινόμεθα τὸ σμικρὸν ἢ τὸ ἴσον δηλοῦν τῷ ῥήματι;
>
> ΘΕΑΙ. Καὶ πῶς;
>
> ΞΕ. Οὐκ ἄρ', ἐναντίον ὅταν ἀπόφασις λέγηται σημαίνειν, συγχωρησόμεθα, τοσοῦτον δὲ

μόνον, ὅτι τῶν ἄλλων τι μηνύει τὸ "μὴ" καὶ τὸ "οὔ" προτιθέμενα τῶν ἐπιόντων ὀνομάτων – μᾶλλον δὲ τῶν πραγμάτων περὶ ἅττ' ἂν κέηται τὰ ἐπιφθεγγόμενα ὕστερον τῆς ἀποφάσεως ὀνόματα.

ΘΕΑΙ. Παντάπασι μὲν οὖν. (257b1–c4)

V: So, let us look at this as well.

T: Which thing?

V: When we speak of 'not-being', it seems, we do not say something opposite to being but merely something different [from being].

T: How so?

V: For example, when we call something 'not large', then do we seem to you to refer to the small any more than the equal by that expression?

T: How could we?

V: So, we will not concede that, when a negation is said, it indicates an opposite, but merely this much, that the 'non-' and 'not' put before the subsequent expressions (and more so before the things over which the expressions uttered after the negation are set) signal one of the others.

T: By all means.

According to the Visitor, in speaking of not-being, we do not speak of something 'opposite' (ἐναντίον) to being but something 'different' (ἕτερον) from it (257b3–4). For instance, when we say, 'Socrates is not large', by 'not large' we do not (necessarily) refer to the opposite of the

large, that is, the small, but might equally refer to the equal (257b6–8).[13] Thus, when one attaches 'non-' and 'not' (τὸ μὴ καὶ τὸ οὔ) to expressions, or better, to the entities to which those expressions refer, they refer not to the opposite of the negated entity but to 'one of the others' (τῶν ἄλλων τι), that is, an entity different from the negated entity. For instance, if one attaches 'not' to 'large' (or the large), 'not' does not (necessarily) refer to the small but simply to something different from the large, including the small and the equal.

These lines have been hotly debated. The less controversial issue concerns the sort of 'is not' claims at stake. As I mentioned, most scholars think that the discussion from 257b1 onwards (if not already before) concerns negative predication (Frede, *Prädikation*; Owen, 'Not-Being'; McDowell, 'Not-Being'; Szaif, *Wahrheit*, 428–33; Gill, *Philosophos*, 157). But van Eck ('Falsity', 29–33) has claimed that the Visitor is not interested in negative predication here. His main argument is that, although the Visitor alludes to negative predicative claims, he does so merely to elucidate the meaning of negation ('not'), not the meaning of negative predicates ('is not large') (van Eck, 'Falsity', 33). However, even if the Visitor's focus is on negations rather than negative predication, it is hard to believe that the discussion of negations does not also serve the purpose of giving an account of negative predicative claims. For the Visitor begins with an example of a negative predicative claim (that something is not large), and the subsequent

[13] Contrast with Crivelli, *Falsehood*, 198 who argues that we refer to *neither* the small nor the equal. But the Visitor's question whether we refer 'any more' (μᾶλλόν τί) to the small than the equal suggests that, on his view, we might equally well refer to one or the other, not that we refer to neither.

discussion of negations is surely motivated at least in part by the intention to vindicate claims of that sort, that is, negative predicative claims.

The much more contentious issue is the interpretation of the Visitor's construal of negative predicative claims. My preference is for the reading which Szaif (*Wahrheit*, 490–1) and Brown ('Statements', 456) call the 'incompatibility range' interpretation (see also M. Ferejohn, 'Plato and Aristotle on Negative Predication and Semantic Fragmentation', *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, 71 (1989), 257–82; Gill, *Philosophos*, 160–1): when we say that Socrates is not large, we ascribe to Socrates a property F different from largeness, where largeness and the property F are on a *range* of incompatible properties. For instance, we ascribe smallness or equality to Socrates, which are on the same range of incompatible size properties as largeness. But a proper defence of this reading is beyond the scope of this paper; I will assume it merely for illustrative purposes.[14] For us, what matters is a more basic point that does not depend on the

[14] There are at least three alternatives. On the first, in saying 'something that is different' from being, one ascribes to Socrates a property that is incompatible with largeness (see, e.g., Pelletier, *Not-Being*, 39–44). This view implies that *heteron* at 257b4 *means* 'incompatible', although up to this point of the dialogue, it meant 'different'. The incompatibility range interpretation avoids this implication: *heteron* means 'different', but the property that is different from being is taken from a range of incompatible properties that includes the property to be negated (Szaif, *Wahrheit*, 491; Brown, 'Statements', 456). On the second alternative interpretation, in saying 'something different from' being, one ascribes to Socrates a property different from *all* of his properties (see, e.g., Frede, *Prädikation*, 95; Owen, 'Not-Being'; J. van Eck. J., 'Plato's Theory of Negation and Falsity in *Sophist* 257 and 263: A New Defense of the Oxford Interpretation',

incompatibility range interpretation: the Visitor vindicates not only non-identity claims but also negative predicative claims by appeal to difference.

The Visitor concedes to Parmenides that we could not speak of not-being if this implied that we are speaking of the 'opposite' (ἐναντίον) of being (cf. Szaif 1996: 446–53). But he denies this implication. For in speaking of not-being, we may speak merely of something different from being. In the case of negative predicative claims, we can say, for instance, that Socrates is not large without appeal to the opposite of the large. Our claim merely requires an appeal to some entity different from the large. More generally, in attaching a negation to an expression, or better, to the entity to which the expression refers, we are not committed to any reference to the opposite of being, but merely to 'one of the others' (τῶν ἄλλων τι), that is, an entity other than, or different from, the negated entity.[15]

Ancient Philosophy, 34 (2014), 275–88). As I see it, this reading neglects the example at 257b6–7: smallness and equality are drawn specifically from a range of properties that also includes largeness. Finally, Crivelli (*Falsehood*, 186) defends an extensional reading: in claiming that Socrates is not large, one says that Socrates is different from any large entity. Thus, at 257b9–c3, the name following a negation refers not to a property or kind but to an entity that has a property, or partakes of a kind (e.g., a large thing, not largeness) (cf. Bostock, 'Is Not', 115). But *pace* Crivelli (*Falsehood*, 193), it is not clear that the 'things' (πράγματα) 'about' (περί) which names 'are set' are objects rather than kinds. For in the ensuing sections, the 'things' of interest are kinds, such as the beautiful, and not, say, beautiful people or objects.

[15] The truth-maker, then, of the claim that Socrates is not large is the fact that Socrates partakes of *some* property that is incompatible with, but on the same range as, largeness. What this

None of this seems to require negative kinds. For instance, we are not told that the ascription of a property different from largeness to Socrates implies that Socrates partakes of the not-large. More plausibly, given the central role of difference, the ascription of the relevant property to Socrates requires him to partake of an entity that is different from the large, where the difference claim involved is analysed as set out above: the entity of which Socrates partakes in turn partakes of difference with regard to the large. Let us say that the entity in question is equality. Hence, Socrates partakes of equality which in turn partakes of difference with regard to the large.

This analysis of negative predicative claims is more complex than the analysis of non-identity claims. For in the case of negative predicative claims, alongside the differential triadic relation, an ordinary dyadic participation relation is needed. For instance, the claim that Socrates is not beautiful is analysed as follows: Socrates partakes of a property (for instance, the moderately good-looking), where this property in turn partakes of difference with regard to beauty. By contrast, non-identity claims are spelled out simply in terms of the triadic relation. For example,

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property is may vary. At a young age, Socrates partook of a property that is further removed from largeness than the property of which he partook as an adult, and Theaetetus may partake of yet another size property. If the properties differ from largeness and are drawn from the right range, if something partakes of one of these properties, it will be true that it is not large. One might worry that, in certain cases this implies that there are lowly kinds or forms. For instance, one might think that the truth-maker of the claim that Socrates is not beautiful may be his participation in ugliness (and thus that there is a kind or even form ugliness). But the Visitor's account does not require, e.g., a kind or form ugliness. For one may partake of all sorts of properties that differ from beauty but fall short of ugliness.

the claim that Socrates is distinct from beauty is analysed as follows: Socrates partakes of difference with regard to beauty. In addition, in the case of negative predicative claims, further conditions on the differing entities hold, for instance, that they must be on the same range of incompatible properties (if one adopts the incompatibility range interpretation). For example, for Socrates to be not beautiful, it is not sufficient for him to partake of redness even though redness is distinct from beauty and hence partakes of difference with regard to beauty. By contrast, non-identity claims may involve any distinct entities, including properties from different ranges.[16]

Thus, non-identity claims and negative predicative claims are not analysed in the same way. But the basic ontological resources required for the two analyses are the same: the kind difference and participation, especially differential triadic participation. In this sense, then, the Visitor extends his earlier treatment of non-identity claims to negative predicative claims to provide a unified account of both. And just as he did not require negative kinds to vindicate non-identity claims, he does not need them to vindicate negative predicative claims.

This intermediate verdict does not defeat the standard interpretation yet. For the main evidence for negative kinds is still to come. But given the Visitor's strategy against Parmenides so far, it would be surprising if he did go on to introduce negative kinds. After all, he has been able to

[16] The conditions will vary with one's interpretation of the construal of negative predicative claims. In particular, if one thinks that the negated property must be different from all properties of the relevant entity (e.g., largeness is different from all of Socrates's properties), one must add a different sort of condition, namely that all entities of which Socrates partakes in turn partake of difference with regard to largeness. This condition, too, is absent from the analysis of non-identity claims where one is interested simply in the difference of one entity from another.

vindicate 'is not' claims, and thus to counter Parmenides, by appeal to difference and without recourse to negative kinds. I will now argue that, as expected from the introductory exchange, the Visitor keeps operating only with positive kinds to complete the argument that not-being is.

4. Parts of Difference (257c5–258a10)

In the introductory exchange, the Visitor has argued that, in making negative predicative claims, we refer to something different from, not the opposite of, the negated entity. But we might want to know more about the entities to which we refer when we make negative predicative claims. In the aftermath of the introductory exchange, then, the Visitor argues that the entities in question, such as the not-large or not-beautiful, are parts of difference (257c5–258a10), before proceeding to argue that not-being is (258a11–e5). On the standard interpretation, the analysis of entities such as the not-large as parts of difference implies that they are kinds. But I will argue instead that the parts of difference are simply entities that partake of difference. Thus, the Visitor does not posit any 'partial' negative kinds that correspond to the parts of difference. In the next section, I will argue that he does not posit a negative kind not-being either.[17]

The Visitor introduces the parts of difference in analogy with knowledge:

[17] Some scholars think that not-being is itself a part of difference (see, e.g., Lee, 'Negation'; O'Brien, *Études*, 44–5; Crivelli, *Falsehood*, 218), but I will argue below that not-being is identical with, not a part of, difference.

ΞΕ. Τόδε δὲ διανοηθῶμεν, εἰ καὶ σοὶ συνδοκεῖ.

ΘΕΑΙ. Τὸ ποῖον;

ΞΕ. Ἡ θατέρου μοι φύσις φαίνεται κατακεκερματίσθαι καθάπερ ἐπιστήμη.

ΘΕΑΙ. Πῶς;

ΞΕ. Μία μέν ἐστί που καὶ ἐκείνη, τὸ δ' ἐπί τῳ γιγνόμενον μέρος αὐτῆς ἕκαστον ἀφορισθὲν ἐπωνυμίαν ἴσχει τινὰ ἑαυτῆς ἰδίαν· διὸ πολλαὶ τέχναι τ' εἰσὶ λεγόμεναι καὶ ἐπιστῆμαι.

ΘΕΑΙ. Πάνυ μὲν οὖν.

ΞΕ. Οὐκοῦν καὶ τὰ τῆς θατέρου φύσεως μόρια μιᾶς οὔσης ταὐτὸν πέπονθε τοῦτο.

ΘΕΑΙ. Τάχ' ἄν· ἀλλὰ πῇ δὴ λέγωμεν;

ΞΕ. Ἔστι τῷ καλῷ τι θατέρου μόριον ἀντιτιθέμενον;

ΘΕΑΙ. Ἔστιν.

ΞΕ. Τοῦτ' οὖν ἀνώνυμον ἐροῦμεν ἤ τιν' ἔχον ἐπωνυμίαν;

ΘΕΑΙ. Ἔχον· ὃ γὰρ "μὴ καλὸν" ἑκάστοτε φθεγγόμεθα, τοῦτο οὐκ ἄλλου τινὸς ἕτερόν ἐστιν ἢ τῆς τοῦ καλοῦ φύσεως.

ΞΕ. Ἴθι νυν τόδε μοι λέγε.

ΘΕΑΙ. Τὸ ποῖον;

ΞΕ. Ἄλλο τι τῶν ὄντων τινὸς ἑνὸς γένους μέρος ἀφορισθέν, καὶ πρός τι τῶν ὄντων αὖ πάλιν ἀντιτεθέν, οὕτω συμβέβηκεν εἶναι τὸ μὴ καλόν;

ΘΕΑΙ. Οὕτως.

ΞΕ. Ὄντος δὴ πρὸς ὂν ἀντίθεσις, ὡς ἔοικ', εἶναί τις συμβαίνει τὸ μὴ καλόν.

ΘΕΑΙ. Ὀρθότατα.

ΞΕ. Τί οὖν; κατὰ τοῦτον τὸν λόγον ἆρα μᾶλλον μὲν τὸ καλὸν ἡμῖν ἐστι τῶν ὄντων, ἧττον δὲ τὸ μὴ καλόν;

ΘΕΑΙ. Οὐδέν.

ΞΕ. Ὁμοίως ἄρα τὸ μὴ μέγα καὶ τὸ μέγα αὐτὸ εἶναι λεκτέον;

ΘΕΑΙ. Ὁμοίως.

ΞΕ. Οὐκοῦν καὶ τὸ μὴ δίκαιον τῷ δικαίῳ κατὰ ταὐτὰ θετέον πρὸς τὸ μηδέν τι μᾶλλον εἶναι θάτερον θατέρου;

ΘΕΑΙ. Τί μήν;

ΞΕ. Καὶ τἆλλα δὴ ταύτῃ λέξομεν, ἐπείπερ ἡ θατέρου φύσις ἐφάνη τῶν ὄντων οὖσα, ἐκείνης δὲ οὔσης ἀνάγκη δὴ καὶ τὰ μόρια αὐτῆς μηδενὸς ἧττον ὄντα τιθέναι.

ΘΕΑΙ. Πῶς γὰρ οὔ; (257c5–258a10)

V: Let us think through this, if it agrees with you as well.

T: Which thing?

V: The nature of difference seems to me to be chopped up just like knowledge.

T: How so?

V: [Knowledge], too, is one, I suppose, but each part of it that is about a certain thing is separated and has some peculiar name of its own; which is why we speak of many crafts and branches of knowledge.

T: By all means.

V: The same thing, then, holds also for the parts of the nature of difference, although [the nature] is one.

T: Perhaps, but how can we spell this out?

V: Is there some part of difference set against the beautiful?

T: There is.

V: Will we speak of that as nameless, or as having some name?

T: As having [some name]; for what, on each occasion, we call ‘not beautiful’, this is not different from anything other than the nature of the beautiful.

V: Well, then, tell me this.

T: Which thing?

V: Separated from some one kind as a part, and in turn again set against one of the things that are, in this way, the not-beautiful has turned out to be another one of the things that are?

T: In this way.

V: The not-beautiful, then, it seems, turns out to be some setting of a thing that is against a thing that is.

T: That’s right!

V: What then? According to that reasoning, do we think of the beautiful as being more among the things that are, and the not-beautiful less?

T: Not at all.

V: So, we should say that the not-large and the large itself are in the same way?

T: In the same way.

V: Hence, the not-just, too, should be posited along the same lines as the just with respect to one being nothing more than the other?

T: Sure.

> V: And about the other things we will speak in the same manner, since the nature of difference has emerged as one of the things that are, and if it is, it is necessary to posit its parts, too, as things that are, and no less so.
>
> T: What else?

According to the Visitor, (the nature of) difference is 'chopped up' (κατακεκερματίσθαι) just like 'knowledge' (ἐπιστήμη) (257c7–8):[18] just as there are parts of knowledge, individuated by their objects, which form different crafts and 'branches of knowledge' (ἐπιστῆμαι), there are parts of difference individuated by being 'in turn again set against one of the things that are' (πρός τι τῶν ὄντων αὖ πάλιν ἀντιτεθέν) (257e2), such as the beautiful (257d7; 257e2–4; 257e6–7). For instance, just as medicine is a part of knowledge, individuated by its object, namely, health, the not-beautiful is a part of difference individuated by (being set against) the beautiful. It is concluded further that the parts of difference belong to the 'things that are' (ὄντα) no less than the things against which they are set (258a7–10).

How should we understand the analogy? The standard interpretation takes it to imply that the parts of difference are kinds just as the branches of knowledge are kinds of knowledge (see, e.g., Lee, 'Negation', 267–304; R. S. Bluck, *Plato's* Sophist: *A Commentary* [*Commentary*]

[18] The Visitor repeatedly speaks of the 'nature' (φύσις) of difference (255d9; 256d12–e1; 257d4; 258a8–9; 258d7). Sometimes, this is taken to emphasize that difference is a kind (Crivelli, *Falsehood*, 210). But we can also read it in a less loaded way as stressing against Parmenides that difference *is* or exists (compare my response to the objection of ontological parity below). For the mention of the nature of a *part* of difference at 258a11, see section 5.

(Manchester, 1975) at 166–7; Szaif, *Wahrheit*, 437; Brown, 'Dark Matter', 246–7; Crivelli, *Falsehood*, 206; 'Negative Kinds', 24–6).[19] But it is not clear that this is the salient analogical feature. For, in our passage, the Visitor does not make explicit that the branches of knowledge are kinds, nor does he explicitly treat the parts of difference that way (cf. Gill, *Philosophos*, 162). Instead, the focus seems to be on individuation: the parts of difference, like the parts of knowledge, are individuated by the objects they are set over, that is, the objects of knowledge, or the things against which the parts of difference are set.

One could retort that the Visitor speaks of a 'kind' (γένος) at 257e2. He says that the not-beautiful 'has turned out to be' (συμβέβηκε εἶναι) 'another one of the things that are' (ἄλλο τι τῶν ὄντων) in two steps: first, it is 'separated off (ἀφορισθὲν) from a unified *kind*, namely, difference, and second, it is set against a thing that is, namely, the beautiful (257e2–4).[20] The

[19] According to Crivelli ('Negative Kinds', 35), the parts of difference are kinds but not species or kinds *of* difference (see fn. 5 above). Bluck (*Commentary*, 168–70) wavers on whether kinds of difference are negative forms.

[20] For this interpretation, see also Diès, A., *Platon: Oeuvres complètes, tome VIII, 3^e^ partie:* Le sophiste [*Oeuvres*] (Paris, 1925) at 372, fn. 2; Frede, *Prädikation*, 86–7; Lee, 'Negation', 279, fn. 16. Cornford (*Knowledge*, 291, fn. 1) claims that the not-beautiful is separated off from the beautiful, but the not-beautiful seems to be set against the beautiful, not separated off from it. Gill (*Philosophos*, 160) argues that the not-beautiful is separated off from a larger kind that characterizes the relevant incompatibility range (namely, the aesthetic). However, the Visitor has not explicitly mentioned a larger kind such as the aesthetic anywhere in his account of negative predication. More plausibly, the kind in question is difference.

claim that a part of difference is separated off from the kind difference may be taken to suggest that the part is itself a kind. But as we know from the *Statesman* (262c6–d6), it does not follow from the fact that something is a part of a kind that the part is itself a kind.[21] On a less inflationary reading, then, although the parts of difference are separated off from a kind, they are not themselves kinds. Since the Visitor refrains from calling the parts of difference 'kinds' (γένη or εἴδη), this reading seems preferable to me.

Instead, I suggest that the relation between difference and its parts is elucidated by the Visitor's claim that the nature of difference is 'chopped up' (κατακεκερματίσθαι) like knowledge (257c7-8) (cf. Dixsaut, 'Négation', 196–7). The word *katakermatizein* ('chop up') occurred earlier in the *Sophist* to describe a part of 'refutative' speech (ἀμφισβητητικόν) (225b1) that is 'chopped up into questions relative to answers' (κατακεκερματισμένον ἐρωτήσεσι πρὸς ἀποκρίσεις) which the Visitor calls 'controversalist' (ἀντιλογικόν) (225b9–11).[22] It is also used in the *Statesman* to mark the division of animal inasmuch as it is tame and gregarious (266a1–4).[23] But the most

[21] I do not assume that, in the *Statesman*, the Visitor rules out negative kinds but merely that he rejects the claim that every part of something is a kind (see section 1 above).

[22] In this division, sophistry turns out to be, among other things, a 'controversialist' (ἀντιλογική) craft (226a1–4).

[23] Dixsaut ('Négation', 197) claims that the Visitor uses the word *katakermatizein* at *Statesman* 266a2 to insinuate that a mistake has occurred which trades on treating each part of something as a kind (that is, the assumption rejected at 263b7–10). But it is not clear that the Visitor intends any such criticism *at this point of the division*. He says that animal inasmuch as it is tame and

fruitful parallel is with a passage in the second deduction of the *Parmenides* where the expression is applied to being (144b4–5) and the one (144e4).

Plato's Parmenides says that 'being' (οὐσία) 'is chopped up into the smallest and largest possible and into any of the things which are at all, and it is the most divided thing of all, and there are unboundedly many parts of being' (144b4–c1).[24] As in the *Sophist*, being chopped up is associated with parthood: being is chopped up and hence has many parts. But in the *Parmenides*, this does not imply that those parts are kinds of being but rather that they have a share in, or partake of, being.[25] I propose that we understand the relation between difference and its parts in the *Sophist* in the same way: the parts of difference are entities that partake of difference, without the implication that they are 'kinds' (εἴδη) of difference, or kinds at all.

But as I argued earlier, participation in difference should (typically) involve three relata.[26] For instance, change is different *from sameness*, and hence partakes of difference with regard to

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gregarious has been divided except for two kinds (setting aside dogs), and then, apparently unperturbed, continues with the division (266a9–10).

[24] Κατακεκερμάτισται ἄρα ὡς οἷόν τε σμικρότατα καὶ μέγιστα καὶ πανταχῶς ὄντα, καὶ μεμέρισται πάντων μάλιστα, καὶ ἔστι μέρη ἀπέραντα τῆς οὐσίας (*Parm.* 144b4–c1 Burnet).

[25] In the immediate vicinity of this passage in the *Parmenides*, there is no explicit mention of participation. But the first move in the second deduction was to say that, if the one is, then it 'partakes of being' (οὐσίας μετέχει) (142b5–7). The later claims about the distribution of being should be read in the same vein.

[26] I put aside the self-participation of difference. See Leigh, 'Modes of Being', 22–3 for a discussion.

sameness. Therefore, for something to be a part of difference, it should partake of difference with regard to something else, namely, the entity 'against which it is set' (ἀντιτεθέν). Thus, a triadic participation relation obtains between a part of difference, difference itself, and the entity against which the part of difference is set. Moreover, the first relatum is a *part* of difference because it partakes of difference with regard to something else. For example, the not-beautiful is a part of difference because it partakes of difference with regard to the beautiful. None of this implies that the parts of difference, such as the not-beautiful, are kinds.[27]

What, then, *is* the not-beautiful? In the introductory exchange, the Visitor said that, when attached to an expression, or the corresponding object, 'not' refers not to the 'opposite' (ἐναντίον) of the object but to 'one of the others' (τῶν ἄλλων τι) (257b9–c3), that is, something 'different' (ἕτερον) from it (257b4). This suggests that the not-beautiful is not a kind on par with the positive kind against which it is set. For if the not-beautiful were such a kind, surely it would be the opposite of the beautiful.[28] Instead, I suggest that 'the not-beautiful' simply refers to any

[27] According to a friendly alternative reading, the parts of difference are constitutive of difference without being kinds of it (many thanks to an anonymous referee for this suggestion). I prefer spelling out parthood in terms of the triadic participation relation because this account allows us to tie in the Visitor's claim that the parts of difference are set against (positive) entities with the differential triadic participation relation as formulated above.

[28] One could retort that the Visitor denies only that, when attached to the beautiful, 'not' refers to the opposite of *being*, but does not deny that it refers to the opposite of the beautiful (cf. Szaif, *Wahrheit*, 41). But although at 257b3–4 the Visitor says that, when we call something 'not

entity different from the beautiful. For instance, on the incompatibility range interpretation, 'the not-beautiful' refers to any property different from the beautiful that is on the same range of incompatible properties as the beautiful.[29]

This conclusion may seem to fly in the face of what we can call the 'ontological parity' of the parts of difference and the entities against which they are set (Szaif, *Wahrheit*, 441–2). After all, the Visitor says that the not-beautiful, not-large, and not-just are among 'the things that are' (τὰ ὄντα) no 'less' (ἧττον) than and 'in the same way' (ὁμοίως) as the beautiful, the large, and the just (258a1–2; 258a7–9). For instance, he says that 'the not-just, too, should be posited along the same lines as the just with respect to one being nothing more than the other' (καὶ τὸ μὴ δίκαιον τῷ δικαίῳ κατὰ ταὐτὰ θετέον πρὸς τὸ μηδέν τι μᾶλλον εἶναι θάτερον θατέρου) (258a4–5). This seems to imply that whatever ontological status is accorded to the beautiful or the just, the not-beautiful or not-just have the same status: if the former are kinds, so are the latter. In addition,

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large', we do not speak of the opposite of being, he goes on to claim that, in speaking of the not-large, we refer to something different from the large, not its opposite (257b6–c3).

[29] Cf. Cornford, *Knowledge*, 290; Cherniss, *Criticisms*, 263–4. But unlike Cornford and Cherniss, I do not take 'the not-beautiful' to refer to *all* entities that are not the beautiful. For if we adopt the incompatibility range interpretation, 'the not-beautiful' refers only to entities that are on the same range of incompatible properties as the beautiful. Moreover, 'the not-beautiful' need not refer to all entities on this range but may refer to only one, or several, of them. For recall that, according to the Visitor, we need not refer to the small when we speak of the 'not-large' (257b6–7). But if 'the not-large' referred to all entities on the incompatibility range, it would *have to* refer to the small as well.

the Visitor asserts the parity of difference and its parts. For he argues that, if difference is among the things that are, then 'it is necessary to posit its parts, too, as things that are, and no less so' (ἀνάγκη δὴ καὶ τὰ μόρια αὐτῆς μηδενὸς ἧττον ὄντα τιθέναι) (258a8–9). But difference is a kind, and hence its parts, such as the not-beautiful or not-just, should be kinds as well.

In response, we can give ontological parity a weaker spin. Since there is not just a kind of the beautiful, but also the kind difference, and since those kinds can mix, the not-beautiful is no less than the beautiful, even if there is no kind of the not-beautiful. This weaker version of ontological parity is sufficient for the Visitor's dialectical goals against Parmenides. The motivation for engaging with Parmenides was to show that not-being is, and this has been achieved for the parts of difference, regardless of whether they have the status of kinds. Similarly, the claim that, if difference is, then its parts, too, must be 'things that are' (ὄντα) need imply only the result that they *are*, not that they are kinds.[30]

I have argued that the Visitor does not introduce what I called 'partial' negative kinds, such as the not-beautiful or not-just. On a positive note, I have suggested that the Visitor's argument

[30] Moreover, on my reading, the parts of difference *are* or exist independently of us. For they are simply entities that partake of difference with reference to something else (e.g., equality in size that partakes of difference with regard to largeness). Thus, we need not embrace the more radical view defended by A. Silverman (*The Dialectic of Essence: A Study of Plato's Metaphysics* (Princeton, 2002) at 183, 200) that the parts of difference are merely 'conceptual items' produced by us as we speak and think.

against Parmenides requires only the kind difference and a triadic participation relation: the not-beautiful or not-just are parts of difference, and included among the things that are, because they partake of difference with regard to positive kinds such as the beautiful. Next, I will argue that the Visitor does not commit himself to a negative kind not-being either.

5. Not-Being (258a11–e5)

After the Visitor has concluded that the parts of difference, such as the not-beautiful and not-just, are among the things that are, he completes his argument that not-being is and concludes that there is a 'kind' or 'form' (εἶδος) of not-being:

> ΞΕ. Οὐκοῦν, ὡς ἔοικεν, ἡ τῆς θατέρου μορίου φύσεως καὶ τῆς τοῦ ὄντος πρὸς ἄλληλα ἀντικειμένων ἀντίθεσις οὐδὲν ἧττον, εἰ θέμις εἰπεῖν, αὐτοῦ τοῦ ὄντος οὐσία ἐστίν, οὐκ ἐναντίον ἐκείνῳ σημαίνουσα ἀλλὰ τοσοῦτον μόνον, ἕτερον ἐκείνου.
>
> ΘΕΑΙ. Σαφέστατά γε.
>
> ΞΕ. Τίν' οὖν αὐτὴν προσείπωμεν;
>
> ΘΕΑΙ. Δῆλον ὅτι τὸ μὴ ὄν, ὃ διὰ τὸν σοφιστὴν ἐζητοῦμεν, αὐτό ἐστι τοῦτο.
>
> ΞΕ. Πότερον οὖν, ὥσπερ εἶπες, ἔστιν οὐδενὸς τῶν ἄλλων οὐσίας ἐλλειπόμενον, καὶ δεῖ θαρροῦντα ἤδη λέγειν ὅτι τὸ μὴ ὂν βεβαίως ἐστὶ τὴν αὐτοῦ φύσιν ἔχον, ὥσπερ τὸ μέγα ἦν μέγα καὶ τὸ καλὸν ἦν καλὸν καὶ τὸ μὴ μέγα <μὴ μέγα> καὶ τὸ μὴ καλὸν <μὴ καλόν>, οὕτω δὲ καὶ τὸ μὴ ὂν κατὰ ταὐτὸν ἦν τε καὶ ἔστι μὴ ὄν, ἐνάριθμον τῶν πολλῶν ὄντων εἶδος ἕν; ἢ τινα ἔτι πρὸς αὐτό, ὦ Θεαίτητε, ἀπιστίαν ἔχομεν;

ΘΕΑΙ. Οὐδεμίαν. (258a11–c5)

V: So, it seems, the setting against of the nature of a part of difference and the nature of being, which lie opposed to each other, is no less of a being, if we may say so, than being itself, not indicating an opposite of [being] but merely this much, something different from it.

T: Exactly!

V: What should we call it?

T: Clearly, not-being, which we sought on account of the sophist, is this very thing.

V: As you said, then, it does not fall short in being of the others in the least, and it is necessary to take courage and now say that not-being firmly has a nature of its own, and just as the large was large, the beautiful was beautiful, the not-large not large, and the not-beautiful not beautiful, in this way, along the same lines, not-being was and is something that is not, counted as one kind among the many things that are? Or do we still have any distrust regarding it, Theaetetus?

T: None.

Often, the Visitor's conclusion that there is a 'kind' (εἶδος) of not-being is taken to imply that he is committed to a negative kind not-being (see, e.g., Frede, *Prädikation*, 93–4; Szaif, *Wahrheit*, 442–6; Crivelli, *Falsehood*, 212). One may infer further that he posits a negative form not-being, if kinds are forms. But there is an alternative that has fallen out of fashion, namely that the kind

not-being is identical with the kind difference.[31] I hope to show that this old-fashioned view, although in need of a more detailed textual defence, is correct.[32] The Visitor does not posit a new negative kind not-being but rather argues that the positive kind difference *is* (identical with) the kind not-being.

To see this, we have to understand how the Visitor arrives at the conclusion that there is a kind not-being. In the first sentence of our passage, the Visitor says about the 'setting against', or simply *antithesis* (ἀντίθεσις),[33] between the nature of a part of difference and the nature of being

[31] See, e.g., F. Schleiermacher, *Platon: Werke, Sechster Band:* Theaitetos*,* Der Sophist*,* Der Staatsmann [*Werke*] (Darmstadt, 1970) at 369; Diès, *Oeuvres*, 373, fn. 1; Cornford, *Knowledge*, 292–4; Ross, *Ideas*, 168; Vlastos, 'Ambiguity', 288–9, fn. 44; Bluck, *Commentary*, 170; Fine, *Forms*, 114.

[32] Berman ('False Belief', 35–7) also argues against attributing negative forms to the Visitor but takes not-being to be a relation between positive forms, including difference, and distinct from difference. By contrast, on my view, the Visitor does not need to posit a further entity (not-being) distinct from difference, regardless of whether this entity is characterized as 'positive' or 'negative'.

[33] ἀντίθεσις and its cognates are difficult to translate. Perhaps the most natural translation would be 'opposition', but I already used this term to render ἐναντίον. Cornford (*Knowledge*, 292) has 'contrast', but this is too weak to capture the ἀντί- ('against') in ἀντίθεσις. Rowe (Theaetetus *and* Sophist, 161) translates ἀντίθεσις as 'contraposition' which is stronger, but I prefer the English 'setting against' for the cognates and the transliteration for ἀντίθεσις itself.

that it is a 'being' (οὐσία) no less than 'being itself' (τοῦ ὄντος αὐτοῦ) (258a11–b3).[34] Echoing his remarks from the introductory exchange, he stresses that the *antithesis* 'indicates' (σημαίνουσα) not an 'opposite' (ἐναντίον) of being but 'something different' (ἕτερον) from being (258b3). The Visitor then calls the *antithesis* 'not-being' (τὸ μὴ ὄν) (258b6–7) which has a nature of its own (258b10) and is a kind (258c3).

How innovative is this passage ontologically? In my view, it is not innovative at all. Earlier, the not-beautiful was said to be 'set against' (ἀντιτιθέμενον), that is, in *antithesis* to, the beautiful (257d7). As I argued above, this claim is understood best in terms of difference: the not-beautiful partakes of difference with regard to the beautiful. The not-beautiful, then, is set against, or in *antithesis* to, the beautiful in the sense that it is *different from* it. Similarly, in the present passage, when the Visitor speaks of the *antithesis* of a part of difference and being, he presumably refers to the difference of a part of difference, such as the not-beautiful, from being.

[34] As I mentioned in the previous section, the Visitor likes to speak of the 'nature' (φύσις) of difference. Here, he similarly speaks of the nature of *a part* of difference (258a11). One could take this to imply that the part of difference is a *kind*. But I suggested a weaker reading in section 4, namely that the Visitor speaks of the 'nature' of something to emphasize against Parmenides that it *is*. Similarly, in this passage, he emphasizes that the part of difference *is*. At any rate, the occurrence of the word 'nature' cannot settle whether an entity is a kind. Its strength must be determined on the basis of an interpretation of the Visitor's overall theory.

Thus, the *antithesis* just is difference, and to be in *antithesis* to something, or set against it, is to stand in a triadic participation relation to it, that is, to partake of difference with regard to it.[35]

The Visitor goes on to claim that the *antithesis* is a 'being' (οὐσία) (258b2), and then calls 'it' (αὐτήν) (258b5) 'not-being' (τὸ μὴ ὄν) (258b6–7). 'It' (αὐτήν) refers to 'ἀντίθεσις', which is the subject of the previous sentence: the *antithesis* is not-being. If the *antithesis* is difference, the Visitor here identifies the kind difference with the kind not-being (cf. Cornford, *Knowledge*, 293–4). Thus, the claim that there is a kind not-being (258c3) does not introduce a new entity into the ontology. For the kind not-being is the familiar kind difference. Hence, the Visitor does not introduce a novel negative kind not-being. Rather, he continues to operate only with the (positive) kind difference, just as throughout the argument against Parmenides.

One could object to my interpretation of the Visitor's talk of *antithesis*. I claimed that the *antithesis* between a part of difference and being is difference. But one might argue instead that the *antithesis* is an *entity* which is *different from* being, not difference itself. For at 257e6–7, the not-beautiful itself was characterized as the *antithesis* of a thing that is. Similarly, one could hold that, in the present passage, the *antithesis* is something different from being. On this view, the Visitor does not identify difference with not-being. Rather, he identifies *something* different from being with not-being, and this is a new kind that must be distinct from difference.

But at 258a11–b3, the Visitor is quite clear that the *antithesis* is *between* a part of difference and being. But surely, the *antithesis* between two entities is not itself one of these two entities.

[35] Dixsaut ('Négation', 204) claims that the antithesis is an 'operation', namely, 'la mise en opposition'. But I struggle to see what performs the operation on this view, and where in the text this operation has been introduced.

Notably, the claim that the *antithesis* 'indicates' (σημαίνουσα) 'something different' (ἕτερον) (258b3) is compatible with this reading. Since the antithesis is a 'being' (οὐσία), not a mere expression, 'indication' should not be taken linguistically. The Visitor's claim is not that '*antithesis*' *refers* to something different from being but rather that the *antithesis* itself *discloses* or *reveals* something different from, but not opposite to, being, namely, whatever is in *antithesis* to being.[36] This is compatible with, or even requires, the view that the antithesis itself is difference. For the *antithesis* can indicate something different from being precisely because, by being in *antithesis* to being, the entity indicated is different from being.

Similarly, the earlier claim that 'the not-beautiful turns out to be, as it seems, some setting of a thing that is against a thing that is' (ὄντος δὴ πρὸς ὂν ἀντίθεσις, ὡς ἔοικ', εἶναί τις συμβαίνει τὸ μὴ καλόν) (257e6–7) is shorthand for the fuller statement that came before, namely that the not-beautiful is 'set against' (ἀντιτιθέν) one of the things that are (257e2–4) (not that it is the setting against or *antithesis* itself). In general, a part of difference is not *the antithesis* between itself and being, or a thing that is, but *in antithesis* to it because it is different from it. The *antithesis* itself is the difference of a part of difference from being, or from a thing that is.

These remarks notwithstanding, the objector could continue to insist that the Visitor does not identify the kind not-being with the kind difference. For before he says that not-being is a kind (258c3), he claims that 'not-being' (τὸ μὴ ὄν) is 'something that is not' (μὴ ὄν) 'in this way' (οὕτω) and 'along the same lines' (κατὰ ταὐτόν), that is, in the same way in which, for instance,

[36] Lee ('Negation', 274–5) claims that Plato 'fails to say' that the *expression* that refers to the *antithesis*, rather than the *antithesis* itself, does the indicating here. But in my view, it is better to take the text at face-value and understand the talk of 'indication' non-linguistically.

the not-beautiful is not beautiful (258b10–c3). This could be taken to imply that not-being, like the not-beautiful, is itself one of the parts of difference (O'Brien, *Études*, 44–5), and hence distinct from difference itself.

But the claim that not-being is 'something that is not' in the way in which the not-beautiful is not beautiful need not imply that not-being is a part of difference. The Visitor is coming to the close of his argument against Parmenides and revisits the targeted conclusion, namely that we can correctly say that not-being is, as when we say that not-being is something that is not (254d1–2). He has now achieved this, just as he has shown that we can correctly say that something is not beautiful. But this extension of the conclusion does not require that not-being is a *part* of difference. There may be another reason why we can correctly say that not-being is something that is not, for instance, because the kind not-being just is the kind difference itself.

But the objection might gain new strength from a later summary passage:

> ΞΕ. Ἡμεῖς δέ γε οὐ μόνον τὰ μὴ ὄντα ὡς ἔστιν ἀπεδείξαμεν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ εἶδος ὃ τυγχάνει ὂν τοῦ μὴ ὄντος ἀπεφηνάμεθα· τὴν γὰρ θατέρου φύσιν ἀποδείξαντες οὖσάν τε καὶ κατακεκερματισμένην ἐπὶ πάντα τὰ ὄντα πρὸς ἄλληλα, τὸ πρὸς τὸ ὂν ἑκάστου μόριον αὐτῆς ἀντιτιθέμενον ἐτολμήσαμεν εἰπεῖν ὡς αὐτὸ τοῦτό ἐστιν ὄντως τὸ μὴ ὄν. (258d4–e3)
>
> V: But we have shown not only that the things which are not are, but we have also exhibited just what the kind of not-being is. For having shown the nature of difference as being and as chopped up over all the things that are related to each other, we dared to say

> concerning the part of the nature of difference set against the being of each thing that that very thing is truly not-being.

Once again, the Visitor speaks of a 'the kind of not-being' (τὸ εἶδος τοῦ μὴ ὄντος) (258d5). As we saw, this does not by itself imply that he posits a negative kind not-being *in addition to* difference. Still, the end of the passage may suggest this conclusion. For the Visitor says about a *part* of difference that it is 'not-being' (τὸ μὴ ὄν) (258e2–3). Once again, it seems that the kind of not-being is a part of difference and distinct from difference itself.

But this reading neglects the ἑκάστου ('of each thing') at 258e2.[37] The Visitor says that the part of difference is set against 'the being of each thing' (τὸ ὂν ἑκάστου), not being *tout court*. Presumably, 'the being of each thing' refers to each of the entities against which the parts of difference are set, for instance, the beautiful and the large. If this is right, the Visitor relies on the earlier claim that each part of difference is set against some entity (e.g., the not-large is set against the large). He does not, then, introduce a part of difference set against being *tout court*, namely, not-being. Nor is he committed to a kind not-being distinct from difference.

Still, the Visitor says that a *part* of difference, rather than difference, is not-being. This seems hard to square with my interpretation. Surely, he does not think that, say, the not-large just is not-being. In response, we can deny that the Visitor's claim concerns a particular part of difference. He first makes a general claim that holds for *any* part of difference: that it is set against 'the being of each thing' (258e2). His further claim that 'that very thing is truly not-being' (258e3)

[37] Following Rowe (Theaetetus *and* Sophist, 182), I adopt 'ἑκάστου' not 'ἕκαστον' (as in Duke et al., *Opera*) because it has better manuscript support (cf. Owen, 'Not-Being', 239–40, fn. 33).

should be equally general: *any* part of difference is not-being. One might thus think that not-being is identical with any part of difference but still distinct from difference itself (see, e.g., Van Eck, 'Difference', 73–83; Brown, 'Dark Matter', 248–52). But another reading is possible: based on an observation about any *part* of difference, namely that it is set against 'the being of each thing', the Visitor concludes that difference itself is not-being.

This interpretation is supported by the summary of the Visitor's argument against Parmenides (258e6–259d8). The Visitor first reiterates that his claim is not that there is an opposite of being (258e6–7), and then restates how, and why, it is legitimate to speak of not-being. He does so by formulating two 'oppositions' (ἐναντιώσεις) (259c8), that is, two pairs of seemingly inconsistent claims, as we encountered them, for instance, in the change passage (255e8–256d10). One pair of claims concerns difference, the other pair concerns being. As for being, he reminds us that being is in many ways and is not in many ways (259b1–6). Being is not the other kinds because 'partaking of difference, it would be different from the other kinds' (ὸ δὲ ὂν αὖ θατέρου μετειληφὸς ἕτερον τῶν ἄλλων ἂν εἴη γενῶν) (259b1–2).

Similarly, difference both is and is not (the Visitor is speaking):

> ὃ δὲ νῦν εἰρήκαμεν εἶναι τὸ μὴ ὄν, ἢ πεισάτω τις ὡς οὐ καλῶς λέγομεν ἐλέγξας, ἢ μέχριπερ ἂν ἀδυνατῇ, λεκτέον καὶ ἐκείνῳ καθάπερ ἡμεῖς λέγομεν, ὅτι συμμείγνυταί τε ἀλλήλοις τὰ γένη καὶ τό τε ὂν καὶ θάτερον διὰ πάντων καὶ δι' ἀλλήλων διεληλυθότε τὸ μὲν ἕτερον μετασχὸν τοῦ ὄντος ἔστι μὲν διὰ ταύτην τὴν μέθεξιν, οὐ μὴν ἐκεῖνό γε οὗ μετέσχεν ἀλλ' ἕτερον, ἕτερον δὲ τοῦ ὄντος ὂν ἔστι σαφέστατα ἐξ ἀνάγκης εἶναι μὴ ὄν· (259a1–b1)

> As for what we have said now, namely that not-being is, either someone should question and persuade us that we do not speak well, or, as long as he cannot do that, he too must say as we say that the kinds are mixed together with each other, and that, since being and difference pervade all things and each other, difference which partakes of being *is* because of that partaking, not that of which it partakes but something different, and because it is different from being, it is very clearly and from necessity possible that it is something that is not.

Being and difference pervade all things, including each other. Thus, difference, too, partakes of being, and hence *is*. But difference is not thereby being. Rather, difference itself is different from being, and in this sense, it is, or at least it is possible that it is, 'something that is not' (μὴ ὄν).

Prima facie, this passage is puzzling. Although the Visitor begins the summary with the claim that not-being is (259a2), he does not mention 'not-being' (τὸ μὴ ὄν) in what follows. In particular, we might have expected him to restate that 'not-being' (τὸ μὴ ὄν) is 'something that is not' (μὴ ὄν), since this claim was stated at crucial junctures of the argument against Parmenides, namely, at its outset (254d1–2), and at the end of the argument that not-being is (258b10–c3). Instead, all we get is the claim that *difference* is 'something that is not' (μὴ ὄν) because it is different from being (259a8–b1). This looks like a disappointing denouement. For one might think that the same claim could have been made about any kind other than being. Why could the Visitor not also have said that change is something that is not because it is different from being?

The answer is that difference is special. The passages cited above (254d1–2; 258b10–c3) were the only places in the Visitor's argument against Parmenides where he said that something is 'something that is not' (μὴ ὄν, without definite article), and in both cases, he said this about 'not-

being' (τὸ μὴ ὄν, with definite article). Of course, he is happy to say about each kind that it 'is not' (οὐ ἔστιν), as he does about being in the summary (259b4–6). He also said that 'not-being' (τὸ μὴ ὄν) is concerning each kind, as discussed in section 2 (256e5–6). But the only entity about which he has claimed that it is 'something that is not' (μὴ ὄν) is 'not-being' (τὸ μὴ ὄν). The most straightforward explanation, then, why the Visitor says about *difference* that it is something that is not, and not about any other kind, is that he takes the kind difference to be (identical with) the kind not-being. Thus, in claiming that difference is something that is not, he restates the central claim that not-being is something that is not, as we should have expected.[38]

Indeed, if the Visitor did not assume that difference just is not-being, it is hard to see how the summary would be pertinent to the conclusion that not-being is. The two pairs of oppositions in the summary concern being and difference. Hence, no claim to the effect that not-being is could be made here unless difference just is not-being. Again, if the standard interpretation were true, and the Visitor had established a negative kind not-being distinct from difference, why does he not frame the summary in terms of being and *not-being* rather than difference? He could easily have formulated a pair of oppositions about this alleged kind not-being, including a claim that not-being is, which would have mirrored the claim that being is not. Instead, he talks about

[38] My interpretation should be distinguished from Schleiermacher's (*Werke*, 369) who translates μὴ ὄν at 259b1 as 'das Nichtseiende', that is, 'not-being', as if Plato had written τὸ μὴ ὄν (with the definite article). This reading would directly imply that difference is not-being but is based on a mistranslation, corrected in Staudacher's revision of Schleiermacher: the Visitor says only that difference is μὴ ὄν ('nichtseiend'; 'something that is not').

difference. The explanation, I submit, is that the Visitor has not posited a negative kind not-being in addition to difference at all. The kind not-being just is the kind difference.

6. Negative Predication and False Speech: A Sketch

I have argued that the text of the *Sophist* does not support the ascription of negative kinds to the Visitor. He is committed neither to partial negative kinds, such as the not-beautiful, nor to a kind not-being. We can infer further that the Visitor is not committed to negative *forms* either. For if there are forms in the *Sophist*, they are presumably called 'kinds' (γένη or εἴδη), just like the 'greatest kinds' (μέγιστα τῶν γενῶν 254d4). Hence, the conclusion that the Visitor does not introduce negative kinds also undermines the evidence for negative forms in the *Sophist*. But besides the textual motivation for the standard interpretation, there is a philosophical one: that negative kinds or forms are needed to vindicate negative predication and, according to some scholars, the possibility of false speech.[39] What alternative can my interpretation provide, if any?

Regarding negative predication, I have already suggested that the Visitor does not need negative kinds or forms: negative predicative claims can be vindicated solely by appeal to difference and two participation relations (an ordinary dyadic one and a differential triadic one). For example, the claim that Socrates is not large can be spelled out as the claim that Socrates

[39] See especially Crivelli, *Falsehood*, 256–7. As mentioned in section 1, some proponents of the standard interpretation deny that negative kinds are needed to vindicate false speech (Szaif, *Wahrheit*, 486).

partakes of a property that in turn partakes of difference with regard to the large. This suffices to show against Parmenides that we can make negative predicative claims without commitment to an 'opposite' (ἐναντίον) of being. But I have not yet said anything about the possibility of false speech which, as I mentioned at the beginning, is of particular importance for defining the sophist. The topic is too large to be addressed in detail here.[40]. Still, I want to at least sketch how the Visitor can vindicate the possibility of false speech without negative kinds or forms.

After the Visitor has concluded that being and not-being mix, one further step is needed before he can return to the definition of the sophist: to show that 'speech' (λόγος) and 'opinion' (δόξα) can partake of not-being (260d5–261a3).[41] For if speech and opinion cannot partake of not-being, there is no 'falsehood' (ψεῦδος) (260e2–3), and the definition of the sophist cannot be completed. The Visitor begins with false speech and extends the account to 'thinking' (διάνοια), 'opinion' (δόξα), and 'imagination' (φαντασία) (263d6–264b8). I restrict my attention to false speech.

In his analysis of speech, the Visitor distinguishes 'names' (ὀνόματα) from 'verbs' (ῥήματα) (262a1) and also claims that 'it is necessary that a speech, whenever it is, is a speech of something, and it is impossible for it to be of nothing' (λόγον ἀναγκαῖον, ὅτανπερ ᾖ, τινὸς εἶναι

[40] For full treatments, see, e.g., Szaif, *Wahrheit*, 454–509; Crivelli, *Falsehood*, ch. 6; B. E. Hestir, B. E., *Plato on the Metaphysical Foundation of Meaning and Truth* [*Foundation*] (Cambridge, 2016), ch. 8.

[41] I translate λόγος as 'speech' rather than 'sentence' or 'statement', as is sometimes done, because the Visitor characterizes it as 'the stream going from [the soul] through the mouth with sound' (264a7–8) (cf. Rowe, Theaetetus *and* Sophist).

λόγον, μὴ δὲ τινὸς ἀδύνατον) (262e5–6). For instance, the speech 'Theaetetus is sitting' consists of a name ('Theaetetus') and a verb ('sits'), and it is about Theaetetus (263a5).[42] Moreover, some speeches are true, others false (263b3). For example, 'Theaetetus, to whom I am talking now, is flying' is also about Theaetetus, but unlike 'Theaetetus is sitting', it is a false speech (263b3).

The distinction between true and false speeches is drawn as follows:

> ΞΕ. Λέγει δὲ αὐτῶν ὁ μὲν ἀληθὴς τὰ ὄντα ὡς ἔστιν περὶ σοῦ.
>
> ΘΕΑΙ. Τί μήν;
>
> ΞΕ. Ὁ δὲ δὴ ψευδὴς ἕτερα τῶν ὄντων.
>
> ΘΕΑΙ. Ναί.
>
> ΞΕ. Τὰ μὴ ὄντ' ἄρα ὡς ὄντα λέγει.
>
> ΘΕΑΙ. Σχεδόν.
>
> ΞΕ. Ὄντως δέ γε ὄντα ἕτερα περὶ σοῦ. πολλὰ μὲν γὰρ ἔφαμεν ὄντα περὶ ἕκαστον εἶναί που, πολλὰ δὲ οὐκ ὄντα.[43]
>
> ΘΕΑΙ. Κομιδῇ μὲν οὖν. (263b4–13)
>
> V: And among these, the true [speech] says the things that are as they are about you.

[42] In Greek, the predicate consists of a single verb (κάθηται or 'sits'), but in English, the right sense of the sentence is better captured by the present continuous, and hence the two-part predicate 'is sitting'. The same goes for 'is flying' (in Greek 'πέτεται' or 'flies').

[43] At 263b11, I adopt the manuscript reading 'ὄντως' rather than Cornarius' emendation 'ὄντων', as in Duke et al., *Opera*. For a discussion, see Frede, *Prädikation*, 57; Szaif, *Wahrheit*, 475–8.

T: What else?

V: And the false [speech says] things different from the things that are?

T: Yes.

V: So, it says things that are not as things that are?

T: Presumably.

V: Namely, different things about you that truly are. For we said, I guess, that there are many things that are about each thing, and many that are not.

T: Quite so.

A true speech says about some entity 'the things that are as they are' (τὰ ὄντα ὡς ἔστιν) (263b4). We can parse this in terms of the ascription of activities: a true speech ascribes activities (or properties) to an entity which it is in fact performing.[44] For instance, 'Theaetetus is sitting' ascribes sitting to Theaetetus 'as it is' (ὡς ἔστιν) since Theaetetus is in fact sitting. By contrast, a false speech says about some entity 'things different from the things that are' (ἕτερα τῶν ὄντων) (263b7). We might say that a false speech ascribes activities to an entity which are different from activities it is in fact performing. For instance, 'Theaetetus is flying' ascribes an activity (flying) to Theaetetus which is different from an activity he is performing, namely, sitting.

Crucially, the Visitor offers two formulations of his account of false speech. The first formulation, which I just explicated, relies on difference. The second formulation involves not-

[44] In what follows, I will speak of 'activities' because the Visitor's examples involve activities (πράξεις, 262a3). But the account of true and false speech can easily be extended to (ordinary) property ascriptions.

being, or more precisely, 'things that are not' (τὰ μὴ ὄντα): a false speech treats things that are not as things that are (263b9). For instance, 'Theaetetus is flying' treats flying, which is something that is not (relative to Theaetetus), as if it were something that is (relative to Theaetetus) (cf. J. Szaif, J., 'Plato and Aristotle on Truth and Falsehood', in M. Glanzberg (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Truth* (Oxford, 2018), 9–49 at 31). The two formulations are equivalent, and the first explicates the second. For 'the things that are not' (τὰ μὴ ὄντα) are 'different things about you that truly are' (ὄντως δέ γε ὄντα ἕτερα περὶ σοῦ) (263b11). As in the argument against Parmenides, not-being is spelled out in terms of difference.

The exegetical options are the same as for the introductory exchange of the argument that not-being is (Crivelli, *Falsehood*, 238–9; Hestir, *Foundation*, 191–9). On the incompatibility range interpretation adopted earlier, a speech is false just in case it ascribes an activity to an entity which is different from an activity which the entity is in fact performing, where both activities are drawn from a range of incompatible activities. For instance, 'Theaetetus is flying' is false because it ascribes flying to Theaetetus although Theaetetus is sitting, where flying is different from sitting, and both flying and sitting are on the same range of incompatible activities. Once again, however, what matters for us is not the exact interpretation of the Visitor's claim but the basic point that not-being is spelled out in terms of difference. For this allows us to see how false speech can be vindicated without appeal to negative kinds or forms.

I suggested that negative predication can be vindicated by appeal to difference: the claim that Theaetetus is not flying is spelled out as the claim that Theaetetus partakes of an activity that in turn partakes of difference with regard to flying. This account can be extended to vindicate the possibility of false speech. Let us distinguish positive from negative speeches, where the former makes a positive predicative claim (e.g., that Theaetetus is flying), and the latter makes a

negative predicative claim (e.g., that Theaetetus is not flying). A positive speech about an entity, then, is false just in case this entity partakes of an activity (or property) that in turn partakes of difference with regard to the activity (or property) ascribed to the entity by the speech. For instance, 'Theaetetus is flying' is false just in case Theaetetus partakes of an activity that in turn partakes of difference with regard to flying. Moreover, and more simply, a negative speech about an entity is false just in case this entity directly partakes of the activity (or property) which, according to the speech, it does not have. For example, 'Theaetetus is not flying' is false just in case Theaetetus partakes of flying.

Of course, I have offered only a rough sketch of the Visitor's account of false speech. But this should suffice to show that negative kinds or forms are not *required* for a vindication of the possibility of false speech. Indeed, we saw the Visitor invoke the same analysis of not-being in terms of difference as in the argument against Parmenides. If that earlier argument did not rely on negative kinds or forms precisely because of the analysis of not-being in terms of difference, as I argued, it is plausible that the later account of false speech does not rely on negative kinds or forms either. The Visitor offers a unified account of non-identity claims, negative predication, and false speech in terms of the kind difference, without appeal to negative kinds or forms.

7. Conclusion

I have argued that the Visitor vindicates negative predication and false speech by appeal to the kind difference and two participation relations (where one relation is dyadic and the other triadic, involving difference). The resulting view achieves the same goals as an account that includes

negative kinds or forms but with a more economical ontology. Hence, a modified version of the profligacy objection to the standard interpretation is on target after all: it would be profligate for the Visitor to posit negative kinds or forms, not because it is *in principle* gratuitous to posit such entities but because he does not need them to confront Parmenides, nor therefore to define the sophist. Not only, then, is the textual evidence for the standard interpretation weaker than is often thought, but the philosophical motivation for it has been undercut as well.[45]

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[45] An earlier version of this paper has been presented at the *Symposium Platonicum* 2022 in Athens, GA, and I would like to thank the audience for their valuable feedback. I developed my first thoughts on the topic in commenting on a paper by Jan Szaif (in which he defended the opposite view) at a workshop at Brown University in 2019, organized by Mary Louise Gill and Anna Pavani, and I am very grateful to him not only for making me think about the topic but also for his comments on a draft of the present paper. I also owe a great debt to Mary Louise Gill for discussing these issues with me over many years and for prompting me to continue working on them. Finally, I want to thank Rachana Kamtekar and two anonymous referees for their extremely helpful comments that have allowed me to greatly improve the paper.

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