

The Enigmatic *Locus Desperatus* at *Sophist* 244d11–12

Simon Noriega-Olmos

Universidad de los Andes (ULA), Mérida, Venezuela

Sph. 244d11–12 is a *locus desperatus*. Editors have suspected these lines to be corrupted. Accordingly, they have proposed multiple emendations. In my view, however, the passage does not need emendation but only interpretation and Schleiermacher's construal. I argue that *Sph.* 244d11–12 shows that the one is not identical to a name. It shows this by analyzing what a name is and proving that the terms 'name' and 'one' are not intersubstitutable *salva veritate*. Plato, *Sophist*, monism, names.

1 Problems of *Sph.* 244d11–12

Sph. 244d11–12 is part of an argument against monism. It is unclear, however, what the argument is and what these two lines say. Cornford refuses to translate them, printing "Str." In a footnote, he points out that the omitted line is hopelessly corrupt.¹ However, the two manuscript variants of 244d11–12 are translatable and, at first blush, not terribly divergent. Moreover, lines 244d11–12 display the literary figure of parallelism and a pun on the previous τὸ ὄνομα ὀνόματος ὄνομα μόνον, ἄλλου δὲ οὐδενὸς ὄν at 244d8. Compare BDW and T:

(BDW) καὶ τὸ ἓν γε ἓν ὄν μόνον καὶ τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτὸ ἓν ὄν.²

'and the one, in particular, being only one of one, it is also one of the name.'³

(T) καὶ τὸ ἓν γε ἓν ὄν μόνον καὶ τοῦτο ὀνόματος αὐτὸ ἓν ὄν.

1 Cornford 1935, 222 n.l. Duerlinger 2009, 107 nn 51 and 140 translates 'PHIL. And, indeed . . .', commenting 'The Greek of this sentence has no fixed sense. Most scholars seem to believe that it is corrupted. I follow Cornford here, assuming that the sentence is better left untranslated than given a highly speculative interpretation.'

2 B is Cod. Bodl. MS E. D. Clarke 39 (anno 895). D is Cod. Ven. gr. 185 (saec. XII). B and D belong to family β. T is Cod. Ven. app. cl. 4. I (saec. X) and belongs to a family of its own. W is Co. Vind. Suppl. Gr. 7 (saec. X) and belongs to family δ. Simplicius E and F attest ἓν ὄν μόνον, like β and W. However, Simpl. D attests ἓν ὄν μόνον, like T. All manuscripts of Simplicius attest τοῦ, like β and W. βTW and Simpl. DE attest αὐτὸ, but Simpl. F attests αὐτοῦ. See the (Duke et al. 1995).

3 αὐτὸ picks up on τὸ ἓν. 'μόνον' (only) admits two translations: 'exactly' and 'exclusively.'

‘and the one, at any rate, being only [one] of one, this itself (i.e. the one) is also one of (the) name.’

BDW explicitly express a nominal predicate ἓν, which T elides. This is a minor difference between BDW and T.⁴ However, the other difference is suspicious: τοῦτο ὀνόματος in T—unlike τοῦ ὀνόματος in BDW—breaks the parallelism with ἄλλου δὲ οὐδενὸς ὄν at 244d8–9. Nevertheless, we can read τοῦτο in T as expressing a subject that τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτὸ ἐν ὄν in BDW assumes and translate both T and BDW-244d11–12 as: ‘the one is simply one of one, and the one is also one of the name.’

The editors have proposed an array of emendations that explain Cornford’s rejection of 244d11–12 as hopelessly corrupt. We can sort these emendations into three groups.⁵ Here is a representative sample from each one:

(AST) καὶ τὸ ἐν γε ἐνὸς ἐν ὄν μόνον καὶ οὐ τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτὸ ἐν ὄν.

‘and the one, in particular, is only one of the one and it is not one of the name.’

(STEINHARDT) καὶ τὸ ὄν γε, ἐνὸς ἐν ὄν ὄνομα, καὶ τούτου ὄντος ὀνόματος αὐτὸ ὄν ὄνομα.

‘and being, in particular, being one name of the one, is itself also a name of this name that is.’

(APELT) καὶ τὸ ἐν γε, ἐνὸς ὄνομα ὄν καὶ τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτὸ ἐν ὄν.

4 Given τὸ ὄνομα ὀνόματος ὄνομα μόνον at 244d8, one can understand τὸ ἐν γε ἐνὸς ἐν μόνον as eliding the nominal predicate ἐν.

5 οὐ emendations

καὶ τὸ ἐν γε ἐνὸς ἐν ὄν μόνον καὶ οὐ τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτὸ ἐν ὄν (Astius 1820)

καὶ τὸ ἐν γε, ἐνὸς ἐν ὄν μόνον καὶ οὐ τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτὸ ἐν ὄν (Stallbaum 1840)

καὶ τὸ ἐν γε, ἐνὸς ἐν ὄν μόνον, καὶ τοῦτο, ὀνόματος δ’ οὐ τὸ ἐν ὄν (Badham 1865, xxxiv–xxxv)

ὄν emendations:

καὶ τὸ ὄν γε, ἐνὸς ἐν ὄν ὄνομα, καὶ τούτου ὄντος ὀνόματος αὐτὸ ὄν ὄνομα (Müller and Steinhardt 1852)

καὶ τὸ ὄν γε, ἐνὸς ὄνομα ὄν, καὶ τοῦτο ὀνόματος αὐτὸ ὄνομα ὄν (Fr. W. Wagner 1857, 317–18; W. Wagner 1856)

καὶ τὸ ὄν γε ἐνὸς ὄνομα ὄν καὶ ταῦτα ὀνόματος ὄνομα ὄν (Deuschle 1857)

ὄνομα emendations:

καὶ τὸ ἐν γε, ἐνὸς ὄνομα ὄν καὶ τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτὸ ἐν ὄν (Apelt 1897)

καὶ τὸ ἐν γε, ἐνὸς ἐν ὄνομα ὄν, καὶ τοῦτο ὀνόματος αὐτὸ ἐν ὄν (Hermannus 1865)

Other emendations:

καὶ τὸ ἐν γε, ἐνὸς [ἐν] ὄν μόνον καὶ τοῦτο ὀνόματος † αὐτὸ ἐν ὄν (Campbell 1867)

καὶ τὸ ἐν γε, ἐνὸς ὄνομα ὄν μόνον, καὶ τοῦτο ὀνόματος, οὐ τὸ ἐν ὄν (Zeller 1889, II, 1:648, n.2)

Zeller’s emendation is a hybrid between ὄνομα and οὐ emendations.

‘and the one, in particular, being a name of the one, is also the one of the name.’

These emendations attest to at least three problems:

(Problem 1) (AST) introduces ‘οὐ’ because he takes 244d11–12 to express the opposite of what the argument intends to conclude. This emendation presupposes that either the conclusion or the construal of the argument is unclear.

(P2) (STEINHARDT) introduces τὸ ὅν because he thinks 244d11–12 harks back to τὸ ὅν (see 244b9–10, cf. 244b7, 12; 244c2, 8; 244d1, 3, 6, 8; 244c5, 8 ff.; 244a6). He takes the argument to be about τὸ ὅν and not about τὸ ἔν. He thinks 244d11–12 is the conclusion of a long argument that starts at 244b9, not of a short argument between 244c9 and 244d12. (APELT), in contrast, introduces ὄνομα because he believes the argument to be about a name. All this suggests that it is unclear what the argument is about and where it starts.

(P3) It is unclear whether the differences between BDW and T are consequential and which manuscripts render a better reading. An additional problem is an ambiguity that affects the MSS and all emendations:

(P4) It is unclear whether 244d11–12 mentions or uses the terms ‘one’ or ‘being.’ Compare Fowler’s and White’s translations of (APELT):

(Fowler, APELT) And the one will turn out to be the name of one and also the one of the name.

(White, APELT) And also *the one*, being the name of *the one*, will also be the one of the name.⁶

Fowler takes the first two instances of ‘one’ to be mentions of the term, whereas White—as his italics suggest—takes them to be uses.

6 Fowler 2006, Wiehl and Apelt 1985; Apelt 1897. A footnote in White’s translation in Cooper’s 1997 edition reads: ‘Plato is relying on the thought that if the terms “one” and “name” designate one thing (in the sense that he assumes is relevant), then they are interchangeable, even to the point of generating the strange phrase “the one of the name”’.

2 The context of *Sph.* 244d11–12

To understand the meaning of 244d11–12, we need to clarify the argumentative sequence between 244b9 and 244d12. At 244b9–c10, the Eleatic Visitor ('EV') begins as follows:

(Text1) ἔν πού φατε μόνον εἶναι; ... ὃν καλεῖτέ τι; ... πότερον ὅπερ ἓν, ἐπὶ τῷ αὐτῷ προσχρώμενοι δυοῖν ὀνόμασιν, ἢ πῶς;

I suppose you say that only one [thing] is? ... Do you call something 'being'? ... What? This very one [thing], and thus you apply two names to the same thing, or what?

(T2) τό τε δύο ὀνόματα ὁμολογεῖν εἶναι μηδέν θέμενον πλὴν ἓν καταγέλαστόν που.

It is ridiculous, I suppose, to accept two names and to postulate nothing except one [thing].

Here the EV is reacting to the monist view that 'the all is one (thing)' (244b6–7), 'only one thing is' (244b9–10), and 'the absolute and truly one is indivisible (245a8–9).' In (T1), the monists apply the terms 'one' and 'being' to the one and only thing they claim (there) is. In (T2), the EV detects a contradiction in claiming 'there is nothing except one [thing]' and simultaneously agreeing 'there are two names.' One can dispute what the contradiction is. Either (T2.1) the EV thinks the two names apply to two different things, one of which is one too many for a monist universe or (T2.2) he thinks two names, even if they apply to the same item, are too many things for a monist universe.

Interpretation (T2.2) may seem problematic because linguistic entities and ontological principles belong to different levels of discourse. But this is what the EV has in mind. He takes sentences to be among the things that are (260a5–6) and must, therefore, think that even a name is one thing too many for a monist universe:

(T3) καὶ τὸ παράπαν γε ἀποδέχεσθαι τοῦ λέγοντος ὡς ἔστιν ὄνομα τι, λόγον οὐκ ἂν ἔχον (244c11d1).

It makes no sense at all to agree with someone [i.e. a monist] who claims that a name is.

(T4) τιθεῖς τε τοῦνομα τοῦ πράγματος ἕτερον δύο λέγει πού τινε. (244d3–4)

If one holds that the name is different from the thing, I suppose (που) one speaks of two.

(T4) analyzes what a name is. Naming something is essential to being a name. If something is a name, it necessarily names something. A name involves a *nominans* (i.e. a written or phonetic mark that names) and its *nominatum* (i.e. the object of named). *Nominans* and *nominatum* are interdependent. A *nominans* necessarily has a *nominatum* for a mark that does not name anything cannot be a *nominans*. Correspondingly, a *nominatum* necessarily has a *nominans* for an object unpaired to a *nominans* cannot be a *nominatum*.⁷ A name presupposes at least two distinct interdependent items, and these are too many items for monism.

(T1) and (T2) constitute an argument that trades on two names and the monist principle that there is only one thing. In contrast, (T3) focuses on just one name, while (T4) analyses what a name is. (T3) and (T4) do not make an argument, but—as *καὶ μὴν* in the following line suggests—they appear to present solid assumptions for an argument.

3 The name-one argument

(T5) (T5.1) *καὶ μὴν ἂν ταυτόν γε αὐτῷ τιθῆ τοῦνομα*, (T5.2) *ἢ μηδενὸς ὄνομα ἀναγκασθήσεται λέγειν* (244d6–7).

Further, he would then posit that the name is the same as the thing [*αὐτῷ* picks up *τοῦ πράγματος*], or he will be compelled to say that it is not a name of anything.

(T5.1') *εἰ δέ τις αὐτὸ φήσει, συμβήσεται τὸ ὄνομα ὀνόματος ὄνομα μόνον, ἄλλου δὲ οὐδενὸς ὄν* (244d8–9).

But if he says it is of something, it will follow that the name is only a name of a name and is not of any other thing.

(T5) Introduces two options monists have, to make their theory compatible with the existence of a name. These options present a dilemma: Either (T5.1) the name (i.e. *nominans*) names itself and the same item is simultaneously name and *nominatum* or (T5.2) the name has no *nominatum*. The second horn (T5.2) is immediately dismissed because, as (T4) implies, a name without a *nominatum* is a contradiction in terms.

The first horn (T5.1), in contrast, demands an explanation. (T5.1') introduces 'a name¹ that is a name of (i.e., that names) a name²'. But (T5.1) tells

7 At 244d1, 'ὄνομα' stands for *name* in a broad sense that includes the written or phonetic mark and its meaning. But at 244d3, 6, 7, 8, and 11, 'ὄνομα' and 'ὀνόματος' stand for the written or phonetic mark, meaning *nominans*.

us that the name¹ which names is the same as the name² which is named. This is a self-naming name.⁸ Since the job of a name is to distinguish a *nominatum*, a name identical to its *nominatum* can hardly do its job. Nonetheless, a name that is a *nominatum* of itself—unlike a *nominans* without *nominatum*—is not a contradiction in terms. Moreover, self-exemplifying words name themselves, e.g. ‘word’ refers to itself, and ὄρος—in Greek and carved in stone—is the very boundary and thus names itself.

The EV continues:

(T6) καὶ τὸ ἓν γε ἐνὸς ἐν ὄν μόνον (244d11).

And the one, at any rate, is only one of one.

To obtain (T6), the EV has substituted all instances of ‘name’ in (T5.1)’ for ‘one’. The motivation for this substitution is the monists’ dictum that (T1) ‘the all is one’ and the claim under attack that (T5.1) ‘the one is a name of itself.’ The monists must take ‘one’ and ‘name’ to be coreferential. But if ‘one’ and ‘name’ are coreferential, they should be substitutable *salva veritate* in extensional contexts. Moreover, the sentences ‘the name is a name of itself and ‘the one is one of the one’ should say the same thing.

However, ‘the name is a name of itself’ and ‘the one is one of the one’ do not say the same thing, and ‘one’ and ‘name’ cannot, therefore, be coreferential. In ‘name¹ of...,’ we can fill in the empty placeholder with the term ‘name²,’ even if ‘name¹’ and ‘name²’ are identical, coreferential, and name one another. The empty place in ‘name¹ of...’ is a placeholder for a *nominatum*, and that *nominatum* can be the very name that names it. Although a *nominans* and its *nominatum* are usually different items, their identity does not imply a contradiction in terms.

8 It cannot be a *nominans* that names a different *nominans*, for these obviously are two different items as in (T4). τὸ ὄνομα ὀνόματος ὄνομα μόνον has at least three readings. (a) ‘The name is a name of a name,’ meaning: ‘name’ is the name of a name. I doubt this is the correct reading in this context. It commits the monists to the obvious existence of two different things, the *nominans* and the *nominatum*. (b) ‘The name is a name of name.’ This is an instantiation claim, stating that an individual name instantiates the kind name. This reading commits the monists to the obvious existence of two different things: an individual and a kind. Or (c) ‘the name is name of name’ intended as a definitional or essential claim, stating that to be a name is to name a name, i.e. itself. A name that is a name of itself is one single individual analyzable (i.e. divisible) *in abstracto* into a *nominans* and a *nominatum*. Such a name is inconsistent with monism because the one is indivisible (245a8–9). This is probably what the EV intends.

On the other hand, we cannot fill in the empty placeholder in ‘one¹ of...’ with a term coreferential with ‘one¹,’ let alone with ‘one¹’ itself. In Greek and in a context that has to do with counting, we would expect the empty space in ‘one¹ of...’ to be a placeholder for a partitive genitive. This is a placeholder for a whole or plurality of which the referent of ‘one¹’ is a part. Since part and whole are not identical,⁹ it would be nonsensical to fill in the empty place in ‘one¹ of...’ with a term that refers to the very same part that ‘one¹’ refers to. The monists cannot even accept ‘one of...’ to be a meaningful construction. They cannot admit that to be one is to be one among a plurality of items or parts. Indeed, the one of the monists cannot be one of anything. It follows that ‘name’ and ‘one’ cannot be coreferential.

In the case of a self-naming name, we can interchange the term ‘name’ (*nominans*) and whatever (*nominatum*) fills in the empty place in ‘name of...’ *salva veritate* and *salvo sensu*. This does not apply to ‘one of...’ in its ordinary meaning. Here, one is part of whatever fills in the empty place, and a part is not identifiable with its whole. A name and the one must be different. Here is the final blow:

(T7) καὶ [τὸ ἓν] τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτὸ ἐν ὧν (244d11–12).
and [the one] is this one of the name.

Since the monists cannot consistently speak of ‘one of anything,’ they cannot speak of (T7) ‘one of a name.’ This last substitution adds insult to injury. It takes ‘one of...’ and ‘name of...’ to have the same meaning, to accept the same values in their placeholders, and to be equivalent. But ‘one of...’ and ‘name of...’ have different meanings, and the substitutions in (T7) and (T6) are unacceptable. The identity of one and name assumed by (T3) cannot be the case. The monists inconsistently suggested that the one was a name.

4 Lessons to learn

(AST) and (STEINHARDT) failed to appreciate that the argument at 244c11–13 not only focuses on a name but also exploits the notions of name and one (P2). (STEINHARDT) and (APELT) failed to understand that lines 244d11–12 trade on the meanings of the expression ‘one of...’ and ‘name of...’ (P3). More precisely, the argument trades on what one is and what a name is

9 I assume Plato has in mind ‘proper parts’, not an ‘improper part’ such that the whole is indivisible and a part of itself.

(P4). (AST) did not appreciate that the conclusion was explicit (P1, T4, and T5.2).

Unlike us, the EV is ready to mix different levels of discourse—linguistic expressions and ontological principles. He assumes the one and a name to be beings equally. Accordingly, if the one has a name, both the one and its name are beings, and there are two different items. This is incompatible with the monists' claim that there is only one thing. In a monist universe, the one cannot have a name, and the monists cannot consistently talk about the one.

This inconsistency is only part of the problem. The EV suggests (P1) that the natures of one and name are incompatible with monism. There cannot be one on its own, one always characterizes something else. Being one is to be one of something, one among several things. Moreover, a presumably single item, such as a self-referring name, is analyzable and involves a conceptual plurality. A self-referring name, precisely because it is a name, presupposes a naming relation between two relata, a *nominans* and a *nominatum*. Although it appears to be a single item, a self-referring name is a plurality consisting of two relata.

5 Editing *Sph.* 244d11–12

We can finally appreciate that the two transmitted variants of the text not only make sense but also show parallelism and progression through (T5.1'), (T6), and (T7). The claim in (T5.1') is odd, though not a contradiction in terms. The claim in (T6) is unacceptable for a monist. And the claim in (T7) adds insult to injury by building upon the confusion that led to (T6). Schleiermacher brings this progression to the fore by following BDW and reading $\alpha\tilde{\nu}$ τὸ instead of $\alpha\tilde{\nu}$ τὸ. This reading renders the subject explicit (but the nominal predicate $\tilde{\epsilon}\nu$ implicit) and reads (T7) as a climax.

(T7 SCHLEIERMACHER) καὶ [ἔν] τοῦ ὀνόματος $\alpha\tilde{\nu}$ τὸ $\tilde{\epsilon}\nu$ ὄν.¹⁰

And the one is in turn [one] of the name.

This is not an emendation but a different word-division of a text Plato wrote in *scriptio continua*. He presumably wrote ...ONOMATOΣΑΥΤΟΕΝ... and

10 Schleiermacher 1824.

very possibly intended ΑΥΤΟ as αὖ τὸ. Deussen gets the same effect by following T and adopting Schleiermacher's reading.

(T7 DEUSSEN) καὶ τοῦτο ὀνόματος αὖ τὸ ἐν ὄν.¹¹

And the one is in turn this of a name.

(T7 SCHLEIERMACHER) takes its implicit nominal predicate from (T6). (T7 DEUSSEN), in contrast, expresses that nominal predicate with a τοῦτο that harks back to (T6). In favor of τοῦ, we may argue that it is an anaphoric definite article that particularizes ὀνόματος (Smyth and Messing 1984, 1119, 1120b–c). This particularization indicates that the name in (T7) is the name already mentioned in (T5.1). This indication is important because the argument operates with an iterative substitution of one for name in (T6) and name for one in (T7). τοῦ and αὖ τὸ are compelling readings, and the new OCT text is right to accept them.¹²

11 Deussen 1869.

12 Judging by his notes, Schleiermacher's interpretation differs from mine. The editors of the new OCT text recognize that the argument trades on substitutions of terms leading to absurdity or senselessness.

