# Similarities between the Sophist and the Philosopher

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Plato's *Sophist* primarily addresses the most important question, 'What is a sophist?' The difference between a sophist and a philosopher is hardly obvious, and in this dialogue, Plato attempts to resolve the problem of how to dissociate the sophist from the philosopher by raising a fundamental question about the similarity between the two. This paper revisits this problematized notion of similarity and proposes a further reflection on this issue. First, I carefully examine the initial exchange between Theodorus and Socrates, which focuses on the various images of philosopher, especially in relation to the *Phaedrus*. The allusions to the *Phaedrus* point to the real issue of the confusion of philosopher and god. Next, in the first outer part of the dialogue, when six definitions are completed, the Eleatic visitor points out the slippery nature of the concept of similarity. This theme is related to the rhetoric of the sophist, discussed in the *Phaedrus*. I suggest that the problem of similarity has already been examined in the *Parmenides*, which offers important suggestions on how to understand 'similar' as affection that participates in 'the same'. In the *Sophist*, this consideration suggests that the art of dialectic, by dealing with sameness and difference, can distinguish between similarity and dissimilarity. It is on this basis that the sophist and the philosopher are ultimately distinguished in relation to god in the second outer part. Finally, I suggest that the sophist and the philosopher are distinguished at three levels: theoretical, performative, and philosophical. The dialogue *Sophist* aims to make us, the readers of the dialogue, true philosophers, by confronting the 'sophist within us'.
sophist, philosopher, similar, same, dialectic

## *1. The sophist matters*

What matters in Plato's dialogue, the *Sophist*? Of course, the sophist matters, I believe. However, many commentators do not take the theme of the sophist seriously but tend to ignore it as the nominal subject of the dialogue to discuss what they see as more important and fundamental metaphysical issues. I contend with this common view and maintain that Plato's *Sophist* deals primarily with the question of utmost importance, namely, 'What is the sophist?'

First, I would like to introduce a conversation I had with my supervisor at Cambridge, Myles Burnyeat. During a supervision at his office, I asked for his opinion about the chapter of my doctoral thesis that I had just finished, in which I proposed the new concept of a 'sophist within us'. I said, 'This phrase is not Plato's. Is it alright to write this in the thesis about Plato?'

My teacher told me something like this: 'You are entitled to put this. You have already discussed so many things'. Even though this is not what Plato actually stated, I was convinced that Plato had really meant it.

On another occasion, Myles asked me, in a slightly relaxed tone, 'Noburu, do you think Plato doubted that he was a philosopher?' I answered, 'By definition, yes. I take the philosopher as someone who suspects that he may be a sophist. Because I believe Plato was a real philosopher, he must've had a doubt'. Myles smiled and said nothing.

I tried to clarify this point in my book, *The Unity of Plato's* Sophist, published in 1999. When I discussed the image of the sophist and philosopher, I introduced the ethical difficulty, namely, 'Who is a sophist, and who is a philosopher?' I wrote that 'Finally, what are you and I who read the *Sophist*? We readers may be asked whether or not we are sophists if we participate in the enquiry; we are not ourselves exempt from this serious question.'[1] In a later chapter, I came back and saw this difficulty as the core of the problem:

> Those who ignore the sophistic counter-attack on philosophy cannot really see philosophical issues in the *Sophist*: for to ignore the sophist is to avoid examining ourselves. In my view, real philosophy is impossible without serious confrontation with the sophist. The sophist is not an opponent standing outside you and me, but lives within ourselves, or he may be ourselves. This cross-examination of ourselves is the only way, I suggest, to save the philosopher in us.[2]

The question of what the sophist is must be the most important philosophical problem. By this, I mean it is not *one* of the important philosophical issues but the very issue that challenges philosophy itself. In other words, we do not address this issue within the discipline of philosophy, but we ourselves are asked if we engage in philosophy and whether we ourselves are philosophers. The possibility of philosophy is at stake here.

This is what I demonstrated in my monograph published twenty-three years ago. But that was just a leitmotif for an important project. In this paper, I move forward and revisit the core project of defining the sophist. To this end, I must discuss the similarities between the sophist and the philosopher once again.

1 Notomi, 1999, 72-73.
2 Notomi, 1999, 204.

*2. Who should be distinguished?*

We are confused about philosophers, not only in ancient Greece but also today. Many people may assume that philosophers are found in universities or philosophy departments, but they soon become lost as to where to find one. In our society, philosophers are probably confused with scholars, teachers, journalists, spiritual leaders, and politicians. A large difference between us and Plato is that we no longer use the term 'sophist', so few people raise the question about the difference between a sophist and a philosopher today.

To consider how to find a philosopher, let us examine where Plato started in the dialogue *Sophist*. The initial exchange between Theodorus and Socrates focuses on the various images of a philosopher. The adjective 'φιλόσοφος' is stated twice by Theodorus in the first two paragraphs. First, he introduces the visitor from Elea as 'very much a philosopher (μάλα ἄνδρα φιλόσοφον)' (216a). However, in response to Socrates' mysterious identification of him with the god, Theodorus again underlines that he is godlike (θεῖος), because 'φιλόσοφος' is so called (216c). Here, before the main topic of the sophist is introduced, a deep confusion between philosopher and god is revealed. But which god is being considered here?

Although Homeric quotations by Socrates are often discussed by commentators, I think we should not miss the shadow of the *Phaedrus* in the introductory conversation. Socrates first says that Homer says that 'gods generally attend on all humans who show due respect', and that 'the god of strangers and visitors attends on (συνοπαδόν) us humans and observes us as we overstep the mark or keep in line' (216b, trans. Christopher Rowe). We notice that the word 'συνοπαδός' is rare and used only twice in the classical and earlier periods, both in Plato. Another example occurs in the *Phaedrus*. In the myth of the heavenly procession of the souls, the ordinance of Necessity is that 'whichever soul follows (συνοπαδός) in the train of a god and catches sight of part of what is true shall remain free from sorrow until the next circuit' (248c, trans. Rowe).

The myth of the *Phaedrus* describes what love is. In heaven, the souls of philosophers are among the followers of Zeus (Διὸς ὀπαδῶν) (252c). By investigating whether their beloved is doing philosophy (loving wisdom), he endeavours to realise the nature of the lover (252e).

> If it is from Zeus that they draw, like Bacchants, they pour the draught over the soul of their loved one and make him as like their god as possible (ποιοῦσιν ὡς δυνατὸν ὁμοιότατον τῷ σφετέρῳ θεῷ). (253a-b)

The god accompanying the philosopher turns out to be Zeus.

Compared with Plato's use of 'συνοπαδός', the verb 'ὀπηδέω' is seen more often in Homer[3]: for example, when the elder Phaeacian advises the king Alcinous to entertain the visitor (ξεῖνος), he says that 'we may pour libations also to Zeus, who hurls the thunderbolt; for he ever *attends upon* (ὀπηδεῖ) reverend suppliants'. (*Od*. 7. 164-165, trans. A. T. Murray)

The initial conversation of the *Sophist* with reference to Homer suggests that Zeus accompanies the philosopher, instead of the philosopher's accompanying Zeus as in the *Phaedrus* myth. In this image, the Eleatic visitor, the alleged philosopher and follower of Zeus, is mistaken for the god Zeus. Theodorus tries to correct this conflation and suggests that they separate the divine philosopher from the god. But does he make a clear distinction?

Another shadow of the *Phaedrus* is seen shortly after, where Socrates adds that 'philosophers might give the impression that they are completely mad (μανικῶς)' (216d). This points to the divine madness that philosophers possess in the *Phaedrus*. We see that the philosophers' madness is mentioned later when the Eleatic visitor asks the third favour of his interlocutor: he is afraid that he would seem *mad* (μανικός) to Theaetetus for doing an immediate about-turn (242a). But such 'about-turns' are necessary steps for philosophers pursuing dialectical arguments. The initial conversation alluding to the *Phaedrus* points out that the philosopher and god are being confused.

### *3. How are they distinguished?*

It is no easier to distinguish (διακρίνειν) the philosopher than the god, since both present all sorts of appearances because of the ignorance of others (216c). Socrates then raises the question of how to think about the three kinds, namely sophist, statesman, and philosopher. The Eleatic visitor replies that people in Elea believe that they are distinct, so he and his young interlocutor, Theaetetus, begin to define the sophist first. Here, the problem is clearly stated, that although these three kinds are divided (διαιρούμενοι), it is not easy to determine (διορίζεσθαι) what each is (217b). There are three types of difficulty:

The first is how to understand the relationships between the three kinds. Are they all different and independent of each other, as people in Elea assumed? Or is it the case, as Michael Frede suggested, that there are only two kinds? Frede, somewhat dogmatically, states that:

3 Nine examples: *Il*., 2.184, 5.216, 17.251, 24.368, *Od*., 7.165, 181, 8.237, 9.271, 19.398.

> 'Clearly Plato's own view is not that there are, as it were, three natural kinds, the philosopher, the sophist, and the politician, on a par with each other. Plato's own view seems rather to be, very roughly, that there are real philosophers and that there are false or mock-philosophers, namely sophists, easily mistaken for the real thing; and that politicians are either real philosophers or false or fake philosophers and hence sophists, though it is the real philosopher-politicians who easily get mistaken for sophists.[4]

I share this view, but I believe that Plato treated the relationship between the philosopher and the statesman more carefully in the *Statesman*.'[5]

The second, as we saw in the initial conversation, pertains to the difficulty in distinguishing between god and humans. Here we must note that the quoted passage of *Odyssey* 17, 485-497, was severely criticised by Socrates in *Republic* 2, 381d, since he insists that gods never make various appearances. On a larger scale, we will observe a basic difference between divine king and human statesman in the great myth of the *Statesman*. I suggest that also in the *Sophist*, the distinctions between god, philosophers, and sophists are a hidden issue.[6] If the philosopher is one who makes him or herself as like the god as possible, what do we think of the relationship between the sophist and the god?

A third difficulty is how to distinguish between the sophist and philosopher. Although this is what the entire dialogue is officially addressing, some commentators question whether the distinction is being proposed, or if it is, whether it is being proposed successfully. I strongly disagree with this view, because both the concluding remark of the Eleatic visitor at the end of the dialogue and the introductory conversation of the *Statesman* clearly indicate confidence in the definition. Let us now examine the dialogue itself.

## *4. Similarity is slippery*

The early enquiry into the sophist depicted six kinds of the sophist: [1] a hunter for rich young men (221c-223b); [2–4] a merchant, a retail dealer, and a manufacturing trader of learning (223c-224e); [5] a fighter in private arguments (224e-226a); and [6] a purifier of wrong opinions in the soul by means of refutation (226a-231b). However, these appearances are not sat-

4 Frede, 1996b, 149.

5 I suggested the latter option in Notomi, 2017.

6 One of the final division is between divine and human, *Sph.* 265b-266d; cf. Notomi, 1999, 287-299, 287-300.

isfactory achievements but imply crucial defects. There are several questions regarding this result:

(1) Why were so many definitions produced instead of just one?
(2) Are they all correct descriptions of the sophist? Or are some of them wrong, and therefore not definitions of the sophist?
(3) If they are all definitions, what relation can be found between them? Are they part of a single overall definition? Or are they independent (in which case, how can we think of 'definition')?
(4) If they are definitions, are they equally valid? Or are some more important than others? Which are the most important, and why?

Since this doubt is expressed immediately after the six definitions are completed, we can understand that the last one is the main cause of these troubles. The sixth definition reveals the purifier of the soul who, by using refutations, gets rid of the dislearnability (ἀμαθία) of the ignorant. Immediately after this definition, Theaetetus raises the question:

> **Tht.** All the same, what has just been described does bear quite a resemblance (προσέοικε) to someone of that sort.
> **EV.** Yes, and a wolf has quite a resemblance to a dog—the most savage of creatures to the gentlest. To be safe, one must always be particularly on one's guard when it comes to similarities (περὶ τὰς ὁμοιότητας); for similarity is the most slippery of kinds. (231a)

Similarity is slippery. Whenever we say that A and B are similar, we sometimes have to say that A and B are dissimilar because every pair has common characteristics and differences. For example, we can say that a wolf and a dog are similar (in appearance and kind), but we must also say that they are quite dissimilar (in nature). Therefore, without specifying the aspects in which any two are similar and dissimilar, the sophist will easily mislead us into confusion and contradiction. It should be noted that similar and dissimilar are deemed contradictory in Zeno's argument in the *Parmenides*: Zeno says that 'If beings are many, then they must be both *similar* and *dissimilar*, but that is impossible; for dissimilar things cannot be similar or similar things dissimilar' (127e, trans Gill & Ryan).

Obviously, deception through similarities is a major technique employed by the sophists, who are experts in rhetoric. In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates explains this:

> **Soc.** Then clearly those who hold beliefs contrary to the things that are (παρὰ τὰ ὄντα) and are deceived have this kind of thing creeping in on them through certain similarities (δι᾽ ὁμοιοτήτων τινῶν).
> **Phdr.** It does happen that way.
> **Soc**. So is there any way in which a man will be expert at making others cross over little by little from the thing that is (ἀπὸ τοῦ ὄντος) on each occasion, via the similarities (διὰ τῶν ὁμοιοτήτων), leading them away towards the opposite (τοὐναντίον), or at escaping this himself, if he has not recognized what each thing that is actually is?
> **Phdr.** No, never. (262b, trans. Rowe, slightly modified)

We should remember that deception by the sophist is discussed in the first part of the *Sophist*. In the first six definitions of the sophist, each appears to have some similarities to the previous one. Gradually shifting the focus, the enquiry eventually presented a dubious sophist, called the 'sophist of noble lineage', who may be a Socrates. There, moving little by little, the enquiry reaches the opposite. Therefore, sophists can easily make use of this tool to produce apparent contradictions. However, it is not easy to show how contradictions are merely apparent. For generally speaking, any two things in this world are similar *and* dissimilar.

### *5. Similarity is defined*

We may expect that the concept of similarity will play a key role in the *Sophist*, but strangely, Plato uses these words only in a few places. The adjective 'ὅμοιος' is used four times and the noun 'ὁμοιότης' is used twice.[7] Of these six examples, three appear in the explanation of separative art (διαιρετική), and another is used to describe a simile. Although the art of separating like from like (ὅμοιον ἀφ᾽ ὁμοίου, 226d), which is said to have no common name, may well be associated with dialectic, I find this strange because if Plato seriously tackles this concept within the dialogue, he should have used these words more frequently. This leads me to the hypothesis that some basic consideration, and maybe a solution as well, must have already been given in the earlier dialogues. I suggest that it was in the *Parmenides*.

7 'ὅμοιος', 226d2, 3, 252d1, 259d4; 'ὁμοιότης', 227b3, 231a7; cf. 'ὁμοίωμα', 266d7, 'ἀφομοιωθέν', 221c2, 'ἀφωμοιωμένον', 240a8; 'συγγενές', 221d9, 227b1, 1, 228a8, b6, 264b2.

In the paper that I presented in the last IPS symposium in Paris,[8] I discussed and showed that the *Parmenides* examines the concept of similarity. When Zeno first introduces it in his *ad absurdum* argument against pluralists (128e-129b), Socrates suggests that positing the Forms of Similarity and Dissimilarity will solve the difficulty. However, in the infinite regress argument (132c–133a), the concept of similarity that represents the relation between Forms and sensibles, as between models and copies, turns out to be a cause of serious difficulties.[9] Therefore, in the second part of the *Parmenides*, similarity is discussed extensively as one of the features to examine in relation to the One, and Parmenides gives the following definition of 'similar': τὸ ταὐτόν που πεπονθὸς ὅμοιον (139e).

The Greek is very hard to translate, but literally, it means 'that which is affected the same is similar'.[10] This definition, in terms of Sameness, must be a critical hint as to how to solve the similarity problem. Here, it might be interesting to see how Aristotle took over this definition. He defines 'similar (ὅμοια)' in two passages in *Metaphysics*, in slightly different ways. In Chapter 9 of Delta (the so-called philosophical lexicon), he distinguishes three senses of 'similar':

> We call similar (ὅμοια) both things whose affections are the same (τὰ[11] ταὐτὸ πεπονθότα); and things more of whose affections are the same than other (τὰ πλείω ταὐτὸ πεπονθότα ἢ ἕτερα): and those whose quality is one. (Δ 9, 1018a15-17)

The first definition is exactly the same as Plato's, which was probably fashionable in the Academy, whereas the other passage in Chapter 3 of Iota presents four senses (1054b3-14) without using the phrase 'ταὐτὸ πεπονθός'.

While the *Parmenides* does not explain why 'ταὐτὸ πεπονθός' means 'similar', the *Sophist* gives us important clues for understanding this definition.

## *6. Affection means participation*

In the *Sophist*, the verb 'πάσχειν' and its noun 'πάθος' are used in the critical examination of Monists (especially Parmenides himself). The Eleatic visitor examines the relationship between 'one' and 'whole' in the following way:

8 Cf. Notomi, 2022.
9 For this argument, I follow the interpretation of Schofield, 1996.
10 Gill & Ryan, 1996, translate: 'whatever has a property the same is surely like'.
11 Manuscript $A^b$ and Alexander's commentary add πάντῃ, probably to balance with the next one.

> **EV.** Now something divided up into parts is not in any way prevented from having oneness as an affection (πάθος) covering all its parts, and from being in this way, one is both being all (πᾶν) and a whole (ὅλον).
> **Tht.** Of course not.
> **EV.** But is it not impossible for something affected (πεπονθὸς) in this way to be, itself, that one by itself? (245a)

In this argument, the Eleatic visitor introduces the two types of 'one', that is, the one itself (which has no part, nor is 'a whole') and one thing (which participates in Oneness and has parts as being 'a whole'). He argues that if being is one and a whole by having the affection (πάθος) of the one (πεπονθός), then being is no longer one (because it has many parts). This perplexing and strange argument aims not only to reject the monism of Parmenides but also to provide the basic scheme of treating the relationships between kinds. Being affected (πεπονθός) or having an affection (πάθος) means the thing's participation in Form. This condition of 'being affected' separates one thing from the one itself.

This terminology plays a crucial role in later dialogues. In *Timaeus* 37b, in discussing the World Soul as consisting of Sameness, Difference, and Being, Timaeus says, 'She (sc. the World Soul) declares with what thing, in what manner, how, and when that wherewith anything is the same, or than which it is other, *is and is predicated to be* (εἶναι καὶ πάσχειν)' (37b, trans. A. E. Taylor).[12] A. E. Taylor translated 'πάσχειν' as 'is predicated to be', and commented that such use of πάσχειν as the sense 'to have a certain predicate' is also seen in *Prm*. 139e, 140a, and *Euthphr*. 8d.[13]

Proclus commented on this extremely difficult passage and explained the expression 'εἶναι καὶ πάσχειν' in the following way:

> For Plato often signifies 'to participate (μετέχειν)' by 'to be affected (πεπονθέναι)', as we have learned in the *Sophist*, that when he states that to a thing affected a whole is one, it is not the one itself but that which participates in one… Then, he himself is accustomed to signify participations by 'to be affected', and to call all 'that participates in' being affected that in which it participates. (Proclus, *In Tim*. ii, 304.19-22, 26-28. Diehl)

12 W. R. M. Lamb: 'that each thing *is and is acted upon*'; D. Zeyl: 'they are the same or different and are characterized as such'.

13 Taylor, 1928, 177.

We can also confirm this explanation by looking at the *Parmenides* 129b, where Socrates puts forward the theory of Forms:

> But if he shows that things that participate (μετέχοντα) in both of these have both affections (πεπονθότα), there seems to me nothing strange about that.

Klaus Corcilius, in the examination of this part of the *Timaeus*, follows Proclus' interpretation and relates this passage to *Sophist* 245. He says that 'Plato speaks of the participation of the many in the one in terms of affection or 'undergoing' (πάθος, 245a1, πεπονθός, a5).' Correspondingly, the expression 'εἶναι καὶ πάσχειν' in the *Timaeus* 'can be taken to cover both intrinsic being (*einai*, *F*-ness) and what things are in virtue of partaking in intrinsic being, what they 'undergo' (*paschein*, being *F*-things).'[14]

It should be noted that in the later dialogues, 'participation (μετέχειν)' is not restricted to the relation between sensible things and Forms. Forms also participate in other forms.[15]

If, as suggested so far, Plato used the word 'be affected (πεπονθός)' for the participation relation, the definition of similarity will be understood. Just as a thing that participates in the one has an affection of a whole, so things that participate in Sameness are *similar*. This analysis strongly suggests that there is no Form of 'whole' because whole is an affection but not a Form. The same is true for 'similar'. I think this is why the Form of Similarity no longer appears in the dialogues in the *Sophist* or any subsequent one. This means that we can and should avoid using this confusing notion but explain 'similarity' in terms of sameness and difference.

Concerning 'πάσχειν' and 'πεπονθέναι' in this part, Fiona Leigh tried to show that it is the passive state of causation (ποιεῖν).[16] In the *Phaedo*, the Form is considered a cause of being in the sensible world. Although the pair of πάσχειν and ποιεῖν plays an important role in the Gigantomachia argument, I suspend the judgement as to whether 'affection', used in the refutation of Monists, implies the causal relation of Form on the things which participate in it.

14 Corcilius, 2018, 69.
15 Therefore, the word 'wholes' is used for the relation between kinds in 253c-d.
16 Leigh, 2010, 63-85.

### *7. The art of dialectic explicates similarities*

It is important that the *Parmenides* defines similarity not as an independent, basic concept but as a derivative from Sameness. Sameness has played a key role in the theory of transcendent Forms as well as in the combination of the greatest kinds in the *Sophist*.

In the earlier dialogues, Forms are grasped by focusing on *the same* form over many sensible things, and this focus leads us to the contemplation of the Forms. For example, in the *Meno*, Socrates asks the question of 'What is it?', and suggests that virtue as the object of enquiry should be one and *the same* form (ἕν τι εἶδος ταὐτόν, *Men.* 72c), and *the same* over all (ταὐτὸν ἐπὶ πᾶσιν, 75a).[17] Thus, Sameness is a criterion of the Forms over many sensible things. Further, the concept of sameness represents the self-identity of Forms and implies each Form's contrariety to its opposite Form (*Euthphr.* 7a)[18].

If we apply the definition of 'similar' to particular cases, we can reconstruct the argument of how to understand similarities and dissimilarities:

> [Similar things] A sensible thing A participates in Beauty itself, and another thing B participates in Beauty itself. The Form of Beauty is the same with itself. Therefore, beautiful A and beautiful B are similar.
>
> [Dissimilar things] A sensible thing A participates in Beauty itself, and another thing B participates in Ugliness itself. The Form of Beauty and the Form of Ugliness are different (not the same). Therefore, beautiful A and ugly B are dissimilar. In this case, even if one thinks that A and B are similar in beauty, that similarity is merely apparent.

How, then, can we understand the similarities and differences between the sophist and the philosopher? In the concluding remark of the combination of kinds, the Eleatic visitor criticises those who confuse the same and different. He says:

17 Bees are *the same* (ταὐτόν), although they are of many kinds (72c); health is *the same* (72d-e); strength is *the same* in respect to *the same* form (sc. strength) (72e). Further, in the *Symposium*, Diotima says to Socrates, 'It is quite mad not to regard the beauty in all bodies as one and *the same* (ἕν τε καὶ ταὐτόν)' (*Smp.* 210b). Socrates argues that all instances of courage are *the same* in all the cases (ἐν πᾶσι τούτοις ταὐτόν, *La.* 191e) and that all instances of piety are *the same* (ταὐτόν) and have one form (μίαν τινὰ ἰδέαν) in all the pious actions (*Euthphr.* 5d).

18 By contrast, the preservation and continuity of a thing is not absolutely the same, but that it leaves something new of that sort that it was (*Smp.* 208a-b).

> **EV.** Every time someone claims that a thing is the same when it is different or different when it is the same, we should understand just what way he means, and in what respect he is claiming it to *be affected* (πεπονθέναι) one or the other. To claim the same to be different, the different the same, the big small or the like, unlike in any old way, and delight in this sort of thing, forever countering with opposites in one's arguments. (259c-d)

If we consider that the verb 'be affected' expresses participation or predication in what partakes of Forms, the first advice is understood as clarifying the aspect and manner in which these predicates are applied. The opponent confuses the same and different, big and small, and similar and dissimilar. This statement indicates that the art of dialectic can distinguish between Sameness and Difference, and thereby observe relations between kinds. The Eleatic visitor described the dialectic as follows:

> **EV.** Are we not going to claim that dividing according to kinds (κατὰ γένη διαιρεῖσθαι), and not thinking either that the same form is different or, when it is different, that it is the same (μήτε ταὐτὸν εἶδος ἕτερον ἡγήσασθαι μήτε ἕτερον ὂν ταὐτὸν), belongs to expertise in dialectic? (253d)

However, the opponent ignores these differences and confuses them. He must be a sophist.[19] Thus, if we can correctly understand sameness and participation through dialectic, the confusion caused by similarities can be eliminated. Then, we can state the way and in which respect two things are similar or dissimilar. We will no longer be bothered by the assertion that one thing is at once similar and dissimilar to another.

### *8. Now we can determine the noble sophist*

Now, let us move forward to the distinction between the sophist and the philosopher. To distinguish between them, it is still crucial to understand the sixth definition of the sophist, namely the purifier of the soul. Is the so-called 'sophist of noble lineage' a real sophist or a philosopher like Socrates? Difficulties in 'similarity' arose when this definition was completed.

The Eleatic visitor compared this to the situation in which 'a wolf has quite a resemblance to a dog—the most savage of creatures to the gentlest'. The wolf and dog pair may be a common example to illustrate the difficulty

19 This person is called 'late-learner', who might well include Antisthenes.

of distinction. However, this pair is reminiscent of the pair of a sophist and a philosopher. The dog is generally a tame and clever animal, and is mentioned as a simile for the philosopher-rulers in the *Republic*. By contrast, wolves are known as wild, dangerous, and cunning. The poetic phrase 'as wolves love lambs', spoken by Socrates in the *Phaedrus*,[20] evokes the image of a sophist hunting young men. The sixth definition also states that the character 'gentle towards others' (cf. ἡμερούνται, 230b) belongs to those whose ignorance can be removed by the method of refutation. Thus, the pair of wolf and dog signifies the difficulty of dissociation between the sophist and the philosopher. The fact is that the sixth definition presents serious difficulties as to whether this specialist is considered a sophist or a philosopher.

We can see an important expression of this in the description of 'refutation (ἔλεγχος)'. Thus, the purifiers of the soul are described:

> **EV.** They use the conversation to collect those beliefs together and put them side by side, thereby revealing them as *contradicting* (ἐναντίας) one another, not just on the same subjects but in relation to the same things and in the same respects. (230b)

Is this the genuine method of refutation, such as that employed by Socrates, or is it a fake method of apparent refutation? If we have the right understanding of sameness and difference, we will confidently say that it is authentic.

This description evokes the law of non-contradiction, but in the final definition, the sophist turns out to be the maker of apparent contradictions that disguise genuine contradictions. I therefore proposed in my book that the sophist of noble lineage is a *Socratic* philosopher,[21] which turns out to be the case *after* a dialectical examination of the middle part of the dialogue.[22] Until this lengthy discussion, the sixth definition has not yet been determined.

### *9. How do we distinguish between the sophist and the philosopher?*

Can we now distinguish between the sophist and the philosopher? I believe not yet, for the relationship between them is not so simple as to participate

20 *Phdr.* 241d. Perhaps a Homeric allusion.

21 Here the dialecticians proposed and represented by the Eleatic visitor may be philosophers of a different kind, albeit brothers.

22 The evidence for this claim is the list of the sophists in the first outer part in 265a, which does not include the sixth definition. See Notomi, 1999, 275-277.

in different Forms. One might suppose that the philosopher participates in wisdom, whereas the sophist does not (but maybe participates in ignorance). However, there are reasons to be sceptical. As Socrates consistently reminds us, human beings do not possess wisdom or knowledge about the most important things (e.g. justice, beauty, and goodness). If so, we cannot say that the philosopher participates in wisdom, but we should say that philosophers seek wisdom with full awareness of their own ignorance. The sophist, by contrast, is not a possessor of wisdom either, but he pretends to know everything with faint awareness and suspicion. Therefore, to distinguish between the two, it is necessary to consider god as the third factor. In the *Sophist*, it is confirmed that god alone possesses the wisdom of all things (233a).

**God (wise)**
↑
***<imitating>***
↑ ⇖
**Human beings**
**Philosopher ← *<pretending>* ← Sophist**
***becoming like a god false appearance of a god***

*[Scheme 1: Relationship between god, philosopher, and sophist]*

This triangular scheme is illustrated by the paradigm of two kinds of image-making:

**Original**
↑
***<imitating>***
↑ ⇖
**Image (εἴδωλον)**
**Likeness (εἰκών) ← *<pretending>* ← Apparition (φάντασμα)**
***being like not being like***
***(true appearance) appearing to be like (false appearance)***

*[Scheme 2: Relationship between original, likeness, and apparition]*

Thus, the essence of the philosopher lies in the 'imitation of god', as the *Theaetetus* (176a-b) and other dialogues show. We remember that in the myth of the *Phaedrus*, the philosopher's soul is said to seek to become like the god. Although the dialogue *Sophist* does not state that philosophers belong to likeness-making, I believe that, as long as they are contrasted with the sophists as apparition-making, it is reasonable to see this contrast within image-making art.

### *10. Can we be philosophers?*

The sophist and the philosopher are to be distinguished on three levels. First, their distinction is made in the theoretical enquiry given in the dialogue. However, this distinction is not in isolation but is dependent on the other two. Second, the inquirers must demonstrate that their method of argumentation, including its definitions and distinctions, is philosophical and clearly different from sophistry. Otherwise, the enquiry itself will fail, and the distinction will collapse. Therefore, this performative level grounds the theoretical level. Third, the inquirers' attitude towards enquiry should be philosophical, that is, 'gentle' in the face of cross-examination and refutation, as opposed to the stubborn resistance of the sophist. This attitude is well illustrated in the concluding part of the *Theaetetus*. Socrates says to Theaetetus:

> **Soc.** And if you are barren, you will be less overbearing to those who keep company with you, and gentler (ἡμερώτερος), because you'll have the sense not to think you know what you don't know. (210c, trans. Rowe)

Now, we can clearly see that this gentleness is the condition of the philosopher, who is freed from dislearnability by the refutation of Socrates.

Like other dialogues, Plato's *Sophist* is not just a theoretical treatise discussing philosophical issues. We know that the *Phaedo* urges its readers to rid themselves of irrational fears and purify their souls.[23] Similarly, the *Republic* expects its readers to transform their own souls through their imaginations.[24] I believe that the later dialogues are also intended to encourage us, the readers of the dialogues, to practice dialectic.[25] The practice of dialectic and making us philosophers is the real purpose of discussing the distinction between the sophist, statesman, and philosopher.

23 Notomi, 2018.
24 Notomi, 2019.
25 *Plt.* 285d, 287a clearly states this aim.

If everyone, including Socrates and Plato, is suspected of being a sophist, we must prove through the correct method of dialectic that we are engaging in philosophy. Defining the sophist is an important part of that huge project, and if we succeed in this first task, we will become more like god and we will live a better life as philosophers. To do this, we must be aware of our own ignorance and take care of our souls. The dialogue *Sophist* must be the ideal guide for this project. The real target is definitely 'us'. We must confront the sophist within us.