

What the Dialectician Discerns: A New Reading of *Sophist* 253d-e

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At *Sophist* 253d-e the Eleatic Visitor offers a notoriously obscure schematic description of the kinds of eidetic field that the philosopher practicing dialectic ‘adequately discerns’ (ικανῶς διαισθάνεται, 253d7). My aim is to propose a fresh reading of that obscure passage. For all of their impressive thoughtfulness and ingenuity, the major lines of interpretation pursued so far have missed, I will argue, the full context of the passage. As a consequence, the proponents of these lines of interpretation have failed to avail themselves of resources that would have freed them from otherwise unavoidable moments of force or neglect in their readings. The key is to recognize the place of the *Sophist* within the trilogy of the *Theaetetus*, *Sophist*, and *Statesman* and, accordingly, to expand the context of *Sophist* 253d-e to include the *Theaetetus* and the *Statesman*. In his schematic description at *Sophist* 253d-e, the Visitor refers to the eidetic fields traced by two distinct modes of *logos*. At the end of the *Theaetetus*, Socrates offers anticipatory sketches of each of these modes; but in the body of the *Sophist* the Visitor restricts his practice of dialectic to just one of the two—only in the second half of the *Statesman* does he take up the other mode. As a consequence, only a reader who is oriented by the close of the *Theaetetus* and who lets this orientation guide her in a reading of the *Sophist* and the *Statesman* together is well positioned to recognize the referents of the Visitor’s remarks at *Sophist* 253d-e.

To offer our fresh reading, we must first take three preparatory steps: a translation of *Sophist* 253d-e (part 1), some critical reflections acknowledging the strengths and weaknesses of the several most important lines of interpretation offered so far (part 2), and a reorienting retrieval of the key passages in the *Theaetetus* and the *Statesman* whose relevance to our passage has hitherto been overlooked (part 3). These preparations will put us in position to offer our new reading of *Sophist* 253d-e (part 4). We will close by indicating some of the issues that this reading raises for one’s understanding of dialectic both in the trilogy and in several later dialogues.

I. Translation of the Passage

Here, first, is the notorious passage, preceded by two speeches that indicate in a general way what is at issue. Once I reach the passage proper, I shall break it into its main syntactical parts¹ and give it first in the Greek of the Oxford edition,

¹ My four divisions follow the main groupings marked by Gómez-Lobo 1977.

then in my own translation.

253c7 Visitor: ... By Zeus, Theaetetus, have we unexpectedly stumbled upon the free man's knowledge? Might we, seeking the sophist, have first discovered the philosopher?

c10 Theaetetus: How do you mean?

253d1 Visitor: Shall we not say that it belongs to dialectical knowledge (τῆς διαλεκτικῆς... ἐπιστήμης) to distinguish according to kinds (τὸ κατὰ γένη διαρῆσθαι) and to deem neither the same form to be a different one nor a different one to be the same (μήτε ταῦτὸν εἶδος ἕτερον ἡγήσασθαι μήτε ἕτερον ὄν ταῦτὸν)?

d4 Theaetetus: Yes, we shall say this.

Here our passage proper begins.

d5 Visitor: Οὐκοῦν ὁ γε τοῦτο δυνατὸς δρᾶν

[i] μίαν ἰδέαν διὰ πολλῶν, ἐνὸς ἐκάστου κειμένου χωρὶς, πάντη διατεταμένην ἰκανῶς διαισθάνεται,

[ii] καὶ πολλὰς ἑτέρας ἀλλήλων ὑπὸ μιᾶς ἕξωθεν περιεχομένας,

[iii] καὶ μίαν αὖ δι' ὅλων πολλῶν ἐν ἐνὶ συνημμένην,

[iv] καὶ πολλὰς χωρὶς πάντη διωρισμένας.

d5 Visitor: Accordingly, someone who can do this adequately discerns

[i] a single form that is extended in every way through many, each one [of which] is situated apart,

[ii] and many [forms]², different from one another, that are embraced from without by a single [form],

and, again,

[iii] a single [form] [running] through many wholes that is gathered into a one,

[iv] and many [forms] that are separated off apart in every way;

Here we add the sentence with which the Visitor completes his speech:

253e1 [to discern] this is to know how to judge, according to kind, in what way each [of the forms] is able to combine and in what way [each is] not [able to combine].

II. Three Previous Lines of Approach

I share the consensus of most translators in taking the αὖ at 253d8 as a structural key to the passage.³ Functioning as an adversative (Smyth 1963 [1920], #2802), it effectively opposes what follows to what precedes, thereby gathering clauses [iii] and [iv] into a pair and setting them over against, as counterpart to counterpart, the pair of [i] and [ii]. This opposition, in turn, helps make visible the parallel structure of the two pairs: the first member of each pair—[i] and [iii]—keys from a one (a 'single form', 253d5, d8) whereas the second member—[ii] and [iv]—keys from a many ('many forms', d7, d9). Thus the reader finds herself driven to ask two sets of questions: first, what, *within each pair*, are its one and its many and how are these related? And second, how does the

² I have inserted the word 'form' in brackets in each case where the Visitor, by using the feminine, pointedly refers back to his use of ἰδέαν at 253d5.

³ This consensus includes among many others the translations of Cornford; Fowler; Brann, Kalkavage, and Salem; and Schleiermacher. An exception is White 1993, who appears to ignore or, perhaps, to relocate the αὖ when he separates [i] from [ii]-[iv] by introducing the latter three with an 'in addition'; note that in White's translation published in Cooper ed. 1997, the editor adds a footnote offering as an alternative the consensus reading of the syntax.

one/many relation that each pair lays out relate to the one/many relation that the other lays out?

A reflection on various commentaries on our passage⁴ reveals two—or, counting as a third a mix of these that actually predates them in the literature,⁵ three—basic approaches. While each of these approaches has real strengths, each also has significant problems.

[a] *Is the Visitor laying out schematically the eidetic fields disclosed by the dialectical processes of collection and division, respectively?*

On one long-standing line of interpretation, which takes its bearings from the Visitor's orienting characterization of 'dialectical knowledge' as the practice of 'distinguishing according to kinds' (τὸ κατὰ γένη διαιρεῖσθαι), [i]-[iv] lay out the eidetic fields disclosed by the practice of dialectic.⁶ This practice, according to this line of interpretation, consists of the distinct and complementary processes of collection and division. [i] and [ii] indicate the kind of eidetic field that is disclosed by collection, and [iii] and [iv] indicate the kind of eidetic field that is disclosed by division.

To see this approach more concretely, recall the Visitor's several exhibitions in the *Sophist* of the practice of 'distinguishing according to kinds' (τὸ κατὰ γένη διαιρεῖσθαι). In working out his accounts of the angler (218e-221c) and his several accounts of the sophist (219a-226a, 226b-231b, and, resuming 232b-236c, 265a-268d), in each case the Visitor begins by locating the kind to be defined within a comprehensive form that includes a great many other kinds as well. He then proceeds by a series of repeated bifurcatory divisions and selections to isolate the *definiendum*: first he takes as a whole the field covered by the comprehensive form and, by distinguishing two lesser forms, cuts the field into two 'parts' or 'halves' (see 221b3); he then selects the form or part that includes the *definiendum* and abandons the other, and he repeats this two-step process of division and selection on the selected form or part; with each new division and selection, he identifies a new differentiating feature of the *definiendum*, and by repeating the two-step process as long as necessary, he narrows the field to the point at which only the *definiendum* remains.⁷ His final act is to gather the com-

⁴ I will not attempt, in the following expositions of what I have identified as the three basic approaches, to consider all of the variants of each. My goal, rather, is to exhibit the strengths of each and then to show why they fail to do full justice to [i]-[iv] in 253d-e.

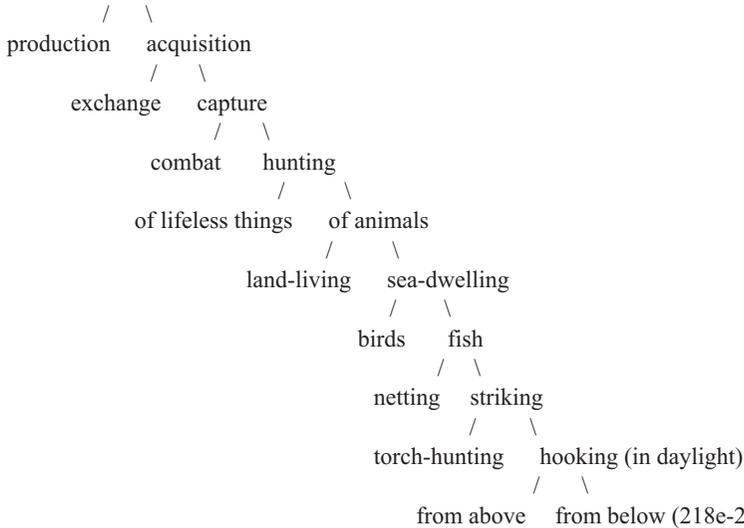
⁵ I have in mind the seminal reading by Stenzel 1964 [1940], to be found in ch. VI. See, in part 2, section [c] below.

⁶ The best articulation of this view that I know is offered by Sayre 1969 (especially ch. III.6), and economically restated by Sayre 2006; Cornford 1935 is a distinguished predecessor.

⁷ If we set aside the division into fifteen kinds or art at *Statesman* 287c-290e and 303c-305e, which, as I shall argue in part 2, exhibits division in a different, non-bifurcatory mode, there are two sets of distinctions that deviate from this characterization of the practice of bifurcatory division in the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*; both, however, operate within the framework of bifurcatory division. At *Sophist* 265a-266d the Visitor cuts productive expertise in two ways—divine vs. human and of originals vs. of 'copies' (εἰδῶλα, 266b6, also d4)—and then coordinates the two cuts in order to isolate the

prehensive form and the forms of all the ‘halves’ he has selected into a unified list of the differentiating characters of the *definiendum*. To make all this more visible, here is a schematic rendering, following the Visitor’s own characterization of the selected forms or parts as the ‘right-hand’ ones ([ἐ]πι δεξιῶ, 264e1), of the paradigmatic process of ‘distinguishing according to kinds’ that yields his paradigmatic account of the angler:

The angler is ... an expert (τεχνίτης)



The angler, according to the Visitor’s final gathering, is an expert at acquisition by capture by hunting of animals, specifically sea-dwellers and more specifically fish, by striking them with hooks from below.

On our first line of interpretation of 253d-e, the Visitor’s identification of the comprehensive form, in this case ‘expertise’, would be the act of ‘collection’. This comprehensive form would be the ‘single form’ referred to in [i] and [ii], and the many kinds that it includes within it would be the ‘many’ or ‘many forms’ referred to in [i] and [ii]. The Visitor’s work of dividing and selecting would be the complementary activity of ‘division’. [iii] refers to the form of the *definiendum*, here the angler, as, by means of the whole series of divisions and selections, it is brought to light as the whole set of differentiating characters that the divisions disclose. The ‘many wholes’ that this form ‘[runs] through’ are the

human production of copies (εἰδολοιργητικῆς, d8). And at *Statesman* 282b-c the Visitor first divides the fashioning of woollens into separation and combination and then, before turning to divide combination, divides separation into the separation of the raw wool by hand and the separation of the strands of warp by the shuttle; thus he divides along the left-hand side as well as along the right-hand of his division of the fashioning of woollens. (I owe thanks to Justin Vlasits and to the anonymous reader for *Ancient Philosophy* for insisting that I pause to acknowledge the first of these passages, and to Dimitri El Murr and to John Sallis for calling attention to the second.) Since all of the cuts in these two passages are bifurcatory, I regard them as only partial exceptions to the general pattern of bifurcatory division, exceptions that, so to speak, prove the rule, attesting to rather than disrupting the unity of this mode of division.

many kinds that are in each case cut into parts or halves, and it is because each of these wholes is unified by a form or character that holds of the angler that the form of the angler ‘[runs] through’ them all; that the form of the angler is ‘gathered into a one’, in turn, refers to the Visitor’s assembling of all the selected forms—that is, those on the ‘right-hand’ side in the series of cuts—as the whole that, distinguishing the angler from all other kinds of expert, defines the form of angling.⁸ [iv], finally, refers to ‘the many [forms]’ on the ‘left-hand’ sides of the Visitor’s cuts, namely, ‘production’, ‘exchange’, ‘combat’, ‘lifeless things’, ‘land-living’, ‘birds’, ‘nets’, ‘torch-hunting’, and ‘from above’; in simply abandoning them when, after each cut, he selects the form on the ‘right-hand’ side, the Visitor leaves each of them ‘marked off apart in every way’, that is, both apart from each of the other abandoned ‘left-hand’ forms and apart from each of the ‘right-hand forms’ that belong to the ‘one’ into which, according to [iii], the ‘single [form]...is gathered’.

The great strength of this first line of interpretation lies with its identification of [iii]-[iv] as a schematic characterization of the field traced by dialectic in the mode of bifurcatory division. On three key points the fit is precise: the notion of ‘gathering’ a ‘single form’—that of the *definiendum*—‘into a one’ fits beautifully with the dialectician’s assembly of the final list of differentiating features and his definition of the ‘single form’—again, that of the *definiendum*—by identifying it with this ‘one’;⁹ the notion that the *definiendum* is thereby disclosed as running ‘through many wholes’ fits perfectly with the dialectician’s treatment of the comprehensive kind and then of each subsequently selected kind as, in each case, a ‘whole’ to be divided into parts in order to further pursue the form of the *definiendum*; and the notion of there being ‘many forms separated off apart in

⁸ For vocabulary in the body of the *Sophist* that supports this reading of the meaning and referent of συνημμένην, see the Visitor’s characterizations of his acts of assembling at the close of the first and the seventh divisions of the sophist as συναγάγωμεν (‘let us collect’) at 223c9 and συμπλέξαντες (‘weaving together’) at 268c6. At the close of his initial diairesis of statesmanship in the *Statesman* the Visitor announces this act of assembly by the verb συνείρωμεν (‘let us string together’, ‘let us connect’) at 267a4. Gómez-Lobo 1977, 31-32, objecting to this interpretation, advanced by Stenzel, of συνημμένην in [iii], argues that if this were the right reading, ‘we should expect some reference to a plurality...of concepts or determinations being brought together into a unity’ (emphasis in the original) and hence the Visitor should give us not the singular συνημμένην but rather the plural συνημμένας. But I disagree. It is true that on the present approach to our passage the ‘single [form]’ in [iii], because it is tracked by the dialectician as it ‘[runs] through many wholes’, is brought to light under a plurality of characters, and it is true that in the final act of each set of divisions the dialectician brings these characters together in his final formulation of the definition of the ‘single form’; but the key point is that it is *that* ‘single form’ that ‘[runs] through [the] many wholes’ and so it is *that* ‘single form’ that, thus exhibited by the corresponding group of characters, is disclosed as ‘a one’ by his ‘gathering’ or ‘connecting’ of them. By making συνημμένην modify μίαν, the ‘single form’, Plato has the Visitor give a precise expression of the way in which the final, synoptic step in the practice of division discloses the *definiendum*, in itself a simple and unique form, as a complex ‘one’. (For an explicit discussion of the interplay of simplicity and complexity in reaching the defining λόγος of a form, see Miller 1992, also 1991 [1986], Epilogue B.)

⁹ See n8 for philological exegesis of the appropriateness of the singular συνημμένην as a description of this assembling.

every way' fits perfectly with the status of the series of distinguished and then abandoned 'left-hand' forms.

Yet the interpretation of [i]-[ii] as a schematic characterization of the field traced by an initial collection is strikingly weak on several related counts. First of all, the very notion of an initial 'collection' is imported into the *Sophist* (and the *Statesman*) from the *Phaedrus*. This is partly a terminological point, partly a substantive one. As a terminological matter, as Sayre 2006, 36-37 observes, it is surprisingly only in the *Phaedrus*, and not in either the *Sophist* or the *Statesman*, that the term συναγωγή is introduced as the counterpart to the term διαίρεσις to form the methodological couplet of 'division and collection' (cf. τῶν διαίρέσεων καὶ συναγωγῶν, *Phaedrus* 266b6-7). In his titular references to dialectical method in the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*, the Eleatic Visitor, using various forms of διαίρειν, refers to 'division' alone.¹⁰

As a substantive matter, in only two of the Visitor's sets of divisions in the *Sophist* and the *Statesman* do we find passages that we might be tempted to read as the kind of 'collection' that, as Plato has Socrates envisage the process of dialectic in the *Phaedrus*, precedes and provides the encompassing form that 'division' then analyzes.¹¹ Socrates envisages an initial movement of thought that 'proceeds to bring many perceptions together into a reasoned unity' (249b7-c1, Nehamas and Woodruff trans.), which then is made the subject of division (265d-266a); hence—at least as Plato has him retrospectively reconstruct the major movements of his two speeches on love as phases of a unified whole—Socrates first gathers various sorts of excessive desire under the heading of madness, then sets about dividing madness into its major kinds, human and divine, and their major subkinds. In the *Sophist*, by contrast, the Visitor establishes the encompassing unit for each of his first five divisions of the sophist—'expertise'—by applying the paradigm of the angler, and he establishes it for the angler not by a survey and collection of 'many perceptions' but by a straightforward, uncontroversial declaration (219a).¹²

What, however, of the two passages that we might be tempted to read as initial collections? In both cases, the problem is partly their imperfection as cases of collection, partly their imprecision in answering to the schematic description in [i]-[ii] in *Sophist* 253d-e. The first of the two passages is the Visitor's opening

¹⁰ For titular references to the method, see *Sophist* 235c8, 253d1, *Statesman* 285a4-5, 286d9; in all of these, the Visitor speaks only of 'division', not of 'collection'.

¹¹ Just to be as clear as possible, the point is not that there is no operation of collection within the course of division in the *Sophist*; it is, rather, that with the two possible exceptions that I now turn to in my main text, the collection of items into a kind appears only—to repeat with emphasis—within the course of division, hence as a subordinate methodological moment rather than as a separate operation in equal partnership with division. And it is as division that it is identified, in our first line of interpretation, as providing the sort of eidetic field that the Visitor refers to in [i]-[ii] at *Soph.* 253d-e.

¹² Sayre 2006, 37 observes that '[b]y the time of the *Statesman*, ...collection seems largely to have dropped out of view...the role assigned to collection in the *Phaedrus* and the *Sophist* is given over in the *Statesman* to the use of paradigms instead'. But as the Visitor's use of the angler shows, this is already largely true of the *Sophist*.

reflection in his sixth division of the sophist, his account of the so-called ‘sophist of noble lineage’ who cleanses the soul of its false pretensions to wisdom (226b-231b). He begins by calling attention to an array of household activities—‘filtering and sifting and winnowing’,¹³ then ‘carding and spinning and combing’ (226b)—in order to identify them all as cases of the ‘single art’ of ‘discrimination’ (226c); he then works through a series of bifurcations in order to isolate the specific sort of discrimination that cleanses the soul. If we take collection to consist essentially in the discernment of a ‘reasoned unity’, then the Visitor’s discernment of ‘discrimination’ constitutes a successful collection; but if, as the interpretation of [i]-[ii] at *Sophist* 253d-e as a schematization of the eidetic order traced by collection requires, collection involves a systematic grasp of the many that this ‘unity’ is ‘extended through’ and ‘embraces’, then it is an imperfect collection at best and fails to exhibit the field schematized by [i]-[ii]. The Visitor makes no claim to have identified more than a few illustrative kinds of ‘discrimination’—indeed, he notes that the kinds he has named belong together with ‘a million other things like that’ (226c); the vagueness of his ‘many’, accordingly, leaves it equally vague how his ‘single form’ is really ‘extended in every way through [them]’ and ‘embrac[es]’ them all, much less how they are ‘situated apart’ and ‘different from one another’.

The second of the two passages is the remarkable set of reflections at 232b-236c by which the Visitor prepares the ground for shifting from his initial characterization of sophistry as a kind of acquisition and, when he resumes division at 265a-b, for beginning the seventh division of the sophist from production as the encompassing kind. At 232b-236c he leads Theaetetus from the understanding of the sophist as one who, in the course of engaging in disputes over any and all matters, passes off for true what are merely ‘appearances’ of real things and thereby generates in his young listeners the false belief that he is wise; since, the Visitor points out at 265b, ‘imitation’ is a kind of ‘production’, the sophist must be sought within the encompassing kind of ‘production’. Should we count this as the Visitor’s undeclared practice of collection by which—to quote Sayre 2006, 177-178 evoking [i]-[ii]—he ‘discerns the *one* form (e.g. production) extended throughout the many’, that is, the five types of sophist, ‘originally lying apart, and thereby comes to see the latter as unified by the single common form’? This is an insightful reading of the realization by which, as Plato portrays him, the Visitor guides Theaetetus to the starting-point of the seventh division. But on two counts it gives a problematic illustration of the eidetic field schematized in [i]-[ii]. First of all, the five types of sophist are hardly ‘each one situated apart’ or even, except in an attenuated way, ‘different from one another’ as [i]-[ii]

¹³ I omit the fourth term the Visitor mentions here, διακρίνειν. Since this is the infinitive form of the verb from which is derived the name of the activity of the ‘single art’, διακριτική, that is said to ‘be in all’ (οὔσαν ἐν ἅπασιν) of these definite activities, to include it here would make the Visitor’s reflection guilty of a form of the confusion of part and whole; ‘discriminating’ would be just one of the many of the activities and it would be in all of them. As is noted in the Oxford edition apparatus, many emendations have been proposed to avoid these problems; I agree that some emendation is needed, but I have no opinion on what the best might be.

requires. On the contrary, the divisions that yield them set them in various relations of overlap and internal variation. For instance, the second, third, and fourth types all fall within the kind ‘selling’ and are distinguished only by reversals of the next two distinctions, ‘what others make’ vs. ‘what one oneself makes’ and ‘retailing’ vs. ‘trading’: within the shared category of ‘selling’, the second type sells what others make, by trading, while the third type sells what others make by retailing and the fourth type sells what he himself makes by retailing. As another instance of entanglement with a different structure, the first and fifth types both fall within the kind ‘capture’, with the first a kind of ‘hunting’ and the fifth a kind of ‘combat’, yet both are marked, the first in the penultimate division and the fifth in the last division, as money-makers—a characterization, moreover, that they implicitly share with the second, third, and fourth types as well insofar as these latter are ‘sellers’. Second, to ask about the ‘single form’ that is, if the Visitor’s supposed collection is to be taken to conform to [i]-[ii], ‘extended in every way through [these five types]’ and ‘embrace[s them] from without’ is to invite perplexity. When they are first identified, they are all taken to be kinds of acquisition; acquisition, however, is initially divided from production, which, in turn, is taken to include imitation (219a-b); accordingly, when the Visitor later characterizes the sophist as an imitator and, so, a producer, he appears to contradict his initial identification of the five types of sophist as kinds of acquisition. To observe this is not to object to the Visitor’s later characterization; indeed, both the *Sophist*, here, and the *Statesman*, later, proceed fruitfully by reflections that refute their initial efforts at definition.¹⁴ But it *is* to object to interpreting the Visitor’s later characterization as the identification of a form that ‘is extended through’ *these five types* and ‘embrace[s]’ *them* ‘from without’. Strictly speaking, these five, *taken*, as the Visitor takes them, *as kinds of acquisition*, do not fall within production, much less imitation, at all; accordingly, to take them as kinds of imitation and, so, of production is tacitly to retract that initial characterization, at the very least in the sense of denying that it is essential to the five as types of sophist. And this is to raise doubts about whether the Visitor’s reflection, if it constitutes a collection in any sense at all¹⁵ rather than just a recharacterization, provides an exhibition of the eidetic order schematized by [i]-[ii] at *Sophist* 253d-e: the five types of sophist are not, as they are characterized on our first line

¹⁴ In the *Statesman*, the Visitor will take back his initial, paradigm-driven characterization of the statesman as a herdsman of human beings, refuting it indirectly with ironic humor at 264b-266e and then exposing its error by means of the myth of the ages of Cronus and Zeus and his new distinctions at 275b-276e.

¹⁵ There is, indeed, good reason to object even to calling the Visitor’s reflection a collection. When he begins his reflection at 232b, he does so by retrieving ‘something of what was said about the sophist’, that is, ‘one thing [that] seemed to me to disclose him most of all’ (ἐν γὰρ τί μοι μάλιστα καταφάνη αὐτὸν μὴνῶν, b3-4), namely, that the sophist is a ‘disputant’ (ἀντιλογικόν, b6). This ‘one thing’ is said only in the fifth division, not in the first four. Accordingly, when the Visitor takes this ‘one thing’ as the point of departure for his characterization of the sophist as an imitator and, so, a producer, he appears to be leaving the first four types—and, as well, the initial characterization of the fifth as an acquirer—behind in order to start afresh. Can such a move count as a collection at all? If so, it can hardly be counted as a collection ranging over the five types.

of interpretation, a ‘many’ that the ‘single form’ ‘is extended through’ and ‘embraces’.

If these reflections are well-taken, the strength of our first line of interpretation lies in its account of [iii]-[iv] as a schematic characterization of the kind of eidetic field that is traced by the sort of division the Visitor practices in the *Sophist*, not in its account of [i]-[ii] as a schematic characterization of the kind of eidetic field that is traced by collection. If there is collection in the *Sophist*, it is not named as the partner to division that we first learn of in the *Phaedrus*, nor do the several putative examples of it trace with precision, if at all, the sort of eidetic field that is schematized by [i]-[ii]. To find the referent of [i]-[iv] as a whole, then, we must keep looking.

[b] *A second approach: is the Visitor laying out schematically the ways in which the several ‘vowel forms’ enable some ‘consonant’ forms to ‘combine’ and keep others apart?*¹⁶

Especially if one is gripped by the pairing of division with collection in the *Phaedrus*, one may respond to the failure of [i]-[ii] to correlate with the notion of ‘collection’ by looking away from division as well—that is, from the methodological couplet of division and collection as such—and seeking an alternative reading of [i]-[iv] as a whole. And at least initially, an alternative does seem textually close at hand.

The dialectician could not trace the relations of forms by the method of division unless, obviously, forms are subject to various relations in the first place, that is, as the Visitor puts it, unless some forms are able to ‘combine’ and others are not; and such capacities and incapacities for combination would seem to presuppose, in turn, that there be a special set of forms that are responsible for them. In the passage immediately preceding his ‘unexpectedly stumbl[ing] upon the free man’s knowledge’, the Visitor prepares Theaetetus to recognize this special set by introducing the partial analogy¹⁷ of letters: that some letters can be combined to form syllables is the work of certain others, the vowels; the expert in spelling must be able not only to distinguish which consonants ‘will not fit with one another and which will’ (253a2-3) but also to identify the vowels that, ‘running through them all (διὰ πάντων) like a bond’ (a5-6), first enable that fit. Analogously, the Visitor points out, one who has the ‘knowledge’ of how ‘to make one’s way through *logoi*’—namely, the dialectician—must not only be able to ‘show which of the kinds harmonize with which (ποῖα ποῖοις συμφωνεῖ τῶν

¹⁶ This approach was first proposed by Gómez-Lobo 1977, and it remains widely accepted; for a recent endorsement, see Notomi 1999. Though I will not go through Gómez-Lobo’s reading in all of its interesting details, I do owe to his account the basic orientation and the key points I make in the positive reconstruction of the second line of interpretation that I offer in the next several pages; my goal is to work out this reconstruction in its strongest possible form, then to identify several important difficulties that have left me unsatisfied and in search of a fresh approach.

¹⁷ As Gómez-Lobo 1981, 81-82 and Notomi 2006, 234n48 also observe, the analogy is partial in that there are no vowels responsible for preventing combination, whereas, as 253c3-4 brings out, there are ‘kinds’ that ‘are responsible for the division’ between other kinds.

γενῶν) and which do not admit [such harmonizing] with each other' (b9-12) but also, 'in addition' (καὶ δὴ καί), he must be able to show

whether there are certain [kinds] (ἅττ' αὐτ') running through them all (διὰ πάντων) and holding them together (συνέχοντ') so that they are able to mix and then again whether, where there are divisions (ἐν ταῖς διαίρεσιν), there are other [kinds] (ἕτερα) running through wholes (δι' ὅλων) that are responsible for division (τῆς διαίρεσεως αἴτια).¹⁸ (c1-4)

Which are the special kinds that, analogously as vowels enable the combinations of consonants, are responsible for the 'mix[ing]' and the 'divisions' of the other kinds? The Visitor appears to acknowledge that Sameness and Difference have this status when, in the opening phrase of our passage at 253d-e, he declares that the one who knows how to 'distinguish according to kinds' is able to avoid 'deem[ing]...the same form to be a different one [and] a different one to be the same' (d1-2). Here we must pause to acknowledge two possible interpretations, a narrow one and a broad one. On the narrow reading, by 'the same form' the Visitor intends *self*-sameness, and, so, by 'deem[ing]' neither the same form to be a different one nor a different one to be the same' he means nothing more than not confusing two different forms. On the broad reading, the Visitor intends, as well, sameness *with another*, and he has in mind the play of sameness and difference that holds in the relation between the 'halves' or 'parts' that the dialectician, when she divides a comprehensive kind, discerns within it: the distinction of a comprehensive kind into 'parts' involves understanding the respect in which, insofar as they both belong to that comprehensive kind, the 'parts' are the same with one another and the respect in which, insofar as they are distinct from one another in their specificities, the 'parts' are different, and it is by virtue of sharing in Sameness and Difference, respectively, that the 'parts' of a divided kind can stand in these relations.¹⁹ Now, whichever of these ways we interpret the Visitor's reference to 'same' and 'different' at 253d1-2, we must also include Being within the special set of 'vowel' forms. The forms the dialectician distinguishes

¹⁸ How should one translate the plural and the singular uses of διαίρεσις in this last clause? Does the Visitor refer specifically to the cuts the dialectician makes in practicing the method of division (τὸ κατὰ γένη διαμεῖσθαι, 253d1), or does he refer simply to distinctions between kinds that reflect their difference? In order not to beg this question, I have tried to translate the two appearances of διαίρεσις as neutrally as possible.

¹⁹ Two supporting passages are important here. First, the Visitor asserts explicitly that 'each one [of the forms] is different from the others not by virtue of its nature but rather by virtue of participating in the form of the Different' (255e4-6); by parity of reasoning, the same causality must hold for a form's sameness with another form. Second, the Visitor invokes the notion of different 'respects' in the relations of sameness and difference in an important passage at 259c-d. In this passage he speaks of the 'difficult and at the same time beautiful' work of 'following what a person says and scrutinizing it step by step' in order to 'understand just what he means' 'when he says that what is different is the same in a certain way and that what is the same is different in a certain way (ὅταν τέ τις ἕτερον ὄν πη ταῦτόν εἶναι φῆ καὶ ὅταν ταῦτόν ὄν ἕτερον)', that is, the work of understanding 'the way in which, and in accord with the way in which, he says that either of these conditions holds (ἐκείνη καὶ κατ' ἐκεῖνο ὃ φησι τούτων πεπονημένα πότερον)'.

as ‘parts’ cannot *be* the same in either sense nor can they *be* different unless, first of all, they *are*, and a comprehensive kind cannot be divided ‘according to kinds’ unless, first of all, it *is*; accordingly, for forms to share in Sameness and Difference, they must first share in Being.²⁰ Being, Sameness, and Difference, then, would be (or, at least, would be the most important of)²¹ the ‘vowel’ forms that enable the combinations and divisions of the various other kinds.

These reflections prepare us for the second possible line of interpretation of our passage at 253d-e: on this line of interpretation, the Visitor lays out the sort of eidetic fields into which the key ‘vowel’ forms, by enabling relations of sameness and difference, organize all the other forms. But which fields, established by which of the ‘vowel’ forms, are described by [i]-[ii] and [iii]-[iv] of our passage? Key textual clues appear to be provided by the apparent echoes, first, of διὰ πάντων at 253c1 by διὰ πολλῶν in [i] and, second, of δι’ ὄλων at c4 by δι’ ὄλων πολλῶν in [iii].²² The first of these echoes invites us, hearing the language of [i]-[ii], to ask: which is that ‘single form’ that—analogously as ‘the vowels run through all [the other letters] (διὰ πάντων) like a bond’ (253a5-6)—both ‘is extended...through many [other forms] (διὰ πολλῶν)’ and yet, ‘embracing [them] from without,’ leaves them ‘apart’ and ‘different from one another’? The pre-eminent candidate is Being.²³ As the Visitor has indicated in his earlier discussions of the Hot and the Cold (243e) and, most pointedly, of Motion and Rest (249e-250d), each member of these pairs joins with its other in participating in Being; Hot and Cold, and Rest and Motion, each *are*. Yet in this *being* each member of each pair stands apart from its other as different from it; hence Being ‘is extended through’ each pair of forms and holds the pair together ‘from without’, leaving each member uncombined with its other.²⁴ The second of these echoes, in turn, seems to point us to Difference.²⁵ Here it is important to keep in

²⁰ The point here is not that a form must *exist* if it is to stand in relations of Sameness and Difference. Rather, it is by virtue of its *being* that a form can, so to speak, go on to be *the same as*...or to be *different from*...something else. Linguistically, ‘is’ is the ‘is’ of veridical predication. In terms of Platonic metaphysics, Being should be understood as implying for that which participates in it that this thereby gains the power of participating in Sameness and/or Difference as well and, as a result of these further participations, is able to stand in the relations of *sameness as*...and/or *difference from*...itself and/or something else. This is consistent with the view of Gómez-Lobo 1977, 39.

²¹ Should other kinds of relations, kinds that—like Likeness and Unlikeness or, perhaps, Contrariety—depend on Being, Sameness, and Difference, be included with them as ‘vowel’ forms? I leave this interesting question aside for now; it would needlessly complicate the difficulties that, as we shall now see, beset our second line of interpretation of 253d-e.

²² I follow Gómez-Lobo 1977, 39 in keying from these echoes.

²³ In offering this reading of the ‘single form’ in [i], I am restating the central claim of Gómez-Lobo 1977.

²⁴ Gómez-Lobo 1977, 42 cites the Visitor’s analysis of the relations of Being, Motion, and Rest as exhibiting the eidetic relations in [i]-[ii]—and, with the περιεχομένας at 253d8 echoing the περιεχομένην at 250b8, pointedly so.

²⁵ By contrast with the identification I have just offered for the ‘single form’ in [i], here, in identifying the ‘single [form]’ in [iii] as Difference (or, synonymously, Otherness), I am departing from Gómez-Lobo. He makes a point of speaking instead and only of ‘Not-Being’. Even while, citing

mind the partiality of the analogy of letters and kinds; for even while the Visitor stresses that certain letters ‘will not fit with each other’ (253a2), he does not claim that there is any vowel that is responsible for this whereas, when he turns from letters to forms, he says—to quote again—‘where there are divisions, there are other [kinds] (ἕτερα [γένη]) *running through wholes* (δι’ ὅλων) that are responsible for division’ (c3-4). If we turn to [iii]-[iv] with these words resonating in our minds, does Difference present itself as that ‘single form’ that, by ‘*running through many wholes* (δι’ ὅλων πολλῶν),’ is responsible for dividing or differentiating them internally and, so, for leaving ‘many [forms]...marked off apart in every way’ even while, precisely *as* a ‘single form...[that runs] through [this] many’, it is itself ‘gathered into a one’?

With its shift of focus to the ‘vowel’ forms, this second line of interpretation brings central insights in the *Sophist* into prominence: the work of Being and of Difference does both underlie and make subject to *logos* the relations both between themselves and among other forms, and it is an attractive feature of this interpretation that it takes 253d-e to serve as an anticipation of the Visitor’s initial demonstration of this in his subsequent reflections on the ‘greatest kinds’ at 254c-259e. Alas, that it is attractive does not imply that it is compelling; there are three sets of significant problems with the reading of 253d-e that this line of interpretation generates.

First of all, there is no way to avoid imputing a certain arbitrariness or even caprice to the Visitor if we try to interpret his references to a ‘single form’ in [i] and again in [iii] by taking him to allude to the ‘vowel’ forms. At 253c1-4 the Visitor makes it clear that there is a certain plurality of ‘vowel’ forms—ἄττ’

259a4-7, he observes that the ‘vowel’ forms that the Visitor cites as responsible for the combinations and divisions of other forms ‘are Being and Otherness’, respectively, he also argues that ‘since the identification of Not-Being and Otherness first takes place [later,] from 256c11 to 258e3, it is safer to understand 253c3 [that is, the Visitor’s reference to the “other [kinds]” that are “responsible for division”] as a reference to Not-Being’ (38). Notomi 1999, 236-237 follows Gómez-Lobo in this. What Gómez-Lobo regards as ‘safer’, I regard as, at best, artificial and, at worst, potentially misleading. Why, first, is it artificial? Even if as we first read 253c3 and then 253d-e we should understand the form ‘responsible for division’ to be ‘Not-being’, in the immediately following passage in which the Visitor sorts out the five greatest kinds (254c-257a), he will repeatedly interpret the relation of ‘...is not...’ that holds between any two of the kinds as the relation ‘...is different from...’, and in the passage immediately following this sorting, the passage in which the Visitor offers his analysis of the ‘parts of Otherness’ (257b-258e), he will explicitly identify ‘the form...of that which is not (τὸ εἶδος ... τοῦ μὴ ὄντος)’ as ‘the nature of [the] Different’ (τὴν ... θατέρου φύσιν) (258d6, d7). And it is precisely these passages that, on the line of interpretation that Gómez-Lobo offers, the Visitor is anticipating and introducing at 253c and 253d-e. Accordingly, even if on first reading we take 253c3 and [iii] in 253d-e to refer to Not-being, once we have read the two following passages we will want to go back and re-interpret 253c3 and [iii] in 253d-e to refer to Difference. (As Notomi 1999, 235, intending to support Gómez-Lobo, observes, ‘We can understand [the] meaning [of 253d-e] only in retrospect.’) Why, second, is Gómez-Lobo’s speaking of Not-being rather than Difference potentially misleading? As I shall shortly try to show in discussing the first and the third of the three sets of problems that arise when we take the ‘single [form]’ in [iii] as Difference, speaking only of ‘Not-being’ and not of Difference may—inadvertently, to be sure—serve to veil those problems and, so, leave us content with the overall line of interpretation in ways we should not be.

αὐτ᾽, ‘certain [kinds]’, he says at c1—that ‘hold’ the other kinds ‘together so that they are able to mix’ and that there is another plurality of forms—ἕτερα, ‘other [kinds]’, he says at c3—that are ‘responsible for division’. And we have seen this for ourselves: forms must share in Sameness (whether self-sameness or sameness with others) in order to be *the same*, and this itself, that they *be* the same, requires that they also share in Being; likewise, forms must share in Difference in order to be *different*, and this, that they *be* different, requires that they also share in Being. If, then, the Visitor meant to refer in [i] to what enables combination and in [iii] to what enables division, why would he speak in each phrase of a ‘single form’, μίαν ἰδέαν, rather than of several? Why focus on Being in [i] rather than on both Being and (on the broad reading) Sameness—and indeed, noting the ‘different from one another’ in [ii], on Difference as well—, and why focus on Difference in [iii] rather than on Being and Difference? Why, on this line of interpretation of 253d-e, does the Visitor both in [i] and in [iii] abandon the plurality of forms that he had anticipated by his plurals at 253c1 and c3?

Second, if we suppose for the sake of argument that by μίαν ἰδέαν in [i] he really does refer to Being, the Visitor’s apparent echoing of the earlier διὰ πάντων (253c1) by διὰ πολλῶν (d8) is unaccountably weak; for Being ‘is extended through’ and thereby ‘embraces’ *all* the other forms, not just *many* of them. Indeed, having earlier described the vowels as ‘running *through all* [the other letters] (διὰ πάντων) like a bond’ (253a6), if his point at [i] were to single out Being as a ‘vowel’ form, it would have been both correct and completely appropriate to repeat διὰ πάντων in [i]. But he does not do so.

Third, if, again for the sake of argument, we suppose that by μίαν [ἰδέαν] in [iii] the Visitor refers to Difference, we quickly encounter a host of very difficult problems in trying to give a close interpretation of δι’ ὄλων πολλῶν in [iii]. Indeed, as reflection shows, there is good reason why, when at 254c-259e he goes on to interpret the work of Difference, the Visitor never uses the term ὄλον to refer either to the field of forms as a whole as Difference structures it or to any of the particular relations that Difference structures within this field. The Visitor presents the work of Difference in two phases.²⁶ First, at 254c-257a, he argues that it is by virtue of Difference that each of the five ‘greatest kinds’ *is not* each of the others. And this *not-being* is of course not restricted to the relations of each of the five to each of the other four but, he says, holds for each form in relation to each of ‘all the kinds’ (256d); hence, ‘Non-being’—that is, the set of the instances of Difference understood as all the cases in which any one form *is not* any other one form—‘is unlimited in multitude’ (256e). A moment’s thought reveals that in the overwhelming majority of these instances there is no determinate relation between the two different forms; Motion, for example, is distinct

²⁶ I write this in full awareness of the argument in the literature over whether the sense and syntax of ‘is not’ shifts from the first phase at 254c-257a (in which the Visitor has been understood by the mainstream of commentators to be expressing the negation of identity) to the second at 257b-258e (in which he has been understood to be expressing the negation of determinate attributions); Frede, in particular, argues against the mainstream view of the first phase and denies a shift of sense in his very arresting 1992. In this discussion I am agnostic about this issue.

from Just, and Odd from Dog, and Hot from Rest, etc. etc., without there being anything like a relation of wholeness or of part-to-part between the two. Accordingly, the notion that in differentiating each form from each other form, Difference runs δι' ὄλων πολλῶν, differentiating a plurality of 'wholes', is non-sensical. Matters become more interesting, however, in the second phase of the Visitor's account, at 257b-258e. In this difficult passage, the Visitor treats Difference itself as a kind of whole, taking it as analogous to Knowledge: just as Knowledge is in each case a knowledge of some definite subject matter and, so, has the plurality of its definite kinds as its parts, so Difference, he argues, is in each case difference *from some definite attributive character*—he cites 'the not-beautiful', 'the not-great', and 'the not-just' as examples—and, so, has this plurality of definitely targeted negations as its parts. Crucially, each of these parts is to be understood not as the positive contrary of what it negates but rather as its contradictory. Accordingly, by 'Not-being' (τὸ μὴ ὄν), the Visitor famously argues, we mean not 'something opposite to Being' (ἐναντίον τι... τοῦ ὄντος) but 'only [what is] other [than it]' (ἕτερον μόνον), as such (257b3-4). To put the point generally, the negative of a character X, 'the not-X', even while it is itself a character, nonetheless signifies nothing positive in its own right—rather it signifies only and as such the contradictory of X. And now a possible reading of the Visitor's phrase δι' ὄλων πολλῶν in [iii] seems—but only seems—to present itself. Since for every character X there will be a character not-X, there will be countless such pairs. If we think of the characters X and not-X as part and counter-part, should we think of these countless many pairs as the 'many wholes' that Difference runs 'through' (the interpretation of Gómez-Lobo 1977, 46f.)? And should we think of the members of each pair as, in the language of [iv], what Difference, by 'running through' each pair, 'separate[s] off apart in every way' from each other? Alas, to persuade ourselves of this reading, we must manage to digest several terminally indigestible implications. To pose these as questions: first, can that which is presented as at least a summative whole of the countless plurality of merely negative attributive characters—namely, Difference as the Visitor treats it, at 257b-259e, as the analogue to Knowledge²⁷—also be thought, in the same context, as that which 'runs through' and structures each pair of positive and negative characters? Second, can a merely negative attributive character—that is, a character that signifies nothing positive but only what is other than some definite positive character—count as a genuine part and, so, form a genuine whole with its other? Third, given that the potential extension, at the ontological level of forms, of a negative attributive character is all other characters than the one that is negated (and, too, all of *their* negative counter-parts) and, hence, that the potential extension of any one pair of positive and negative

²⁷ But there is something remarkable to notice about the Visitor's language in his treatment of Difference at 257b-258e: though his notion of the 'parts of Otherness' implies that these make up a whole, he never refers to Otherness or Difference, which includes all of these 'parts' within itself, as itself a 'whole'. Thus he leaves open what is as a matter of fact very doubtful, whether the indefinitely numerous host of these 'parts' is more than an unstructured aggregate.

attributive characters coincides with the potential extension of every other such pair, should we count each pair of (now speaking for the sake of argument) part and counter-part as forming a different whole from that which is formed by each other pair? Finally, and here we find ourselves returned to the first phase of the Visitor's presentation of the work of Difference at 254c-257a, in what sense or way may we take the extension that each of the pairs shares with each of all the others—namely, the plurality of all the forms, positive and negative alike—to be, itself, a whole?

[c] *A third approach: is the Visitor laying out schematically both the eidetic fields disclosed by collection and division and the way in which the 'vowel' form Difference establishes the relations that make collection and division possible?*

In first laying out the program of part I, I mentioned parenthetically a third approach that, while it is effectively a mix of the first two, predates them both in the literature; on the interpretation of Stenzel 1940, [i] refers to the ontological relations effected by the 'vowel' form Difference, whereas [ii] and [iii]-[iv] refer to the eidetic fields traced by Collection and by Division, respectively. As the 'single form' in [i], Difference effects the relations that first make the work of Collection and Division possible, running 'through many' and leaving 'each one of [them] situated apart'. It is over this field of differentiated 'ones' that, in any particular project of definition, Collection ranges, identifying, as [ii] indicates, a 'one' comprehensive form that 'embrac[es] from without' 'many [forms]' that are 'different from one another'. Division then takes up this field and, focused on the 'single [form]' [iii] of the *definiendum*, seeks its differentiating features by the process we saw illustrated by the paradigmatic definition of the Angler, successively cutting 'many wholes' and in each case selecting the part that contains or characterizes the *definiendum* and abandoning the other. An important feature of Stenzel's interpretation is that he envisages the whole field studied and laid bare by the combined work of Collection and Division as a 'pyramid' of 'higher and lower'—that is, relatively generic and specific—'concepts' (Stenzel 1964 [1940], 104). This clear picture of an ontological hierarchy leaves indeterminate, however, just what Stenzel takes the Visitor to have in mind in [iv] when he speaks of the 'many forms that are separated off apart in every way'. Does Stenzel take the Visitor to refer to the 'many other' forms that the dialectician distinguishes and, so, 'separates off' from the form of the *definiendum* as she proceeds from one cut to the next, namely, the plurality of 'left-hand' forms that she abandons, or does he take the Visitor to refer to the plurality of *infima species* or 'indivisible form[s]' that lie along the 'base' of the pyramid and from which, since these forms are to be found contained by the abandoned 'left-hand' forms, the dialectician effectively isolates the form of the *definiendum*?²⁸

²⁸ Gómez-Lobo 1977, esp. 33 takes Stenzel to intend the plurality of 'indivisible forms', that is, the forms of the *infimae species*, that lie 'at the base of the pyramid'; indeed, the term 'base' is his, not Stenzel's. (In addition, as Gómez-Lobo takes care to point out, the term 'indivisible form', *atomon eidos*, is Stenzel's, not Plato's; see Stenzel 1964, 31n10.) Stenzel's own language is more ambiguous: though he does indeed evoke the figure of the 'pyramid', he variously identifies the

It is, on the one hand, a strength of this approach to our passage that it brings into play and inter-relation elements from both the first and the second approaches: it is a richer Plato whose text discloses both the methodological work of Collection and Division and the ontological work of the form ‘Difference’ that that methodological work presupposes. But, on the other hand, it is a weakness of this approach that it makes Plato vulnerable to variants of a number of the kinds of critical objection to which the first two approaches are subject. Most importantly, if the Visitor is taken in [i] to intend to refer to the ontological work that establishes the field of forms over which Collection ranges, why does he refer just to a ‘single form’ rather than—as he did in his supposedly preparatory reflections at 253c2-3 on the ‘other [kinds]’ that are ‘causes of division’—to several? Looking back to his ἕτερα (‘others’) at c3, we should ask why he now refers to Difference rather than to Being and Difference? Or, if we must take him to choose one form rather than several, why does he refer to Difference rather than to Being? If the former is responsible for the *difference* between each form and each other, the former is responsible for there *being* a plurality of forms able to participate in Difference in the first place. Second, we can ask once again: if the Visitor does intend by his ‘single form’ at [i] the form of Difference, why does he describe it as ‘extended in every way *through many* (διὰ πολλῶν)’ rather than ‘through all’ (διὰ πάντων)? Does Difference not ‘extend through’ *all* the other forms, and given this, is ‘through many’ not too weak? Third, in taking [ii] and [iii]-[iv] to pair the field that is traced by Collection with the field that is traced by Division, does this approach not fall prey to the double error, both terminological and substantive, of importing into the *Sophist* the pairing of ‘division and collection’ that belongs rather to the *Phaedrus*? Finally, a small but important philological point: in taking [ii]-[iv] as a whole to stand over against [i] and

‘many [forms]’ of [iv] as ‘all other Ideas’ than ‘the required one’ (1964, 101), as ‘the many other Ideas’ [sc. than the Idea that is defined] (102), as ‘the many other classes’ [sc. than that of the *definiendum*] (103), and as the ‘many others’ from which the form of the *definiendum* is ‘distinguished and marked off’ (104). The verbs in this last phrase in particular make the determinateness of Gómez-Lobo’s disambiguating interpretation of Stenzel’s intention problematic, for it is only the ‘left-hand’ forms, and not the plurality of other *infimae species* or ‘indivisible forms’, that are, in Stenzel’s words, ‘distinguished and marked off’ by the method of division as we see it practiced in the *Sophist*. There are different sorts of stakes in this question. At the level of Gómez-Lobo’s challenge to Stenzel, what is at issue is the kind of critical fire Stenzel’s interpretation should rightly come under: if Gómez-Lobo’s interpretation of Stenzel is right, then he is also right that Stenzel is reading into our passage two key organizing ideas for which there is no textual evidence—the idea of a pyramidal hierarchy of forms and the idea of the plurality of ‘indivisible forms’ at its ‘base’; if, on the other hand, Gómez-Lobo is reading into Stenzel a determinateness in the latter’s interpretation of the expression, ‘many [forms]’, in [iv] that is not there, then Stenzel is only, but still, to be faulted for the indeterminateness that leaves the expression ambiguous. For us, however, what is more important is the determinate positive reading that is left to the wayside by both Stenzel and Gómez-Lobo: since the Visitor’s phrase in [iv], χωρὶς πάντη διωρισμένας, ‘separated off apart in every way’, requires that the forms it refers to have been picked out and set apart by the dialectician in the course of his actual practice of the method of division in the *Sophist*, it should be read to refer to the ‘left-hand’ forms that are distinguished and abandoned, and with the single possible exception of the last ‘left-hand’ form that is distinguished and abandoned, these are not *infimae species* or ‘atomic forms’.

to shift focus from ontology to methodology, does this approach not violate the symmetry established by the $\alpha\tilde{\nu}$ ('again') at 253d8, which, functioning as an adversative, marks a fresh start and thereby gathers [iii] and [iv] and pairs them off over against [i] and [ii]? If this third approach were well-taken, we would expect the $\alpha\tilde{\nu}$ to be placed at the beginning of [ii], not [iii].

Where does this survey and critique of the three approaches leave us? If it is right that we ought not to import into *Sophist* 253d-e the *Phaedrus*' pairing of 'collection' with 'division' and read [i]-[ii] as tracing the sort of eidetic field that is traced by a collection, and if it is also right that the details of the text do not support reading the 'vowel' forms in the preceding discussion of the analogy of what the grammarian and the dialectician must know as the referents of 'a single form' either in [i] (and [ii]) or in [iii], then we are left without a successful reading of [i]-[ii]. Yet the first approach, [a]—and to a lesser degree the third, [c]—has given us a reading of [iii] and [iv] that fits them well, namely, that [iii] and [iv] lay out schematically the sort of eidetic field that the method of division, as it has been exhibited in the *Sophist*, traces. But there are two important *caveats*. First, as we just argued at the close of n28, the 'many' in [iv] must refer not to the set of *infimae species* that belong to the encompassing form and are other than the form of the *definiendum* (for division as practiced in the *Sophist* does not divide down to 'the base of the pyramid' and expose the set of these) but rather to the 'left-hand' forms that the dialectician distinguishes and then abandons. Second, the symmetry established by the $\alpha\tilde{\nu}$ ('again') at 253d8 requires that before we settle on the reading of [iii] and [iv] proposed by the first and, in part, the third approaches, we must find a complementary reading of [i] and [ii] that is equally well supported by the text. Without that, our reading of [iii] and [iv] must remain partial and provisional.

III. The Trilogy *Theaetetus*, *Sophist*, and *Statesman*; Resources for Interpretation

Up to this point, we have offered an immanent critique of three major approaches to *Sophist* 253d-e; as a consequence, we have operated within the confines of two related assumptions, namely, that the *Sophist* is the proper and sufficient context for the interpretation of 253d-e and, accordingly, that it is 'dialectical knowledge' *as it is practiced in the Sophist* that we should look to in order to find exhibitions of the kinds of eidetic fields laid out in 253d-e.²⁹ But the *Sophist* itself provides the basis for challenging the first assumption, and once we do, we shall see that the second becomes problematic as well. In its opening frame the *Sophist* links itself with the *Theaetetus* on the one hand and with the *Statesman* on the other, making itself the middle member of a trilogy. At *Sophist*

²⁹ Of course, this formulation leaves room for considerable disagreement about which practice of 'dialectic' in the *Sophist* one should have in mind: the bifurcatory mode of division modeled in the 'account' of the angler and practiced in all seven sets of divisions in pursuit of the sophist, as approach [a] would have it, the divisions that lay out the relations between the five 'greatest kinds', as approach [b] would have it, or a mixture of these kinds of division, as approach [c] would have it.

216a Plato has Theodorus greet Socrates with a confirmation that he and his circle of students ‘have come in accordance with yesterday’s agreement’, that is, the agreement that Socrates articulated at the end of the *Theaetetus* (210d) ‘to meet here again in the morning’ of the next day. And at *Sophist* 217a Socrates, Theodorus, and the newly arrived Visitor from Elea set the agenda, the latter’s exposition of the Eleatic understanding of ‘sophist, statesman, and philosopher’, that will govern the *Sophist* and the *Statesman* together, pairing them.

Understanding the context of our inquiry into *Sophist* 253d-e as the whole trilogy provides new resources for interpreting our passage and in this way liberates us from the second assumption. To see how, consider first what the *Theaetetus* offers, then the *Statesman*.

[1] *The aporetic close of the Theaetetus and the possible legacy for the Sophist and the Statesman of the second and third sorts of ‘account’ (λόγος)*. To begin with what is familiar to all readers of the *Theaetetus*: the dialogue ends, at least ostensibly, in aporia, with Socrates mounting a powerful dilemma against the so-called ‘dream theory’ interpretation of the proposal that knowledge is ‘true judgment with an account’ and then offering brief but incisive refutations of three proposed senses of ‘account’ (λόγος). There is a widely (but of course not universally) shared recognition that the arguments that Plato has Socrates make on each major point are problematic and that their intended effect is not so much to destroy as to elicit from the reader deeper formulations of the proposals that they refute. Plato encourages this constructive response when he has Socrates preface his refutations with the seemingly rhetorical question, ‘for what knowledge could there be apart from an account and correct judgment?’ (202d). It goes beyond the bounds of our present inquiry to delve into the details of all the closing arguments in the *Theaetetus*,³⁰ but two points—the first an observation, the second a question—regarding the relation between Socrates’ second and third proposals for the sense of ‘account’³¹ and the modes of dialectic in the *Sophist* and the *Statesman* are germane and, I hope, uncontroversial.

First, the third sense of ‘account’ that Socrates proposes, ‘tell[ing] some mark by which the object of inquiry differs from all other [things]’ (208c), provides the core of what will become the mode of the method of division that the Eleatic Visitor practices in the *Sophist* and the first part of the *Statesman*. What distin-

³⁰ I have attempted such an exploration and response, however, in Miller 1992, cited in n8 above. Other approaches that I have found exemplary are Desjardin 1981; Haring 1982; Sayre 1969.

³¹ I skip over the first sense, ‘making one’s thought apparent vocally by means of words and verbal expressions’ (206d), not because speaking aloud is not important to giving an ‘account’ of something. On the contrary, Socrates’ practice of elenchus and Plato’s practice of writing dialogues support the claim that speech and its expression in writing are necessary for knowledge. But the notion of vocalizing one’s thought applies without qualification to all kinds of speech, and so, as Socrates indicates in his objection at 206d-e, it gives us no help in interpreting the kind of ‘account’ that ‘dialectical knowledge’ (*Sophist* 253d) requires. From here on I shall refer only to the two senses of ‘account’ that Socrates introduces in his second and third proposals, at 206e-207a and 208c, respectively. Here and in the text below I borrow, with only very slight emendations, Levett’s excellent translation in Burnyeat and Levett 1990.

guishes the Visitor's mode of division in those passages from what Socrates proposes is only that the Visitor takes forms or kinds as his proper object, not sensibles, and that the Visitor seeks not just some one 'mark' but rather that plurality of features that, sufficient to distinguish the form under inquiry from all other forms, will thereby meet Socrates' goal. We have seen this mode of division on display in the Visitor's paradigmatic account of the angler at *Sophist* 218e-221c, but all seven of his sets of divisions in pursuit of the sophist and, in the *Statesman*, his sets of divisions in pursuit of the statesman at 258b-267c and of the weaver at 279c-283a illustrate this mode as well. In each case, he practices division by an extended set of bifurcations and selections of one of the resultant parts that enables him to gather a set of features 'by which [the form under inquiry] differs from all other [things]'.³²

What, however, of the second sense of 'account' that Socrates proposes? First of all, Socrates offers three distinct formulations, each of which brings its predecessor into slightly sharper focus: 'giving an answer to what a thing is by reference to its elements' (206e-207a), 'going right through the thing element by element' (207b, also c), and 'going through the whole by means of the elements' (207c); the second of these explicates 'by reference to its elements' (διὰ τῶν στοιχείων, 206e7) as 'going through...element by element' (διὰ τῶν στοιχείων...περαίνῃ, 207b4-5),³² and the third makes explicit that the series of elements belong together as a 'whole' (τὸ ὅλον, c3-4). Taking these elaborations together, we can formulate the second sense of 'account' as a discourse that explicates 'what a thing is' by laying out the elements that constitute it as a whole. To make this clear, Socrates gives two different examples. The first is saying 'what a wagon is' (ὅτι ἐστὶν ἄμαξα, 207a5-6) or giving 'its being' (οὐσίαν, 207c1, also c3) by naming all of its parts. The second is spelling a syllable correctly by working one's 'way through its letters in order' (ἐξῆς) (208a10). By his objections to each of these examples, Socrates helps clarify the criteria that such an 'account' must meet in order to be a successful component of knowledge.³³ First, the account must distinguish the elements or parts that the 'being' of its object requires deeply enough to identify not just gross components of the object—for instance, the 'wheels, axle, body, rails, [and] yoke' of a wagon (207a), which Socrates compares to the mere syllables, by contrast with the letters, that make up a word—but its genuine στοιχεῖα, its constitutive 'elements' or true parts. What these are for the wagon, Socrates declares he lacks the expertise to say, but he helps clarify the notion by his second example, spelling a syllable correctly; for the στοιχεῖα of a syllable just are the simple sounds that, marked as letters,

³² These English phrases, given in Levett's translation, nicely convey the way περαίνειν, 'proceed to the end, from beginning to end', focuses the sense of διά, 'through', so that it expresses the motion of exegesis from one part to the next, that is, 'element by element'.

³³ By characterizing the account as a 'successful component of knowledge', I mean to keep in view that even at its best, such an 'account' is by itself not enough to constitute knowledge; under the final proposal, it must fit together with a 'true judgment'. For discussion of this fit, see Miller 1992, 2017.

make it up.³⁴ Here, strikingly, his objection anticipates the characterization that Plato will have the Visitor give of the dialectician's knowledge at *Sophist* 253d1-2 (quoted above). The speller cannot claim knowledge until he is free of the complementary errors, first, of 'believing the same [letter] now to be part of one [syllable] and now part of a different [one]' and, second, of 'judg[ing] that now one [letter] and now a different [one] belongs to one and the same [syllable]' (207d). As an example of the second kind of error, Socrates cites the appearance of the self-same syllable *-the-* (in Greek, $\theta\epsilon$) in the proper names 'Theaetetus' and 'Theodoros' and imagines the mistake of the novice who, failing to recognize its recurrence in the second case, spells it correctly as *-the-* ($\theta\epsilon$) in the first case but incorrectly as *-te-* ($\tau\epsilon$) in the second; here the speller fails to recognize the sameness of the same, taking—now to recall the Visitor's formulation at *Sophist* 253d1-2—'the same form to be a different one'. Since Socrates gives none, we must construct our own example of the first kind of error: suppose our novice were to spell the two different syllables *-the-* ($\theta\epsilon$) and *-te-* ($\tau\epsilon$) both as *-the-* ($\theta\epsilon$); here he would fail to recognize the difference of the different, taking—now to recall the Visitor's formulation at *Sophist* 253d2—'a different form to be the same'.

We have observed a number of cases in the *Sophist* and in the *Statesman* of dialectical 'accounts' in the third of Socrates' three senses in the *Theaetetus*, that is, of divisions that by a series of bifurcations and selections of the 'right-hand' forms establish the differences that distinguish a form under inquiry from all others. Are there any cases of 'account' in the second sense?

[2] *The Visitor's dialectical explication of 'care' in the Statesman: the method of division in a new mode.* To see that the *Statesman* does indeed provide a dialectical 'account' in the second of Socrates' three senses, recall, first, the Visitor's two-fold criticism of the initial set of bifurcatory divisions with its characterization of statesmanship as the art of the 'nurture' ($\theta\rho\epsilon\pi\tau\iota\kappa\acute{\eta}$, 267b5) or 'herding of human beings' ($\acute{\alpha}\nu\theta\rho\omega\pi\omicron\nu\mu\iota\kappa\acute{\omicron}\nu$, 267c2). On the one hand, the notion of 'nurture' grants the ruler a function to which a host of other artisans—merchants, for example, and farmers, millers, bakers, and gymnastic teachers (267e ff.)—have a 'greater and prior' claim, if indeed the ruler has any claim to this at all (276b); for these other artisans all provide physical nourishment in one sense or another to the citizenry, including to the statesman himself, whereas the statesman does not. On the other hand, 'the paradigm of shepherds and cowherds' (275b) implies for the statesman a difference in kind relative to his subjects, thereby granting him the superior status of a god, whereas, in truth, he is but one human being among others, alike in his nature and in his education and upbringing to those he rules (275c); it is this conflation of human and divine that the Visitor exposes by introducing the figure of the divine shepherd and locating

³⁴ See LSJ II.1. The paradigm cases of $\sigma\tau\omicron\iota\chi\epsilon\acute{\iota}\alpha$ are the letter-sounds (that is, the sounds that were distinguished and written as letters) that compose a syllable. At *Theaetetus* 206a-b, Socrates treats letter-sounds as, in this status of being components of larger complexes, analogous with musical notes.

him in the bygone age of Cronus in the myth of cosmic reversal at 268e-274e. It is to position himself to draw these two different kinds of distinctions that the Visitor replaces the notion of ‘nurture’ with the more general notion of ‘care’ (ἐπιμελεία and synonyms, 276b ff.); this both prepares the way for dividing the divine shepherd from the human statesman, as the Visitor does at 276d, and sets the stage for the task of dividing the human statesman’s work from that of the various sorts of ‘nurture’-providers. ‘No other sort of art would be disposed to say that its claim to being care for the whole human community (ἐπιμελεία... ἀνθρωπίνης συμπάσης κοινωρίας) is greater than and prior to that of the art of kingship’, he says at 276b-c. With the notion of ‘care’ in place as the new all-embracing kind, the Visitor appears ready to make good on his promise at 268e and, ‘[by proceeding] just as before, continually removing part from part’, to resume the method of division in order to differentiate and define statesmanship.

When he turns to do this at 287b, however, we get a surprise.³⁵ As we have stressed, up until now all of the Visitor’s sets of divisions in the *Sophist* and the *Statesman* have followed the model of the ‘account’ of the angler in the *Sophist*, proceeding to gather the differentiating features of the form under inquiry by successive bifurcations and, in each case, selections of one of the resultant parts and abandonments of the forms of the other. Now, however, no sooner has he set Young Socrates and himself the task of ‘bringing the paradigm of the weaver’s art, as we have spoken of it, to bear on the statesman’ and, so, of ‘dividing from each other the arts concerned with the city that are contributory and that are directly causal (τῶν τε συνατιῶν καὶ τῶν αἰτιῶν)’ than he declares that it is ‘difficult’ (χαλεπόν, 287b10), then that it is ‘impossible’ (ἀδυνατούμεν, c4), to ‘cut them into two’ (τεμεῖν δίχα, b10). Especially because the distinction between the contributory and the directly causal arts already has the outward form of a bifurcation and was treated that way when it was first introduced in the earlier divisions differentiating the weaver’s art (see 281d ff.), this is strange to hear. But the Visitor does not explain; he says only that ‘the reason will become clear as we proceed’ (287c1),³⁶ and he proposes instead to ‘divide [the arts] limb by limb, like a sacrificial animal’ (κατὰ μέλη...οἶον ἱερείου, c3).³⁷ Thus Plato leaves it up

³⁵ The Visitor defers his turn to the final divisions at 287b by two major detours, the lengthy reflections on the use of paradigms at 277a-283b and on due measure at 283b-287b. Nothing in these passages undermines the impression that the Visitor will resume the practice of division ‘just as before’. On the contrary, when in the culminating section, 279c-283a, of his reflection on the use of paradigms, the Visitor offers Young Socrates a paradigmatic set of divisions in pursuit of the weaver at 279c-283a, he strongly reinforces this impression by making all of his cuts by means of the familiar process of bifurcation-and-selection of the ‘right-hand’ forms that he has used in every set of divisions up to this point in the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*. Thus Plato gives us yet one more exhibition of the third sense of ‘account’ in the *Theaetetus*. The one qualification is that in his last cut at 282d-283a, rather than simply setting aside the ‘left-hand’ form, ‘twisting’, he divides it into two parts, the twisting that yields the warp and the twisting that yields the woof.

³⁶ There is a delightful but seemingly accidental irony in the fact that the idiom the Visitor appeals to means, if—as it should not be—it is taken literally, ‘will become *no less* clear’ (οὐχ ἧττον...καταφανές, 287c1).

³⁷ On first hearing this striking simile, one is reminded immediately of *Phaedrus* 265e1, where

to us to try to understand, as we trace the Visitor's divisions, both why bifurcation is impossible and what the alternative mode of division consists in.

The Visitor distinguishes fifteen kinds of art—or, more precisely, fifteen kinds of function that various arts or groups of arts perform. Here is a list of the fifteen:

- {1} the providing of 'raw materials' (τὸ πρωτογενές, 288e, 289a)³⁸
- {2} the providing of 'tools' (ὄργανον, 287d, 289b)
- {3} the providing of 'containers' (ἀγγεῖον, 287e, 289b)
- {4} the providing of 'bearers' (ὄχημα, 288a, 289b)
- {5} the providing of 'defenses' (πρόβλημα, 288b, 289b)
- {6} the providing of 'playthings' (παίγνιον, 288c, 289b)
- {7} the providing of 'nourishments' (θρέμμα, 289a, 289b)
- {8} the service provided by slaves (289d)
- {9} the service provided by traders and merchants (289e-290a)
- {10} the service provided by heralds and clerks (290b)
- {11} the service provided by priests and mantics (290c-e)
- {12} the service provided by the orator (304a, c-d)
- {13} the service provided by the general (304a, e-305a)
- {14} the service provided by judges (304a, 305b-c)
- {15} the work of statesmanship (305e and ff.)

For us, this list is important both for what it refrains from doing and for what it does instead. It refrains not only from any bifurcation but also from any step-wise movement from the more encompassing to the encompassed, any abandonment of 'left-hand' and selection of 'right-hand' *divisa*, and any accumulation of differentiating features for the *definiendum*. On the contrary, it mentions the primary object of inquiry, statesmanship, only to observe, with the introduction of each new member of the list, that statesmanship is not to be confused with it; thus the Visitor gives us, at most, a *via negativa*-style characterization of statesmanship, showing us only what it is not.³⁹

Socrates describes division as 'cutting according to kinds at their natural joints' (κατ' εἶδη... διατέμνειν κατ' ἄρθρα ἢ πέφυκεν). But the differences run as deep or deeper than the similarities: whereas Socrates contemplates a series of cuts that will isolate a sought-for natural kind, namely, eros as a kind of divine madness, the Visitor, as we shall see, contemplates a series of cuts that will allow one to see the organic whole of which the kinds that are distinguished are functioning parts. Accordingly, even though some of the divisions in the *Phaedrus* do not conform to the pattern of bifurcatory diairesis in the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*—in particular, Socrates cuts the kind on the left-hand side, human madness, and cuts it into three subkinds, not two, and he cuts the right hand side, divine madness, into four subkinds—, the goal of division in the *Phaedrus*, to isolate the *definiendum*, is consistent with that of bifurcatory diairesis in the *Sophist* and the *Statesman* and not with the goal of the non-bifurcatory mode that the Visitor, as I am now in the course of arguing, anticipates with the second sense of λόγος at the end of the *Theaetetus*, schematizes in [i]-[ii] of *Sophist* 253d-e, and exhibits here in the division of the fifteen kinds of care at *Statesman* 287c-290e and 303c-305e.

³⁸ In working through the first seven kinds and then gathering them into a summary list at 289a-b, the Visitor offers for each kind a singular term that brings into focus the basic function or work that the various things produced by the various arts in that kind perform.

³⁹ For an interesting reflection on this aspect of the Visitor's final divisions, see Sayre 2006, esp. 113-131.

What the list does instead is trace a series that ranges from the arts that most of all provide the city with the physical things that meet its material needs to the arts that most of all provide it with the services, that is, not things but deeds, that meet its spiritual needs. Three distinct features of this series are particularly important to highlight. [1] *The mid-point of the list.* Plato alerts us to the difference in kind between the physical things that kinds {1}-{7} provide—namely, the ‘things in a city that people possess’ (τῶν ἐν πόλει κτημάτων)—and the deeds that kinds {9}-{15} provide by having the Visitor give us, at the exact midpoint of the list, a kind that defies this very distinction: slaves are at once ‘possessions’ (see κτητούς, 289d10, also κτήσιν, 289b8) and ‘servants,’ that is, at once instrumental ‘things’ and agents. This is presumably why the Visitor cannot re-apply his earlier bifurcation of the arts into the contributory and the directly causal: as both ‘thing’ and agent, the slave falls on both sides of this distinction. [2] *The range and order of the list.* The list not only ranges *between the extremes* of the care for material needs exhibited by the various arts that provide ‘raw materials’ {1} and of the care for spiritual well-being exhibited by the statesman’s educational and policy-making work of cultivating the right balance of courage and moderation {15}—it *ranges* between these extremes, articulating a gradient or continuum. Plato helps us notice this by having the Visitor explicitly count out the first seven kinds⁴⁰ and then, in his provisional summary at 289b, declaring it ‘most just’ to move the arts that provide ‘raw materials’ from sixth place in the list, where he first came upon and distinguished them (288d-e), to the ‘beginning’ (κατ’ ἀρχάς) or first place. Aided by this prompt, we can see in the list as a whole a movement—now to mark its major phases in a summary way⁴¹—from {1} the stuffs required for {2} the fashioning and {3} preservation and {4} transport of things to the things needed by the citizenry in their physical being for {5} their defense, {6} their entertainment by the mimetic arts, and {7} their bodily nurture to the deeds⁴² by which they {9} distribute goods and {10} do the communications with one another needed for this distribution and {11} maintain the public religious rites that keep them united as a community to the deeds by which they are led {12} to heed the statesman, {13} to fight for the city, and {14} to obey the law, to the deeds, finally, by which {15} their characters are formed to be

⁴⁰ Note ‘third’ (τρίτον) at 288a3, ‘fourth’ (τέταρτον) at b1, ‘fifth’ (πέμπτον) at c1, ‘sixth’ (ἕκτον) at d5, and ‘seventh’ (ἑβδόμου) at 289a1.

⁴¹ I restrict myself to these summary reflections for fear of losing the proportions that the focus of this essay’s project requires. There is much more that could be said about the structure of the list, especially in regard to its *quasi*-mathematical form and its analogical relation to the analysis of the double octave matrix in ancient music theory, its status as an exhibition of the so-called ‘god-given method’ in the *Philebus*, and the help it provides for the interpretation of the ‘unwritten teachings’ that Aristotle reports with such obscure conciseness in *Metaphysics* i 6. I hope that by my reticence here I have struck the mean. For more detail and for development of each of these various further connections, see the expositions in Miller 2013, 1990, and 2004, respectively.

⁴² As we have just seen, it is here, as the kind that marks the transition from physical things that support the physical being of the citizenry to the deeds by which they sustain their social and spiritual lives, that the Visitor places {8}, the function of the slave.

inwardly disposed to work together in all these ways. [3] *The members of the list as 'limbs' of the city.* Recognizing the gradient or continuum character of the list begins to help us understand why it is *these* fifteen that make it up: the Visitor's series is an effort to exhaust the full set of possible kinds of 'care' on the spectrum ranging from the most physical to the most spiritual needs of the citizenry. But he is guided by a second principle of selection as well: as he indicates by his declaration that they must 'divide [the arts] limb by limb, like a sacrificial animal', he distinguishes kinds with an eye to the various kinds of interplay they are fit for and to the normative order of organic unity such fitness for interplay reflects.⁴³ This helps to explain why arts as seemingly trivial as those that produce {3} 'containers' or {4} 'bearers' or, again, as those of {9} shopkeepers and traders and {10} clerks and heralds have places alongside the obviously important arts of {13} the general and {14} the judge and, indeed, {15} the statesman himself. Needless to say, the spiritual well-being of the city requires both {14} the maintenance of justice and the collaboration, orchestrated by {15} the statesman's domestic and foreign policies, of the agents of {12} of persuasion and {13} of military action. Less obviously, the city's spiritual well-being presupposes its material well-being, and this requires a host of less conspicuous forms of collaboration. Consider, for instance, how the physical health of a city requires not only {7} the production of 'nourishments' but also, on the one hand, {2} the 'tools' for this production and, on the other, {9} the commercial transactions of traders and merchants by which these 'nourishments' are distributed to the citizens; and, again, how these 'tools' must themselves be made—by means, of course, of still other 'tools'—from {1} 'raw materials,' while commercial transactions require {3} 'containers' to preserve and {4} 'bearers' to move the goods between fields and markets and shops and homes. Commerce also requires {10} the communications and clerical work that heralds and clerks do, the sense of justice that {11} religious rites and {14} the courts in their very different ways preserve, and the maintenance of peace for which the citizens can thank {5} their walls ('defenses') and {13} their generals. And so on. In these and myriad other interdependencies we see various of the fifteen kinds working together as the 'limbs' of a well-constituted organic whole.

In every basic respect, the Visitor's list fulfills the criteria of Socrates' second sense of 'account' at the end of the *Theaetetus*. Focusing on the 'care' for them-

⁴³ Let me offer a short note on a topic that cannot be pursued apart from an inquiry into the *Statesman* as a whole. (For that inquiry, see Miller 2004 (1980).) In the practice of sacrifice the sacred victim would be dismembered and then its organs would be laid out on the altar in a reconstruction of their fit with one another, in order that the priest might discern in them the will of the gods (see Onians 1954, 60n28). When the Visitor characterizes his division as 'limb by limb, like a sacrificial animal', he tacitly compares himself to the priest at the altar, and in making this comparison he surely refers back to his myth of cosmic reversal and our 'present-day' need, in the age of Zeus, to remember the 'instructions' for how to care for ourselves that were left by the departing god (see 273b); comparing the community to a 'sacrificial victim', he attempts to reconstruct it in a way that discerns, in the order of its 'limbs' (μέλη), the way the various kinds of artisans, being true to the god's instructions, can do together and for themselves what the god and his daimons did for the cosmos and mankind when they were present in the world in the preceding age of Cronus.

selves that it falls to the members of a city to exercise, he goes through, ‘element by element’—that is, subkind of ‘care’ by subkind of ‘care’—what the ‘being’ of ‘care’ requires of its instantiation in the city. By working his way from one extreme to its opposite, he attempts to canvass and identify ‘all’ of these ‘elements’. By pressing himself to pick out the seemingly insignificant as well as the obviously significant subkinds, he seeks to descend beneath the level of gross components⁴⁴—that is, of ‘syllables’—to the subkinds that have a compelling claim to being genuine ‘elements’ or parts—that is, to being ‘letters’. By moving stepwise and gradually as he moves from the one extreme to its opposite, he seeks like an accurate speller to capture the ‘order’ of these ‘elements’ or parts. And by distinguishing these with an eye to their capacities for ‘limb’-like interplay, he seeks to do justice to the way in which, like the parts of Socrates’ Hesiodic wagon, they are capable of the various sorts of co-operation that make for a well-constituted ‘whole’.

IV. Reading *Sophist* 253d-e in the Context of the Trilogy

We are now in position to recognize and work through a fresh reading of 253d-e, especially of [i]-[iv] at d5-9.

First, I share the general agreement that by his prefatory characterization, at 253d1-3, of ‘dialectical knowledge’ as ‘distinguishing according to kinds’ (κατὰ γένη διαρπείσθαι), the Eleatic Visitor refers to the method of division—but with a crucial qualification. As we have noted in working through the three major approaches, it has been presumed that the *Sophist* is the proper and sufficient context for the interpretation of 253d-e. But this is problematic, for the *Sophist* itself belongs to the trilogy of *Theaetetus*, *Sophist*, and *Statesman*, and as we have now seen, the *Theaetetus* and the *Statesman* effectively expand our sense of what counts as a case of the practice of the method of division. The *Theaetetus* put before us two distinct sorts of ‘account’, only one of which, ‘telling some mark by which [the object of inquiry] differs from all other things’ (208c), is filled out and exhibited by the sets of bifurcatory divisions in the *Sophist*. For the other sense of ‘account’, explicating ‘what’ something ‘is’ by laying out the elements that constitute it as a whole (206e-207a), we do not get an exhibition until we come to the *Statesman* and the Visitor’s explication of the fifteen subkinds of ‘care’. I suggest that our ability to recognize the fit of the two kinds of eidetic field traced in [i]-[ii] and [iii]-[iv] depends upon our reading *Sophist* 253d-e in the context of the *Theaetetus*, *Sophist*, and *Statesman* as a whole and on our recognition that the *Sophist* and the *Statesman* give us what the *Sophist* alone does not, namely, two essentially different modes of the method of division that yield the two essentially different sorts of ‘account’ that Socrates proposes at the end of the *Theaetetus*.

Let us begin with [iii]-[iv] and elaborate the reading that we have already provisionally established. To recall the text:

⁴⁴ To mark a topic for another occasion, note how the Visitor’s fifteen kinds descend beneath the level of Socrates’ distinction of ‘rulers’, ‘auxiliaries’, and ‘producers’ in the *Republic*.

d5 Visitor: Οὐκοῦν ὁ γε τοῦτο δυνατὸς δρᾶν...ἰκανῶς διαισθάνεται...

...[iii] καὶ μίαν αὖ δι' ὄλων πολλῶν ἐν ἐνὶ συνημμένῃν,
[iv] καὶ πολλὰς χωρὶς πάντῃ διωρισμένας

d5 Visitor: Accordingly, someone who can do this adequately discerns

...[iii] a single [form] [running] through many wholes that is gathered into a one,
[iv] and many [forms] that are separated off apart in every way;

We have seen that the first approach, [a] in part 1, gives us a good interpretation of what the Visitor is referring to in these very schematic lines—and, we can now add, one that felicitously reflects the place of the *Sophist* within the trilogy. The Visitor is tracing the kind of eidetic field that is disclosed by the kind of ‘account’ that answers to the third of Socrates’ three senses at the end of the *Theaetetus*, an account that, proceeding by a series of bifurcations and selections, defines a form by collecting its differences from all that it might otherwise be thought to be like. To bring this into view, we need only recall the precise fits we noted earlier in our discussion of the first approach. The ‘single [form]’ is that of the *definiendum*, for example the form of the angler or of the sophist or of the weaver or of the statesman. The mode of bifurcatory division discloses this ‘single [form]’ as ‘[running] through many wholes’ by the way in which, at each step of its series of divisions and selections, it identifies a difference by taking the form selected in the previous step and, treating it as ‘whole’, dividing it into parts and selecting the one that contains the *definiendum*; repeating this procedure until it reaches the point where the *definiendum* stands alone, it passes through ‘many’ wholes. At this point the dialectician ‘gathers’—or, to bring out the connotations of συνημμένην, ‘joins together’ or ‘connects’—‘into a one’ all the selected forms; as the list of the differences of the form of the *definiendum*, these define it; the angler just *is*, to recall our earlier restatement of the Visitor’s first example, an expert at acquisition by capture by hunting of animals, specifically sea-dwellers and more specifically fish, by striking them with hooks from below. Hence, to rearrange the Visitor’s language in [iii] in order to bring out the claim at its core: the ‘single form’ is identified with and as the complex ‘one’ into which the forms of the ‘many wholes’ are ‘gathered’. [iv], in turn, acknowledges that in the course of repeated division and selection ‘many [forms]’ are ‘separated off’ and simply abandoned. As we saw earlier, these are the forms on the ‘left-hand’ side of each of the cuts, and each of them is ‘separated off *in every way*’; that is, it is not only separated from the form on the ‘right-hand’ side to which it is the counter-part or other ‘half’ but it is also left apart from and out of relation with all of the other ‘left-hand’ forms as well.

What, now, of [i]-[ii]? To recall the text:

d5 Visitor: Οὐκοῦν ὁ γε τοῦτο δυνατὸς δρᾶν

[i] μίαν ιδεάν διὰ πολλῶν, ἐνὸς ἐκάστου κειμένου χωρὶς, πάντῃ
διατεταμένην ἰκανῶς διαισθάνεται,

[ii] καὶ πολλὰς ἐτέρας ἀλλήλων ὑπὸ μιᾶς ἐξωθεν περιεχομένας,

d5 Visitor: Accordingly, someone who can do this adequately discerns

[i] a single form that is extended in every way through many, each one

[of which] is situated apart,
 [ii] and many [forms],⁴⁵ different from one another, that are embraced
 from without by a single [form]...

The Visitor's explication of the fifteen subkinds of 'care' in the *Statesman*, I have argued, answers to and exhibits the second of the three senses of 'account' that Socrates suggests at the end of the *Theaetetus*, namely, explicating 'what something 'is' by laying out the elements that make it a well-constituted whole. Now I want to propose that it is the sort of eidetic field that such an account, thus exhibited, discloses that the Visitor intends to describe schematically in [i]-[ii].

Notice, first, how well the Visitor's language in [i] seems to fit the relations exhibited by the list of the fifteen subkinds of 'care'. [Δ]ιατεταμένην, perfect passive of διατείνω, signifies being 'stretched out', and its connotation of 'to the uttermost',⁴⁶ is brought out by πάντη, 'in every way'. This nicely expresses the sense in which the 'single form' 'care', in being explicated by the list of fifteen, is 'extended' from one extreme to its opposite. That, in turn, 'the many through which' it is 'extended' are 'separated apart', 'each one' from the others, nicely expresses their status as members of the list. Each is, in the Visitor's metaphor at 287c, a 'limb' (μέλος)—or, in Socrates' language at *Theaetetus* 207aff., the sort of 'element' (στοιχείον) that the parts of the wagon or the letters of a syllable are. To bring this into focus, it is helpful to contrast the relations between the members of such a 'many' with those of the 'many' that the Visitor characterizes in [iii]. These latter relate as 'wholes' to parts and *vice versa*; bifurcatory division, when it cuts a 'whole' into two and then cuts one of these into another two, and so on, lays out relations of containment that are constitutive for the *relata*. That, in the bifurcatory account of the angler, 'expertise' is either 'productive' or 'acquisitive', or that 'acquisition' is either 'exchange' or 'capture', implies that the latter are constitutive for the former and that the being of the former depends on the latter. 'Limbs' or 'elements', by contrast, are not composed of one another. They do of course work together and, so, together constitute functioning 'wholes'. But the parts of the wagon are not made of one another, nor are the letters that compose a syllable; by contrast with the sorts of 'wholes' of parts that bifurcatory division discloses, the ability of 'limb'-like or 'elemental' parts to constitute wholes depends on their first being constituted as beings in their own right, hence as 'apart' (χωρίς) from one another. If one subkind of 'care' in the Visitor's list were itself composed by, or were compositive of, another, they could not be given their separate places—that is, 'situated apart'—in the list; or, more concretely, only if 'each one' subkind of 'care' in the list of fifteen first has its own self-standing integrity can it then collaborate in various ways with each of the others.

Letting the list of fifteen help illuminate the Visitor's language in [i] helps as

⁴⁵ Again, I have inserted the word 'form' in brackets in each case where the Visitor, by using the feminine, pointedly refers back to his use of ἰδέαν at 253d5.

⁴⁶ See LSJ. Some of the examples cited, the bow or one's outstretched hands or the reach of a spider's web, nicely image the sense of extending towards opposed extremes or boundaries.

well with an initially puzzling feature of [ii]. We noted earlier that [i] keys from a one, the ‘single form’, while [ii] keys from a ‘many’; if it is right to take the ‘many [forms]’ in [ii] to refer back to the ‘many’ in [i] and the ‘single [form]’ in [ii] to refer back to the ‘single form’ in [i], then we can say, speaking more fully, that whereas in [i] the Visitor moves from the one to its ‘many’, in [ii] he reverses direction and moves from the ‘many’ to its one. What is initially puzzling is the new verbal expression that he introduces to describe the one-and-many relation from the new perspective of [ii]: ὑπὸ μιᾶς ἔξωθεν περιεχομένης, ‘[they are] embraced from without by a single [form].’ How does this new spatial figure, ‘embraced from without,’ fit together with the preceding διὰ πολλῶν... διατεταμένην, ‘extended through many’? That is, how can the ‘single form’ be ‘extended through the many’, hence in some way be ‘in’ each of them, and at the same time, insofar as they are ‘embraced’ by it ‘from without’, be ‘outside’ them? We find a key, I suggest, in the way the list of fifteen displays ‘each one’ of the ‘many’ as ‘situated apart’ from the others. For the ‘single form’ to hold its ‘many’ together in a way that preserves their constitutive independence from one another, each of the many must have its relation to the ‘single form’ free of any dependence upon the relation of any other of the many to the ‘single form’. We can illustrate this by the analogy—suggested, strikingly, by the Visitor’s earlier use of the verb περιεχομένην at 250b8—of the vexing case of the relation of Being to Motion and Rest. Just as each subkind of ‘care’ is a subkind of ‘care,’ so Motion is a case of Being and Rest is a case of Being; that is, Motion *is* and Rest *is*. But Motion and Rest are ‘completely contrary to each other’ (ἐναντιώτατα, 250a8); hence the *being* of the one must be thought as independent of the *being* of the other,⁴⁷ with neither in any way constitutive of the other. Being itself, on the other hand, is one and self-same. Accordingly, to do justice both to its internal unity and to the way it is common to both Motion and Rest, it must be thought as ‘a third’ (τρίτον τι) that is ‘beyond’ (παρὰ, b7) Motion and Rest while they must be thought as ‘embraced by it’ from ‘outside them both’ (ἐκτὸς τούτων ἀμφοτέρων, d2). While the fifteen subkinds are not contraries, the range they span is bounded by opposites. And as I have been arguing, the *being a subkind of ‘care’* that defines ‘each one’ is not constituted by the *being a subkind of ‘care’* that defines any other. That is, in their ‘limb’-like natures, no one among the ‘many’ stands to any other in the sort of whole-to-part relation that is displayed by each cut in bifurcatory division; rather, they ‘are situated apart’, and it is to do justice to this externality of ‘each one’ to each other that the dialectician must think of the one—the ‘single form’—that holds them together as holding them together from ‘outside’. If this is well-taken, the account of ‘care’ shows us that the apparently contrary perspectives of [i] and [ii] are appropriately complementary. Whereas from the perspective of the relation of the one to its many, the one, that is, the ‘single form’, is ‘extended through’ the whole series of its ‘many’ subkinds ‘in every way’ and, so, is ‘in’ each of them all, from the perspective of

⁴⁷ That the Visitor is tracing ontological relations by way of our ‘thought’ of them, is signified by ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ τιθεῖς, ‘posited in the soul’, at 250b7. White 1993 translates this as ‘conceive’.

the relation of the many to the one, their standing ‘apart’ from one another requires that the one that ‘embraces’ them be understood to be ‘outside’ them and, so, to ‘embrace’ them ‘from without.’

V. Questions for Ongoing Reflection

We have now replied to the second *caveat* offered at the close of part 2: taking our bearings from the pairings of [i] and [ii] and of [iii] and [iv] that are effected by the $\alpha\beta$ (‘again’) at 253d8, we have found a reading of [i]-[ii] that is both complementary to our reading of [iii]-[iv] and equally well supported by the text. The key has been expanding what we take to count as the relevant context for 253d-e and, in relation to this, recognizing the non-bifurcatory mode of division that is anticipated by the second of the three senses of ‘account’ at the end of the *Theaetetus* and is displayed by the division of the fifteen subkinds of ‘care’ in the *Statesman*. In sum: whereas in [i]-[ii] the Visitor gives a schematic description of the array of forms that the dialectician ‘discerns’ by division in the mode of explicating a kind by laying out the elements that it requires in order to be constituted as a whole, in [iii]-[iv] he describes the array of forms that the dialectician ‘discerns’ by division in the mode of defining a kind by a series of bifurcations that enable the gathering of its differences.

At the beginning of part 2, I observed that the two pairs, [i]-[ii] and [iii]-[iv], should elicit two questions in the reader: first, what, *within each pair*, are its one and its many and how are these related? And second, how does the one/many relation that each pair lays out relate to the one/many relation that the other lays out? Our new reading of the passage has given us an answer to the first question, but the second remains open.

Pursuing this second question requires, really, a fresh study; it would help, moreover, to expand our context once again, going beyond the trilogy of the *Theaetetus*, *Sophist*, and *Statesman* to, at least, the *Philebus* and the *Timaeus*, for in the latter two dialogues we find illuminating cases of the sort of non-bifurcatory division that is indicated in [i]-[ii].⁴⁸ For the moment, let it suffice to offer, as a bridge to this further study, several orienting questions regarding what we have found so far.

First of all, it may be useful to exhibit our answer to the first question by two bare-bones diagrams. Figure α lays out the eidetic pattern disclosed by division in the non-bifurcatory mode that gives us the one-and-many of [i]-[ii], and figure β lays out the pattern disclosed by division in the bifurcatory mode that gives us the one-and-many of [iii]-[iv].

Figure α :

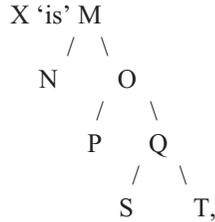


in which the ‘single form’ Z, ‘extended through’ A, B, C, D, and E, ‘each one’ of

⁴⁸ For discussion of the mode of dialectic put in play in the *Philebus* and in the *Timaeus*, see Miller 2010 and 2003, respectively. See also the work cited in n41.

which is ‘situated apart’ and ‘different from one another’, ‘embraces them from without’.

Figure β:



in which the ‘single form’ X, that of the *definiendum*, ‘runs through’ (what the bifurcatory process discloses, by dividing each of them, as) the ‘many wholes’ M and O and Q (until, once T is reached,) X ‘is gathered into [the complex] one’ of M and O and Q and T, while ‘many [forms]’, namely, N and P and S, are ‘separated off apart in every way’.

With these schematizations before us, I want to pose, as open-endedly and non-question-beggingly as possible, three sets of very basic questions.

First, are the all-encompassing form M, from which the process of bifurcatory division begins, and the ‘single form’ Z, which is the form explicated by the non-bifurcatory process of going through the series of ‘elements’, the same in kind? Or to ask this in another way: can M be explicated by the non-bifurcatory process of going through its ‘elements’, and can Z be made subject to the process of bifurcatory division?⁴⁹

Second, are the sorts of subkinds sought by division in the bifurcatory mode as the termini of its process, e.g., S and T, the same in kind as the sorts of ‘elements’ disclosed by division in the non-bifurcatory mode, e.g., A, B, C, D, and E, and *vice versa*. One way of pursuing this would be to ask: if the ‘left-hand’ forms N, P, and S were not simply abandoned but instead were each subjected to further bifurcations in the same manner as are the ‘right-hand’ forms M, O, and Q, would the process end up disclosing as a kind of ‘base’ line⁵⁰ a series like the one—e.g., A, B, C, D, and E—that is disclosed in non-bifurcatory division?⁵¹

⁴⁹ Already, of course, one thinks of the moment at 287c when the Visitor says that ‘it is difficult’, then that ‘it is impossible’, ‘to cut [the contributory and the directly causal arts] into two’. Does this imply that ‘care’ also cannot be ‘cut into two’, not, at least, without violence to the structural relations of the subkinds that it implies?

⁵⁰ As we saw in n28, this is the language that Gómez-Lobo 1977, 33 uses to describe Stenzel’s figure of a pyramid of forms, along the ‘base’ line of which we would find a series of *infimae species*.

⁵¹ Part of what is at issue here is the role of contrariety in the relations between forms as these are disclosed by the two modes of division. At 262a-264b the Visitor objects to Young Socrates’ one-sided division of human beings and ‘beasts’ (or, in Rowe’s translation, ‘animals’, τῶν θηρίων, 262a4) and proposes as models of correct bifurcation the cuts of number into odd and even and of human beings into male and female; he also brings to the fore, as the cut that Young Socrates jumped over, the division of animals into domesticated and wild. In all these cases the *divisa* are contraries and the kinds are intended to be mutually exclusive. By proposing them as corrections the Visitor implies that these characters are normative for—hence, at the least, standards to be aimed at and as fully as possible approximated by—bifurcatory divisions. In the list of the fifteen subkinds of ‘care’, on the other

Finally, we come to a new version of—or, at least, arrive by a new route at—a perennial nest of questions facing the interpreter of Platonic dialectic: if, as it at least initially appears likely, these comparative reflections reveal differences between the sorts of one and many that the two modes of division disclose, what are the implications, first, for the ontological status of each sort of one and many; second, for the metaphysical reach of each of the two modes of division; and third, for the truth-status of what the philosopher in his practice of dialectic in each of the two cases ‘adequately discerns’?⁵²

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hand, only the extremes, the providing of raw materials and statesmanship (as the manifold work of forming the characters of the citizens), are arguably opposites, and they leave room for a host of intermediaries in each of which there is a co-presence, in varying balances, of concern for the material and for the spiritual needs of the city. At the risk of bringing the contrast of the sorts of many that the two modes disclose to too narrow a point of focus: whereas S and T are, as the last in the series of bifurcations, approximations, at least, of contraries, D and E are not contraries but, rather, belong to a larger nexus of ones that, like ‘limbs’, are fit for various sorts of interplay.

⁵² This essay grows out of a text seminar that I was invited to give by Burt Hopkins and Nickolas Pappas at a conference on Plato’s *Sophist* at Seattle University in November 2012. For comments and discussion, I am grateful to Burt and Nick and the other members of that seminar, to Dan Esses and the other members of a separate seminar held by John Ferrari at Berkeley in April 2014, to Cristina Ionescu for correspondence, and to an anonymous reader for *Ancient Philosophy*.

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