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Plato and the Complex *Genos* of the *Sophist*[*]

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Abstract. To reveal the sophist's *genos*, the *Sophist* offers seven *logoi*, each of which picks out a different aspect of sophistry. How are we to judge them? Which is the best definition? Although scholars have divided opinions, the text clearly states that the sophist is most correctly exposed through the seventh *logos*. If so, then what are we to make of the first six *logoi*? Does the seventh *logos* prove them to be untrue? Or does it rather paint a more complex picture of the *genos* in question, which nonetheless relates to the previous *logoi*? The present paper defends this last option. Specifically, it argues that the seventh definition singles out the unifying element of the different concrete images of the sophist presented in the first five *logoi*. Besides that, the paper claims that the sixth *logos* is the only one that does not correspond to the sophist, but to the philosopher. Thus, by contrasting the sixth and seventh definitions of the *Sophist*, Plato offers an important key line of demarcation between the philosopher and the sophist, despite recognizing that the former may share some specific characteristics of the latter.
Keywords: Plato, the *Sophist*, dialectic, collection, division.

1. Introduction

Plato's aim in the *Sophist* is to reveal the *genos* of the sophist.[1] This particular *genos* is difficult to discern, since it often appears to be indistinguishable from the *genos* of the philosopher: although people agree

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Платоновские исследования / Platonic Investigations 22.1 (2025) DOI: 10.25985/PI.22.1.02

[*] This paper has been partially funded by the Research project Platón y la Historia (PID2023-146491NB-I00).

[1] All translations from the *Phaedrus*, the *Theaetetus*, the *Sophist*, and the *Republic*, with small modifications, are taken from Rowe 1986, Rowe 2012 and Rowe 2015.

that sophistry and philosophy are two different activities (*Sph.* 217b), it is not clear in virtue of what one may differentiate one from the other and say what each of them is. Thus, in order to shed some light on this issue, the Eleatic Stranger (henceforth ES) engages the young Theaetetus in a dialectical discussion. By the end of the dialogue, seven different *logoi* have been presented, each of which seems to pick out a different aspect of sophistry. The sophist appears to be, at the same time, (1) a hunter of rich young people (*Sph.* 221c6–223b7), (2) a travelling trader of knowledge (*Sph.* 223c1–224d3), (3) an importer-exporter of words and lessons for the soul that are either acquired from others, or (4) produced by himself (*Sph.* 224d4–224e5), (5) a wrestler or antilogician (*Sph.* 224e6–226a5), (6) an educator who cleanses the obstacles that prevent the soul from learning (*Sph.* 226a6–231b9), and (7) a producer of images that appear to resemble the originals, even though they are unlike them (*Sph.* 232b1–236d4; 264b11–268c4).

How are we to judge these seven *logoi*? What constitutes a good *logos* of sophistry? Are there any correct descriptions of the sophist? Although these are thorny issues that divide scholars, the text leaves little room for doubt about one point: the sophist is most correctly (*Sph.* 233d2: ὀρθότατα) and truly (*Sph.* 268d4: τἀληθέστατα) revealed through the seventh *logos*. If this is true, then what are we to make of the first six *logoi*? Does the seventh *logos* show them to be untrue? Or does it rather paint a more complex picture of the *genos* in question, which nonetheless relates to the previous *logoi*? In what follows, we shall argue in favor of this last option.

2. The difference between the angler and the sophist

At first glance one might assume that a good discourse on sophistry must reflect the discourse on angling. Before embarking upon the hard endeavor of clarifying sophistry, the ES proposes to Theaetetus that they start their enquiry on "small and easier matters before attacking the very greatest" (*Sph.* 218d1–2). This easy task, it emerges, is to clarify the art of the angler, which will be taken as the model for the investigation on the art of the sophist. The two interlocutors engage in the

dialectical investigation as follows: first, they divide the *genos* "art" into two parts, productive art and acquisitive art. The former is the art that brings into being that which was not there before, such as farming, the manufacturing of objects, and the art of imitation (*Sph.* 219a10–b6). The latter is the art that deals with things that are or have come into being, such as learning, money-making, combat, and hunting (*Sph.* 219c2–7). Their task is to situate the art of the angler within this division. The *genos* of angling is determined relatively easily. Within two Stephanus pages, Theaetetus and the ES determine that the art of angling is an acquisitive art and, more specifically, that the angler is a hunter of water creatures with a special type of hook (*Sph.* 221c). This simple *logos* marks off angling by articulating the particular sub-kind to which it belongs.

Seen from this perspective, one could maintain that if the method of collection and division were to successfully mark off the art of the sophist, then it must belong to one of the two sub-kinds of art, i.e., acquisitive and productive art.[2] And if this were correct, then the fact that the seventh *logos* is superior to the other *logoi* would imply that, since the seventh *logos* is the only discourse that places sophistry in the productive art, it follows that the other *logoi* are incorrect.[3] The upshot would be that the seventh *logos* and the other *logoi* are mutually exclusive. That is to say, the seven *logoi* do display different features of sophistry, since they reveal incompatible properties.[4]

Although this line of argument appears compelling, there is textual evidence against it. The first point to notice is that *several* components of the first six *logoi* reappear in the seventh *logos*. In the seventh *logos*, the sophist is presented as an antilogician who disputes in private discourse through questions and answers (as in the fifth *logos*), he hunts young people (first *logos*), teaches them how to speak about, or speak against, every subject, and makes money by trading learning (second

[2] Cf. Rickless 2010: 292.

[3] While in the seventh *logos* Theaetetus and the ES place sophistry in the productive art, in the other *logoi* they claim that it is either acquisitive (first five *logoi*) or separative (sixth *logos*).

[4] Cf. Brown 2010: 158–160. See also Bluck 1975: 53 and Teisserenc 2012: 41.

and forth *logoi*).[5] Hence, it would be difficult to maintain that these *logoi* are entirely fallacious; from the very fact that they recur in the most true *logos*, it follows that they cannot be dismissed. Further, the ES seems to suggest that the earlier *logoi* are correct when he calls them μαθήματα (things learned) (*Sph.* 232a5).[6]

This brings us to the crucial point, often overlooked in the literature, that this gap between the *logos* of angling and the *logos* of sophistry reflects the gap between their *genera*. For Plato, there is an irreducible difference between angling and sophistry: whereas the *genos* of the former is simple, the *genos* of the latter is complex. Those who think that the *logos* of sophistry must have a nature identical to that of angling miss the salient fact that the isomorphism is primarily between the *logos* and the *genos* it refers to, and not between the *logoi* themselves.[7] It is one thing to display something such as angling, and quite another to grasp sophistry. In the former case, the activity is uncontroversial and clear to everyone. The widespread familiarity with angling is a clear sign that this can be readily captured in a simple *logos*. The distinguishing feature of a simple *logos* is that it can be shown without trouble and without recourse to dialectic.[8] In the case at issue, this can be achieved by merely pointing to the single observable activity that we all have

[5] Cf. *Sph.* 232b8–c10; 233b1–c6. On this point, see Notomi 1999: 82–83.

[6] And yet, this is not necessary. *Contra* Centrone 2008: 75, n. 49. In *Lg.* 821b5, it is argued that there is a false μάθημα about the stars. As we will make clear in what follows, among the first six *logoi*, the sixth is the only one that does not reveal a true feature of sophistry.

[7] The assumption that the angler and the sophist are of the same kind (*Sph.* 221d: συγγενῆ) is overridden early in the dialogue. Starting from the second *logos* onward, the ES and Theaetetus assume that the art they are looking for is variegated (*Sph.* 223c2: ποικίλης) and not trivial (*Sph.* 223c1: φαύλης). As a first-order approximation we can say that a kind is variegated in that it appears in lots of different ways (*Sph.* 231b9–c1: πολλὰ πεφάνθαι) and leaves one at a loss (*Sph.* 231c3: ἀπορῶν). By contrast, a kind is trivial in that it appears in the same way to anyone and is simple to find. We will say more on this distinction at the end of this section.

[8] That Plato thinks this is the case is confirmed in the *Theaetetus*. Here Socrates says that clay is a trivial (*Tht.* 147a1: φαύλων) thing that is ready to hand (*Tht.* 147a2: προχείρων). In this case, Socrates continues (*Tht.* 147c3–6), one answers the τί εστί question about clay in a "trivial (φαῦλόν) and simple (ἁπλοῦν) way by just saying clay is earth thoroughly mixed with liquid". By contrast, one can answer the difficult

in mind when we think of the angler. In the latter case, on the other hand, there is great disagreement about what this activity amounts to, and it is often confused with philosophy. And yet, although "sophistry" is said in many different ways, we do believe that, besides the name "sophist", there is also an activity that all sophists share. In this case, a simple *logos* would not work because it is not possible to discern the organizational structure that draws together the several activities the sophist performs into one. What we need instead is a unified view of a complex *phenomenon*; we need a synoptic view that not only gather the set of meanings of this activity but also displays how it is internally organized.[9] This is nothing but the result of a protracted investigation that is difficult and laborious to carry out.

The dialectical process from which this complex *logos* arises can be divided in two steps. In the first stage, the dialectician dissects the *genos* of sophistry into its constitutive parts. Seen in this light, the first set of *logoi* displays the wide range of meanings of this art.[10] In the second stage, the dialectician organizes this complex kind, which constantly slips from our hands. He does this not by contrasting its meanings as merely opposed to each other,[11] but rather by displaying its different facets as well as the common feature in virtue of which all these elements are connected and related to one another. If there is an activity of sophistry in itself, then there should also be a feature

question about the nature of knowledge only by carrying out a dialectical investigation. See also *Prm.* 130b–d.

[9] That the primary aim of the conversation is to circumscribe the range of meanings of sophistry is aptly remarked by Vegetti 2004: 98.

[10] In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates claims that it is a mandatory step of a true research to wonder if the object under investigation is simple or complex: "Shouldn't one reflect about the nature of anything like this: first, is the thing about which we will want to be experts ourselves and be capable of making others expert simple or complex (ἁπλοῦν ἢ πολυειδές)?" (*Phdr.* 277c). When it is complex, it is important to consider all its constitutive parts before singling out their unifying principle.

[11] As it becomes clear in *Tht.* 154e, this is something that a sophist, but not Socrates, would assume. Socrates argues that, while sophists use "arguments as weapons to beat each other's arguments down", he and Theaetetus will look at the things they are thinking and "see how their thoughts relate to each other — whether they chime together, or whether there is complete disharmony between them".

to which all these different names designating the sophist refer and in virtue of which the sophist can be a hunter, a merchant, a teacher, and so forth.[12] And this is precisely what the seventh *logos* is meant to reveal: "the one feature of it that all these things learned (μαθήματα) actually are oriented to (βλέπει εἰς)" (*Sph.* 232a4–5). Hence, the first five *logoi* are not a cluster of unconnected accounts of sophistry to be rejected, but they are instead aspects of a multi-layered picture that is ultimately fully revealed in the seventh *logos*.[13]

On the basis of these remarks, we can therefore distinguish simple and complex *genera* in the *Sophist* as follows. The simple *genos* of angling is easy to capture in a formula because the activity is readily discernible by mere observation. When hearing the term "angling", we all *picture* a person hunting water creatures with a special type of hook. The difficult *genos* of sophistry, by contrast, is hard to capture because, although it constitutes a genuine unity, it has an internal complexity (i.e. it consists of many different and connected parts) that cannot be adequately observed.

3. Marking off sophistry from philosophy

So far we have seen that in the *Sophist* an account of a complex *genos* is good if it both displays its various aspects and the unifying principle in virtue of which each of its members is a member of that *genos*. This

[12] Cf. Gill 2010: 181.

[13] That Plato thinks this manner of presentation is acceptable is confirmed by the *Phaedrus*. There, Socrates attempts to mark off *eros* through the method of division and collection. In this regard, he argues that it is necessary to arrange our *logos* in relation to the nature of the thing examined "offering a complex soul complex speeches containing all the modes, and simple speeches to a simple soul" (*Phdr.* 277c). Insofar as the object examined, i.e., the human soul, is complex (*Phdr.* 253c–254e), the *logos* describing it is complex too (as Socrates forcefully argues in a well-known passage, a good *logos* on *eros* must reveal (1) that *eros* is both a human (first *logos* of Socrates) and divine madness (second *logos* of Socrates) (*Phdr.* 266ab) and (2) that both *logoi* reveal different facets of *eros* due to their relationship with madness and the desires for what is beautiful. While human madness is the desire for a (beautiful) body, divine madness is the desire for knowledge of Forms). By contrast, the simple (*Phdr.* 230a: ἁπλόος) nature of the divine soul is specified by a simple *logos*.

is what allows a complex *logos* to grasp the whole of its *genos*, in all its complexity, without oversimplifying it. But if this is correct, then what is the final picture of sophistry? And how do we distinguish it from philosophy?

Philosophy and sophistry are difficult to separate because their *genera* are complex: in both cases, however, there is a unifying feature in virtue of which, despite their different characteristics, they constitute unified wholes. The crucial problem is that they share many common features. With some exceptions,[14] many of the things said in the first five *logoi* of the sophist can equally well be said of the philosopher: both the sophist and the philosopher are distinguished teachers and antilogicians;[15] they are well-known in the *polis*; they hunt young people and are believed to educate their souls about ἀρετή. The important thing to note here is that, upon careful examination, they share *multiple* features that are immediately evident when we consider them.[16]

[14] The major distinction between the sophist and the philosopher is that the former, unlike the latter, charges money for his activities (*Ap.* 21a–23c). However, this does not prevent them from doing the same activities. On this point, we agree with C.C.W. Taylor (2006: 160), who argues that "whether a given activity is done for a fee or gratis is not a distinction internal to the activity itself; playing the cello is the same activity, whether the player is an amateur or a professional". Another analogous distinction would be that the sophist (*Ti.* 19e), but not the philosopher (*Phdr.* 230d, *Cri.* 52e–53a), travels from city to city. Yet, this is explicitly denied at the beginning of the dialogue, where it is argued that the philosopher visits cities (*Sph.* 216c).

[15] The antilogician is at the heart of the fifth *logos*. There, it is argued that the antilogician (ἀντιλογικόν) is the person who disputes in private discussions that are divided into questions and corresponding answers (*Sph.*, 225b8–10). Notice that the ES does not employ any pejorative terms and that his *logos* of the antilogician applies equally well to a variety of figures: the Eleatics, the eristics, the sophists, and the dialecticians or the philosophers; they all hold private discussions consisting of questions and answers (cf. Kerferd 1981: 59–67). For the philosopher as a teacher, see the last section of this paper.

[16] This reveals something that certain classicists have been arguing in recent years (cf. Lowell 2006), namely, that σοφιστής, φιλόσοφος, ῥήτωρ etc. are terms belonging to fourth-century discourse that writers of the fourth century — very notably Plato — project back onto the fifth century, when in fact they were not used at that time to denote *noms de profession*. In other words, Plato is not writing the *Sophist* looking back at a time when people wondered how to distinguish the sophist from the philosopher.

What they do not share, however, is the *unifying* feature that lies behind this multiplicity. This is, we maintain, the key to understanding their difference.

Let us take the sophist first. What is the unifying element in virtue of which the sophist is a hunter, a teacher, and an esteemed antilogician? This is explicitly singled out in the seventh *logos*. According to this *logos*, the sophist is a notorious antilogician who produces a special type of image, i.e., the apparition (φάντασμα). An apparition is a false and deceptive image that only *appears* to resemble the object, even though it is unlike it (*Sph.* 236b6–7: ἐπείπερ φαίνεται μέν, ἔοικε δὲ οὔ). This image modifies the proportions of the original object so that it *appears* proportionate from the viewpoint of the viewer. The sophist is special in that he implants this false image in the souls of his audience, making them believe that this image is in fact the original. According to this conception of education and learning, if knowledge is not present in the soul, then a sophist "can put it there — as it were, putting sight into the eyes of the blind" (*R.* 518b6–c2). That is to say, the items of knowledge can be produced and immediately transmitted from one soul to another. Consequently, young unintelligent students are eager to follow the sophist because, by passively accepting the content of this image, they believe that they can become wiser.[17]

Plato is writing the *Sophist* looking back at a time when Socrates struck people as a sophist because the term σοφιστής was an all-encompassing term, which included many different things (that is to say, in Socrates' lifetime the term σοφιστής did not have yet the narrow and derogatory sense that it has for us (*pace* Guthrie 1971: 27–51)). Hence, it is unsurprising that there are many points of resemblance between Socrates and the σοφιστής. For Plato, this can be conceded only on the condition that one realizes that behind the many features they share there is also an underlying difference.

[17] What I think is important to emphasize here is that the same features are ascribed both to the image and to the soul of the person receiving it. The ignorant student's soul (*Sph.* 228d), like the apparition (*Sph.* 236b), is ugly and lacks proportion. This seems at least to suggest that the sophist intentionally designs his images in order to bewitch ignorant and unintelligent (*Sph.* 228d; 234b) souls that are far away from the truth (*Sph.* 234c). His principal aim is to appear wisest of all about all things (*Sph.* 234c) and thus to be massively popular among young students. By contrast, he does not have any interest in the truth (*Sph.* 236a).

Turning to the philosopher, he is also correctly called a hunter (*Smp.* 223d, *Tht.* 143d),[18] teacher, and antilogician about ἀρετή. All these descriptions also apply to his complex *genos* and display its various facets that instantly emerge when we consider him. And yet, we contend that the philosopher can be distinguished from the sophist in virtue of his different unifying principle. Our main argument is that, while the distinguishing feature of the sophist is revealed in the seventh *logos*, the distinguished feature of the philosopher is revealed in the sixth *logos*.

The crucial piece of evidence in support of the claim that the sixth *logos* is the unifying principle of philosophy is the following. The sophist of the sixth *logos* is presented in a Socratic mold: his art is separative and not productive (*Sph.* 226c3). His activity is not concerned with the production of new items of knowledge, which are meant to *fill* the empty souls, but instead with the *purification*, through questions and answers, of their beliefs. The important thing to note here is that this picture seems to show the distinctive feature of the philosopher. In the *Apology*, Socrates corrects the false impression that he is a sophist by showing that he does not teach anything, and that he does not charge a fee (*Ap.* 20d). The majority of his activity, by contrast, is to examine carefully the beliefs of his interlocutors (*Ap.* 21c). In the *Theaetetus*, Socrates makes this clear again: while he educates intellectually pregnant students, through dialectic, to think things from within themselves, he cannot be of any help to *non-pregnant students*. The problem is that, since they are non-pregnant, they cannot give birth to any truth from within themselves. Hence, Socrates assigns these students to the sophists (*Tht.* 151b2–5): unlike Socrates, sophists do not stimulate their students to actively employ their minds; instead, they produce discourses in order to fill their barren souls. This reflects Plato's idea that the philosopher differs from the sophist in virtue of his different conception of education: the students of the philosopher become wiser not because they passively *receive* an image (cf. seventh *logos*), but rather because they are prompted to *examine* their beliefs through

[18] Cf. Taylor 2006: 159.

their intellects.[19] From the perspective of the philosopher, were one to go unchallenged, he would remain ignorant and far from the truth.[20]

There are two additional arguments that support the claim that the sixth *logos* is about the philosopher. First, it is ruled out that the sixth *logos* refers to the sophist.[21] This *logos* attributes great honor (*Sph.* 231a3: μεῖζον γέρας) to the sophist, so great that the ES says he has introduced a noble family of sophistry (*Sph.* 231b7–8: ἡ γένει γενναία) that as closely resembles sophistry as a dog resembles a wolf (*Sph.* 231a). Later on, at the end of the dialogue, in the final formulation of the seventh *logos*, the ES situates the sophist in a new kind of family, which is no longer noble, but instead of a lower lineage (*Sph.* 268d2–4). This revision provides convincing evidence that the sixth *logos* is not about the sophist, but more plausibly about the philosopher.[22]

[19] As it has been suggested by various scholars (for instance, by Long 1998; Sedley 2004; and Giannopoulou 2013), the *Apology* and the *Theaetetus* are closely connected to one another. More specifically, they both purport to draw a line of demarcation between Socrates' philosophical activity and sophistry. The fact that this distinction is mirrored in the sixth and seventh *logoi* strongly corroborates the claim that the noble sophist is nothing other than the philosopher. This is a difficulty that anyone who would reject our interpretation can hardly surmount. We consider some possible objections to this thesis below.

[20] As the ES makes clear, even if it were the Great King of Persia to go unchallenged, he would remain uneducated and ugly (*Sph.* 230d6–e3), or, which is the same, ignorant and far from the truth (*Sph.* 228c–229a). The same point comes out in the midwife passage of the *Theaetetus*. In describing his midwifery art, Socrates argues that the offspring of his students can be considered to be true *after* they pass *all* his tests (*Tht.* 150b9–c3). People who leave Socrates sooner than they should, albeit pregnant, remain ignorant (*Tht.* 151a1: ἀμαθεῖς). Taken together, the upshot of the two passages is that truth and knowledge can only be the result of a critical examination.

[21] That Plato thinks that the sixth *logos* is not about the sophist is confirmed in *Sph.* 265a. This is the last part of the dialogue: after Theaetetus and the ES have tackled the problem of being and not being, they decide to turn back to the *logoi* about sophistry. In so doing, they omit to mention the sixth *logos*; by contrast, all the other *logoi* are recalled. We take this to be additional evidence for the claim that the sixth *logos* is not about sophistry.

[22] Hence, Taylor's interpretation, according to which "'noble sophistry' is more like sophistry tout court than it is like philosophy, since it shares one of the most distinctive marks of sophistry, the production of contradiction by questioning", is untenable. See Taylor 2006: 166–167. As we see it, Plato clearly distinguishes the noble sophist of

Second, when the students of the noble sophist are examined, they are more temperate, since they realize that they did not know what they thought they knew (*Sph.* 230c). Likewise, in the *Theaetetus*, at the end of the dialectical examination of Theaetetus, Socrates claims that this is all that his expertise is capable of, nothing more (*Tht.* 210c). This is clearly in contrast with the attitude of the sophists' students who talk fearlessly (*Meno* 70b6: ἀφόβως) about everything at the cost of little money (*Ap.* 20c) or time (cf. seventh *logos*).[23]

4. Objections and responses

Hence, if the argument of this paper has been along the right lines, then the distinction between the unifying feature of sophistry and philosophy, which is displayed in the seventh and sixth *logoi* respectively, is vital insofar as it enables us to understand how and why the two arts have so much in common, despite being different. The fundamental problem we must tackle when reading the *Sophist* — which is most decisively worked out by Plato in the *Apology* — is thus the question of what distinguishes the sophist from the philosopher if both are imitators of wise people (*Smp.* 210d5–6; *Sph.* 268b11–c4), surrounded by young rich people whom they purport to make wiser (*Ap.* 23c) and teach how to cross-examine people (i.e., to be an antilogician).

The interpretation we have provided is valuable insofar as it provides a compelling solution to this problem, without undermining

the sixth *logos* from the sophist of the seventh *logos*. Further, Taylor's reading is based on the unproven assumption that, starting from the *Sophist*, Plato has "developed his own view of philosophy as a systematic investigation of the fundamental structure of reality to which Socrates had never aspired, he had to abandon the view of Socrates as a systematic philosopher". And yet, if we look towards the end of the dialogue, we find that, there, the ES distinguishes two different types of beliefs, *doxai* and *phantasiai*. The former are superior to the latter since they occur according to thinking (*Sph.* 264a: κατὰ διάνοιαν) and are not intermingled with *aisthēsis*. It is worth noting that this kind of belief also appears in *Tht.* 189e–190a and that it, as Sedley aptly remarks, "replicates within the soul the form of Socratic dialectic". Cf. Sedley 2004: 130 (see also Gonzalez 2007, chapter 5). Hence, given this important continuity between the two texts, and the connection between *doxa* and Socrates' dialectic, Taylor's position is hardly convincing.

[23] Cf. *Sph.* 234ab. See also *Ap.* 20c.

its complexity. What ultimately distinguishes the sophist from the philosopher are their different conceptions of learning and knowledge, and thus the different manners in which they provide an education. In the remainder of this paper, we will present and refute some objections that scholars have presented against connecting the seventh *logos* with the sophist and the sixth *logos* with the philosopher. Starting with the seventh *logos*, Lesley Brown argues that its distinguishing features seem to fit Socrates almost equally well.[24]. A crucial passage cited in support of this view is *Sph.* 268a. There, it is argued that, while some people, namely simple imitators, produce apparitions thinking that they know the things they only have beliefs about, others, namely the εἰρωνικοί imitators, who are then said to be the sophists, produce apparitions being aware of their own ignorance. According to Brown, this distinction does not lead very far: after all, it is not only the case that Socrates can produce apparitions, but also, and even worse, that the label εἰρωνικός inevitably calls him to mind.[25]

This argument is problematic because it assumes that the philosopher, just like the sophist, shows the images he produces to his audience, making them believe that his image is the original. We should, however, first, recall that the philosopher provides a type of education, the aim of which is not to instill any belief, but rather to stimulate the student's soul to give birth to his own offspring. Second, even in those cases in which he is requested to produce an image, he adopts a different attitude. In the *Republic*, when Socrates presents the three famous similes, i.e., the simile of sun, of the line, and of the cave, he does not neglect to specify that these are things as they appear to him.[26] Socrates

[24] Brown 2010: 161–163.

[25] Brown 2010: 162.

[26] On this point, see the very stimulating remarks of Vogt 2018: 68–69. She argues that "the similes neither express knowledge nor inculcate knowledge. They provide belief, but they do not seem to be bare of understanding (*aneu nou*), and they are not ugly and blind. We would suggest that we call them beliefs with knowledge ⟨…⟩ the similes do not turn us into knowers. They can only offer beliefs for us to think about. But they are neither ugly nor blind. It is good for us to engage with them, and they make us see things about the Good. In this way, the similes are beliefs with knowledge. As we might say, such belief with knowledge is belief about the Good (rather than

firmly believes that his image is not identical with the original and thus insists that it should be taken with a grain of salt. The consequence is that Socrates' images cannot be apparitions since they do not pretend to be identical with the originals they imitate. Third, upon careful examination, the term εἰρωνικόν is used here in a sense opposite from the sense in which it applies to Socrates: the sophist is a charlatan who is aware of being ignorant of the things he pretends to know in front of the public.[27] Hence, contrary to Lesley Brown, we contend that this occurrence of the expression εἰρωνικὸν μιμητήν (*Sph.* 268a7) sharply distinguishes the sophists from Socrates.[28]

Turning to the sixth *logos*, one might object that, since the noble sophist is presented as a teacher, he cannot be Socrates.[29] And yet, upon closer examination, the ES claims that the noble sophist deals with that part of teaching that rids people of ignorance (*Sph.* 229cd; 231b). This is far from being inconsistent with that which Socrates claims to know in the *Theaetetus* and in the *Apology*. In the former, he claims that he knows nothing, precisely that he is barren of wisdom (*Tht.* 150c4: ἄγονός εἰμι σοφίας), but that he is skilled in the art of midwifery (*Tht.* 160b): this is all his expertise can do for young men, nothing more (*Tht.* 210b). In the latter, although Socrates claims that he does not teach (*Ap.* 20c1: διδάσκει) the art of the sophists, he nonetheless admits that he is not entirely devoid of wisdom: he possesses human wisdom (*Ap.* 20d8: ἀνθρωπίνη σοφία). Socrates can be considered wise to the extent that he knows, and can teach students (*Ap.* 23c), how to properly examine his interlocutors. Hence, when Socrates refuses to

belief about the good), but it self-consciously is not knowledge of the Good". See also the seventh chapter of Rowe 2007.

[27] In this regard, Jan Opsomer 1998: 6 argues that "at *Sph.* 268b the Stranger makes use of the word εἰρωνεύεσθαι for the sophist who is afraid to be ignorant in the matters for which he passes himself off a specialist, but hides his ignorance. Sophistic 'irony' is thus the complete reversal of the Socratic: it is a case of insincerity and stimulation: the sophist pretends, deliberately giving the false impression of possessing a certain knowledge; he is an impostor". See also Taylor 1926: 392.

[28] We will elaborate on this distinction in the next section.

[29] See Zaks 2018 for additional pieces of evidence of why sixth *logos* actually portraits Socrates' *elenchus*.

be identified with a teacher, he does so because he wants to keep his distance from the sophistic type of education and divine wisdom (*Ap.* 20d9–e3). This, however, does not prevent him from endorsing a different model of education and wisdom.[30]

5. A difficult task to accomplish

This brings us back to the difficulty of distinguishing the sophist from the philosopher. If what we have argued is correct, then the simple *logos* that can exemplify the simple *genos* of the angler is not sufficient in order to reveal the complex *genos* of the sophist. Instead, what we need here is a complex *logos* that captures the way in which these various layers of the complex *genos* of the sophist can form an organic whole different from that of the philosopher. That being the case, there are at least two reasons why it is hard to distinguish these figures.

One reason is that the sophist performs many of the activities of the philosopher: they are both hunters of young people, teachers about virtues, and antilogicians. Since these features apply equally well both to the sophist and the philosopher, it is hard to distinguish them. It is in fact enough to confine one's analysis to these superficial features to be easily confused.

The other reason is that it is also difficult to distinguish their unifying principles. The philosopher is not the polar opposite of the sophist. Like the sophist, he is also an imitator, or an image, of the wise person. More particularly, although the philosopher tries to become wise, he is not; he is in a middle state between the wise person and the ignorant (*Smp.* 204b).[31] Consequently, the distinction between the sophist and the philosopher is hard to trace because it comes in degrees: although in different ways, they are both imitators of the same person.

[30] Cf. Vlastos 1991: 32. See also the *Anonymous Commentator* 54.31–38 in Diels and Schubart 1905: 36.

[31] In this regard, consider the way in which the discussion ends. Theaetetus argues that although it is impossible to call the sophist wise since he does not know yet, "being an imitator of the wise person, clearly he'll get a name derived from his" (*Sph.* 268c1–2). This description works as well for the philosopher.

Let us start from the sophist. Which kind of image is the sophist? Clearly, he is an apparition of the wise person. As we have seen, the apparition is the type of image that merely seems to resemble the original, but in fact does not. The striking feature of the sophist is that he hides his ignorance and presents himself as a fully competent specialist (*Sph.* 268a). In this sense, he is an apparition of the wise person: he flatters and pleases his interlocutors' souls, so as to provide an appearance of education (*Sph.* 223b5: δοξοπαιδευτικῆς) and of being the wisest of all about all things (*Sph.* 234c). However, all the sophist does is to substantially obstruct the acquisition of knowledge of his interlocutors, instilling false beliefs in souls that are already far from the truth. The upshot is that the sophist only possesses apparent knowledge (*Sph.* 233c: δοξαστικὴν ἐπιστήμην): that is to say, he only gives the appearance of possessing knowledge, and yet he completely ignores the truth and favors lies.

Turning to the philosopher, he is also an image of the wise person but of a different kind: he is a likeness. In the seventh *logos*, the ES opposes likenesses to apparitions. Likenesses are special in that they faithfully represent the original object.[32] Why is the philosopher a likeness of the wise person? Because, unlike the sophist, he genuinely strives, to the extent that a human being can, to become as wise as a god (*Tht.* 176b1–3; *Smp.* 203e–204b; *Phdr.* 248a). In so doing, the philosopher is the opposite of the sophist: he is aware — and does not hide it — that the things he believes are not the things he knows. From this, two distinguished features of philosophy can be identified. First, the philosopher only claims to have human knowledge: this is different both from divine knowledge and apparent knowledge. Unlike the former, human knowledge does not grasp the nature of things; unlike the latter, its aim is to gain as much truth as possible. Second, the philosopher provides a different type of education from that of the sophist. Since he does not possess, or pretend to possess, divine knowledge, he will not implant

[32] As the ES makes clear, they keep "the proportions of the original in terms of length and breadth and depth" (*Sph.* 235d7–8).

any of the things he believes in his interlocutors' souls[33]. Instead, he will examine his students' beliefs and rid them from falsehood.

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[33] As Socrates argues in the *Symposium*, only beautiful wisdom (*Smp.* 175e2: καλῆς σοφίας), and not the meagre (*Smp.* 175e3: φαύλη) wisdom he possesses, can flow between two people by mere contact, "from the one who is full to one who is empty, like water flowing along a strand of wool from a full cup to an empty one" (*Smp.* 175d).

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