Plato and the Sophists: eristic practice, cognition, and perception

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Plato and the Sophists:
Eristic Practice, Cognition, and Perception

by

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Abstract

This dissertation traces metaphysical, epistemological and cognitive developments in Plato’s canon from his earlier *Euthydemus* and *Charmides* to his great work on epistemology, the *Theaetetus*. I argue that Plato’s confrontation with eristic (the methodology of his philosophical predecessors, the sophists) presents him with a serious epistemological challenge that can only be met through the development of a philosophical theory of cognition and perception. I also argue that the *Theaetetus* only appears to be an aporetic dialogue; read in the context of Plato’s earlier work, it actually offers a series of refutations aimed at the theoretical assumptions that underpin the practice of sophistic eristic. I conclude by suggesting that the results of the *Theaetetus*’ arguments make possible his mature metaphysical and linguistic theory offered in the *Sophist*.

Chapter one begins by discussing the changes in the Greek view of the mind between Homer and Plato. Chapter two concerns Plato’s early dialogue the *Euthydemus*. In the *Euthydemus*, I contend, the sophists Euthydemus and Dionysodorus assume what I call “the eristic theory,” a set of metaphysical, epistemological and linguistic claims that underwrite the practice of sophistic refutation. It is usually assumed that sophistic eristic is constituted solely by the clever use of fallacy to persuade rather than logically convince. While I agree that clever use of fallacy is important, I argue that sophistic eristic is also constituted by challenging theoretical commitments. These commitments together entail epistemological infallibilism, a view that in the *Euthydemus* Socrates, I also argue, fails to refute. In chapter three I argue that all of the interlocutors of the
Charmides assume both a broad perceptual model of introspection and the functional identity of all cognitive processes. I further argue that these assumptions account for some of the epistemological puzzles of that dialogue that Socrates cannot solve.

In the final chapter I make the case that in the Theaetetus Plato both explicitly and implicitly challenges the sophistic theory of the Euthydemus and the perceptual/cognitive model of the Charmides. I conclude that while the Theaetetus ends in apparent failure to define knowledge, we see that philosophical progress is made in the refutation of the theory that underpins sophistic eristic and of a deficient theory of cognition, perception and introspection. This refutation clears the way for Plato to develop a more philosophically promising model of human cognition and language.
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1 Initial Considerations

Antisthenes foolishly claimed that nothing could be described except by its own proprietary account (*oikeios logos*), one account for one thing, from which it followed that there could be no contradiction, and almost that there could be no error.

(Aristotle, *Metaphysics* Δ 1024b33-5, tr. Chappell)

Indeed the ancients go so far as to identify thinking and perceiving … They all [e.g. Homer and Empedocles] look upon thinking as a bodily process like perceiving, and hold that like is understood, as well as perceived, by like… Yet they ought at the same time to have accounted for error also; for it is more intimately connected with animal existence and the soul continues longer in the state of error. They cannot escape the dilemma: either whatever seems is true (and there are some who accept this) or error is contact with the unlike: for that is the opposite of the knowing of like by like.

(Aristotle, *De Anima* III.3.427a24-427b5, tr. Smith)

Terrence Irwin has written that the original development of philosophical method and the original themes of philosophy are directly connected to the democratic institutions of ancient Athens.

Democracy encouraged the development of the argumentative and rhetorical skills that could present a persuasive case to a mass audience, but persuasive argument has to persuade its hearers by appeal to some principles that they can be presumed to share. Persuasive speakers in democratic Athens had to appeal to democratic principles; and in the course of appealing to such principles they came to articulate them, and also came to examine them.¹

Irwin claims that this examination of democratic principles leads Plato to confront sophists on both moral issues, e.g., whether justice is to be preferred over self-interest, and metaphysical or epistemological issues, e.g., whether there is an objective reality that

we can come to know. Philosophical theory, according to Irwin, even at its most abstract, was born in the practical world of public affairs. If Irwin is right, and I believe that he is, we ought to be able to trace some strand of this development from its inception in the political confrontations of classical Athens to its end point in philosophical theory.

It would be impractical, and likely unreasonable, to claim that all philosophical theories in classical Athens owe their themes and origins to specifically political aims. However, Plato’s dialogues are written during a time when the Greek understanding of the soul (psūchē) is drastically and permanently altered. Scholars are aware of this alteration.² The Homeric notion had located the soul in the head, lungs and heart, but not specifically in the psūchē. Language is also bodily, located primarily in the phrēn or phrenes, probably signifying the liver.³ Bremmer describes the psūchē in Homer as a bearer of individual identity after death, but not the locus of cognition, volition or emotion.⁴ The psūchē for Homer flies free of the body through the mouth, or through a wound, at the time of death and in moments of great bodily peril. It also may be free of the body during dreaming. Upon death, the soul leaves the body as a last exhalation before heading to the underworld. It is at times seen as a ghost, an eidōlon, a shadow of the person. The seat of emotion and volition in Homer is the thūmos, while the seat of thinking is the nous or phrenes; none of which are necessarily located in the psūchē.⁵

³ Il. II, 213. At times when words have a particularly strong emotional effect on the hearer, they are said to enter as a breath into, and sting, the phrenes. See Il. V, 493. For a discussion, see Lesher (1981) ppp. 15-17. Lesher refers to this as the “pneumatic theory of meaning” (p. 16).
⁵ For a discussion see von Fritz (1943) and Segal (1978). On the manner in which the psūchē is simply the breath that keeps the person alive see Darcus (1979).
Aristotle, by contrast, argues that not only is the *psūchē* a vital life force possessed by anything that lives, but it is also the source of thinking. It is clear that by the time Aristotle is writing, the *psūchē* has come to be the locus of a variety of cognitive, volitional, perceptual and emotional states. It is not just the bodily location, or lack thereof, of mental capacities that changes between Homer and Aristotle. A number of verbs for mental activity undergo a subtle but profound semantic shift at the time. Words like “epistēmē,” “aisthēsis” and “nous” are precisified in important ways. Prior to Plato “aisthēsis” has a broad semantic range: it means thought and recognition as well as perception. Plato narrows the meaning of the term to “perception” as we might use the word today: direct sensory awareness of external objects. It retains this narrower usage after Plato. This narrowing of the semantic range of *aisthēsis* is the result of Plato’s arguments in the *Theaetetus*.

What concerns drove Plato to differentiate between cognition and perception in this manner? This project attempts to answer this question. I shall argue that Plato’s later philosophy requires that cognitive and perceptual functions be distinguished from one another as a response to the practice of sophistic eristic. I shall argue, in other words, Plato’s epistemology and theory of the soul, as the seat of cognition and perception, is motivated by his confrontation with sophistic eristic as it is practiced in the democratic institution of classical Athens. In order to accomplish this task I shall examine some

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6 De An. 427a16-427b5. Aristotle is concerned to argue, of course, that plants have a nutritive *psūchē*, animals a perceptive and nutritive *psūchē*, while only humans have both of those aspects with an added intellectual faculty. All of these capacities are functions of *psūchē*.

7 See also, the tripartite *psūchē* of the *Republic*, which for Plato is the locus of all aspects of the cognitive, conative and emotional life of a person. For an argument that the disembodied *psūchē* is the only source of genuine knowledge in Plato see Gerson (2009).

8 See Moline (1981). *Eidenai* and *gignēskein* are also narrowed to purely cognitive uses in Plato’s later works.
important early dialogues in which sophistic eristic is discussed and displayed, and compare the assumptions and assertions of those dialogues to the later *Theaetetus*.

An excellent display of sophistic eristic, in which eristic is juxtaposed (and contrasted) with Socratic dialectic, is found in the *Euthydemus*. In chapter 2 I shall argue that the sophist-trained antagonists of that dialogue, the eponymous Euthydemus and his brother Dionysodorus, are more than just rapscallions with an aggressive argumentative style. Their approach to debate embodies a theoretic position with attendant epistemological, linguistic and metaphysical principles, a position that challenges the Socrates of that dialogue, and against which he has no good argument. His inability to refute Euthydemus and Dionysodorus’ principles is a failure for Socrates, and represents a threat to objectivity itself.

In chapter 3 we shall see that in another early dialogue, the *Charmides*, all of the interlocutors, Socrates included, make problematic assumptions about introspection that show that they have not properly distinguished between perception and cognition as distinct types of cognitive functions. Their failure to so distinguish fosters problematic dead-end arguments. Specifically, I shall argue that the interlocutors assume both that perception and cognition are identical and what I shall call a broad perceptual model of introspection. These assumptions lead them into difficulties in those dialogues.

In chapter 4 I shall look at Plato’s epistemological masterpiece, the *Theaetetus*. I shall argue that in this later dialogue Plato finally refutes the theoretical underpinnings of sophistic eristic and the broad perceptual model of introspection. This argument will

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9 The broad perceptual account of introspection makes introspection essentially a kind of perception. The idea that we “see” our mental contents in a manner identical to perception is sometimes called the theater of the mind view. I shall exaplain this model of introspection, and explore its consequences in detail in chapter 3.
proceed in two parts: first by interpreting the thesis that knowledge is perception, as it is
discussed in the first part of the dialogue, and connecting it to the theoretical assumptions
of the *Euthydemus*; and second by arguing that Socrates, in the later sections of the
dialogue, either implicitly or explicitly refutes both those eristic theoretical assumptions
and the broad perceptual account of introspection.

I have intentionally avoided direct examination of the central metaphysical works of
the middle period. This may seem surprising to my readers, for it is in the *Phaedo* that
Plato argues for the immortality of the *psūchē*. It is in the *Republic* that Plato argues that
the *psūchē* is tripartite. In a sense, those arguments need no work of the kind that I am
concerned with. Plato explicitly argues for those principles there, and we know what
motivates him plainly enough. Further, much work has been done on the psychology and
moral psychology of those dialogues. This project focuses rather on explaining what
fundamental philosophical concerns drive the later epistemological arguments of the
*Theaetetus* by finding those problems articulated in Plato’s own earlier dialogues. While
the *Theaetetus* is aporetic, in the sense that the interlocutors fail at their stated goal
(namely, to define *epistēmē*), my interpretation of that dialogue reads it as a success in its
refutation of key sophistic assumptions and assertions about the nature of the mind and its
relationship to the world. By the end of the dialogue, *epistēmē* is not successfully
defined, but the main rival to Plato’s epistemology is shown to be a failure. Plato’s own
metaphysical theory is neither positively refuted nor even impugned, but his rivals are

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10 I take these to include (at least) the *Phaedo, Meno, Symposium*, and *Republic*.
11 Of course, Plato argues that the *thūmos*, a source of emotion for Homer, probably located in the lungs,
    heart or chest, is actually a part of a complex *psūchē*. 
devastated. By the end of my project I hope to have offered support to Irwin’s thesis, by showing that the challenge of sophistic eristic drove Plato to develop an epistemology that relies on a better model of cognition and perception than the one he inherited.

It is important to point out that I am not concerned with whether or not Plato discarded the theory of Forms in his later period. This is a contentious issue, largely due to the fact that the theory is conspicuously absent in Plato’s later dialogues. Is it absent because Plato dropped the theory? Did he substantially alter the theory? Did he write later aporetic dialogues, like the *Theaetetus*, that fail because of the absence of the theory of Forms, as a means of displaying that you need the theory of Forms? My project does not answer these questions. That Plato must revisit and confront the eristic theory in the later dialogues is no evidence for either revisionist or unitarian readings of the dialogue. For whether Plato substantially altered, abandoned or maintained the theory, he still may have thought two things: (1) that the eristic theory is certainly wrong, and (2) that even if the theory of Forms is correct, there were still issues related to perception, intentionality and cognition that required his attention.

We shall see at the end of this project that the cognitive and epistemological advances of the *Theaetetus* are vital to the philosophical theories advanced in the *Sophist*. I will, at the end of the project, point to those connections, but developing them through careful examination of the *Sophist* and the *Statesmen* is beyond the scope of this project.

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2 The *Euthydemus*

§2.1 Introductory Comments

The *Euthydemus* is a lively confrontation between philosophy, as exemplified by the character Socrates, and sophistry, as exemplified by the two brothers Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, who claim to be highly skilled at fighting in arguments and *exelenchein*, refuting.¹ They claim to be so good at this that they can refute anything anyone says, whether true or false, and argue either side of a debate by employing a type of argument that Socrates calls “eristic”.² What provokes Socrates most is that they boldly assert that they can teach this art and that it is a kind of virtue. Socrates’ behavior throughout the dialogue stands in stark contrast to the behavior of the two brothers. He is supportive, exploratory and charitable; whenever possible he draws distinctions, offers clarifications and tries to push the young Clinias to pursue virtue. The brothers ignore necessary distinctions and requests for clarification and they engage in whatever tactics are necessary to confuse and befuddle the other interlocutors. Socrates' goal is the truth; the brothers' is victory, no matter how irrationally it is obtained.

While the *Euthydemus* is primarily about the confrontation between Sophistic eristic and philosophical dialectic, a number of allusions are made to later Platonic doctrine, and not all of the allusions are made by Plato's protagonist, Socrates. Euthydemus and Dionysodorus argue that everyone knows everything; Plato will have

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¹ *Euthd* 272b1.
² *Euthd* 272b1-2.
Socrates argue for a similar thesis in the *Meno*. In some of Socrates' comments, there is reference to a metaphysical doctrine of participation and even hints of Forms, prefiguring the discussions of Forms in *Republic* V-VII and the *Phaedo*. Further, Euthydemus and Dionysodorus argue that falsity and contradiction are impossible; themes to which Plato will return in the later *Cratylus*, *Theaetetus*, and *Sophist*. Noticing that these themes, which play such an important role in later Platonic thought, are left undeveloped in the *Euthydemus*, Charles Kahn has asked, "what is the point of these mysterious and semi-comic allusions to major concepts and problems"? His answer is that "The level of philosophical discussion in a Platonic dialogue is regularly correlated with the character and capacity of the interlocutor." Socrates' interlocutors in the *Euthydemus* are not sophisticated and open-minded, thus the level of discussion is not rigorously exploratory. Compare the characters Ctesippus and Clinias, from the *Euthydemus*, to the character Theaetetus, in the *Theaetetus*: Ctesippus and Clinias are fumbling and easily misled, whereas Theaetetus, based on a young mathematician who did make a real contribution to Greek number theory, has the capacity for abstract definition and conceptual subtlety. Because the *Euthydemus'* characters are so philosophically incapable they *broach*, but do not *explore*, philosophical issues. On Kahn's reading, the *Euthydemus* is an introductory text intended to exhort the reader to the study of philosophy - readers who may have been familiar with Sophistic argument *but not philosophy* will be enticed by Socrates' sincere and rational dialectical discussion. Also, by seeing a real philosopher juxtaposed with Sophists, one can compare their method, see what's different about them and take the

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3 Of course, the brothers do not argue that while the soul of everyone is omniscient from a previous life, it has forgotten and must remember; instead they argue that everyone knows everything and no one can ever be wrong, with no mention of the doctrine of *anamnēsis*.


time to look for the Sophist's tricks. The *Theaetetus*, on the other hand, is a genuine philosophical exploration of *epistēmē*, something merely broached in the *Euthydemus*.

In broad strokes, I agree with Kahn's answers to the questions about alluded themes and the purpose of the characters' abilities; but on his reading, two gaps in our understanding of Plato's philosophy become apparent. First, while Protagorean debating method and epistemological concerns are raised in the *Euthydemus* and *Theaetetus*, the epistemological problems raised in the *Theaetetus* do not simply map on to the problems of the *Euthydemus*. For example, the *Euthydemus* broaches the theme of omniscience; the *Theaetetus* never mentions this. Further, while there is a falsity problem in both dialogues, it is stated differently in each. There appears to be no explicit mention of cognition, perception, or memory in the *Euthydemus*, yet these are explicit in the *Theaetetus*. Also, the *Theaetetus* attempts to define knowledge, and while it is argued that everyone is omniscient in the *Euthydemus*, no definition of knowledge is considered. The two dialogues seem importantly connected in terms of certain epistemic themes, but not in others. So, the first gap concerns the exact nature of the connection between the two dialogues; I shall attempt to fill this gap in this chapter.

Second, early in the *Euthydemus*, Socrates shows the young Clinias, and also the reader, what is wrong with the brothers' first pair of arguments: he argues that they use the term *manthanein*, “learning”, ambiguously. It looks as if Plato has given us an example of how to refute the sophistic arguments contained in the *Euthydemus*. Thus, the sophistic arguments of the *Euthydemus* are fallacious and *Plato knows this*. But, if the

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6 As we shall see, at *Euthd* 293b-294a Euthydemus argues that everyone knows everything.
7 The brothers both argue that false beliefs and utterances are impossible at *Euthd* 283b3-288d4. Plato poses a form of the problem again at *Tht* 189a10-12. He does so again at *Soph* 238d-239a, and *Crat* 385e4-386d2, 429c5-429e2.
Euthydemus is a manual that purports to show us what is wrong with these sophistic arguments, then why explore the problems raised by these fallacious arguments in later dialogues? Why should we not, for example, consider the falsity and contradiction problems settled in the Euthydemus because the arguments in which the problems are raised are fallacious? So, from Kahn's reading, two gaps in our understanding of Plato's philosophy become apparent: we don't know the nature of the connection between the themes of the Euthydemus and those of the later Theaetetus, and we don't know why we need to revisit, in the Theaetetus, themes similar to those found in the Euthydemus which have already been shown to be supported by fallacious arguments.

In this dissertation I shall, in part, argue that Plato's later epistemological problems, as they are found in the Theaetetus, stem from his encounter with the clash between Socratic philosophical and Sophistic eristic method and from the failure of Socratic epistemology to account for the complexity of human cognition. To fill the first gap left by Khan’s reading, I shall argue that Dionysodorus and Euthydemus in the Euthydemus assume or argue for, respectively, certain linguistic, metaphysical and cognitive or epistemic principles that together entail a certain kind of epistemological infallibilism. As this is the infallibilism discussed in the Theaetetus this will fill the first gap left by Khan’s reading, I shall argue that Dionysodorus and Euthydemus in the Euthydemus assume or argue for, respectively, certain linguistic, metaphysical and cognitive or epistemic principles that together entail a certain kind of epistemological infallibilism.

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8 That the Euthydemus is written by Plato with the express purpose of contrasting eristic and dialectic is, to my knowledge, universally recognized. There is some dispute about which argument forms the central point being made about paideia (education). Rosamond Kent Sprague (1998) has argued that the only goals of the dialogue are these three: to show that virtue is teachable, that the sophists are not teachers of it because they don’t know it, and that the sophists can’t persuade anyone that they know virtue and that they can teach it. This is, I think, correct about the Euthydemus. Kent Sprague also argues that there is a philosophical theory of a sort behind eristic, but asserts, “Since Plato has really delivered the death-blow to the sophists' educational pretensions with Socrates’ ‘stupid question’ at the end of [286e], at a point not even halfway through the dialogue (in the sixteenth of the thirty-six Stephanus pages), it could be said that the rest of the Euthydemus consists in driving home an attack that has already been adequately grounded.” With this I disagree: the “stupid question” is not the death blow; and, I shall argue, Plato knows this and this is why (in part) he needed to write the Theaetetus.

9 It is generally taken to be the case that Plato’s main epistemological antithesis is relativism. For a full defense of this thesis see Gerson (2009). See also McCabe (2000), pp. 23-55. I shall later argue that the
gap in our understanding of Plato that stems from Kahn's reading - the nature of the connection between the themes of the *Euthydemus* and the themes of the *Theaetetus*. To fill the second gap, the issue of why we need to revisit themes in the *Theaetetus* which are found in fallacious arguments in the *Euthydemus*, I shall argue that Socrates and the other interlocutors of the *Euthydemus* fail to properly engage and refute Dionysodorus and Euthydemus’ infallibilistic epistemology.¹⁰

## §2.2 Outline of the Euthydemus

The dialogue begins when Socrates meets his friend Crito, we do not know where. Crito states that, on the day before, he had seen Socrates talking to some young men in the Lyceum; he asks Socrates what they were discussing.¹¹ Socrates then recounts, from memory and apparently word for word, the discussion he had with the young men. Because I am concerned with the epistemic issues that follow from sophistic eristic, I shall focus on the sophistic-trained brothers' arguments, not so much on Socrates' arguments. This is not to say that the rest of the dialogue is unimportant, but this project is narrowly focused on putting together the epistemological assumptions of sophistic eristic, so we will focus on those arguments that are concerned with learning, knowing,

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¹⁰ I have mentioned that the *Euthydemus* contains allusions to the middle period theory of Forms, but I will not be concerned with middle-period metaphysics and participation. The focus of this project is an interpretation of the *Theaetetus*, and these themes are notoriously absent from the *Theaetetus*. Samuel Scolnicov (1988) has argued that there is more than just method and education on display in the *Euthydemus*, but his focus is primarily the Socratic or Platonic metaphysical theory and its connection to the dialectic. Relatively little work is done on the sophistic eristic’s metaphysical commitments. If I am right, a better understanding of the eristic commitments of the *Euthydemus* can deepen our understanding of the *Theaetetus*.

¹¹ *Euthd* 271a1-272d7.
speaking and other cognitive functions. I will refer to other relevant parts of the text as well, but these arguments are our primary concern. The important sections are:

275d-278e: The brothers Dionysodorus and Euthydemus state that they can teach virtue and that it consists of an argumentative fighting style which Socrates calls eristic. They take turns practicing this art on the younger Clinias, arguing an absurdity: it is the wise who learn, not the ignorant and it is the ignorant who learn, not the wise. They follow by arguing another absurdity: that learners only learn what they know, and they only learn what they do not know.

278e-283b: Socrates offers a rejoinder to the first two pairs of arguments: that they trade on an ambiguity in the word 'learn'.

283b3-288d4: The brothers argue that falsity is impossible, contradiction is impossible and that phrases cannot have a sense.

§2.3 The Protagorean Sophists on Learning and Teaching

The first four arguments we will consider are performed by the brothers on Clinias, a young man about whom we know very little. He seems to be neither philosophically nor rhetorically capable because he rarely defends himself, relying instead on Ctesippus, who may be romantically interested in him, and Socrates, who is concerned that he become virtuous. The central theme of these first four arguments is the concept of manthanein, learning. In this section we will see that the brothers' first four arguments imply a certain kind of attack on the traditional Greek or common sense notion of an expert who has the epistemic justification to teach what he knows.12

The first pair of arguments form a natural pair because the second argument concludes with the contradiction of the conclusion of the first argument. Clearly Euthydemus and Dionysodorus are making good on their claim that they have the ability

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12 This notion of an "epistemic justification to teach" will become clear in the analysis to follow.
to argue both sides of any issue. The first argument of this pair has an epistemic tone to it, being about learning:

The First Learning Argument: Only the Ignorant Learn

1. There are teachers.
2. The teachers are teachers of those who learn (*manthanein*).
3. Learners do not know what they are learning.
4. If one is not wise (*sophos*) then one is ignorant (*amathēs*).
5. In the process of learning what one does not know, one is ignorant.
6. Therefore, while learning one is ignorant.
7. Therefore, it is the ignorant who learn.\(^\text{13}\)

But the boys aren't done yet. Dionysodorus takes over to offer a very short argument concerning dictation:\(^\text{14}\)

The Second Learning Argument: Only the Wise Learn

1. In taking dictation the wise learn and the ignorant do not.
2. Therefore, it is the wise who learn.\(^\text{15}\)

The next argument, the first in another connected pair of arguments, also revolves around learning, *manthanein*. Euthydemus has asked Clinias if the learners learn what they know, *epistasthai*, or what they do not know. Clinias has, of course, answered that learners learn what they do not know.

The Third Learning Argument: One Learns Only What One Knows

1. Assume a learner knows (*epistasthai*) all his letters.
2. If a teacher dictates, he dictates letters.
3. Therefore, if a learner knows his letters, he learns (*manthanein*) what he knows.\(^\text{16}\)

\(^\text{13}\) *Euthd.* 275d3-276b9.
\(^\text{14}\) The image is of a student learning to write Greek by taking dictation from a teacher.
\(^\text{15}\) *Euthd.* 276c1-c9.
\(^\text{16}\) *Euthd* 276d6-277b10.
This short argument purports to present a counterexample to what Clinias has said:

Clinias says that learners learn what they do not know, while Euthydemus has showed him that, at least sometimes, learners learn what they do know. But, of course, the brothers are still not done with poor Clinias. Dionysodorus quickly picks up the debate with the following.

The Fourth Learning Argument: One Learns Only What One Does Not Know

1. Learning is the acquisition (\(\text{lambanein}\)) of the knowledge (\(\text{epistēmē}\)) of what one learns. Knowing is already having (\(\text{echein}\)) knowledge.
2. Not knowing is not yet having knowledge.
3. Those who acquire something are those who do not already have it.
4. Those who don't know belong to the group of those who do not already have something [specifically the knowledge of the thing they will learn].
5. Therefore, learners belong to those who acquire knowledge, not those who have it.
6. Therefore, it is those who do not know who learn.\(^{17}\)

The fact that the first two pairs of arguments revolve around the theme of education is no coincidence, but in fact relates directly to the main themes of the dialogue - teaching virtue. That teaching virtue is a theme of the dialogue does not require a defense - Socrates explicitly states that he will, with his own arguments, show the brothers what he means by teaching virtue. Likewise, the brothers, with their own arguments, show Socrates what they mean by teaching virtue. However, that cultural relativism is a central theme of the Learning Arguments is not explicitly stated in the *Euthydemus*, nor is it obvious; so I shall argue this now.

One important ramification of the Learning Arguments is that the brothers make a mockery of the traditional concept of teaching, where teaching is understood as something done by genuine experts in a particular field for non-experts. In the opening

\(^{17}\) *Euthyd* 277b11-c13.
conversation, at *Euthydemus* 273c-d, Socrates says to Clinias that the brothers know "not small matters, but great matters" like fighting in armor and winning in court. These would be traditional and legitimate matters of expertise - of importance to a young Athenian man's education. But the brothers respond to Socrates' laudation of their expertise by laughing and saying that they are "no longer serious about these things" but are now practitioners of what they call virtue, *aretē*. They then state that they can teach their version of virtue "better than any person and faster" and do this by presenting the above four arguments to Clinias.\(^{18}\) If the first and fourth Learning Arguments, that the ignorant learn, are good arguments, then students are ignorant and teachers are wise - the common sense and traditional Greek relationship between teacher and student. According to the common sense view teacher have knowledge of a subject matter, like fighting in armor or mathematics, and in virtue of this fact are to be considered teachers of the subject. However, the second and third Learning Arguments conclude that students already know what they are being taught, and are already wise - and these conclusions, if the arguments supporting them were good, would impugn the traditional concept of teaching. But which should we conclude the brothers would subscribe to? The answer is both, for taken together, the Learning Arguments raise doubts that the traditional concept is right. Thus, by refuting Clinias four times with arguments about learning they establish themselves as more authoritative than traditional teachers in virtue of their ability to refute.

We should be concerned to try to spell out the teaching standard as the brothers understand it, and to contrast that with the standard view of teaching. To that effect, let \(x\)

\(^{18}\) The passage where the brothers talk about their new skill to Socrates is *Euthyd* 272d7-275d3.
and \( y \) stand for two distinct knowing agents and \( S \) stand for any subject matter. The common sense view of teachers is constituted by the following epistemic standard:

**Common Sense Standard:** \( x \) is a legitimate teacher of \( y \), if \( x \) has more knowledge of a certain subject than \( y \).\(^{19}\)

Because the Learning Arguments call into doubt the traditional model, and the brothers have stated that they are teaching *by performing* the Learning Arguments, it follows that they reject the Common Sense Standard. Their standard to determine whether one is a legitimate teacher is directly related, instead, to *what they are doing to Clinias*; i.e., attempting to refute, or merely persuade, him. The brothers' standard for a legitimate teacher is:

**Eristic Standard:** \( x \) is a legitimate teacher of \( y \) if \( x \) is capable of eristically refuting \( y \).

It should be noted that the brothers do not, at this point, make any epistemic claims beyond who is a legitimate teacher. They have not claimed that *all beliefs* are epistemically justified relative to an individual knower, nor that all truth is relative to a knower - those are stronger claims than what is implied by the Learning Arguments. Later we'll see that the argument against the possibility of falsity, if sound, does mean that there are no experts, and that this reinforces the Eristic Standard for the legitimacy of a teacher. However, after the Learning Arguments, the brothers have simply done the following two things: replaced the Common Sense Standard for being a legitimate teacher with the Eristic Standard, and shown that they themselves are legitimate teachers of Clinias and anyone else who cannot refute them.

\(^{19}\) "More knowledge" is left intentionally vague here. "More" could be quantitative in the sense of more true beliefs and less false beliefs with respect to \( S \), or it could be qualitative - experts in \( S \) can be able to do things with respect to \( S \), like produce dissertations, houses that are square, or mathematical proofs, etc...
After the fourth Learning Argument is given, Socrates stops Clinias’ argument and attempts to diagnose the problem that allows the brothers to argue for contradictory conclusions in the Learning Arguments. This passage is quite important, for here Socrates lays the brothers' tactics bare; thus, we can see what Plato himself thinks about their method and the fallacies they employ.\footnote{Because Socrates doesn't name the fallacy, or even use a term like 'fallacy' in his discussion, there is some controversy as to which fallacy is being committed in these arguments. Sprague sees these arguments as committing either a dicto secundum quid ad dictum simpliciter or a plurium interrogationum, see Sprague (1962, ch. 1). Chance (1992, ch.2) sees a fallacy of equivocation. I agree with Chance that the brothers commit a fallacy of equivocation, but of course, in any one argument there is room for more than one fallacy. Which fallacy is committed will not affect my reading.}

Socrates says:

...people use the word “learn” not only in a situation in which a person who has (echein) no knowledge (episciēmē) of a thing (pragma) in the beginning acquires (lambanein) it later, but also when he who has this knowledge already uses it to inspect (episkopein) the same thing, whether this is something spoken or something done. (As a matter of fact, people call the latter "understand" (sunienai) rather than "learn", but they do sometimes call it "learn" as well).\footnote{Euthd 277e3-278a5, trans. Rosamond Kent Sprague. All references to the Euthydemus are from Plato: Complete Works, Hackett (1997) modified, except as otherwise noted.}

Socrates’ strategy is to disambiguate the word 'learning'; for him there are two senses of the word:

First Sense of ‘Learning’ (lambanein): Acquiring what one does not have.

It is important to see how this responds to the Learning Arguments. According to Socrates, it may be the ignorant who acquire knowledge, but it is the wise who understand it, and not vice versa. In the first Learning Argument manthanein is lambanein, knowledge acquisition; while in the second manthanein is sunienai, understanding, because the learner uses knowledge of writing to learn about writing.

Thus in one sense the wise learn, and in another sense the ignorant learn. Socrates'
disambiguation applies to the third and fourth learning arguments as well. In the third, again, learners use knowledge of writing to get better at it, and so they come to understand, *sunienai*, what they already have acquired; but in the fourth the learners learn what they *do not* know when they are acquiring it. Thus, in one sense one learns what one *does know*, and in another sense, one learns what one *does not* know. Socrates has thus refuted the overall conclusion of the Learning Arguments, that the Eristic Standard holds, on the grounds that they all commit the fallacy of equivocation, though he does not use that terminology. The result of his refutation of the Learning Arguments is, of course, that the common sense standard of legitimate teaching is reasserted over the brothers' eristic standard - the brothers are not legitimate teachers any longer. If the brothers want to succeed in proving that they are legitimate teachers, they will need to reestablish the eristic standard.

§2.4 Protagorean Truth I: The Impossibility of Falsity

After Socrates disambiguates the word ‘learning’ he questions Clinias, eventually getting Clinias to agree that, because knowledge is the source of good fortune and rightness, everyone ought to become wise. Dionysodorus’ response to Socrates’ exhortation to virtue is to argue that Socrates and the others wish Clinias dead by wishing him to be wise. Ctesippus, becoming irritated, warns Dionysodorus not to tell lies

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22 For an alternative analysis, see Chance (1992, pp. 39-40) who argues that the arguments which equivocate over the verb ‘to learn’ assume that learning is possible, something that Parmenides denies. He thus connects Parmenides’ metaphysics with the brothers’ method. How this works is left vague.

23 The full argument runs: You wish Clinias not to be unwise, it follows that you wish him to not be. Therefore, you wish him dead.
about him. Euthydemus refutes Ctesippus by arguing that, because telling any lie is impossible, telling a lie about him is also impossible.  

The First Falsity Argument: One Can Only Speak Truly

1. If one lies, then one speaks the thing (to pragma) about which the sentence (logos) is.
2. If one speaks the thing about which the sentence is, he speaks one of the things that are (to on), and no other of the things that are.
3. Therefore, one who speaks, speaks what is.
4. If one speaks what is, one speaks truly.
5. Thus, Dionysodorus does not lie about Ctesippus.

Ctesippus, in response to the First Falsity Argument, suggests that the person who speaks "these things [i.e., what Dionysodorus said about him, that he wants Clinias dead] does not speak things that are (ou legein ta onta)". Euthydemus takes his comment to mean that Ctesippus thinks it is possible to 'speak what is not', legein to mē on, and so immediately refutes this.

The Second Falsity Argument: One Cannot Speak Falsely

1. The things that are not (to mē on) surely do not exist (ouk estin).
2. Then there is nowhere (oudamou) that the things that are not (to mē on) are.
3. There is no possibility that any person whatsoever could do (prattein) anything to the things that are not so as to make them (poiein) be when they are nowhere (mēdámou).
4. When orators speak, they do (prattein) something.
5. If they do (prattein) something, they make (poiein) something.
6. Speaking (legein) is doing and making.

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24 Versions of these arguments as presented in the Sophist and Theaetetus have attracted a lot of commentary. F1 and F2 are representative of a theme which occurs throughout Plato's life and works: the problem of false speech and false belief. Plato poses some form of problem again at Tht 189a10-12, Soph 238d-239a, Crat 385e4-386d2, 429c5-429e2. He takes the problem to be solved in the Sophist. The interpretation I shall take of this passage borrows much from Owen's analysis of the Sophist [Owen 1999], though I shall, for now, stay focused on the argument as it is presented in the Euthydemus.

25 Euthd 283e6-284a.

26 Euthd 284b1-4.

27 The Greek term oudamou means nowhere. It is contrasted with pou, somewhere. Both are used in as terms of spatial location or place - either not in a particular place, or in a particular place, respectively.
7. No one is capable of making something that is not (to mē on).
8. Therefore, nobody speaks (legein) what is not (to mē on).
9. Therefore, nobody tells lies.
10. Therefore, if Dionysodorus does speak, he speaks the truth (alēthè) and things that are.\[28\]

It follows from line 10 that if Dionysodorus speaks falsely and things that are not, he has not spoken at all. This argument is complex and contains a bevy of assumptions and suppressed premises. In order to facilitate an easy analysis of the Second Falsity Argument, I shall demarcate 5 stages of the argument. Lines 1-2 are the first stage; line 3 is the second stage; lines 4-6 are the third stage; line 7 is the fourth stage; finally, lines 8-10 are the fifth stage. I shall briefly discuss each stage in order to both make explicit some suppressed premises and point out some important aspects of each stage. I shall argue the following: first, in the Falsity Arguments the brothers present a valid, if perhaps unsound argument that no one can make a false sentence, or logos; second, the brothers assume an important linguistic principle about how words get their meaning, which I shall call the Eristic Linguistic Principle, in the Second Falsity Argument; third, Socrates and Ctesippus have no adequate response to the Falsity Arguments nor to the motivating assumptions of F1 and F2; fourth, their failure to present an adequate response allows brothers to uphold their own Eristic Standard for the legitimacy of a teacher.

The first stage of F2, a short enthymematic argument, runs from line 1 to line 2. Line 2 is meant to be a conclusion; the following premise is suppressed:

1.5. The things that do not exist are nowhere.

Stated more precisely, if some particular thing does not exist, then that thing is nowhere.

It follows from this by modus tollens that if some particular thing is somewhere then that

\[28\] Euthd 284b3-c9.
thing exists. We should be careful not to take this principle too strongly; it is a
metaphysical principle of sorts, but it is not a controversial one in that it is not an
expression of materialism against dualism, because it does not follow that if something
exists it must be somewhere. Both the dualist and the materialist will agree that if an
object is in a particular place somewhere, it exists; though the dualist will add that at least
some things that are nowhere, not in any particular place, also exist; vis., souls and divine
beings. As such 1.5 is neutral with respect to the dualism/materialism debate - it simply
expresses a common sense and generally agreed belief that things that do not exist do not
have a spatial location. It also connects directly to the next stage of F2, which is only line
3, and contains an unsupported metaphysical assertion: no one can do anything to make a
non-being into a being when that non-being is nowhere. Line 3 relies on an important
principle - one can only act, in such a way as to create something, on things that are. As
such, line 3 states that creation ex nihilo is impossible. A certain common sense
metaphysical (CSM) picture thus emerges from the first 2 stages of the second Falsity
Argument:

CSM: There are at least two kinds of things (pragmata), beings (to on)
and non-beings (to mé on). Non-beings have no spatial location. Beings
have spatial location. Non-beings cannot be acted on in such a way as to
use them to create beings.29

As we’ll see CSM will play an important role in establishing the conclusion of the

Second Falsity Argument.

29 By conversational implicature, we perhaps can assume that CSM also states that all beings, ta onta, are
somewhere. But, this is neither expressly stated in F2 nor is it entailed by F2. Because it will not affect my
reading of F2 and would require too much defense, I have chosen to leave it out of CSM. Also, a
contemporary philosopher might object to this way of talking, that the non-beings are a type of thing,
because it seems to reify non-beings. Such a philosopher might say that the empty set is treated by CSM as
if it was filled with things called non-beings; but the empty set should be empty. However, Euthydemus,
like a modern English speaker, takes the word 'thing', 'pragma' to be capable of referring to fictions as well
as real things, so we need not see him as reifying non-beings.
Lines 4-6, the third stage of F2, are, I argue here, a valid argument concluding at line 6. Crucial steps are not made explicit in F2, but we can easily supply them in the following seven-line proof:

1. If one speaks one does something [this is line 4 of F2].
2. If one does something, one makes something [this is line 5 of F2].
3. Assume that one is speaking [opening an assumption for conditional proof].
4. One is doing something [by modus ponens with 1 and 3].
5. One is making something [by modus ponens on 2 and 4].
6. One is doing something and making something [Conjunction introduction on 4 and 5].
7. Therefore, if one is speaking one is doing something and making something [by conditional proof, 3-6] [this is line 6 of F2].

The above proof shows that line 6 of F2 follows from lines 4 and 5. Of course, this is not a terribly contentious conclusion to say that speaking is a species of doing and making; though, we might ask what it is that they think is made when speech occurs successfully. The answer can be given in part with a judicious application of common sense - we make words and sentences with speech. Also, this is supported by the previous argument F1, at F1’s line2: If one speaks the thing about which the sentence (logos) is, one speaks one of the beings (to on) and no other being (to on). We can conclude that by line 6, F2 has established that when speaking one makes a logos.30

The fourth stage of F2 starts from the claim that people cannot make a "thing that is not". This is like, but subtly different from, line 3 of F2. Recall that line 3 said that no one can have an effect on non-beings such as to make them exist. Line 7 expands on this asserting that no one is capable of making a non-being in any sense whatsoever. Given line 7 of F2, we can expand on CSM by adding this further principle, resulting in:

30 Of course, logos has a wide variety of meanings in Greek. But, in this context it clearly means what we might mean by 'sentence' in English, even if the sentence is only one word.
CSM: There are at least two kinds of things (*pragmata*), beings (to *on*) and non-beings (to *mē on*). Non-beings have no spatial location. Beings have spatial location. Non-beings cannot be acted on in such a way as to use them to create beings. No one can make a non-being.

CSM supplies the bare-bones picture of a metaphysics that denies the possibility of creation *ex nihilo*. The importance of CSM will become clearer in the fifth and final stage of F2.

The fifth stage of F2 runs from lines 8-10. Line 8 is supposed to be a conclusion: *therefore* nobody speaks what is not. But, how do we get from "no one is capable of making what is not" to "nobody speaks what is not"? While it is true that by line 6 of F2 the brothers seem to hold that when speaking one makes a sentence (*logos*), it is not at all clear why this cannot be a false *logos* — certainly a false *logos* is just as much a being (to *on*) as a true one. But in the rest of F2, the brothers argue that one cannot make a false sentence because it results in making something that is not. So, really, the question we must ask is why must a false *logos* be a non-being, a to *mē on*?

I suggest here that the best way to understand how a false *logos* is a non-being is to supply a principle that explains how *logoi* are constituted. The following linguistic principle does the work of connecting lines 1-7 of F2 with line 8:

**Eristic Linguistic Principle:** An entire sentence (*logos*) gets its meaning and truth-value in virtue of the fact that it refers to a being (to *on*).31

We must take note of two important ramifications of Eristic Linguistic Principle.

First, phrases like 'Theaetetus is a mathematician' *must* be about, not just Theaetetus, but...
Theaetetus *the mathematician*; and 'Theaetetus flies' *must* be about, not just Theaetetus, but the *flying* Theaetetus. The Eristic Linguistic Principle thus denies that the meaning of a sentence is compositionally determined by the meaning of its parts. Second, the meaning of every token instance of a sentence is determined not just in a manner identical to the manner in which the truth-value of that token sentence is determined, but the *same token instance of reference determines the truth-value and meaning of the logos*. Thus, every time one speaks and makes a *logos*, one's *logos* must be both true and meaningful *because* it must be about a certain being, a *to on*. This may make the principle seem implausible to the contemporary reader; however, we must consider how the principle comports with the text before we decide that not even the sophist brothers would hold it.

If we hold that Eristic Linguistic Principle is assumed by the brothers, the Second Falsity Argument is coherent. The conclusions of the various stages are:

Stage 1, 2 and 4: Non-beings are not anywhere in space, and creation *ex nihilo* is impossible.
Stage 3: If one speaks then one makes a *logos*.
Stage 5: No one speaks what is not.

According to stage 3, when we speak we make a *logos*. If an entire *logos* gets its meaning and truth value in virtue of the fact that it refers to a being (*to on*), then in order to make a *logos* one must be able to successfully refer to a being. It follows that if there were false *logoi*, they would have to refer to non-beings, but according to the linguistic principle, such a *logos* would have no meaning at all, it would thus not be a *logos*. It follows that *false* logoi are *non-beings themselves*. By stages 1-4 we cannot make such things. Thus, the first four stages of the Second Falsity Argument and the Eristic
Linguistic Principle together entail that no one speaks what is not. I stress that they entail that no one speaks what is not – the Second Falsity Argument, on my reading, is a valid argument that shows that when one speaks one either speaks truly or is merely making noise.32

Ctesippus, in response to the Falsity Arguments, tries to press his point even further; he says that there is also speaking "in a certain way (tropon tina) and not as is the case (ou hōs echei) about (peri) things that are (to on)."33 To this highly plausible suggestion Dionysodorus responds with a red herring: "Are there some persons who speak of things that are, whether they are?"34 Ctesippus responds that upstanding persons, hoi kalloi k’agathoi, and those who speak the truth, speak things that are.35 The brothers’ eristic strategy after the Falsity Arguments is clear enough: move quickly and draw your opponent's attention to something else (a veiled insult to his social status helps do this); thus not allowing anyone time to disambiguate or dwell on what has been said. And it worked on Ctesippus, his attention has been drawn away from how it is possible to make false statements and focused instead on the kind of people who tell the truth. As a result he never gets to expand on how speaking "in a certain way and not as is the case about things that are" can respond to the Falsity Arguments, and Socrates doesn't either.

32 Compare this to what Cratylus says in the much later dialogue, the Cratylus. “In my view one can neither speak nor say anything falsely.” When asked by Socrates what he would say about a person who misidentified a person by getting that person’s hometown and parentage wrong, Cratylus says, “… he’s just making noise, acting pointlessly, as if he were banging on a brass pot.” [Crat 429e-430a] Aristotle attributes to Cratylus an even stronger position than Plato writes him as holding: Cratylus held that the physical world was in such flux that one could not say anything truthful at all about it. [Metaph 1010a1-14] Clearly, the position that Plato, in the Euthydemus, writes the brothers as holding is one that others may have also held; i.e., that the meaning of a sentence is determined by the sentence’s token act of reference.
33 Euthd 284c10-11, emphasis mine.
34 Euthd 284d1-2
35 Strictly speaking, kalloi k'agathoi means 'good and beautiful' and is a term reserved for the well-born in Greek society. Reeve translates it 'gentleman'; if one takes the historical sense, a man with the behavioral traits indicative of his high social standing, the translation is accurate.
It's important to note that the Falsity Arguments don't contain an argument for the Eristic Linguistic Principle and neither Ctesippos nor Socrates are on to the brothers' trickery and so they offer no counterarguments against it. More importantly, neither Socrates nor Ctesippos argue against the conclusion of the second Falsity Argument - that falsity is impossible. We are left wondering just how it is that phrases can be about something at all, let alone how they can be wrong and about something. It's not sufficient to just say that one can speak "in a certain way and not as is the case about things that are". We must ask how it is possible to refer successfully to \( x \) with a \( \textit{logos} \), and yet be wrong about \( x \). This cannot be explored further in the \textit{Euthydemus} and needs a deeper exploration. It follows that Socrates and the other interlocutors of the \textit{Euthydemus} fail to properly engage and refute the Falsity Arguments. Specifically, a successful refutation of them must show that the Eristic Linguistic Principle is false.

One might object to what I have argued so far, that Socrates does not directly engage the falsity arguments, by pointing to Socrates' comments about them at 286c-287a. Socrates responds to the Falsity Arguments by saying that the followers of Protagoras made use of these arguments, and that they amount to the claim that each person must either speak the truth or not speak - this is not the 'must' of moral imperative; rather, Socrates is saying that the brothers' argument concludes that it is simply not metaphysically or physically possible to think or say something false. Socrates then questions Dionysodorus, giving us the following argument:

The Socratic Quietude Argument

1. Thinking (\textit{doxazein}) and speaking what is not is impossible [granting Dionysodorus the results of the Falsity Arguments].
2. Thus, there is no false opinion (*doxa*) [because false opinion is silent false speech made in the mind].
3. Thus there is no ignorance and there are no ignorant persons.
4. Thus, there is no such thing as a refutation.
5. Thus there is no possibility of making a mistake in action, speech or thought.
6. Dionysodorus and Euthydemus came to teach virtue.
7. Teaching can only occur when the students can be wrong or make mistakes.
8. Thus what Dionysodorus and Euthydemus came to do is pointless.  

Socrates’ refutation of the brothers is brilliant: rather than confront them with his own dueling linguistic, cognitive or metaphysical claims, it reduces them to quietude. If there are no incorrect opinions and it is the teacher's job to correct opinions, then teachers who follow the brothers’ Eristic Standard have nothing to teach. However, it's important to see what the argument is, and what it is not. It *is* an attempt to reduce the brothers to a pragmatic contradiction: it follows from their denial of falsity that teaching is pointless, then *by teaching* they pragmatically contradict themselves. It *is not*, however, a refutation of any claim that was made in the Falsity Arguments, nor a denial of the conclusion of those arguments – in fact it expressly, in line 1, assumes that the Falsity Arguments are good. *In practice* Socrates shows them, by having exhorted Clinias to virtue, that they do not behave as if they believe in the impossibility of falsity.

The result of Socrates’ failure to directly refute the principles and conclusions of the Falsity Arguments is that the discussion can proceed as if no one can speak what is not. Recall the Common Sense Standard for the legitimacy of a teacher: *x* is a legitimate teacher of *y* if *x* has more knowledge of a certain subject than *y*. Even if what Socrates says in his Quietude Argument is right, there can be no ignorance. So, no person can claim to have more knowledge than any other. Because no one can have more

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36 *Euthd*. 286b8-287b2.
knowledge than anyone else, it follows that the Common Sense Standard can’t be right. In fact, if Socrates really does accept the Falsity Arguments then the Quietude Argument is a double-edged sword because it applies equally to Socrates himself. However, if we take it to be the case that winning in an argument is the standard for legitimacy then the brothers are the true teachers. Thus, the Common Sense Standard loses out to the Eristic Standard if the Falsity Arguments go un-refuted.

In conclusion, in this discussion on Protagorean truth I have argued the following: first in the Falsity Arguments the brothers present a valid, if perhaps unsound argument that no one can make a false logos; second, the brothers assume the Eristic Linguistic Principle in the Falsity Arguments; third, Socrates and Ctesippus have no adequate response to the Falsity Arguments nor to those arguments’ motivating assumptions; fourth and finally, their failure puts the brothers in a position to uphold their own Eristic Standard and thus their own version of virtue - the power to refute. If my interpretation is good, the falsity arguments are a tipping point for those who want to uphold the Commonsense Standard for the Legitimacy of a Teacher and its sensible epistemology of expertise.

§2.5 Protagorean Truth II: The Impossibility of Contradiction

As soon as Euthydemus refutes Ctesippus on the possibility of false speech, Ctesippus gets angry; the whole affair seems a mere word from physical violence when Socrates calms everyone down and Ctesippus states that he was not abusing either of the brothers, just contradicting one of them. Dionysodorus claims that Ctesippus must think that contradictions exist and proceeds to refute him on this point. In this section I will
argue that, in addition to the Eristic Linguistic Principle and CSM, the brothers assume a further metaphysical principle and two very important cognitive principles.

The argument against the possibility of contradiction proceeds as follows:

The Non-contradiction Argument:

1. There are *logoi* about each of the beings.\(^{37}\)
2. The *logoi* are about each being as it is (*hōs estin*), not as it is not (*hōs ouk estin*).
3. Since no one speaks *what* is not, as has been argued [in the Falsity Arguments], it follows that no one speaks of things *as* they are not.
4. If two people are speaking the *logos* of the same thing (*autos pragma*), then they are saying the same thing and so are not contradicting one another.
5. If two people do not speak the *logos* of the same thing (*autos pragma*), they do not have the same thing in mind (*mimnēskein*) at all and so are not contradicting one another.
6. If one person, A, speaks the *logos* of a being, \(x\), and another person B does not speak the *logos* of \(x\), then A speaks the thing (*legein to pragma*) and B doesn’t speak the thing (*ou legein to pragma*); so, A and B don’t contradict one another.
7. Therefore, contradictions are impossible.\(^{38}\)

This argument, as explicitly stated in premise 3, relies on the conclusion of the Falsity Arguments. So, a refutation of those would suffice to refute this argument as well.

However, as we have seen, they are never explicitly rejected, nor does Ctesippus or Socrates ever give us any reason to think that they fail, nor have they given us any reason to think that their assumptions and premises are false.

However, there are more important assumptions at work in the Non-contradiction Argument. It is not simply a response to what Ctesippus has just said about contradicting Dionysodorus; it is also a direct response to Ctesippus’ assertion immediately following the Falsity Arguments that one can speak “in a certain way (*tropon tina*)” and not as is the

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\(^{37}\) I have left ‘*logoi*’ un-translated here, because I wish to emphasize the continuity of argument C with F1-2: a theory about *logoi* is assumed in all three arguments.

\(^{38}\) Euthd 285e9-286b8
The similarity in language between Ctesippus’ earlier comment and line 2 of the Non-Contradiction Argument bears this out: *hōs echei* and *hōs estin* both mean “as it is”. So where Ctesippus has said that one can speak *ou hōs echei*, not as is the case, Dionysodorus responds that some specific *logos*, which he has argued is the product of every act of speech, must be “about” a real being *hōs estin*, as the being is. That a *logos* is “about a being as it is” is certainly vague. Let us see if we can clarify it.

Consider line 1 first. It expresses that it's not just the case that we may be able to speak *in some way or other* about each thing but only in the way somehow prescribed the thing’s given propositional content:

Eristic Metaphysical Thesis: Each thing has for itself some distinct descriptive content (*a logos*), or finite set of contents, and no other content.

The Eristic Metaphysical Thesis has no explicit support in the *Euthydemus*, and is quite puzzling. It claims total effability for everything in the universe because there are *logoi*, a propositional content, for *each* being.

But there is more to lines 4, 5 and 6. If two people do not speak the *logos* of the same thing, they do not have the same thing in mind (*mimnēskein*) and if they do in fact speak the *logos* of the same thing, then they have the same thing in mind. This is not so much a linguistic thesis or metaphysical thesis as it is a cognitive thesis about how one might grasp or cognize an object. Thus:

First Eristic Cognitive Thesis: If one has object *x* in mind (*mimnēskein*), then one must do so by speaking (*legein*) or thinking (*doxazein*) one of *x*’s unique *logoi*.

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39 *Euthd* 284c10-11.
Thus, a situation where I am pointing at Simonides and calling him Hermogenes is impossible because the unique *logos* that ‘this is Hermogenes’ belongs only to Hermogenes. I am thus not speaking falsely about Simonides because *I simply am not talking about Simonides at all*. This is true *not* for only for misidentifications, but for *any* utterance which I might conceivably make about any being.

One might doubt that the First Eristic Cognitive Principle is really in effect here. As a principle it seems wildly implausible because it rules out speaking about a thing in a certain way but not as is the case, which is an ordinary enough occurrence. However, the First Eristic Cognitive Principle is entailed by premise 5 alone. Consider that premise 5 states that if two people do not speak the *logos* of the same thing (*autos pragma*), they do not have the same thing in mind (*mimnēskein*) and are not contradicting one another. But assume that two people do have the *logos* of the same thing in mind. If we *also* assume that they do not speak the *logos* of the same thing, it follows that both the two people have the same thing in mind and that they do not have the same thing in mind, a contradiction. Thus, toggling negation on the second assumption, they must speak the *logos* of the same thing. So we can conclude that if two people have the same thing in mind, they speak the *logos* of the same thing. It follows by extension to a single person that if that person has an object in mind, he must do so by speaking the *logos* of that thing.

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40 The structure of this argument is quite simple and deductively valid; it can be rendered in sentential logic quite plainly:
S: Two people speak the *logos* of the same thing.
M: Two people have the same thing in mind.
C: Two people contradict one another.

\[ \neg S \Rightarrow (\neg M \& \neg C) \vdash M \Rightarrow S. \]
Finally, with respect to cognition there is arguably only one kind of cognitive function operating in the Non-contradiction Argument. There is no distinction between perception, conception or propositional belief: for every object; the theory offers a picture of the mind's capacities that is simplistic and straightforward: thinking about something just is accepting contents tout court from objects, a cognitive function called ‘having the object in mind’ (mimnēskein). All speaking or thinking is speaking or thinking about some object as the object is. Thus speaking and thinking are the result of the single cognitive process - content acceptance. On this model of intentionality perception is functionally identical to thinking, believing or speaking. Thus:

Second Eristic Cognitive Thesis: Perception and belief are identical cognitive functions.

This may seem a mysterious notion to us, as I shall argue it did to Plato. However, it was a theory taken seriously among philosophers prior to, and in, Plato’s day. Aristotle, speaking of the Pre-Socratics, writes, “Indeed the ancients go so far as to identify thinking and perceiving… they all look upon thinking as a bodily process like perceiving…” Aristotle famously argues that perceiving and understanding are not identical, along the way separating imagination and discursive thought. That he felt the need to make this argument gives some reason to think that linguistic and cognitive principles, which I argue are assumed by the brothers, are not so outrageous for Plato’s day. Consider also that later in the De Anima, Aristotle claims that thinking cannot be a passive affection like perceiving; he argues that “thought is… in its essential nature

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activity.” Aristotle’s concern is to mark off thinking as not passive mere content acceptance, but an active subject-directed activity. Thus, one of Aristotle’s central projects in arguing against the endoxa is to separate cognitive functions that are not properly separated by the Pre-Socratics. That Aristotle feels the need to do this indicates that he takes seriously, though disagrees with, theories that take perception and belief to be functionally identical. As we shall see in chapters four through six, Plato agrees with Aristotle on this point. Before we leave the Euthydemus let us pull together all of the threads.

§ 2.6 Final Considerations: Epistemology and Metaphysics

The ancients saw a serious philosophical problem in the fact that appearances sometimes conflict – which of the conflicting appearances is true? It has been suggested that relativism was Protagoras’ answer to this problem of conflicting appearances; e.g., if the wind appears cold to you but warm to me, that is because it is true that the wind is cold to you, and also true that the wind is warm to me. Euthydemus and Dionysodorus take this sort of relativism to an extreme – they claim that not only perceptual beliefs, but all beliefs, whether or not they conflict, are true for the believer. But how should we take this claim; what sort of relativism is it?

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42 De Anima III.5 43019-21, emphasis mine.
43 See also Lorenz (2006), pp. 4-6, who asserts that Democritus held that thought and perception are just streams of atoms apprehended by the mind; while thought atoms are finer than those of perception, the psuchē still has only one function: atom reception.
44 For the assertion that Protagoras’ measure doctrine is a solution to a paradox of conflicting appearances see Burnyeat (1979, 1976, 1990), Waterlow (1977), Bemelmans (2002), Giannapoulou (2002), Fine (2003a, 2003b)
In what follows I shall argue that the brothers are infallibilists.\textsuperscript{45} Infallibilism is the thesis that “objects are – really are – how they appear to be.”\textsuperscript{46} Infallibilism is a sort of relativism, insofar as it holds that there is no difference between appearances and reality: the world itself is as it appears to any observer at the time of observation. There are three parts to my argument for the infallibility reading of the \textit{Euthydemus}. (1) I shall argue against other interpreters that the eristic theory is not phenomenalist but realist.\textsuperscript{47} A thoroughgoing phenomenalist does not allow for the objective existence of physical objects. Infallibilism, I will show, does allow for objectivity of a certain kind: there is, according to the brothers’ infallibilism, a real object that necessarily is the cause of all our appearances of it. (2) I shall clarify the kind of relativism that infallibilism is by showing how it differs from contemporary relativism with respect to the possibility of

\textsuperscript{45} On this I disagree with Lee (2005) who writes that the brothers in the \textit{Euthydemus} are neither relativists nor infallibilists because, “Plato’s purpose in the \textit{Euthydemus} is to discredit Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, by suggesting that they got all their ideas from other people” (p. 73). Lee argues that the brothers’ arguments in the \textit{Euthydemus} are shallow failures, intended as foils next to Socrates’ skilled dialectic, and not representative of a genuine philosophical position. If my analysis is at all correct, the brothers get the best of Socrates because of their eristic skill as much as their theoretic subtlety. If we are to view the conflict between dialectic and eristic in the right way we must see the practitioners of eristic as more than just clever speakers, but people who occupy a position that is compelling and subtle. Otherwise, why would Plato return to themes from the \textit{Euthydemus} in the much later \textit{Theaetetus}?

\textsuperscript{46} This definition of infallibilism is Fine’s. Notice that while it is an epistemological term, her definition of it is purely metaphysical. The point should be clear though: the definition collapses any distinction between seeming and being, between appearance and reality. When one is wrong, one’s appearances are not the same as the way that things really are; thus falsity requires a being/appearance distinction. However, if all appearances are reality, then everyone is infallible. See Fine (2003a) p. 180. See also Fine (repr. in Gentzler 2001, p. 157, n. 45) that infallibilism differs from relativism in that the infallibilist holds that all beliefs are true \textit{simpliciter} or absolutely. The truth relativist requires that belief statements be accompanied by the qualifier “for so-and-so”. The infallibilist requires no such qualifier. Fine is concerned only with the \textit{Theaetetus} when she discusses infallibilism. She argues that Plato attributes to Protagoras at \textit{Theaetetus} 153d-154b what only appears to be a different version of relativism, but which is actually infallibilism. I take the term from her and extend her argument about the Protagorean theory of the \textit{Theaetetus} to the \textit{Euthydemus}.

\textsuperscript{47} Phenomenalists hold that physical objects are mere bundles of perceptions. This argument against phenomenalism is crucial to my interpretation of both the \textit{Euthydemus} and the \textit{Theaetetus} because it establishes that the Protagorean theory as both Euthydemus and Dionysodorus present it, is the same as the thesis that knowledge is perception, as Socrates presents it, in the beginning of the \textit{Theaetetus}. See §4.2, below. There is little in the literature on the \textit{Euthydemus} that concerns the eristic theory’s metaphysics, though there is some on the metaphysical assumptions of dialectic in the early dialogues. See Scolnicov (1988), esp. chapter 4. See Kent Sprague (1998).
falsity. Finally (3) I shall argue that the eristic theory is consistent with the claim that all properties are relational; i.e., consistent with the claim that there are no intrinsic properties. I shall also explain the importance of this counterintuitive claim.

I shall start my argument by pulling together the eristic theory’s commitments.

Recall:

1. Eristic Standard for the Legitimacy of a Teacher: $x$ is a legitimate teacher of $y$ if $x$ is capable of eristically refuting $y$.
2. Common Sense Metaphysics: There are two kinds of things (pragmata), beings (onta) and non-beings (mē onta). Non-beings have no spatial location. Beings have spatial location. Non-beings cannot be acted on in such a way as to use them to create beings. No one can make a non-being. Non-beings can have no causal power to affect beings.
3. Eristic Linguistic Thesis: An entire sentence (logos) gets its meaning and truth-value in virtue of the fact that it refers to a being (to on).
4. Eristic Metaphysical Thesis: Each thing has for itself some distinct descriptive content (a logos) and no other content.
5. First Eristic Cognitive Thesis: If one has object $x$ in mind (mimnēskēin), then one must do so by speaking (legein) or thinking (doxazein) one of $x$’s unique logoi.
6. Second Eristic Cognitive Thesis: Perception and belief are identical cognitive functions.48

We should now consider what kind of metaphysical and epistemological theory is represented by this list of claims.

We might be tempted to interpret the eristic theory as phenomenalist, asserting:

“Protagoras’ [and by extension the brothers’] claim seems to have been something like the following: Beyond what appears to me or to you there is no common independent reality. The object is its appearances. There is no object which appears to different people differently, but the object is for each person what it appears to be for him, and there is no advantage to one appearance over another.”49

48 Form this point forward when I speak of “the eristic theory” I am referring to these theses.
49 Scolnicov (1988) p. 6. This is precisely how Sedley (2004) will read the Theaetetus claim that knowledge is perception. My principle disagreement with Sedley and Scolnicov is over how to understand Protagorean relativism as it is exemplified by eristic practice.
The trouble with this reading of the eristic theory is that the theory does not deny that there are mind-independent objects, nor that our perceptions of the world are directly the result of contact with those objects. In fact, the eristic theory requires that there be a mind-independent object, which supplies the content of the appearance. Notice that the Common Sense Metaphysics claims that only real beings can cause our perceptions of them. Further, the linguistic, metaphysical and cognitive theses preclude the possibility that I might be able to talk about any object without getting a mental content directly from that object as the object is. Thus, the brothers’ relativism is not the result of the claim that the objects of the world are mere bundles of perceptions dependent on observers for their existence. Rather, it is the result of the claim that we cannot talk or even think about those objects without using mental content derived from those objects as they are. The “as they are” portion of the claim is very important, as this is what makes false appearances impossible. A false appearance requires that an observer receive an appearance from either a non-being or else from a being, but not as the being is. Both of those are impossible on the eristic theory. Thus, false appearances are impossible. The objects really are how they appear to us, which is the definition of infallibilism, not because they are phenomenal bundles dependent on our perceptions of them, but because we must perceive them as they really are.

Now that we have a sense of what the brothers’ eristic theory entails, we should take a moment to briefly contrast infallibilism with another version of relativism in order to be clear about what the theory claims. It is often said that Protagoras is a relativist, but we need to be careful about how we use this word in Plato’s ancient context. In contemporary philosophy, relativism is often understood to be about standards of
justification. There are two problems with seeing the brothers as relativists of this sort. The contemporary relativist claims that agents justify their claims against some sort of internal or social standard, and that there exists no objective standard outside the agent or social standard which we can use to adjudicate between conflicting claims or conflicting standards.  

The first way that the eristic theory differs from contemporary relativism concerns standards of justification. For the contemporary relativist the existence of knowledge, of even relative knowledge, requires an act of justification, requiring application of standards. But Dionysodorus and Euthydemus are not concerned with standards, or even acts, or justification; but are rather concerned with the source of our appearances. Thus the brothers’ position is not like contemporary relativism because it is not about how we justify our claims.  

The second way that the eristic theory differs from contemporary relativism is that contemporary relativism allows for agents to be wrong; it allows for falsity, while the eristic theory of the Euthydemus does not. Even an agent-subjective relativist can hold that she can get things wrong at times, whether through lack of careful thinking or misapplication of an accepted standard. Thus the contemporary relativist on falsity can be stated in the form of the following negated conditional:

Contemporary Relativist on Falsity: It is not the case that if an agent believes or asserts something then that belief or assertion is necessarily true.

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50 It is helpful, I think, to separate ancient issues from modern ones; it underscores the fact that the ancients’ concerns do not always map on to our own. I do not claim that any scholar has read the brothers as relativists in the modern sense, but I argue that there is a difference between relativism in the modern sense and the brothers’ infallibilism so that we are clear about the theory. For a general discussion of relativism, see Siegel (2011) p. 202, ff.

51 Richard Rorty (1989) argues that relativistic standards do not imply that we cannot be wrong about anything in an attempt to show that relativists can have a system of morality that allows for moral progress and the condemnation of moral wrongs. However, the sophistic eristic, as it is presented here in the Euthydemus makes no such claim.
But the brothers, of course, do not think this. The result of the linguistic, cognitive and
metaphysical theses is that it is quite impossible to speak falsely about anything; i.e., it is
impossible to speak about x “not as is the case” for x. It is also impossible for one’s
sentence, logos, to be about something that does not exist; i.e., it is impossible to “speak
what is not”. But, if both of these things are impossible and, as the brothers have argued
in the learning, contradiction and falsity arguments, falsity is impossible, it follows that
all our beliefs are infallibly true. The brothers, as broad epistemological infallibilists,
hold.\(^5^2\)

Infallibilist on Falsity: If an agent believes or asserts a proposition, then
that proposition is necessarily true.

The infallibilist on falsity directly contradicts the contemporary relativist on falsity.
Also, the brothers’ view about falsity is central to the eristic theory. It is the glue that
connects the cognitive theses with the teaching standard: if the eristic theory is correct,
then there is no falsity, nor contradiction, and everyone is omniscient.\(^5^3\) If neither falsity
nor contradiction are possible and everyone is omniscient then the eristic standard of a
teacher is correct. For on the traditional standard of teaching, one thing that teachers do
is rid their pupils of false appearances and beliefs. But eristic teachers cannot do this, as
there are no false appearances and beliefs; their “skill” is not in correcting false
appearances, but in refutation. Their goal is to refute and change others’ appearances to

\(^5^2\) Fine (2003), p. 183, demarcates two kinds of infallibilism, narrow and broad. Narrow infallibilists hold
that all and only our perceptual beliefs are infallible; broad infallibilists that all of our beliefs are infallible.
It is clear that the brothers in the Euthydemus don’t intend to restrict their epistemic claims to perception.
From now on, unless I say otherwise, I use “infallibilism” to mean broad epistemological infallibilism.
\(^5^3\) Recall that the eristic standard for the legitimacy of a teacher is that \(x\) is a legitimate teacher of \(y\) if \(x\) is
capable of eristically refuting \(y\). The eristic standard is in stark contrast to the common standard, that
teachers are legitimate in a subject or craft if they have more knowledge than their pupils in that subject or
craft.
be in line with their own. Infallibility is what establishes why experts cannot be people who claim that they know more, but instead are the people who have the power to convince others and move the masses. It is crucial to note both that the infallibilist and contemporary relativist principles of falsity directly contradict one another and that the infallibilist principle follows as a direct result of the cognitive and metaphysical theses.

I have argued that the infallibilist reading is distinct from contemporary versions of relativism, and that we should favor an infallibilist reading of the eristic theory of the Euthydemus. But, as I said at the beginning of this section, Protagorean relativism is supposed to be a solution to the problem of conflicting appearances: if the wind appears cold to you but warm to me, that is because it is true that the wind is cold to you, and also true that the wind is warm to me. But whence the “to me” in the eristic theory? If what I have argued is correct, the metaphysical, linguistic and cognitive principles require that the content of “the wind is warm” and the content of “the wind is cold” come from the objectively existing wind. Further, the commonsense metaphysics is realist about those objects. It does not necessarily assert that we make objects by thinking about or perceiving them; those objects can exist independently of us. But then how can the wind’s temperature differ between observers if objects do exist independently of perceivers? On the eristic theory, should we not all get the same content from the object? Not necessarily; our appearances of the wind can differ if the properties of the wind are relational and hold between the wind and one observer. Relational properties, in this sense, exist between observers and objects and are not inherent in the objects that instantiate them. They are distinct from intrinsic properties, which do not require a relationship with an observer for their instantiation. The brothers’ tactics and the
sophistic theory are consistent with a metaphysical view on which objects are real and persistent, but all properties are relational and contingent upon observation for their existence.\footnote{I recognize that there is a weakness in my interpretation at this point. I claim only that the relational theory of properties is consistent with the six eristic principles, not that they entail it, or that they are entailed by relationalism. Consistency is a weaker logical relationship than entailment. As a stand-alone interpretational strategy, this is not sufficient to determine that the eristic theory offers a metaphysics that is relationalist about properties. However, in the \textit{Euthydemus}, we do not have the kind of textual evidence that we would need to determine whether, on the eristic theory, properties are intrinsic or relational. We will see later, in §4.2.1, that the eristic assumptions of the \textit{Euthydemus} are consistent with the theory that knowledge is perception in the \textit{Theaetetus}, which is explicitly relationalist about properties. My overall project is to argue that later Platonic epistemology is motivated by the desire to refute the theoretical assumptions of sophistic eristic. Thus, that the six eristic assumptions are consistent with that later Protagorean theory is sufficient for my project.}

To sum up my findings on the \textit{Euthydemus}, the brothers possess significant rhetorical and theoretical subtlety. The arguments that they employ assume a variety of metaphysical, epistemological and cognitive theses, which I call the eristic theory. Their assumed theory couples a realist metaphysics, not a phenomenalist one, with both a relational view of properties and a simplistic psychology based solely on content acceptance, which asserts that no mental contents are possible unless taken directly and wholly from some object. The result of these commitments is what I have called infallibilism and a standard for teaching virtue that runs counter to both common sense and Socrates’ views.

As we will see in chapter four, in order to contest the global epistemological infallibilism of sophistic eristic Plato will develop the metaphysical underpinnings of infallibilism by appeal to Heraclitean metaphysics. He will do so in the \textit{Theaetetus} in the context of discussion of the idea that knowledge is perception. But first, let us consider another early dialogue in which mental functions play a vital role.
3 The *Charmides*

§3.1 Introductory Comments

In the *Charmides* Socrates asks for a definition of a cardinal Greek virtue, sophrosunē or moderation, and his interlocutors try to answer adequately, but with no success.¹ At a point in the middle of the dialogue, the discussion takes a stronger epistemic turn when Critias defines sophrosunē as ‘knowledge of knowledge and the absence of knowledge’ (epistēmē epistēmēs kai epistēmē anepistēmosunēs).² Socrates attacks the offered definition arguing that ‘knowledge of knowledge and the absence of knowledge’ is either impossible or useless. Socrates’ argument goes wildly against common sense, for if Critias means by his definition ‘knowing that you know and don’t know’ then such knowledge is at least useful – one could imagine how badly off we would all be if we could not know that we don’t know some important fact or proposition. Also, Socrates’ argument that such knowledge is impossible seems to directly contradict the Socratic mission as it was famously defended in the *Apology*.

There, Socrates states that he may not be wise, but that he possesses wisdom of a certain

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¹ Cf. *Euthphr.*, *La.*, *Hi. Ma.* and *Rep. I*, which explore piety, courage, beauty and justice respectively. See also *Ly.*, which explores friendship in the same manner, though it is not a cardinal Greek virtue. Sōphrosunē is a dense term; by derivation it means health of mind (sōs, health, and phrēn, mind). However, it’s one of the Greek cardinal virtues and applies to all those who do not overreach their station in life. It can have religious connotations if it is connected with piety because a pious person would never overreach with respect to the gods. The connection with overreaching has an epistemic tone to it because one has to know oneself and one’s station in life in order to know if an action or attitude overreaches (Annas, 1985 p. 121, stresses this epistemic aspect of the virtue). There is no perfect English word for its translation; I shall, for consistency, translate it as ‘moderation’. For an excellent brief discussion of sōphrosunē and its use in Pre-Socratic Philosophy, Greek Tragedy and Poetry see Tuckey (1968, pp. 5-17).

² Chrm 165b. I have, for the purpose of analyzing the dialogue, split it into two sections: those definitions and refutations that occur before the epistemic turn, and then those that occur after. No one within the dialogue remarks on the importance of the turn, but I shall argue that the turn represents the apex of an introspective theme that had been building dramatically from the start of the dialogue.
kind (*poian sophian*), a human wisdom (*anthrōpinē sophia*). This knowledge, while attested to by the highest possible source (the god Apollo of Delphi), is of a very limited sort – Socrates avows only that he knows nothing.³ Thus, Socrates in the *Apology* claims to *know* that he has this human wisdom with which he *knows only* that he has an *absence* of other knowledge. Does the Socrates of the *Charmides* argue that Socratic self-knowledge is impossible? Much of the secondary literature on the *Charmides* has centered on why Plato seems to refute the Socratic mission as it is described in the *Apology*.⁴

In this chapter I shall take a different approach. As part of my overall project is to argue that Plato in the *Theaetetus* supersedes his own earlier assumptions, I shall argue that the interlocutors of the *Charmides* unreflectively assume a broad perceptual account of introspection – the view that introspection as a cognitive function is identical to perception.⁵ Before I proceed I should remind the reader of what the broad perceptual model entails. The model concerns the following features of a properly functioning, non-hallucinatory human sense perceptions:

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³ *Ap* 20d-21d.
⁴ That Plato is breaking with Socrates is most forcefully argued by McKim (1985). For the view that Plato is not attacking Socratic method or epistemology, and merely offering a dialectical, non-doctrinal discussion of self-awareness, see Carone (1998). Benson (2003) agrees with McKim that the *Charmides* is not an attack on Socratic epistemology, but argues that Plato is merely suggesting a refinement on philosophical method. Julia Annas (1985, p. 111), writes that the discussion of self knowledge “… is itself baffling, appears marginal to Plato’s main concerns, and seems to spring philosophically out of nowhere.” I shall argue, contra Annas, et al., that the epistemic turn is not at all disconnected, but is instead consistent in theme with the rest of the *Charmides*.
⁵ The idea that we “see” our mental contents in a manner identical to perception is sometimes called the theater of the mind view. For a fuller treatment of what it entails and why it is at odds with contemporary externalist accounts of mental content see Davidson (1987) and Heil (1982 and 1998). Explicit arguments for the broad perceptual model are rare in the contemporary literature on introspection. A less philosophical account is given by Wilson (2002). For a social-psychological argument relying on the idea that introspection requires a socially constructed mental apparatus see Nisbett and Ross (1980). Much of my discussion of the features of introspection come from Shoemaker (1994a, 1994b and 1994c). I shall not here concern myself with the give and take of the contemporary debate concerning mental contents and their external individuation, nor with the strengths and weaknesses of contemporary broad perceptual model arguments.
1. Sense perceptions involve three ontologically distinct objects: an object of perception, a perception and a perceptual belief.
2. Sense perception provides us some facts about non-relational properties of an object by which we may identity that object.
3. One can shift one’s attention from one object to another in a given occurring perception.
4. Sense perception is both fallible and feasible: it is capable of giving us knowledge of the external world and yet at the same time it can give us false beliefs about that world.
5. The objects that are perceived causally produce the content of perceptual beliefs.
6. The objects of perception exist independently of the content of the perceiver’s perceptual beliefs.\(^6\)

We might be skeptical that the above list can apply to ancient theories of perception; however, I am justified in thinking that the above list might be accepted by the average Greek in Plato’s day because the belief that there is a real object out there that we come to know through perception is so commonplace an assumption in Greek literature and philosophy that it barely requires quoting. In Greek literature, the connection between seeing the objects of the world and knowing them applies even to the gods: Zeus, the epitome of wisdom, bears the title “all-seeing” and because of this “all-knowing”.\(^7\)

As I examine the *Charmides* I shall argue that the six characteristics of sense perception are also characteristics of introspection for the interlocutors. The theory that all six characteristics of sense perception also apply to introspection I call the broad perceptual account of introspection.

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\(^6\) The list owes much to Shoemaker (1994a, 1994b and 1994c). Shoemaker argues that each of these characteristics is absent from introspection, thus denying the broad perceptual model. Shoemaker includes as a characteristic of sensation that each of the five senses has a specific organ of sense associated with it. However, his claim is false. Proprioception is a discrete sensory function that is neither introspective nor possesses a distinct organ of sense. Thus, I have not included the requirement that each type of perception must have an organ of sense devoted to it. Though, as we shall see below, Plato may think this is the case. The idea that each type of sense perception has a devoted organ turns out to be more controversial than one might think.

\(^7\) Hesiod *Works* 267: “*panta idōn diōn ophtholmos kai panta noēsas*”. 
With respect to my methodology in this chapter, I recognize that Plato in the early dialogues explicitly present us with neither a theory of cognition nor of introspection, but as we shall see, several interpretive puzzles can be solved if we hold that the broad perceptual account is assumed in the *Charmides*. I recognize further that in arguing that the interlocutors assume the broad perceptual model of introspection I cannot rely on the fact that Attic Greek verbs of perception are polysemous as verbs of understanding, knowing and being aware; nearly all languages are polysemous in this respect and so this cannot be evidence of the broad perceptual account. To avoid relying on polysemy and a reading that relies on an erroneous understanding of Greek semantics, I shall focus on the inferential role of the broad perceptual model in various arguments of the *Charmides*. The large part of the work in this chapter, like the previous chapter on the *Euthydemus*, is drawing out assumptions and focusing on assertions that concern thought and perception. Finally, there are two methods that I could have employed in arguing my thesis; I could have taken each individual characteristic of perception and argued in separate sections of the chapter that various parts of the text show evidence of that characteristic or I could proceed through the dialogue from start to finish drawing attention to those parts of the text that show evidence of the broad perceptual model. I have chosen the latter because there is evidence of more than one characteristic of the broad perceptual model in the same argument and I do not wish to repeat the same textual references in different areas. There are many arguments from the *Charmides* that I do not examine, as they do not show any evidence for or against the broad perceptual model.

In a later chapter I shall argue that in the *Theaetetus*, specifically in the analogy of the aviary, Plato criticizes the *Charmides*’ assumptions about introspection and self-

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8 Witness the English phrases “I see a tree” and “I see what you’re saying”.

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knowledge. What we shall find is that perception, knowledge and introspection must be pried apart. But we must begin with the *Charmides*.

§3.2 The Preamble: Introspection, Cognition and Character

The dialogue begins as Socrates approaches the wrestling school of Taureas after distinguishing himself at the battle of Potidaea (one of the opening hostilities of the Peloponnesian war). The first moves of the dialogue unsubtly raise the issue to be discussed. Socrates asks Critias if there are any promising youths in his company and is directed to Charmides, who, as a historical fact, is Plato’s uncle and, along with Critias, a member of the Thirty Tyrrany. As Charmides sits next to Socrates, Socrates has the vantage to look down the younger man’s cloak; speaking about this point of view, Socrates states “[I] caught on fire, and was quite beside myself.” That Socrates must exercise sexual restraint sets the tone for the main topic of the discussion, the virtue of moderation, *sophrosunē*; in fact we see two instances of the need for moderation: Socrates must be moderate with respect to his visceral passion for Charmides, and Charmides, the reader of Plato’s day would know, fails to show political moderation because of his involvement with the Thirty. The preamble to the discussion thus sets the theme for the rest of the dialogue.

As the discussion begins, Socrates is told that the intellectually distinguished Charmides has been suffering from mysterious headaches. So he states that he has a cure for the headaches, learned from the doctors of Zalmoxis, but that his medicine is holistic

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9 The Thirty were an Athenian oligarchic regime put in place in 404 BCE by Sparta after defeating the Athenians in the Peloponnesian war. The Thirty politically disenfranchised all but the wealthiest Athenians and murdered political opponents.

10 *Chrm.* 155d.
and will require him to treat the whole of Charmides, not just his head.\textsuperscript{11} In fact, the charm for curing the headache requires curing more than just the body: by “holistic” Socrates means that he must cure Charmides’ body and soul.

… the soul is the source of both bodily health and bodily disease for the whole man, and these flow from the soul the same way that the eyes are affected by the head. So it is necessary first and foremost to cure the soul if the parts of the head and of the rest of the body are to be healthy. And the soul… is cured by means of certain charms, and these charms consist of noble words (\textit{kaloi logoi}).\textsuperscript{12}

Then, even though moderation has not been a topic of the discussion so far, Socrates tells Charmides that, “It is the result of such words [\textit{logoi}] that \textit{moderation} arises in the soul, and when the soul acquires and possesses \textit{moderation}, it is easy to provide health both for the head and for the rest of the body.”\textsuperscript{13} Critias then states that Socrates will find that Charmides is already moderate. So, Socrates states:

…we ought to investigate (\textit{skepsasthai}) together the question whether you do or do not possess the thing I am inquiring about, so that you will not be forced to say anything against your will and I, on the other hand, shall not turn to doctoring in an irresponsible way.\textsuperscript{14}

So, Socrates must investigate Charmides’ soul to see if he has moderation, and if Charmides is moderate then Socrates can give him the \textit{kaloi logoi} needed to cure the headaches. The fact that Socrates has so explicitly stated that they will be examining Charmides’ soul starts the introspective theme; in this sense this dialogue is not very

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{11}] \textit{Chrm}. 156c. Zalmoxis was a religious figure, with whom a cult is associated among the Dacians, who lived north of Greece between the Black Sea and the Carpathian mountains. He is associated with Pythagoras and may have taught that the soul is immortal and leaves the body at death. (Hdt. \textit{Hist.} IV.93-96).
\item[\textsuperscript{12}] \textit{Chrm}. 157a.
\item[\textsuperscript{13}] \textit{Chrm}. 157a-b. The introduction of moderation seems random, but only if we forget two things: that Critias and Charmides will become tyrants, a failure of political moderation, and that Socrates has shown moderation with respect to Charmides’ physical beauty, an instance of successful sexual moderation.
\item[\textsuperscript{14}] \textit{Chrm}. 158d-e.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
different from other Socratic dialogues. However, the *Charmides* is more concerned with the act of introspection than any other. At the beginning of the discussion about moderation Socrates says:

… if moderation is present (*pareinai*) in you (*soi*), you have some opinion (*echeis ti ... doxazein*) concerning it. For it is necessary that, being in you, if it is in you, it provides some awareness (*aisthēsis*) out of which you would form an opinion both that moderation is in you and what sort of thing (*hopoion ti*) it is.\(^{15}\)

This passage is often overlooked or misread. Tuckey does not mention it in his commentary.\(^{16}\) Schmid reads the passage as an instance of Socrates’ general requirement that his interlocutors say what they believe to be true, as opposed to saying what others believe, to which they may not be committed.\(^{17}\) Benson sees in it Socrates’ general definitional requirement being applied to moderation – that if Charmides knows what moderation is, he can correctly state what it is.\(^{18}\) Yet, Socrates does not talk about knowledge here, only forming beliefs or judging about moderation. Because of this, it is more likely that he is describing an introspective process that may or *may not* result in knowledge than that he is assuming that knowledge is required for virtue. Irwin writes with respect to this passage, “Socrates assumes that if Charmides is really temperate, he does not simply conform unintelligibly to conventional rules, and does not conform to them just because other people agree with this conformity, he must also have the right view of why he is conforming to them.”\(^{19}\) Irwin’s reading is too strong for the passage – Socrates only states that if moderation is present in Charmides’ soul then he can make

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\(^{15}\) *Chrm*. 158e-159a.
\(^{16}\) Tuckey (1968).
\(^{17}\) Schmid (1981, pp. 142-143).
\(^{18}\) Benson (2000, p. 114).
\(^{19}\) Irwin (1995, p. 21).
certain judgments about it – Socrates does not claim that the judgments will necessarily be well supported; he merely claims that if one is moderate then one will be able, by introspective awareness, to form some beliefs about moderation. Thus, it is best to read this passage as simply one in which Socrates endorses a certain method - that of introspection for the purpose of identifying a character trait.

Asking for a definition of a Greek moral term like sōphrosunē is, of course, a standard thing for Socrates to do, and the question is asked in much the same way as Socrates usually asks for it. However, while it is a standard to ask for the definition, Socrates elsewhere does not focus so much on the act of introspection; the Charmides is unique in it focus on introspective acts. My focus in this chapter is not on the general nature of the ‘What is F’ question; but rather on the mental act of introspection that Socrates calls for. Thus we should consider the act that Socrates describes.

Socrates does not state that if moderation is present in him, he would know both what moderation is and that he has it. Socrates’ statement is weaker: that Charmides would be able to form an opinion or belief (doxa) about moderation if it was present in him. Also, Socrates does not request that Charmides offer examples of moderate

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20 The request is made similarly in several dialogues: “Attempt this, what I say, state what courage is (ti einai)” (La.190e2-3). “Tell me then what you say piety to be (ti einai) and impiety” (Euthphr. 5d). “Tell me then, visitor, what is that thing (ti einai), the beautiful” (Hp. Ma. 287d). “By the gods, Meno, what do you say virtue is (ti einai)” (Men. 71d). “Well, this is where I have a difficulty. I am unable to state in a manner sufficient for me, just what it is that knowledge happens to be” (using the participle of einai, on). Are we able to say it (Theae. 145e)? Socrates never explicitly asks for a definition of friendship in the Lysis, rather the interlocutors start working on the definition in an organic way: “So now we’ve got it. We know what friends are (ti einai). Our discussion indicates to us that whoever are good are friends” [Ly. 214d]. Further, in the Republic, while confronting Cephalus’ alleged definition of justice, Socrates says, “…but speaking of this itself, justice, are we to say that it absolutely is (einaiai kaplōs) speaking the truth and giving back that which you have taken…” [Rep. I.331b]? Of course, later Socrates will refute the offered definition and, in a manner unique to this piece of text, use the technical term ‘definition’: “Then the definition (horos) of justice isn’t speaking the truth and giving what one has borrowed” [Rep. I.331d].

21 There is controversy over (1) whether Socrates even holds the epistemic principle that one must know the definition of a term before one can use it, (2) over how the epistem principle ought to be formulated, and (3) over how “fallacious” the principle is. These controversies are not my concern here. For a detailed and recent exposition of the controversy see Wolfsdorf (2004).
behavior. Instead he asks that Charmides perform an act of introspection. Two principles are assumed in Socrates’ request:

Presence Principle: If moderation is present (pareinai) in one’s soul then one can have an awareness (aisthēsis) of it.

Doxastic Awareness Principle: If one has an awareness (aisthēsis) of moderation in one’s soul then one can form both an opinion (doxa) that one has moderation and an opinion about what sort of thing (hopoion ti) moderation is.

We can see right away that the first characteristic of sense perception is assumed by Socrates. The introspective process described starts with a mental object, moderation, proceeds through an awareness (aisthēsis) and ends in a belief (doxa) about the object. There is no concern that moderation will be present but unidentifiable. Thus, the second characteristic of perception is satisfied as well. Of course, Socrates thinks that by introspection Charmides has the potential to know what moderation is. Also he thinks that Charmides’ beliefs about moderation could be wrong; which is why he wants to examine his claims. He thus thinks that introspection is feasible but fallible. Therefore, introspection also satisfies the fourth characteristic of perception. Socrates and Charmides must also think that their introspective belief will result from the act of introspection; i.e., they assume that there is a causal link between moderation, if it is in there, and the beliefs about what moderation is. As such they assume the fifth perceptual characteristic. Finally, there is no concern that by introspecting they might affect the object to be introspected: moderation itself, if it is in there at all, will not be altered or created by the act of introspection. Thus the interlocutors assume that moderation exists.

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22 Sense perceptions involve three objects, an object of perception, a perception and a perceptual belief. All three of these are ontologically distinct from one another.
23 The second characteristic is that perception allows us to identify objects by their own non-relational properties.
independently of the content of Charmides’ belief about it, and this is the sixth characteristic of perception. So far, the interlocutors have assumed all but the third characteristic of sense perception.

§3.3 Non-Epistemic Definitions of Moderation

After showing us what is at stake and supplying the introspective methodology, the main discussion ensues. In each subsection of this section I shall consider one definition of moderation along with its refutation; only the first, second and fourth harbor the assumptions with which this project is concerned.

§3.3.1 First Definition: Quiet and Orderly Action

Charmides’ first answer to Socrates’ request for a definition of moderation is:

Definition 1: Doing (prattein) everything in a quiet and orderly (hēsuchia kai kosmiōs) way.24

The kernel of Socrates’ refutation of the first definition is quite simple: he states that moderation is fine, and that there are many actions of the body and soul that are fine, but that at least some are not done in a quiet and orderly way. It follows that on the first definition moderation cannot be fine.25 It follows that moderation cannot be doing things in a quiet and orderly way. After this short refutation, Socrates exhorts Charmides:

Charmides:

24 Chrm. 159b1-6.
25 Chrm. 159b7-160d4. The argument is almost certainly invalid. Socrates’ conclusion is also weak - he asserts that according to this argument (ek ge toutou logou) moderation is not quietness. Tuckey (2000, p. 19) holds that this means that there may be something to the definition after all, but that it lays too much stress on the external behavior of moderate people. This is likely, given that Socrates is about to request that Charmides look inward more carefully for his definition.
… turn your mind (prosechein) intently and look into yourself (emblepsas eis seauton), and form a notion of what the presence (pareinai) of moderation does (poiein) in you and what sort of thing (hopoion ti) it must be to do this, then sum this up (sullogismasthai) and tell me clearly and bravely, what does it appear to be to you?26

Notice that Socrates’ exhortation offers either a slight refinement on the introspective method or a clarification about how he meant to perform the introspection. Initially, it was agreed that one could simply use one’s awareness (aisthēsis) of moderation to make a judgment about what moderation is.27 This was vague, so now we are asked to envision the moderate agent as one with a certain moral psychological constitution, specifically the moderate agent will have a set of mental objects, perhaps beliefs, desires, wishes etc, that are either caused by or constitute moderation.28

First note that Socrates assumes that the beliefs that are formed by Charmides’ act of introspection will be caused by the mental objects he turns his mind toward – again Socrates assumes that introspection as an act will involve a mental object, an awareness of that object and a belief about that object such that the content of the belief is causally determined by the mental object; this is the fifth characteristic of perception.29 Without this assumption it makes no sense to request that someone turn his attention inward to a mental object so that we can examine whether he possesses that object.

Also, notice Socrates’ use of the verb sullogismasthai; it means ‘pull together’, as of disparate pieces – Socrates asks Charmides to pull together what he finds inside

26 Chrm. 160d5-e1.
27 Chrm. 158e-159a.
28 I have claimed that the interlocutors must think that what they are looking for are certain propositional attitudes along with their contents, like beliefs, desires and wishes, because these seem the best candidates for constituents or effects of moderation.
29 The fifth characteristic: Perceptual beliefs are causally produced by the objects that are perceived.
himself to determine what moderation is.\textsuperscript{30} The sense that Charmides has to pull together separate elements suggests that Socrates assumes that Charmides can shift his introspective attention from mental object to mental object; this is the third characteristic of sense perception.

Of course, Socrates also assumes that Charmides will be able to identify the desires, wishes, etc. that he finds – i.e., Socrates expresses \textit{no concern that Charmides might misidentify his own beliefs, wishes and desires}. Of course, we have no reason to think that Socrates thinks that Charmides is infallible with respect to determining the relationship between the mental objects and moderation, which he has said he will examine. But there is a difference between erring about the relationship between the mental objects and moderation and erring about just what each object itself is. Socrates proceeds as if the introspective process will identify the beliefs, desires, etc. that are said to be caused by or constitute moderation. Thus Socrates assumes that this characteristic of perception is a characteristic of introspection as well.\textsuperscript{31}

Also, Socrates does not express any concern that Charmides might \textit{by introspecting} create or alter the mental objects that he might become aware of. The mental objects, which constitute or are caused by the presence of moderation, are assumed to exist independently of Charmides’ awareness of and beliefs about them.

\textsuperscript{30} \textit{Sullogizesthai} used in this context could mean one of a few things: first it could mean reasoning from effects to causes by finding the effects of moderation then determining what moderation must be to cause those effects; second it could mean using another reasoning process to explain or define what moderation must be. We know that \textit{sullogizesthai} will be used technically by Aristotle to mean syllogistic inference, as distinct from inductive inference, \textit{epagōgē}; but there is no evidence that Plato has this terminologically precise sense of the word at the time he writes the \textit{Charmides}. I shall proceed, given the lack of evidence for a precise technical notion, that the verb means gathering different pieces.

\textsuperscript{31} The second was that perception provides us with non-relational properties of objects by which we may identify them.
Thus, the sixth characteristic of perception is implicitly also a characteristic of introspection for Socrates.\(^\text{32}\)

We can see then that the first, second, third and fifth characteristics of perception are assumed in this passage to be characteristics of introspection.

§3.3.2 Second Definition: Shame

Charmides, following Socrates’ exhortation, introspects and states that moderation can “… make people feel ashamed (\textit{aischunein}) and bashful (\textit{aischunte\lower{1pt}{los}})”; so he concludes that moderation must be shame (\textit{aidōs}).\(^\text{33}\) Thus, his second definition of moderation:

Definition 2: Shame (\textit{aidōs}).

Socrates says that Charmides’ attempt to look inward is courageous; there are two reasons why Charmides has earned that praise. First, he supplied a definition that is about the \textit{internal states} of the putatively moderate person – to feel shame is at least to have the belief that one has done wrong (or is entertaining doing wrong), perhaps coupled with certain visceral feelings with respect to this belief. The first definition merely described how moderate people \textit{behave}, the second is about their moral psychology. This focus on the internal accords with what Socrates has just asked him to do – turn his attention inward. Also, Charmides has given Socrates at least \textit{part} of what he asked for –

\(^{32}\) Recall the sixth characteristic, that the objects of perception exist independently of the content of the content of the perceiver’s perceptual beliefs.

\(^{33}\) \textit{Chrm.} 160e2-6. This definition is not entirely strange, as shame at over-reaching is connected with moderation. Consider Pesistratus’ words speaking of Odysseus’ son to Menelaus: “… here is the son of the great hero. But the man is modest (\textit{sophrōn}), he would be ashamed (\textit{nemesein}) to make a show of himself his first time here and interrupt you” [Hom. \textit{Od.} 4.156-9]. However, what is curious is that he finds that moderation is just this \textit{one} feeling, shame, rather than a set of feelings or a set of feelings coupled with dispositions and beliefs. The definition seems too thin.
moderation, if it is present in one, causes one to be, or is constituted by, shame of excess; whether it is excessive sexual behavior, over-reaching political behavior or interrupting one’s betters while they speak.

Of course, the definition is insufficient; Socrates attempts to refute it by arguing:

1. Moderation is shame (aidōs).
2. Moderation is fine (kalos).
3. Moderate men are good (agathos) men.
4. That which is good makes someone good.
5. So, moderation is fine and good.
6. Shame is not good for a needy person.
7. So, shame is good and not good.
8. Moderation is good if it makes those in whom it is present good, and bad those in whom it is not.
9. Therefore, if shame is no more good than bad and moderation is good then moderation is not shame.34

The inferential structure of the refutation of moderation-as-shame is obscure.35

However, Socrates does not find that the definition is simply the wrong kind of definition – shame is appropriately something that is internal to the agent and seems at least related to moderation. It is thus the kind of thing that one might putatively find while introspecting about the nature of moderation.36 However, Socrates’ *reductio ad absurdam* should not force us to conclude that shame has no part at all in moderation – it’s simply not appropriate for a needy person. We are lead to imagine a case in which there are two people, both moderate, but one is needy the other not. The needy moderate man should feel no shame at certain behavior, it is unclear what kind; while the moderate

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34 *Chrm.* 160e2-161b2. Schmid (1981) reads this refutation as an example of the ways in which Socratic dialectic aims to lead the interlocutor away from traditional shame/honor ethics and into a Socratic ethics based on a commitment to truth. Schmid’s reading is too strong; Socrates argues that moderation can’t *just be* shame, not that shame is no part of moderation. In fact, given his praise of Charmides, it’s consistent with the argument that Socrates thinks that shame is a component of moderation.
35 Irwin (1995, p. 359) and Tuckey offer two opposed readings: Tuckey holding that moderation-as-shame is successfully refuted, Irwin that the refutation is only conditionally successful.
36 See note 34 above for the traditional connection between a feeling of shame and moderation.
well-off man would feel shame at the very same behavior. The goodness of shame is variant across persons and situations, while the goodness of moderation is invariant. This is a radical moral move on Socrates’ part; shame is connected to moderation in other Greek literature, but for Socrates shame, because it is sometimes good and sometimes not, plays no part in being moderate.

But this is more than just a radical re-tooling of moderation. It also reaffirms that whatever moderation is it is not open to interpretation by the observer. If one is moderate, one certainly does not make one’s moderation in the act of perceiving it. What’s more, it is assumed that we can identify moderation by its non-relational properties; properties like goodness. Thus, Socrates’ refutation relies on the idea that moderation is an objective condition of the mind with non-relational properties that can be seen by introspection and identified in the same manner that an external object is seen and identified.

But of course, Charmides is not quite done trying to answer Socrates. He offers a definition of moderation as doing one’s own deeds, or minding one’s own business. Socrates refutes this on the grounds that it removes goodness from the definition of a central virtue.37

§3.3.3 Fourth Definition: Doing Good Deeds

Critias’ responds to Socrates’ refutation of moderation-as-doing-one’s-own by stating:

37 Chrm. 163e5-6.
But indeed I … do not say that doing bad things but not good is moderate: but doing good things, not bad, is moderate. So, I give you a clear definition (saphōs diorizasthai) of moderation as the doing of good things (hē tōn agathōn praxis).  

So, the new definition is:

Definition 4: The doing of good things (hē tōn agathōn praxis).

Critias says he has offered a definition of moderation. The verb diorizasthai, of land, means to create a boundary. Its use in verbal disputes, where it means definition, shows that Critias is employing a technical term and shows that he understands what Socrates is asking him for. Recall the criticism of definition 3, moderation-as-doing-one’s-own: it makes moderation sometimes good and sometimes bad. But moderation should only be good, so Critias defines moderation solely in terms of Socrates’ definitional requirement: if moderation just is doing good deeds, then the man who does good deeds will be good and, more importantly, the good man and moderation itself will both be good.

Socrates chooses to refute moderation-as-goodness on more general epistemic grounds. In keeping with my general method, I shall explore what I take the argument to be, but I am not going to be concerned with the success of the argument, nor with every premise. The first and seventh premises are of crucial importance:

1. Moderate people are not ignorant (agnoein) that they are moderate (hotti sōphronein).

38 Chrm. 163e12-13.
39 However, even though he gives what Socrates asked for, ‘good’ can be interpreted in any way Critias likes, even from his aristocratic standpoint. Tuckey historically grounds definition 4 in Hesiod’s Works and Days arguing that Critias quotes the poet but distorts the words: “[Critias’] morality is a class morality, and an exceptionally blatant one. We can all imagine that [good acts] would be acts performed nobly and beneficially from the standpoint of the aristocracy, for only such acts are oikeia [suitably pragmatic] or appropriate to men of such rank.” (Tuckey 1968 p. 21) I do not disagree with this, but there is also an internal dialectical reason why Critias has chosen this definition. This is what I have explained here.
2. Nothing prevents people who do other people’s things from being moderate.
3. Doctors when they make others healthy do something beneficial (ophelimos) both for themselves and others.
4. One who does these things does what he ought (dei).
5. One who does what he ought is moderate.
6. It is not necessary for a doctor or any other craftsman to know (gignoskein) when he cures beneficially or not.
7. So, sometimes a doctor doesn’t know whether he has acted beneficially or harmfully (blaberos).
8. If a doctor acts beneficially then he has acted moderately.
9. Therefore, sometimes he acts moderately and is moderate and he himself does not know that he is moderate.  

The structure of the argument is somewhat opaque, but contains some important assumptions about introspection. First, I shall argue that the first premise is not an instance of the claim that virtue is knowledge; a claim famously attributed to Socrates and found elsewhere in the Platonic corpus. Second, I shall make clear the nature of the relationship between knowledge and virtue in expressed in the first premise. Third, I shall argue that the premise also strengthens the Presence and Doxastic Awareness principles.

Tuckey holds that the refutation of moderation-as-goodness is the start of an exploration of the Socratic idea that virtue is knowledge: “…the question Plato is asking himself is evidently this: ‘if virtue is knowledge, and if, as this implies, no man can habitually and consistently do good without knowing that he is doing good, how is a man

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40 Chrm. 164a1-164c7.
41 Premise 2 is supported by premises 3-5. The example of doctors in premise 3 is arbitrary; they are an example of a profession in which the expert helps himself and someone else – likely by healing and remuneration for the healing. Premises 4 and 5 establish that anyone who does work for the benefit of the self and others can be moderate. So, 3-5 support premise 2 – that there are some people who “do other people’s things” and are also moderate. Premise 6 is intended to support premise 7; it states that it’s not necessary for any craftsman to know when he cures beneficially. From this, premise 7 is supposed to follow – sometimes (eniote) a doctor doesn’t know (gignoskein) whether he has acted beneficially or not. Premise 8 is simply a statement of Critias’ definition – because doing good things is acting beneficially and moderation is doing good things, it follows that if a doctor acts beneficially he acts moderately. The conclusion follows from 1-8 that a doctor can thus act moderately and not know that he has acted moderately. The refutation of moderation-as-doing-good is thus valid.
to know that he is doing good?" In other words, how is he to know that he knows?" But Tuckey misreads this passage. Socrates and Critias have not moved to the general ‘knowledge of knowledge’ issue yet. The refutation of moderation-as-doing-good should be read in the context of the definition just offered, not in the context of the discussion that comes after the definition and the refutation.

In claiming that moderate people are not ignorant that they are moderate, Socrates connects knowledge and morality, which smacks of Socrates’ claim, made elsewhere, that knowledge is either sufficient for, or identical to, virtue. It is, however, not an expression of the Socratic thesis for two reasons. First, when Socrates suggests that Critias might think that moderate people are ignorant of their moderation Critias quickly states, “But I don’t hold (ouch hēgeasthai) this.” Critias is emphatic that if one is moderate, one cannot fail to know that one is moderate – no one, he would reason, of his intellectual and social caliber would act moderately unaware that his actions were moderate and good. For Critias to deny premise 1 of the refutation of moderation-as-doing-good he would have to deny that men like him know when they are moderate. Thus, Critias holds that knowledge of moderation is necessary for being moderate:

Critian Necessity Principle: If an agent is moderate, that agent knows what moderation is.

42 Tuckey (1968, p. 22).
43 At Meno 77b7-78b, Prot 358c-d and Gorg. 358b-d Socrates argues that no one does wrong while knowing that the act is wrong. Further at Gorg. 460b-d and Prot. 360d-e Socrates states that virtue is a kind of knowledge; at Charm. 173b-d he even states that courage is knowledge of what ought to be feared. These passages suggest that Socrates held the view that moral knowledge is sufficient for being moral. Given the prevalence of the sufficiency thesis one might think that Socrates holds it in the Charmides; however, as we shall see, I think the text does not support the claim.
44 Charm. 164a4.
45 “Knows” in this case is gignōskein. I discuss gignōskein in more detail below.
But the Socratic sufficiency thesis is much stronger than what Critias claims here. Socrates claims elsewhere that knowledge is sufficient for virtue:

Socratic Sufficiency Thesis: If an agent knows what moderation is, that agent will be moderate.

For Critias knowledge is necessary for virtue, but for Socrates it is sufficient. Because Socrates only entertains the Critian thesis we need not be concerned with the stronger Socratic thesis and what effect the various refutations of the *Charmides* might have on the stronger Socratic thesis.

Notice that the necessity thesis is similar to the methodological assumptions that started the discussion. Recall the Presence and Doxastic Awareness principles\(^\text{46}\) – according to them if one is moderate, one can have, via *aisthēsis*, a *doxa* about what moderation is and a *doxa* about whether one has moderation. Recall also that the Presence and Doxastic Awareness principles were consistent with an agent having a belief (*doxa*) about what moderation is; the Critian Necessity Principle expresses precisely the same relationship between knowing (*gignōskein*) and moderation; however, the necessity thesis does not mention knowledge of *what moderation is*, only knowledge *that one is moderate*. Yet the discussion itself is about what moderation is – it is thus assumed that if one is moderate and knows it, then one will also know *what moderation is*. That is:

Knowledge is Necessary for Moderation: If one is moderate then one knows both that one is moderate and what moderation is.

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\(^{46}\) Presence Principle: If moderation is present in one’s soul then one can have an awareness of it. Doxastic Awareness Principle: If one has an awareness of moderation in one’s soul then one can form both an opinion that one has moderation and an opinion about what sort of thing moderation is.
It may seem that the claim that knowledge is necessary for virtue is at odds with the claim that introspection is fallible. For, if the principle is true then we are infallible with respect to our knowledge of our own moderation – whoever is moderate and introspects about her moderation will know what moderation is and that she is moderate. But, we need not think that the interlocutors assume that all introspection is infallible – this would be a flat denial of the need for examination at all. Introspection is only infallible with respect to the set of beliefs, desires, feelings etc. that constitute a cardinal virtue like moderation if one possesses that virtue.

Initially, it was assumed that if one was moderate one could, via an awareness of moderation itself, its effects or its constituents, have a belief (doxa) about it. But now if one is moderate one must have knowledge (gignōskein). We are lead to wonder what the difference in terminology between gignōskein and doxa really means for assumptions about introspection at this point in the text. Doxa is a notion, judgment, belief or opinion that may or may not be well grounded or justifiably held. One can look to Homer and Herodotus and other citations too numerous to mention for this sense of the word.\textsuperscript{47} Gignōskein is usually used in a veridical sense and is often connected with vision; again the possible citations for this use of the word are numerous.\textsuperscript{48} There is also reason to think that Plato is employing the words in their standard sense, maintaining the contrast in veridicality between them. At Chrm. 160d5-e1 when he asks Charmides to look into himself for moderation Socrates explicitly says that he will examine him to see if

\textsuperscript{47} E.g., Th. 5.105.3: “But when we come to your notion (doxa) about the Lacedaemonians, which leads you to believe (pistēuein) that shame will make them help you, here we bless your simplicity but do not envy your folly.” Also, Hdt. 8.132 where the Greeks have an incorrect doxa.
\textsuperscript{48} E.g. Il. 23.495-99: “Sit down in the place of gathering and watch (eisoraein) the horses… and then you will know (gignōskein), each one of you, the horses of the Argives.” In many cases noein and gignōskein are used to indicate perceptual recognition. For a fuller discussion of knowledge and perception verbs in Homer see Lesher (1981, esp. p. 11 for gignōskein).
Charmides’ *doxa* is correct, which indicates that it might not be. However, here at 164a1-164c7, one cannot be moderate and *be wrong* about being moderate. Thus, Plato maintains the distinction in the usual sense of *doxa* and *gignōskein* in the shift in terminology, when the interlocutors move from the weaker Presence and Doxastic Awareness principles to the stronger Critian thesis.

And of course, Critias accepts the refutation of his position, but wants to maintain that knowledge is a necessary constituent of moderation. In fact, his next definition makes it the *only* constituent of moderation:

… I would rather withdraw some of my statements, and would not be ashamed to pronounce that I had said something incorrect, rather than concede that a person being ignorant of himself (*agnoein eauton*) is moderate (*sôphronein*). I would say, that this itself is what it is to be moderate, knowing oneself (*to gignōskein eauton*).49

Thus we arrive at what I have called the epistemic turn in the *Charmides*; moderation is now defined not with respect to motivations, emotional responses or actions; rather moderation is given a purely epistemic definition:

**Definition 5:** Knowing (*gignōskein*) the self.

Given what has just transpired in Socrates’ refutation of moderation-as-doing-good-deeds the new definition is not surprising.50 Recall Critias’ strategy when he offered definition 4, moderation-as-doing-good – he saw that what was lacking in definition 3 was that

49 *Chrm.* 164d-e.

50 Commentators have, however, found it more than surprising. See Kahn (1996, pp. 190-191, esp. p. 190, n. 13). Kahn calls definition 5 the “epistemic definition,” and says it is why the *Charmides* is one of the more puzzling of Plato’s works. Further, he states that moderation in its traditional sense, involves knowing one’s place as well as doing what’s appropriate. “In the *Charmides*, however, doing is almost forgotten; and from here on knowing will be the topic of the discussion (Kahn, 1996, p. 191).” On my reading the reason for the purely epistemic definition 5 is that Critias is trying to define moderation according to what Socrates has just asked for (an epistemic component) while preserving the traditional aristocratic sense of self-knowledge (i.e., knowing your place socially).
moderation and the moderate person were not both good, so he defined moderation in terms of goodness itself. Now, seeing that self-knowledge is absent from moderation-as-doing-good, he defines moderation as self-knowledge itself. Critias, then, seems to cooperate with Socrates by offering the kind of definition that he asks for, even if the definition lacks other qualities that may be important constituents of moderation, like shame and orderliness. The internal structure of the dialogue itself has prompted this new definition and we can see that the theme of introspection has reached an apex – moderation is not just learned by acts of introspection, but moderation just is the result of successful and careful introspection. However, Socrates is not satisfied with this definition.

§3.4 The Epistemic Turn: Moderation-as-Self-Knowledge

By 164d-e moderation has been defined as self-knowledge itself. Socrates first inspects the definition then refutes it on the grounds that self-knowledge is either impossible or useless. We shall see that there is more evidence that the interlocutors assume the broad perceptual model of introspection in the discussion after the definition of moderation as self-knowledge.

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51 Tuckey writes “Probably his introduction of [know yourself] is prompted merely by the expression Socrates used and by the traditional connection between self-knowledge and [moderation]…” (Tuckey, 1968, p. 24). My reading, because I argue that Critias’ definition is an attempt to give Socrates the definition he asks for, shows Critias’ epistemic definition to be driven by the progression of the discussion in the Charmides and less by external historical facts. Though I still agree with Tuckey that Critias is not trying, in good faith, to arrive at what moderation is, I hold that each definition he offers is rhetorically subtle and quite clever because it gives Socrates what he asked for and it leaves open the possibility for an aristocratic interpretation – “doing your own things” is aristocratic if it means not reaching beyond your social station; “doing good” is aristocratic if “good” is defined by aristocratic-centered values; finally, “knowing yourself” is aristocratic if it means “know your social place”.

52 He hedges the claim during the refutation by claiming that a great man could tell us how it is possible (Chrm. 169a1-3).
§3.4.1 The Explication: Unpacking Moderation-as-Self-Knowledge

After stating that moderation is self-knowledge Socrates examines and clarifies the definition without yet refuting it; in doing so, he changes the wording of the definition in a puzzling way that has exercised commentators. After clarifying and altering the wording of moderation-as-self-knowledge Socrates will refute it, but his rewording requires some attention. This part of the text in which moderation-as-self-knowledge is clarified and unpacked, before the full refutation begins, I call the explication. In arguing that there is evidence in the explication that the interlocutors assume the broad perceptual model of introspection, I shall first list the steps of the explication, and then argue that the interlocutors use the term ‘science’ (epistēmē) in the explication in a subjective psychological sense with reference to certain practitioners’ psychological grasp of a science, rather than in an objective sense, with reference to what an art is in itself. I shall make the difference between these two senses clear in a moment. We shall see that in so using epistēmē Critias and Socrates assume several features of the broad perceptual model of introspection.

I shall list each step of the explication for clarity and to obviate the connections that are made between them. We begin with the purely epistemic definition of

53 Grube (1980, p. 218ff.) argues that Critias and Socrates draw the ramifications that they do because they assume that moderation is a kind of craft-skill (technē). Taylor (1908) holds that Critias confuses practical with speculative knowledge and that he confuses psychology with epistemology. Tuckey (1968, p. 37) holds that if moderation is a science of the self then the moderate person knows what he knows. Tuckey does not elaborate on why this is so. Dyson (1974) argues that the explication occurs because the Greek language allows one to slip from knowing what one knows to knowing knowledge and thus from knowing what one does not know to knowing ignorance. Rosenmeyer (1957) argues that Plato confuses concrete terms with abstract ones, conflating acts of knowing with the totality of the class of all knowers; thus Critias and Socrates move too quickly from the claim that if one is moderate one knows oneself to the claim that if one is moderate one knows knowledge itself. McKim (1985, p. 63) argues that Socrates has simply attached an addendum to Critias’ definition that turns Critias’ epistemic definition into a Socratic ability, the ability to examine. This allows Plato to criticize and then break with Socratic method and epistemology. I shall make the same claim as Tuckey, but show that the explication relies on certain previously assumed cognitive principles.

54 The explication runs from Chrm. 164c7-167a9.
moderation just offered by Critias, which I referred to as definition 5, moderation-as-self-knowledge.

E1: Moderation is self-knowledge, *gignōskein heauton* (164d3-5).

Socrates then connects knowing (*gignōskein*) with science (*epistēmē*) by claiming that E2 follows if E1 is correct:

E2: Moderation is the science of the self, *epistēmē heautou* (165c4-7).

After E2 Socrates then asks what fine (*kalon*) result the science of the self produces. But not every science, responds Critias, results in a product. The arts of calculation and geometry do not produce things like the art of house building; yet they are sciences. Moderation, he asserts, is like calculation and geometry. Refuted in his assumption that every *epistēmē* is productive, Socrates states that every science is of something and asks Critias to tell him what moderation is the science of. Critias replies that it is the only science that is of the other sciences and of itself.\(^{55}\) Thus:

E3: Moderation is the science of the other sciences and of itself, *epistēmē tōn te allōn epistēmōn kai autē autēs* (166b9-c3).

Socrates then asks if moderation-as-self-knowledge would also be a science of the absence of science (*epistēmē anepistēmosunēs*), and Critias says that it would. Thus:

E4: Moderation is the science of three things: science itself, the other sciences and the absence of science, *epistēmē kai tōn allōn epistēmōn kai autē autēs kai anepistēmosunēs* (166e7-9).

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\(^{55}\) *Chrm.* 166b9-c3.
But more follows, according to Socrates and Critias, from claiming that moderation is self-knowledge and that it is the science of itself, the other sciences and the absence of science. Socrates says it follows from E1-4 that:

E5: Moderation is knowing that which one knows and that which one does not know and it is knowing how to examine oneself and others to determine whether one or they know what is claimed (167a1-9).  

At E5 the explication is over and Socrates will proceed to refute the now-clarified and fully understood science of moderation-as-self-knowledge.

However, the explication itself raises many questions. The text is not entirely clear on what justifies moving from E1 to E5; we especially want to understand the move from \textit{gign\'oskein} to \textit{epist\'em\'e} in E1-2. Is every instance of knowing, \textit{gign\'oskein}, also possession of a science, an \textit{epist\'em\'e}? The words have distinct connotations, though are often both translated ‘know.’ Why is moderation the science of \textit{itself}, if it is a science of \textit{the} self, as the move from E2-E3 states? Why would moderation be a science of the absence of science and what does this mean? Finally, why is it that because moderation is knowledge of knowledge and the absence of knowledge it follows that it confers on its possessor the ability to examine oneself and others? In answering these questions we will see that the interlocutors assume that introspection, the cognitive act fundamentally required for moderation-as-self-knowledge, is like perception in several ways.

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56 His words are, “… only the moderate person will (1) know himself, (2) be able to examine (\textit{exetasai}) what he knows (\textit{ti eidenai}) and what he doesn’t (\textit{ti m\'e}), (3) be able, in a like manner, to examine (\textit{episkopein}) others concerning what they seem (\textit{oiasthai}) to know (\textit{eidenai}), when they know, and what they seem to know (\textit{oiasthai}) but don’t.” Socrates also says, “being moderate and knowing the self (\textit{gign\'oskein eauton}) are knowing (\textit{eidenai}) that which (\textit{ho}) you know (\textit{eidenai}) and that which (\textit{ho}) you do not.” \textit{Chrm.} 167a.

57 The shift from knowing in the sense of \textit{gign\'oskein} to knowing in the sense of \textit{epist\'em\'e} occurs near the beginning of the transition at \textit{Chrm.} 165c10-d6. In the next paragraph he also refers to all these things as \textit{technai}. 
Let us first consider the move from E1 to E2, the shift in terminology from *gignōskein* to *epistēmē*. Notice that self-knowledge *just like any other science* is about either understanding a subject, or the creation of a product. As I have already stated about *gignōskein*, the term tends to denote knowledge by acquaintance, or direct awareness of some fact. It tends to be connected to visual perception but sometimes means recognition, which need not be visual, e.g., when you recognize that you’re mistaken about something you previously believed. *Epistēmē* connotes skill or systematic knowledge. So, in moving from E1 to E2, the interlocutors are making a claim that moderation-as-self-knowledge is *not* like looking at a tree and recognizing that it is a tree, but more like systematic knowledge of trees, for example recognizing that it is a scotch pine, or understanding of the first principles that govern the life and growth of a tree. The shift is semantically subtle but epistemically very significant. That they make the move without argument or discussion means that the interlocutors see the cognitive acts employed in all these sciences and acts of understanding as essentially the same. This can be made more evident if we consider what premise might be missing, with a subargument from an argument that takes E1 as a premise and E2 as a conclusion:

1. Moderation is self-knowledge, *gignōskein heauton* (E1).
2. Mere recognition of the self is sufficient for having systematic knowledge of the self.
3. Thus, moderation is the science of the self, *epistēmē heautou* (E2).

The claim that mere recognition is sufficient for systematic knowledge is supported by the idea that systematic knowledge of the self is acquired by introspection that results in “seeing” what one’s mind has in it or is constituted by. Thus, this move from E1-E2 is
evidence that Socrates and Critias both assume the broad perceptual account of introspection. But there is more evidence of this in the move to E3.

The next question is why the interlocutors think that moderation, as the science of the self (E2), should also be the science of the other sciences and itself (E3). Of course Socrates adds that the science of science must also be about the absence of science (E4). Moving from E2 to E3 and E4, as we shall see, requires some further assumptions about science and introspection. Recall that in moving from E1 to E2 at 166a-b Socrates presses Critias to describe what the object of moderation-as-self-knowledge is on the grounds that all sciences have a distinct object. Critias then says that the distinct object of self-knowledge is not just the self, but also self-knowledge itself.

We must be careful here to stay focused on what it is that Socrates has called moderation-as-self-knowledge in E3. Notice the explicit analogy between medicine, homebuilding, mathematics and geometry on the one hand, and moderation-as-self-knowledge on the other: each has an identifiable object over which it ranges. Medicine is the science of healthy bodies, homebuilding is the science of well-built homes, mathematics of “the odd and the even” and moderation-as-self-knowledge is the science of the self. But it is a puzzle why moderation-as-self-knowledge, which looks ostensibly like psychology up to this point, should also be about other bodies of knowledge. It is even more puzzling why it should be about the absence of such bodies of knowledge.

To state the puzzle clearly, up to E2 in the Charmides, moderation-as-self-knowledge has been about knowing one’s motivations and desires and moderating them, which is the traditional way of understanding the virtue. Even the purely epistemic definition is spelled out in psychological terms – knowledge of the self, which is
understood as knowledge of one’s own *psuchē* and its contents. But knowledge of
knowledge and the absence of knowledge, E3-4, looks a like what we might call
epistemology or the philosophy of science, disciplines concerned with understanding
knowledge itself or understanding the other sciences. What has a cardinal virtue
concerned with moderating one’s desires, defined as knowledge of one’s soul and its
condition, to do with the science of homebuilding or the science of the odd and the even?
How can we make sense of the move from E2 to E3 and E4? The answer, I shall now
argue, has to do with what Critias assumes it means to possess a science. I shall first
argue that there are two senses that we might take the word “science” in E1-E4, then I
shall argue that, reading “science” in E1-4 in one sense makes the move from E2 to E3
and E4 incomprehensible. But taken in the other sense, the move from E2 to E3 and E4
is more reasonable. Lastly, we shall see that taking “science” in the second sense entails
that perception shares characteristics one, five and six with introspection – more evidence
that the interlocutors assume the broad perceptual model of introspection.58

In explaining the move from E2 to E3 and E4 I shall begin with a distinction
between two ways that we might talk about medicine as a science. Consider the
difference between talking about, on the one hand, what a certain doctor knows and, on
the other hand, medicine as a body of knowledge. When talking about the science of
medicine as a body of knowledge, we speak of it as a practice with certain tools,
techniques and facts about the body, infectious disease, etc., as well as a certain
methodology. Also, when talking about the science of medicine we consider the body of

58 Characteristic 1: Sense perception involves three ontologically distinct things, an object of perception, a
perception and a perceptual belief. Characteristic 5: The objects that are believed causally produce the
contents of perceptual beliefs. Characteristic 6: The objects of perception exist independently of the
content of the perceiver’s perceptual beliefs.
medical facts and techniques to be fairly fixed, perhaps changing within certain
parameters. Call this the ‘objective totality’ sense of talking about a science. But
compare this to talk about what an individual doctor actually knows. We do not assume
that each individual doctor knows exactly the same fixed set of facts and is capable of the
same fixed set of techniques, nor do we assume that every doctor possesses the entirety of
all facts in the objective totality of the science of medicine. We say of such a person that
she has medical knowledge, even if she does not possess the objective totality of every
fact or technique available to that science. Call this the ‘subjective individual’ sense of
talking about a science.

If we read “science” in E3-4 in the first sense, as an objective body of facts and
techniques, the transition from E1 and E2 (moderation as awareness of and understanding
of one’s self) to E3 and E4 (the science itself, other sciences and the absence of science)
makes little sense because we are moving from talk about human minds to talk about
what objective sciences are; i.e., we are moving from introspective psychology to
epistemology or philosophy of science. But if we read “science” in E3 and E4 in the
second sense, what an individual agent knows when she is a doctor, then the transition
from E1 and E2 to E3 and E4 involves no move from psychology to epistemology,
because all of E1-4 are about an individual agent’s knowledge; the entire discussion is
about what’s in an agent’s head, as it were.

To clarify, consider the following example. Assume that some agent is moderate
and a homebuilder; he thus possesses the science of homebuilding in the nomenclature of
the Charmides. In other words, through moderation-as-self-knowledge, whose object is
the self and what’s in it, the introspecting agent can know that he knows homebuilding
and any other science present in him including his own moderation-as-self-knowledge.

Of course, moderation-as-self-knowledge is a science itself; so when pressed about what it is that the moderate agent knows when he knows himself through moderation-as-self-knowledge, Critias replies that the moderate agent knows that he possesses all the sciences within him including moderation itself.\(^59\)

Given this reading of the exposition, certain assumptions about introspection emerge more clearly because we can recognize that E1-E4 really is still about introspection and not about epistemology or the philosophy of science. Each science as it is possessed by an individual, according to the interlocutors is supposed to have some object, and moderation-as-self-knowledge (i.e., the science of itself, other sciences and the absence of science) is no different – but its object is both itself and the other sciences. Critias does not claim that the beliefs that constitute moderation-as-self-knowledge for an individual agent will have any effect on the beliefs that constitute the object sciences for an agent. The content of the beliefs that constitute, for example, homebuilding are those objects that are related to homebuilding. But those beliefs themselves are the contents of the beliefs that constitute moderation-as-self-knowledge. So, in the act of introspecting and realizing that one knows homebuilding, there are three ontologically distinct objects or sets of objects: 1) the objects of the introspection, which are the beliefs that constitute homebuilding, 2) an introspective act and 3) an introspective belief that one possesses the science of homebuilding. Further, homebuilding’s belief set causally produces the content of the introspected beliefs that constitute moderation.

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\(^59\) In this Critias is self-consistent. Recall that Critias holds what I have called the Critian necessity principle, that if an agent is moderate, that agent knows what moderation is. If moderation just is self-knowledge then of course if one possesses it one cannot but know that one possesses it.
Thus, Critias assumes in the move from E1 to E4 that introspection shares characteristics one, five and six with perception.\textsuperscript{60} Critias also assumes that we could identify the internal set of objects that constitute homebuilding over and against those that constitute medicine and that we can shift our attention from science to science in order to determine what sciences we possess. These are the second and third characteristics of sense perception.\textsuperscript{61}

My interpretation so far focuses on how moderation-as-self-knowledge is the science of the other sciences and itself. But in moving to E4, Socrates and Critias add that it must also be the science of the absence of science. Why this addition? There is no explanation in the text. We are left to wonder how there can be a science of the absence of science. However, as long as we continue to read epistēmē in the ‘subjective individual’ sense, the move to E4 is natural. Assume that the moderate, and therefore self-knowing, agent who is a homebuilder is \textit{not} also a physician. Such an agent would then know via moderation-as-self-knowledge that the science of medicine is absent because, upon introspecting, the moderate agent would know that the set of beliefs and propositional attitudes that constitute medicine are not present within him; i.e., he would have knowledge of the absence of the science of medicine.

We must now consider the final step of the explication, what I have called E5, the claim that moderation-as-self knowledge constitutes knowing (\textit{eidenai}) that which one

\textsuperscript{60} Characteristic 1: Sense perception involves three ontologically distinct things, an object of perception, a perception and a perceptual belief. Characteristic 5: The objects that are believed causally produce the contents of perceptual beliefs. Characteristic 6: The objects of perception exist independently of the content of the perceiver’s perceptual beliefs.

\textsuperscript{61} Characteristic 2: Sense perception provides us some facts about the non-relational properties of an object by which we might identify that object. Characteristic 3: One can shift one’s attention from one object to another in a given occurring perception.
knows and that which one does not know and that it is knowing how to examine oneself and others to determine whether one, or they, know what is claimed (167a1-9).

We can see that there is no assumption that introspection is infallible in the move to E5. Socrates and Critias recognize that the deliverances of introspection are to be examined and not taken at face value. Thus, introspection is both fallible and feasible as a source of knowledge about what sciences one possesses, and this was also one of the characteristics of perception.

We can now conclude our consideration of introspection in the explication. If I am correct in what I have argued in this section, Socrates and Critias assume the broad perceptual model of introspection by assuming that all six characteristics of perception are also characteristics of introspection.

§3.4.2 The First Refutation of Moderation-as-Self-Knowledge

After stating that moderation-as-self knowledge must entail E2-5, Socrates begins his refutation of moderation-as-self-knowledge with an argument by analogy saying that “in other cases” (en allois) a science that is only of itself, the other sciences, and the absence of science is “impossible” (adunaton). The other cases are other types of mental acts and in each Socrates’ central claim is the same:

1. There is no vision (opsis) that sees only vision itself, other visions and non-vision, but not colors (chrōma).

62 Literally, the deliverances of introspection need to be looked at again; the verb is episkopein. At 166c-d Socrates states that what he is doing is examining Critias’ and his own claims so that each “existing thing should become clear”.
63 Characteristic 4: Sense perception is both fallible and feasible: it is capable of giving us knowledge of the external world and yet at the same time is capable of giving us false beliefs about the world.
64 Chr. 167c4-5.
2. There is no hearing (akouein) that hears only hearing itself, other hearings and non-hearings, but hears no sound (akoē or phōnē).
3. There is no sense (aisthēsis) that is a sense of sense itself and the other senses, but senses nothing that the other senses sense (aisthanesthai).
4. There is no desire (epithumia) that is a desire for itself and the other desires, but not for pleasure (hēdonē).
5. There is no wish (boulēsis) that wishes only for itself and the other wishes, but not for some good (agathos).
6. There is no love (erōs) of itself and other loves, but is not of any fine thing (kalon).
7. There is no fear (phobos) of itself and the other fears that does not fear frightening things (deina).
8. There is no belief (doxa) of itself and the other beliefs that does not believe the things that other beliefs believe.
9. But there is a science (epistēmē) [specifically moderation-as-self-knowledge] that is not of any learned thing (mathēma) but is a science of itself and a science of the other sciences.

This argument is vital for understanding what Plato thinks about introspection in the early dialogues. Also, it is not intended to be a conclusive refutation of the possibility of self-knowledge; as Socrates immediately states, it is only intended to stress its oddity. Yet, there is an apparent paradox or Socrates and Critias would not accept it as a putative refutation of moderation-as-self-knowledge. Recognizing this, we should consider what the paradox is. I shall argue that the nine propositions of the refutation show evidence

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65 The term for the object of fearing is the adjective deinos in the plural as a neuter substantive; literally ‘frightening things.’
66 The object of doxein in this passage is mēdeis in the neuter; literally ‘nothing’; it is the object of the active verb doxein, ‘believe.’
67 Chrm. 167c8-168a9.
68 Benson (2003) argues following Kahn (1996) that the interlocutors believe that the knower of knowledge has the ability to know: (a) that she has knowledge of a specific subject matter, (b) that she does not have knowledge of a specific subject matter, (c) that someone else has knowledge of a specific subject matter and (d) that someone else does not have knowledge of a specific subject matter. Benson then argues that the refutations in the latter half of the Charmides only aim at (a) and (c) and so only at a portion of the Socratic mission. However, Benson (2003 pp. 42-44) gives short shrift to the ‘other cognitive acts’ argument. Wellman (1964) argues that at the end of the Charmides the question is not whether the knowing subject can be the knower and the object of knowledge, but whether an act of knowing can be known in itself, claiming that the central question is an aspect of the problem of consciousness.
69 “We ought not to state categorically that there is not [a science of science and the absence of science which is not a science of any thing that is learned], but still go on investigating whether there is” (Chrm. 168a). This particular passage is overlooked by those who think that the Charmides is a skeptical refutation of the possibility of epistemology – if Socrates intended his refutation of knowledge of knowledge to be conclusive, he wouldn’t hedge so strongly. See esp. Ketchum (1991).
that the interlocutors assume the broad perceptual model of introspection, but some care
is required in establishing this case. I shall begin by arguing that it is not reflexivity itself
that is at the heart of the paradox, but rather that there are three conditions, of which
reflexivity is a part, that are paradoxical. The broad perceptual model of introspection,
we shall see, is required if one is to accept the three conditions.\textsuperscript{70} I shall use the term
‘mental act’ to refer to all nine of the acts, though the three types of acts (perception,
emotion and purely propositional belief) are importantly different types of mental act.\textsuperscript{71}

The structure of each of the nine claims is the same: For any type of mental act, $M$, there is no $M$ that acts only upon itself and other mental acts of its type, but also does
not operate on or range over the objects that other mental acts of its type operate on or
range over. We can split this into three conditions for a uniquely reflexive mental act:

1. Reflexivity: The mental act is about itself.
2. Higher Order: The mental act is about all the other acts of its type.
3. Narrowsness: The mental act is not about what the other acts of its type are about.

It is made explicit why sensory capacities cannot fulfill all three conditions. Socrates
says that if hearing were to hear itself then the faculty of hearing itself must possess
sound and if sight were to see itself then sight should possess color – and none of these
things is the case.\textsuperscript{72} But none of these is the case because Socrates and Critias assume,
not unreasonably, the following three things: First, hearing and sight, as cognitive acts,
\textit{must} take individual distinctive objects: such capacities involve three ontologically
distinct objects, a color or sound respectively, an instance of seeing or hearing and a

\textsuperscript{70} I have taken care in my argument not to rely merely on the fact that all manner of cognitive acts are
mentioned in the same argument. We shall see that there are three conditions for a uniquely reflexive
mental act are what are required to connect introspection as a mental act with perception as a mental act.
\textsuperscript{71} It’s important to note that this is one of the first times in the history of western thought when perception
is treated as anything like a cognitive act; it was treated as a bodily act. For a discussion of this see
\textsuperscript{72} Chrm. 168d-e.
perceptual belief whose content is the thing seen or heard. Second, while the text does not make clear what sense of “perceive” the interlocutors are working with, it is clear that the object of the perception plays a primary, if not the sole, role in what the perceiver perceives. This primary role is indicated by the fact that each cognitive capacity takes a specific type of object – hearing does not take color, fear does not take learned things, etc. Third and finally, perceiving agents’ minds do not make the sounds and colors that those agents’ perceptive faculties derive their perceptive contents from; i.e., sounds and colors exist independently of the content of the perceiver’s perception. While this separate ontological existence is not indicated in the text, again, the fact that each cognitive capacity has a unique object indicates that the objects themselves in virtue of their own ontological type play a significant if not the sole role in the content of the mental state.

And these are three of the standard characteristics of perception. The above three assumptions about perception taken as a set with the three conditions for a uniquely reflexive cognitive act do in fact form a contradictory set because the standard view of perception requires that perceptions be about ontologically distinct objects that then causally produce the contents of the perceptual beliefs. But, a uniquely reflexive perceptual ability would take as its contents both itself and other perceptual beliefs, which are not ontologically distinct from the agent. In short, it is the assumption of ontological distinctness between act and object that creates the air of paradox.

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73 Specifically they are: (1) Sense perceptions involve three ontologically distinct objects, an object of perception, a perception and a perceptual belief. (5) The objects that are perceived causally produce the content of perceptual beliefs. (6) The objects of perception exist independently of the content of the perceiver’s perceptual beliefs.
The lesson that the interlocutors take from the other cognitive functions argument is that sensory capacities themselves cannot fulfill all three conditions and thus cannot be capacities for self-perception.\textsuperscript{74} When asked if there is a vision of vision and the absence of vision that sees no color Critias says, “By Zeus, not I”, an emphatic no.\textsuperscript{75} But the argument is a refutation of moderation as the science of self-knowledge, not a problem about seeing sight. So after listing 1-8 of the other mental acts refutation, Socrates says that he is asking for moderation-as-self-knowledge to be a science “of this sort,” meaning that it follows the same pattern as the others mental acts, including perception.\textsuperscript{76} Thus the interlocutors must be assuming that whatever conditions hold for the perceptive mental acts must also hold for all the other mental acts. In fact, \textit{epistemē} is given its own unique type of objects in the same manner of the other acts – \textit{mathēmata}. In Plato’s works \textit{mathēmata} can mean lessons, especially childhood school lessons,\textsuperscript{77} a discipline or course of study,\textsuperscript{78} or more generally it can simply refer to something learned\textsuperscript{79} or to learning as an activity.\textsuperscript{80} The term is thus ambiguous; but there is a connection across the several semantic contexts. In every other instance that I have found in which Plato uses the word \textit{mathēmata} it does not refer to falsity or to a useless discipline. Even when used in the dialectical discovery of the sophist’s art in the \textit{Sophist} it is used to refer to the

\textsuperscript{74} The real question here seems to be whether there is another cognitive capacity that takes sight as its object, but not colors. But of course, the discussion in the \textit{Charmides} never goes that far. Aristotle argues that either we posit a visual capacity that can sense itself or suffer an infinite regress at \textit{De An} III.2.
\textsuperscript{75} \textit{Chrm.} 167d3.
\textsuperscript{76} \textit{Chrm.} 168a6.
\textsuperscript{77} \textit{Tim.} 26b.
\textsuperscript{78} \textit{Lach.} 182c: two of the subjects referred to by the term are fighting in armor and military strategy. See also \textit{Prot.} 313d where is used with respect to medicine and gymnastics, and \textit{Soph.} 224b-d where it refers to the subjects concerning excellence, \textit{aretē}, that sophists teach for a fee, and \textit{Rep. VII.} 525b where it refers to the art of numbers, i.e., calculation or arithmetic. Earlier at \textit{Rep. VII.} 521c-d the term is used to refer to the disciplines, like mathematics, that bring the soul to the study of true philosophy.
\textsuperscript{79} This is the sense used by Plato at \textit{Tht.} 153b where Socrates says that it is through learning and study, being motions, that the soul gains \textit{mathēmata} and is preserved. See also \textit{Rep. V.} 475b.
\textsuperscript{80} This is the sense used at \textit{Rep. VI.} 485d where Socrates says that when one’s desires flow toward learning one is lead to the soul and away from the pleasures of the body.
useful genuine disciplines that sophists also teach. This connotation of genuine usefulness is best exemplified at Republic 475b-c where Socrates says that a true philosopher, as a lover of learning, does not choose some mathēmata over others, but learns them all the way a gourmet tries food. Thus, through the term mathēmata, we are reminded of the sense of epistēmē employed in the explication: genuine practical and theoretical disciplines that are useful to people. By requiring that a distinctive type of ontological category, mathēmata, be the object of epistēmē the interlocutors impart the same statement structure of first two perceptive faculties to all cognitive faculties. Thus, it is clear from the fact that the statements all have the same structure and from Socrates’ comments that the three conditions for a uniquely reflexive mental act are meant to apply to all mental acts, including doxa and epistēmē. Further, the assumptions about the metaphysics of perception that are required for the self-referential paradox for perceptions must be applied to epistēmē as well. Thus, the paradox for epistēmē results because it is assumed that an instance of epistēmē, if it is to be a uniquely reflexive mental act, must involve an ontologically distinct object that exists independently of the knowing agent and causally produces the content of the mental act of self-knowing. Socrates and Critias in the other mental acts refutation assume that three of the central characteristics of sense perception also apply to introspection.

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81 Soph. 224b-d. Plato doesn’t have a problem with sophists who teach math and writing, his concern seems to be with the ability to turn poor arguments into seeming good ones.
§3.4.3 Self-Knowledge as Technē: The Usefulness Refutation

After accepting that the ‘other mental acts’ refutation is not conclusive, Socrates and Critias agree to proceed as if moderation is a science of science. Socrates, with an extended argument that runs from 169e1 to 171c10, questions whether the science of science would be a useful. Two sections of the usefulness refutation contain assumptions about introspection. The first section runs:

1. There is a science of science (assumed at 169d2-4 and stated again at 170a6).
2. Science of science is nothing more than dividing (diairein) things so that one is a science and the other is not a science (170a5-8).
3. Medicine is the science and absence of science of health (170a10-b1).  
4. Politics is the science and absence of science of justice (170b1).
5. If moderation is only the science of science, the person that only knows (gignōskein) science but not health and justice knows only that (hoti) he knows something (tis) and has a certain science (tis epistēmē) (170b6-10).
6. One knows the healthy by medicine, the harmonious by music, house-building by house-building, but one does not know the harmonious, healthy or house-building by moderation (170b10-c4, emphasis mine).
7. If moderation alone (monon) is knowledge of knowledge, then one will not know that (hoti) one knows the healthy or house-building (170c6-7).
8. The one not knowing (agnoein) this (toto) will not know (eidenai) that which (ho) he knows, but will only know that (hoti) he knows (170c9-10).
9. Therefore, moderation is knowing not what (ho) one knows, but only that (hoti) one knows (170d1-4).

82 Chrm. 169d2-4.
83 The phrase is awkward in English – the term ‘absence of science’ is one word in Greek, anepistēmosunos, which can mean ignorance. Socrates seems to be applying the terms epistēmē and anepistēmosunos in a manner consistent with the way that he might apply them to medicine to get the locution ‘knowledge of health and the absence of health’.
84 This passage is problematic: the word ‘this’ in Greek (toto) is a singular, neuter and in the accusative singular case – it should agree with its referent in gender and number. Yet, there are two neuter words in the previous passage, health and homebuilding. To refer to both, toto should be plural. Yet, to refer to the singular term moderation, it would need to be feminine. Alternately, the phrase could refer to the fact of the last statement – the one ignorant of this thing, i.e., the fact that only moderation confers the knowledge that you know.
The first two premises make it clear that Socrates is refuting the ability of moderation-as-self-knowledge to investigate the self and others.\textsuperscript{85} In the third and fourth premises it is reiterated that each science must have a distinct kind of object of which it knows. In the fifth and sixth premises the act of self-knowing is separate from the act of knowing health or well-built houses. Thus the introspective knowing that one has the science of medicine cannot even take health as an object. As a result, when one introspects about what it is that one knows, one cannot know what the object of one’s science is by moderation-as-self-knowledge. In each case the introspective act that knows knowledge involves three ontologically distinct objects, an object science, an introspective act and an introspective belief. Also, the introspective act has to provide the introspecting agent with some identifying facts about the science that one is introspectively perceiving, that it is a science and that it is distinct from some other science. Also, the science that one becomes of aware of via moderation-as-self-knowledge causally produces the content of the introspective belief and seems to exist independently of what the introspecting agent thinks of the science; i.e., one does not make the science of medicine in one’s soul by introspecting, one finds it there. Thus, the first section of the usefulness refutation contains evidence that Socrates and Critias assume that introspective knowing shares the first, second, fifth and sixth characteristics of perception with introspection.\textsuperscript{86}

\textsuperscript{85} This was the fifth and final step of the explanation. E5: Moderation is knowing (eidenai) that which (hos) one knows and that which (hos) one does not know and it is knowing how to examine (exetasai) oneself and others to determine whether one or they know what is claimed (Chrm. 167a1-9).

\textsuperscript{86} Those were: (1) Sense perceptions involve three ontologically distinct objects, an object of perception, a perception and a perceptual belief. (2) Sense perception provides us some facts about non-relational properties of an object by which we may identify that object. (5) The objects that are perceived causally produce the content of perceptual beliefs. (6) The objects of perception exist independently of the content of the perceivers’ perceptual beliefs.
The next phase of the refutation of the usefulness of moderation-as-self-knowledge concerns the final step of the transition – the fact that the moderate person ought to be able to determine if others know. We are asked to consider a situation in which there are two people: a moderate man who is not a doctor, and a doctor who will be examined by the moderate man with respect to the doctor’s medical knowledge. The argument runs:

1. Each science is defined (*horizein*) by what it is of. (171a5-6)
2. Medicine is separated from the other sciences because it is the science of health and disease. (171a8-9)
3. If the moderate man wants to know what the science the doctor has is of, he must examine the doctor on matters of health and disease. (171a3-6)
4. The moderate man must look to the words and actions of the doctor to see if what the doctor says is truly spoken. (171b7-9)
5. Without the medical art, no one can verify these things. (171b11-12)
6. Therefore, if moderation is only the science of science and the absence of science then the doctor (1) will not be able to distinguish the genuine practitioner of his art from the quack, (2) will not be able to distinguish the man who supposes he knows the art from the one who actually does, and (3) will not recognize any knower except the man in his own field, the way other craftsmen do.

Socrates then concludes that moderation-as-self-knowledge is useless because it will not allow the moderate man to do what, in the explication, they determined he could do - investigate others and himself to see if they or he actually know.\(^7\) The first two premises illustrate the same assumption as the first section of the usefulness refutation – that the introspective act that knows knowledge involves three ontologically distinct objects, an object science, an introspective act and an introspective belief about that science. Also that one can identify, via introspection, the unique sciences and separate them from one another. The introspecting agent in the above case cannot use

\(^{87}\) *Chrm*. 171d.
introspection to examine the content of another agent’s medical beliefs but must use his own understanding of medicine.

We thus see that the kernel of the refutation of the usefulness of self-knowledge is not just its reflexive capacity, but the fact the interlocutors make such strong metaphysical assumptions about introspection and its objects.\textsuperscript{88}

§3.5 Conclusion: Cognition and Self-Knowledge

In each section of this chapter on the \textit{Charmides} I have argued that the interlocutors assume the broad perceptual model of introspection. Further, I have argued that the paradox of self-knowledge found in the refutations of moderation-as-self-knowledge are the result of an inconsistency between the broad perceptual model of introspection, assumed by the interlocutors, and the three conditions for a uniquely reflexive mental act. We have also seen that the interlocutors, especially in the first refutation of moderation-as-self-knowledge, assume that all of our cognitive and perceptual faculties, from wishing and believing to knowing, seeing and introspecting are functionally identical. Thus, all of the interlocutors of the \textit{Charmides}, like the eristic brothers of the \textit{Euthydemus} assume that perception and belief are identical cognitive functions. As we shall see, there are more problems inherent in this idea that all cognitive/perceptual/emotional faculties have the same functional structure: knowledge itself is quite mysterious. For Plato an account of knowledge, be it of the self or anything

\textsuperscript{88} For an alternate reading of the usefulness refutations see Morris (1989, esp. pp.56-59). Morris argues that if we read the term \textit{epistēmē} as meaning ‘recognition’ then we can understand why knowledge of knowledge will be useless: the very idea that someone can recognize as abstract a thing as knowledge of knowledge without recognizing its subject matter is ridiculous to Morris. However, Morris’ reading does not assist us in understanding why knowledge, belief and other propositional attitudes like loving and believing are on par with recognition with respect to their inability to self-cognize. My reading explains this by appeal to some assumptions about certain cognitive functions.
else, will require that knowledge be a cognitive capacity distinct from belief and that both of those capacities be distinct from perception.
4 The *Theaetetus* on Cognition and Perception

§4.1 Introductory Comments

The *Theaetetus* is Plato’s dialogue about knowledge, *epistēmē*. In the beginning of the dialogue Euclides and Terpsion, upon hearing that the mathematician Theaetetus will likely die of war injuries, have a slave read aloud a recorded conversation that took place between a young Theaetetus and a mature Socrates. Thus framed, the main text of the *Theaetetus* is a discussion between Theaetetus and Socrates. Early in the conversation Socrates asks Theaetetus to define *epistēmē* itself. Theaetetus’ first definition is that *epistēmē* just is areas of expertise like geometry, arithmetic and astronomy.1 This enumeration of examples is not even *prima facie* satisfactory to Socrates, so in order to clarify what he wants, he asks Theaetetus to provide a definition like those that he is already used to working with in mathematics.2 Socrates then instructs Theaetetus to define knowledge in the same manner as his mathematic definitions.

Theaetetus’ first *prima facie* acceptable definition is that *epistēmē* is perception, *aisthēsis*.3 Socrates connects this definition with Heraclitean metaphysics and Protagorean epistemology; then the definition, so connected, is considered and refuted.4

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1 *Tht*. 146a-c. All English quotes from the *Theaetetus* will be taken from McDowell’s (McDowell 1973) translation unless otherwise noted.
2 *Tht*. 147b-148d. Theaetetus attempted to define linear commensurability after being given several proofs of the linear incommensurability of various squares to a one unit square. We need not concern ourselves with the details, but the message is clear: Theaetetus already has an excellent capacity for abstract definitions.
3 *Tht*. 151d.
4 Socrates is explicit about this connection, see *Tht*. 151e7-160a. See esp. 152e, 162c, 179b5-d5. Cf. 160d-e. The refutation runs from 160a-187a. Socrates tries to make ‘knowledge is perception’ clear by
Theaetetus then offers a second definition, that \textit{epistêmê} is true belief, \textit{alêthê doxa}.\footnote{Tht. 187b.} This definition is tested, along with an excursion into the question of how false belief is possible.\footnote{Tht. 187b-201c.} In the end, the definition of knowledge as true belief is refuted with a very short counterexample.\footnote{Tht. 200d5-201c7} And so Theaetetus offers his third and final definition of \textit{epistêmê}: true belief with an account, \textit{alêthê doxa} with a \textit{logos}.\footnote{Tht. 201d.} After speculatively unpacking this new definition, by describing a dream he had that the world is composed of knowable complexes and unknowable simples, Socrates refutes it.\footnote{Tht. 201d8-210a9} The dialogue then ends in aporia; the interlocutors agree that they have failed to define \textit{epistêmê}.

My interpretation of the theory of knowledge developed in the \textit{Theaetetus} will rely on my reading of the the \textit{Euthydemus} and the \textit{Charmides}. In the two previous chapters I have argued that the interlocutors in two early Socratic dialogues rely on some implicit assumptions in their respective arguments. Euthydemus and Dionysodorus’ assumptions in the \textit{Euthydemus} constitute what I have called “the eristic theory.” I have also claimed that this background theory undergirds the method of sophistic eristic as Plato presents it. With respect to the \textit{Charmides} I have argued that all of the interlocutors assume both a broad perceptual model of introspection and the functional identity of all cognitive processes. I shall now make the case that in the \textit{Theaetetus} Plato both connecting it with well-understood \textit{endoxa}. While this is a standard move in dialectical reasoning, it is unique to the \textit{Theaetetus} for Plato to write Socrates as offering positive doctrine and clarification before refutation. Socrates goes so far as to say that he is a midwife of philosophical theories, not merely a destroyer of theories, and able to test them for adequacy. See Tht. 149a.

\footnote{Tht. 149a.}{Tht. 187b.}
\footnote{Tht. 187b-201c.}{Tht. 187b-201c.}
\footnote{Tht. 200d5-201c7}{Tht. 200d5-201c7}
\footnote{Tht. 201d.}{Tht. 201d.} The sense of “\textit{logos}” in this third and final definition of knowledge is disputed by interpreters. For a summary of the issues, see Chappell (2005), pp. 198-199. He concludes, I think rightly, that, “’Account’ will do as a translation of \textit{logos}. But it should be remembered that the discussion of 202d-210a is in large part an attempt to decide between different senses of \textit{logos}.” Thus, Plato himself takes the sense of “\textit{logos}” in “\textit{epistêmê} is \textit{alêthê doxa} with a \textit{logos}” to be disputed and in need of argument. I shall agree with Chappell, et al. on translation, but reserve full discussion for §4.3.4.

\footnote{Tht. 201d8-210a9.}
explicitly and implicitly challenge the eristic theory of the *Euthydemus* and the perceptual/cognitive model of the *Charmides*. Thus, while the *Theaetetus* ends in aporia, we will see that philosophical progress is made in the refutation of the sophistic eristic background theory. This refutation clears the way for Plato to develop a more philosophically promising model of human cognition.

After these introductory comments, I will begin this chapter in §4.2 with an overview of Socrates and Theaetetus’ discussion of the first definition of knowledge, that knowledge is perception (KnP).\(^{10}\) Socrates argues that in order to be plausible KnP requires two important doctrines: Protagorean epistemology, in the form of the ‘man is the measure’ doctrine, along with the Heraclitean metaphysics of radical flux. The synthesis of Protagorean epistemology (PMM) and Heraclitean flux (HF) form the framework for understanding how knowledge can be identical with perception.\(^{11}\) The refutation of KnP proceeds as if KnP, properly understood, entails this metaphysical and epistemological synthesis.\(^{12}\)

In §4.2.1 I focus on the ontology of HF, arguing that its ontology is consistent with the ontology of the eristic theory in the *Euthydemus*. We will see that HF offers a unique theory of properties, objects and agents, on which objects and all perceiving agents are composed of ontologically fundamental *kinēseis*, motions, which interact to

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\(^{10}\) I shall refer to the definition of knowledge as “KnP”.

\(^{11}\) I shall abbreviate ‘Heraclitean metaphysics of radical flux’ as HF, and Protagoras’ ‘man is the measure’ epistemology as PMM. I make no claim to the historical accuracy of the *Theaetetus*; I am not concerned with whether Plato offers an accurate recounting of the historical Heraclitus in HF, nor whether PMM is an accurate recounting of Protagoras’ book *On Truth*. For the rest of this discussion, “HF” and “PMM” refer to the theories as Plato recounts them in the *Theaetetus*. For the sake of discussion I shall be careful to maintain the distinction between KnP, on the one hand, and HF and PMM on the other. KnP is merely an identity claim: all instances of knowledge are perception and all instances of perception are knowledge. HF and PMM are presented as the way things have to be in order for KnP to be true.

\(^{12}\) Modern readers might object to the refutation of KnP on the grounds that certainly we can define KnP some way other than the combination of HF and PMM. Plato offers us no such alternative, however, and it the interlocutors make it clear that there seems no other option out there. See
create both perceptions and properties. HF requires that all properties be relational, i.e.,
that there can be no intrinsic properties. This unusual metaphysical theory, I shall argue,
is Plato’s attempt to offer the strongest philosophical support possible for the practice of
sophistic eristic.

In §4.2.2 I focus on the epistemology of PMM, arguing that the best reading of
PMM aligns it with the sophistic theory of the *Euthydemus* because PMM, like the
sophistic theory, is infallibilist, rather than truth relativist. The difference between the
two positions is subtle but important. Truth relativism is the view that all beliefs are true
for the person who holds them and that there are no absolute truths, except perhaps for
the statement of relativism. For the truth relativist, the wind is cold for me, but this truth
about the wind for me carries no epistemic weight for you or anyone else. On the other
hand, infallibilism is the view that “believed by x” is synonymous with “true for x.” On
the infallibilist interpretation Socrates in his exposition of PMM and HF claims that
different observers have epistemic access to the same wind, though they might
consistently ascribe different perceptual properties to it. The wind, according to the
infallibilist really is cold for me and warm for you because coldness and warmth are
relational properties whose relata are, on the one hand, the wind and on the other hand,
respectively, the two observers. Contrary to relativism it is true absolutely that the wind
is cold in relation to me and warm in relation to you.

In §4.2.3 I shall focus on the strategy of the refutation of HF and PMM. At 163a-
165e Socrates offers a short series of refutations of KnP (understood as HF+PMM). But
very significantly, at 165e4–168c5 Socrates then pretends to be Protagoras, popping his
head out of the ground to defend himself against the initial refutations of PMM. By
showing that the initial refutations of PMM at 163a-165e are substantially the same as the refutations of the sophistic eristic in the *Euthydemus*, I argue that Plato recognizes that the Socratic arguments from the *Euthydemus* are inadequate to refute sophistic eristic. It will thus be established that the *Theaetetus* is an explicit attempt to grapple with persistent *aporiai* stemming from the confrontation between sophistic eristic and philosophical dialectic.

In §4.3.1 I shall interpret Socrates’ final argument against KnP.¹³ I shall argue that we should read this final refutation of KnP as specifically designed to refute the Second Eristic Cognitive Principle: that perception and belief are identical cognitive functions.¹⁴

In §4.3.2-3 I shall argue that while KnP (understood as HF and PMM) has been rejected, and it has become clear that some kind of cognition is distinct from perception, *implicit in HF and PMM is a deficient picture of cognition that inhibits any attempt to define knowledge; and some features of that picture survive the demise of those theories.*

On my reading, the models of cognition that Socrates sets forth to explain false belief, the wax block and aviary, implicitly rely on the eristic cognitive thesis, which I identified as assumed by the sophists in the *Euthydemus*, and on the broad perceptual model of introspection, which I identified as assumed in the *Charmides.*¹⁵ But of course, in the *Theaetetus* those models of the mind’s operations, put forth to explain false belief, fail to do so. The models fail, I shall argue, because they rely on those theses of the eristic

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¹³ *Tht.* 184b4-186e10.
¹⁴ Recall that I identified this principle in chapter 2; see §2.6.
¹⁵ On the Charmides, see Chapter 3. The eristic cognitive thesis is: if one has object *x* in mind (*mimnēsein*), then one must do so by speaking (*legein*) or thinking (*doxazein*) one of *x*’s unique *logoi*. 

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theory and on the broad perceptual model of introspection. Their failure is an implicit rejection of those theses and the broad perceptual model of introspection.

In §4.3.4 I will interpret the discussion of Theaetetus’ final definition of knowledge: that knowledge is true belief with an account. I shall argue that in Socrates’ dream, the non-compositional eristic linguistic thesis—that an entire sentence (logos) gets its meaning and truth-value in virtue of the fact that it refers to a being (to on)—has been replaced by a compositional account of content that can better explain the existence of false beliefs. This, I shall argue, is the coup de grâce against the eristic theory. Pulling chapter 4 together, we will see that over the course of the Theaetetus Plato has refuted every lingering sophistic thesis as well as the broad perceptual model of introspection. The ground is cleared for Plato’s late epistemology and philosophy of language, as expressed in the Sophist and Statesman.¹⁶ Let us proceed to consider KnP now.

§4.2 Cognition and the World: Knowledge as Perception in Theaetetus 151e7-160a

After Theaetetus has agreed to attempt an abstract definition of epistēmē, he offers the thesis that knowledge is perception (KnP). Socrates immediately says that KnP is the same view that Protagoras held, the Protagorean doctrine that ‘man is the measure’ (PMM). He elaborates PMM as follows: “As each thing appears to me (phainetai emoi)

¹⁶ I shall not interpret these two dialogues in this project, but leave that work for a later project. For now, it shall suffice that I have shown that the sophistic eristic theory, with its attendant erroneous metaphysical, epistemological, linguistic and cognitive baggage has been refuted. This is the progress of the seemingly aporetic Theaetetus.
so it is for me (einaî emoi), and as it appears to you so it is for you (soi).”  

He then expresses the same doctrine more generally and explicitly connects it to KnP, claiming that “things are for each man such he perceives them to be… [and] perception is always of what is, and unerring, as befits knowledge.”

Socrates then expands this epistemological doctrine further by giving it a metaphysical underpinning in the form of an ontology that, it is assumed, must be the case if KnP, understood as PMM, is true:

In the case of the eyes first, you mustn’t think of what you call white colour as being some distinct thing outside of your eyes (exō tōn ommatōn) or in your eyes either (en tois ommasi) - in fact you mustn’t assign any place (tis chōra) to it, for then it would be standing in formation, not in a process of coming to be.

Socrates claims that it would be inconsistent with KnP if your perceptions are ever wrong about an object: if you ascribe cold to the wind, but the wind is actually not cold, then your perception is wrong and perception is not, in fact, knowledge.

This metaphysical picture, which Socrates associates with Heraclitus, is important, and Socrates elaborates on it at length, claiming that underlying the appearance of a multitude of individuals belonging to a plethora of distinct and specific kinds is a different fundamental reality, one in which all that really exists are four types of motions, which are themselves imperceivable but which generate all perceptions and

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17 Th. 152a7-9. The verbs in the second clause are implied, not stated. What matters is that the personal pronouns are in the dative whether connected to phainetai or einaî; i.e., he does not say that the object itself is as it appears to me, but rather that the object is for me as it appears to me.
18 Th. 152c, emphasis mine.
19 Th. 153d8-e2. The sense of tis chōra might be given best by translating the passage as “… you mustn’t assign any particular place to it…” It’s not that there is no place at all that any property exists, it’s that there can be no definitive place set over any other.
20 We might say at this point that Socrates has interpreted Theaetetus’ definition too strongly: certainly no early modern Empiricist would claim that every instance of perception is infallible, nor would they need to defend Empiricism. But this is how Socrates sees it.
all perceivers. He refers to this theory as the “subtle theory”\(^\text{21}\) in contrast to the “crude theory” that all that exists are physical perceivables, saying, “the principle (archē) upon which all we have said depends, that everything is actually motion (kinēsis), and other than this there is nothing (ouden). Motion has two forms, each an infinite multitude, but differentiated by their powers, the one active and the other passive.”\(^\text{22}\) From the interaction between the active and passive powers, Socrates says that two things are mutually generated: “… of which one is a perceived thing, the other a perception (aisthēsis), which is on every occasion generated and brought to birth together the perceived thing.”\(^\text{23}\) According to this theory, there is a “twin birth” at every instance of perception, the twins being perceptions and perceived properties.\(^\text{24}\) He enumerates the generated perceptions: sight (opsis), hearing (akoē), smelling (osphrēsis), feeling cold (psuxis) or hot (kausis), pleasures (hēdonai), pains (lupai), desires (epithumiai), fears (phoboi) and many others.\(^\text{25}\) The mutually generated kinds of perceivables, which Socrates calls the “kinsmen” (homogonoi) of perceptions, are: for all manner of vision, all manner of colors (chrōmata); for all manner of hearing, all manner of sounds (phōnai); and so on for all manner of perceptions and things perceived.\(^\text{26}\) Socrates is clear about the metaphysical status of both perceptions and perceived properties; they are distinct from each other but born at the same moment from confluence of distinct types of motions. He says that at the moment the eye is filled with sight,

\(^{21}\) Thet. 156a2-3.
\(^{22}\) Thet. 156a2-7. My Translation. Socrates adds that some motions in each of the two categories are swift and others are slow at Thet. 156c6-d2.
\(^{23}\) Thet. 156b1-4.
\(^{24}\) Thet. 156 d.
\(^{25}\) Thet. 156. b.
\(^{26}\) Thet. 156b-c.
… [the eye] sees at that moment and has come to be (gignomai), not by any means seeing, but an eye that sees; and the thing which joined in generating the colour has been filled all round with whiteness (leukotēs); it has come to be, again, not whiteness (leukotēs), but white (leukon) - a white piece of wood or stone, whatever it is that happens to have that sort of color. We must think of all other cases too in the same way: we must take that nothing is hard, hot or anything, just by itself…

Also:

… black white or any other color will turn out to have come into being through the collision (prosbolē) of the eyes with the appropriate motion. What we say a given color is will be neither the thing which collides nor that which it collides with, but something which has come into being between (metaxu) them, something which is private to the individual.

It is important to note that HF is not only a metaphysical theory about perceptible objects and properties, but also about perceiving agents. Socrates says that on HF, even the seeing agent is not the same from moment to moment: “… it [the object] doesn’t always appear the same even to yourself because you never remain the same as yourself”. This point is expanded upon later, reinforcing the fact that every perception is relative not just to an individual perceiver, but to that perceiver at a particular time:

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27 Th. 156e.  
28 Th. 153e-154a. I have slightly deviated from McDowell here. My translation is in the italicized. McDowell renders ἄλλα μεταξύ τι ἐκάστω ὁ ὅν γεγονός as “something peculiar to each one”, but ὅν is best translated to include the sense of privacy, emphasizing that Socrates is trying to give full flesh to the idea that each person is a measure. It should be noted that Socrates also says that, “… no one of them [any perceivable, like hard, white or hot] is anything in itself, all things of all kinds are coming to be in association with one another… and there is nothing (ouden)… which is in itself just one thing (en autō kath’ auto)… (157a). Socrates does not just describe the theory, he provides its motivations, stating, “… the hot and fire, which we’re told generates and governs everything else, is itself generated by means of movement and friction - and they’re changes.” (153a) He continues, “The class of living things is produced by these same processes [heat and fire]… and… bodily condition is destroyed by inactivity and idleness, but to a great extent preserved by exercise and change.” (153b) This extends beyond bodies and inanimate physical objects as well. Socrates says that the psuchē “learns lessons and is preserved and becomes better, by way of learning and practice, which are changes…” (153b) Thus, the claim that “everything is motion” is intended to explain biological growth and cognitive processes; i.e., HF accounts for all sorts of change from observable physical properties to cognitive changes, like learning. I shall focus on intentionality and cognition, but the above texts hint that HF, with its attendant PMM, is intended as a systematic philosophical theory of the world and the human being.  
29 Th. 154a6-9.
So for my part, I’ll never come to be perceiving any other thing in the same way; because there’s another perception for the other thing and it makes the perceiver *otherwise qualified and another thing*. And, for its part, the thing which acts on me will never, by coming into contact with another person, generate the same product and come to be qualified in just that way; because from another person it will generate another product and come to be otherwise qualified.\(^\text{30}\)

The perceiver comes to be, with each new perceptual experience, “otherwise qualified and another thing.” HF thus offers a radically non-diachronic theory of personal identity.

What we have in Socrates’s exposition of “knowledge is perception”, then, is a package deal that includes three things:

1. **KnP**, the identification of *epistēmē* with *aisthēsis*.
2. **HF**, a metaphysics of radical *kinēsis* on which agents and objects in the world are, at their most fundamental, *kinēseis*. The world is such that properties simultaneously come into being along with perceptions of them at the time of perception, and do not persist beyond that moment. Further, like properties, agents do not persist through time.\(^\text{31}\)
3. **PMM**, an epistemology on which all appearances are correct for the one who experiences them.

We should keep in mind that according to Socrates, PMM depends on HF because if we are to hold that each person really is his own measure, it is asserted, HF is what the world must be like. If HF is refuted, then PMM is refuted with it. But what sort of metaphysics is this? Beyond what I have said about it so far, there are many questions that we might ask about HF. Let us take a closer look at this ontological picture now.

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\(^\text{30}\) *Tht*. 159e7-160a3.

\(^\text{31}\) There is uncertainty about the theory. It is clear that perceptions are the result of slow and fast motions, but what is moving slowly and quickly; i.e., what are the changing *relata*? One *relatum* is clearly the eye, see above at 154a. See Cornford (1935) p. 41. Sedley (2004) p. 45-46 holds that Socrates “… is here preparing us for a Protagorean world in which bodies are replaced with changes.” Somehow the world, including agents, *just is motions* of some kind.
§4.2.1 The Ontology of Heraclitean Flux

The metaphysics of HF, as presented by Socrates, is unusual and challenging to characterize. I shall ultimately claim that the *Euthydemus*’ eristic theory and HF are mutually consistent, but in order to show this I must first interpret the ontology of HF. My argument will proceed in three stages. The first two concern interpreting HF as offered in the *Theaetetus*, while the third concerns the relationship between HF and eristic metaphysics. I shall consider several possible readings of HF’s metaphysics of properties and objects, and argue that on the best reading of the theory all properties are relational but objects are not mere phenomenal bundles.\(^{32}\) Finally, after interpreting the theory, I shall briefly argue that HF is consistent with the metaphysics of the eristic theory of the *Euthydemus*.

As I will be arguing that HF is relationalist about properties, before beginning my argument I will explain what I mean by the term “relationalism” by contrasting it with other positions on the metaphysics of properties. I intentionally mention only those metaphysical theories about perceptible properties that are useful in interpreting Plato’s theories of perception. I will not attempt to settle any contemporary disputes or claim that Plato has an insight into how to interpret the contemporary science of perceptual experience. The science has come too far since Plato’s day for this, and contemporary philosophical theories of perception are typically justified by interpreting the scientific data on the experience of color. I also recognize that there are more views about the

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\(^{32}\) On this I agree with Cornford (1957), pp. 44-55. Cornford neither uses the term “relationalism”, nor argues for the relationalist reading, but suggests that various arguments that are meant to motivate KnP are meant to show that properties do not inhere either solely in percipients nor solely in objects, but “between” (*metaxu*) as Plato puts it. My argument owes much to Chappell (2006). However, where he focuses on the *peritropē*, or “recoil”, argument at 170c-171c, I shall consider the entirety of the arguments for and against KnP. That all properties are relational is clearly a radical view, because it is largely uncontroversial that there are some relational properties, but also uncontroversial that there are some non-relational properties.
metaphysical status of perceptible properties than I have presented here, and that the
theories I present are not all mutually exclusive. However, the logical space carved out
by four prominent theories on the ontology of color perception will provide a helpful
framework for interpreting Plato’s text. The theories that I am concerned with are
realism, subjectivism, dispositionalism, and relationalism.

A property realist holds that perceptible properties of physical objects do not owe
their existence to a perceiver: colors, for example, are out there in the world.\textsuperscript{33} A
property subjectivist holds that perceptible properties are properties of experiences; they
are purely subjective features of the psychology of perceivers and not features of objects
independent of perceivers. For the subjectivist, colors, for example, are in the head.\textsuperscript{34}

Two contemporary approaches concerning the status of color properties that
attempt to avoid any subjectivist/realist entanglement are dispositionalism and
relationalism. A dispositionalist about color claims that “for an object to instantiate a
color property is for it to have a disposition to cause experiences of an object having that
property in normal perceivers in normal conditions”.\textsuperscript{35} As Levin, Johnston and McGinn
understand dispositionalism, it is intended to capture two important and \textit{prima facie}
incompatible features of color experience: its objective character (objects are said to
instantiate color properties) and its subjective character (our phenomenological
experience of color can be quite different under different conditions, e.g., low light and

\textsuperscript{33} For recent realist theories of color properties see Dretske (1995), Hilbert (1987, 1992) and Matthen

\textsuperscript{34} Recent subjectivists include Clark (1992), as well as various adverbial and sense datum theories. For a
sense datum theory of perception see Jackson (1977). For an adverbial theory, see Chisholm (1957).

\textsuperscript{35} McGinn (1996) p. 537. See also, Levin (2000) and Johnston (1992) for a defense of dispositionalism.
colored light).  Given these twin features of perception, says the dispositionalist, it seems best to characterize color as a dispositional property.

The relationalist about color properties argues that color properties are relational properties holding between observers and objects and not intrinsic to the objects that instantiate them, and thus not reducible to either a property of a mental state nor to physical properties like surface reflectivity and wavelength designation. Relationalism may seem at first glance indistinguishable from dispositionalism - after all, if \( x \) is disposed to appear \( F \) to an observer, does that not mean that \( F \) is a relational property? As Cohen sees it, it does not. He defines a non-relational property in the following manner: “A non-relational property of \( x \) is a property that \( x \) has (or lacks) regardless of the relations \( x \) bears to things other than \( x \”). A relational property, by contrast, is defined thusly: A relational property, \( F \), of \( x \) is a property of \( x \) that it has in relation to a perceiver \( y \). The difference between these two positions is that dispositional properties can be intrinsic to the object, but relational properties are by their nature non-intrinsic.

To call perceptual properties relational is to claim that they are properties like ‘being next to’; i.e., they are intrinsic to neither the object nor the perceiver. However, to call color properties dispositional is to leave open the possibility that they are intrinsic to the object, as the dispositions to produce the color in a perceiver are possessed by the object independent of any perceiver’s faculty of perception.

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36 There is also some evidence that surface reflectivity and wavelength do not account for color phenomenology, see Matthen (2001) p. 43.
37 McGinn may have come to abandon the view because of concerns about the how well it comports with the phenomenological aspects of perception. See McGinn (1996) p. 540. However, dispositionalism is defended against his worries by Levin (2000). See also Shoemaker (2000).
39 Relational properties seem a bit mysterious, but in fact are quite ordinary; e.g., ‘being next to’ is a relational property that can only be instantiated between two non-identical objects in requisite proximity.
Now that we have a sense of four distinct possibilities for the ontology of perceptible properties, I can begin my interpretation of HF. Let us consider whether it is more reasonable to read HF as realist, subjectivist, dispositionalist, or relationalist. I shall start with realism. It is clear from the text that HF is not realist about color, or other perceptible properties. Socrates says explicitly that colors, on HF, come to be as the result of a confluence of motions, some of which are produced by the observer, and some by the object: he says that color is not in the object until this confluence.40 “… we must take it that nothing is hard, hot or anything, just by itself.”41 If no object is to hold any property “in itself by itself” then HF cannot be realist about color properties.

Nor does it seem likely that HF is subjectivist. We might think that color properties, as well as other properties, e.g., the hardness of this table, have no real existence beyond what a perceiver perceives on HF, because they come into being along with a perception. So prima facie it looks like HF entails color subjectivism. But, on closer inspection, this cannot be right, especially because a subjectivist reading fails to make sense of the notion of “twin births”. Active and passive motions come together, says Socrates, to form two distinct things, the perception and what is perceived. But what is perceived, e.g. the white on the pebble, is not a mind-dependent entity or a property of a perception; Socrates says that the twin births, the perception and the property perceived, result from the mutual contact between the seeing eye and the object.42 Thus, while it may be accurate to say that all perceptions are private events for observers, the object has as much to contribute to the color as the eye. Notice that white is never said by Socrates to be a property of the perception or internal experience, but is rather a property of the

40 Tht. 153e-154a.
41 Tht. 156e
42 Tht. 153e7-154a3.
object. This suggests that white is not, on HF, taken to be a subjective property of a perceiver’s mental state.

Let us now consider whether HF offers a dispositionalist theory of color properties. Recall that dispositionalists claim that for an object to instantiate a color property is for it to have a disposition to cause experiences of an object having that property in normal perceivers in normal conditions. This also prima facie looks consistent with the theory. Seeing HF as dispositionalist can account for Socrates’ comments that properties only come into being as the result of the confluence of certain motions. A stick might be real but its appearing white to an observer is merely a disposition in the object that becomes actual when the observer and the object are rightly situated - in his language we could say that the disposition to appear white finally becomes actual when the right motions interact. A dispositionalist reading does not, however, account for everything Socrates says; he makes it clear that color properties are not auto kath’ auto. All perceptible properties are the result of the mutual impact of the eye and the object; thus, they are not solely in the object.43 A disposition to appear such-and-such would have to be an intrinsic property of the object. Thus KnP cannot be dispositionalist.

Let us now consider reading HF as a relationalist view. First, consider that on HF the perception as relational property would have two relata: (1) the passive motions of the eye and (2) the active motions of the world. That each perceived property is a dyadic

43 Of course there are many ways to understand what a disposition itself is, but at the very least, dispositions are said to be properties of particulars or kinds independent of their relationship to other things. An object could be disposed to cause an agent to experience property F, even if the agent and object are never in the right relationship for the object to do so. In fact what’s most mysterious to contemporary philosophers about dispositions is the fact that they must be simultaneously intrinsic properties and yet at the same time do not seem identifiable with any one property, or subset of properties, of a particular or a kind. I shall maintain that dispositions are intrinsic properties and forgo any attempt to solve puzzles related to such properties.
relation is vital: it is important that the perception in the observer be tied to a perceived object at a specific time, because on HF no perceiving agent has diachronic identity. If we did not do this, the perception might be said to have identity across time for the same observer on two separate occasions. So, each perceived property is a dyadic relation.44

Recall that relational properties are not intrinsic to the object. This is consistent with Socrates’ claim that we must not assign a single place to a perceptual property. As Socrates says, “In the case of the eyes first, you mustn’t think of what you call white colour as being some distinct thing outside of your eyes (exō tōn ommatōn) or in your eyes either (en tois ommasi).”45 He also says that the color white must be “between” (metaxu) the object and the perceiver. Thus, the perception comes to exist in the perceiver at the same time that the property comes to exist of the object. The existence of the property is dependent on the two interacting motions, one from the perceiver and one from the object, thus, the property cannot be intrinsic to the object.

There is one last piece of textual evidence that HF is best read as a relational view of properties. Relationalism is suggested by the context within which Socrates introduces HF as support for PMM. He considers a paradox that results from three seemingly plausible claims concerning change:

44 As Fine (2003), p. 171 writes, “That objects are genuinely coloured, even if they have any given colour-token only for a moment and only in relation to a given perceiver, is also suggested at 156E5-7…”. We might object to this excessive treatment of properties: surely some objects present stable appearances for us across time. After all, my kitchen table is, I believe, the same color as it was yesterday. And this is precisely what Socrates shall argue in his final refutation of KnP at Tht. 184d3-185e2 (I shall consider this passage below §4.3.1). As Socrates there argues, we need to apply sameness to today’s and yesterday’s experience of the color of the kitchen table. This means that properties require some kind of diachronic identity and cannot be individuated with reference to a specific time, but we would jump the gun to consider that objection here.

45 Tht. 153d8-e2.
1. Nothing can become larger or more numerous other than by undergoing increase.  

2. A thing to which nothing is added and nothing is taken away neither increases nor diminishes. 

3. It is impossible that a thing should ever be what it was not before without having become and without any process of becoming. 

As Socrates puts it, these sentences are warring in his soul, a vivid way to describe a paradox or contradiction. He then describes a case where one has six dice. Put four beside them and the six are greater than the four by one and a half times. But put twelve dice beside the six, and the six are less by half. Thus, the six dice have changed without “becoming” in violation of the three seemingly plausible claims about change.

HF resolves the paradox by stressing the fact that six is greater, by one and a half, in relation to four. Six is also one half less in relation to twelve. There is no change in the object, only a pair of different relational properties: on the one hand, between the six dice and the four dice, and on the other hand, between the six dice and the twelve dice. If we hold that ‘being one-half less’ and ‘being one and a half times more’ are intrinsic properties of the six dice, then the paradox results. But if we understand these as relational properties, then the paradox does not result. It is only by denying relational properties that the mathematical paradox results. HF, however, offers a theory on which all properties are relational. I suggest that the point of the dice example is to

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46 Tht. 154b7. By extension, nothing can become less numerous or diminish without itself undergoing decrease.

47 Tht. 155a3-5.

48 Tht. 155b1-3.

49 Tht. 155b4-5.

50 Tht. 154c.

51 This is not explicitly stated, but I take it to be the lesson of the passage. This passage is variously read. See Cornford (1957), pp. 43-5 who argues that the puzzle of the dice only a puzzle if you think that all change is intrinsic alteration of an object. Though he finds the argument an unconvincing irrelevance (p. 41), while I think that it is central to understanding HF.

52 Bostock’s reading is more tentative; he indicates at Bostock (1988), pp. 45-46, that Plato is confused about the difference between mathematical and non-mathematical properties. On my reading, HF is intended by Plato to assert that all properties, from quantitative relationships to colors and tastes, are relational. HF is inadequate, but that is, I think, Plato’s point.
illustrate by analogy a broader relationalism about properties. The object of perception is like the six dice. The twelve dice and the four dice are like the perceptions of two separate percipients. The wind is cold to A, because that is how it is in relation to A. The wind is cold to B, because that is how it is in relation to B. The wine is sweet in relation to ‘A on one day’ but is bitter in relation to ‘A on another day’.

The six dice are “less by half” in relation to the twelve. But the six dice are “more by half” in relation to the four dice. Thus, we see Socrates drawing a parallel between relational mathematical properties and perceptions.

So far, I have argued that we ought to read HF as relationalist about all properties, as opposed to reading it as realist, dispositionalist or subjectivist. However, one further matter deserves our attention: the status of objects on HF. I shall now argue that HF offers neither a bundle theory nor a substrate theory of objects. This is not an uncontroversial reading of HF. Cornford reads the ontology of HF as as endorsing realism with respect to the objects of perception: there is an object existing independently of what perceivers perceive. Against him are Sayre, Sedley and Chappell. Sayre

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53 Recall the non-diachronic identity of persons: ‘A today’ is not even the same person as ‘A tomorrow.’
54 A different reading of this passage is offered by Fine. She argues that if the point of the puzzle is that all properties are relational then “…the puzzles could be solved simply by noting that the various properties are relational, he [Plato] would not emphasize that we are concerned with conflicting appearances that occur at different times.” Fine (2003b), p.p. 178-180. But conflicting times is not the point of the dice example. Socrates, in introducing the dice example, says at Th. 159a9-b1, “Suppose, then, that the very thing which we touch, or against which we measure ourselves, is itself big or white or hot. In that case the thing will never become different simply by encountering something else, and without any changes in itself.” The point is not to index every perception to a unique point in time, but rather to stress that there is a paradox associated with a metaphysics of intrinsic properties, and that this paradox is solved by holding that all perceptible properties are relational. Chappell’s reading partially agrees with mine; he writes, “…the answer to the puzzle is that the dice in the different circumstances are neither more nor less simplicitur. Rather the dice are more for this observer and less for that observer.” Chappell (2005) p. 70. However, he takes this to imply that all perceptible properties are “subjectively phenomenal” bundles. As I have argued, the relational reading of KnP preserves the fact that objects and observers jointly create perceptions. The perceptible property is between, metaxu, the object and person, not found only in the observer, nor only in the object.
55 (Sayre) 1983.
56 Sedley (2004)
argues that Plato intends for HF to be an argument against the commonsense notion that objects of perception are quite apart from acts of perception. Sedley agrees with Sayre that on HF there is no object, but a mere bundle of temporary phenomenal properties. Chappell refers to KnP as a “combination of the doctrine of flux and phenomenal subjectivism… [The holder of HF] has reason to reject the entire object/quality metaphysics…” But the eristic theory of the Euthydemus, recall, requires something external, an object of some sort to supply the contents of our beliefs about them. Thus, it is necessary for me to read HF as Cornford reads it, and not as Sedley, Sayre and Chappell read it. My disagreement with them concerns only the status of objects, not the status of properties. If Sedley, Sayre and Chappell are right, then on HF when we describe the properties that exist only momentarily for a single observer at a single moment in time, we exhaust what there is to say about the object. This, I shall argue, captures only half of the picture. It does not capture that on HF there are motions that exist independently of our perceptions of the world.

Before I begin, we should think carefully about what is entailed by a “bundle theory of objects”. It is helpful to compare a bundle theory with a substratum view, to be clear about the details. The bundle theory is an answer to a central metaphysical question: what is more primary, an object or its properties? Both substrate and bundle theories admit that objects and properties exist, but they disagree about which one has ontological priority. The classical substratum theorists include Aristotle, Descartes and Locke. On the substratum theories, of these authors, properties are held to be posterior

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57 Chappell (2005), p. 70, refers to objects as “subjectively phenomenal” bundles. I refer the reader back to my argument, just given, that perceptible properties are not subjectively phenomenal. The subjectivist thinks that all properties are in the perceiver’s head, none are in the world. As we shall see, Sedley interprets HF as a phenomenal bundle theory, but not a subjectively phenomenal bundle theory. Sedley interprets HF as presenting a metaphysics of objects on which objects are bundles of perceptual properties.
to, and ontologically dependent upon, prior substrata for their existence. Aristotle writes at *Metaphysics* 1005a12-16 that he will examine what is prior and what posterior with respect to substance and attribute. He further states at 1017b20-25 that one sense of substance is “…the ultimate substratum which is not predicated of anything else…”\(^{58}\) And in his summation of the argument that substance is prior to attribute, he writes at 1019a1-14, “Some things are called prior and posterior in this sense, others in respect of nature and substance; i.e., those which can be without other things, while the others cannot be without them… the subject is prior (so that substance is prior).” In the famous opening to *Metaphysics* Α, Aristotle writes, “…if the universe is a nature of a whole, substance is its first part, and if it coheres by virtue of succession… substance is first, and is succeeded by quality then by quantity.” Further, at *Categories* 2b6, “So if the primary substances did not exist it would be impossible for any of the other things to exist.” Descartes concurs: “…whenever we find some attributes or qualities, there is necessarily some thing or substance to be found for them to belong to…”\(^{59}\) Locke thought that a substrate is required to undergird properties, but held that we cannot have direct experience of it. He writes in the *Essays Concerning Human Understanding*, II.xxiii.2, “The idea then we have, to which we give the general name substance, being nothing, but the supposed, but unknown support of those qualities, we find existing, which we imagine cannot subsist, *sine re substante*, without something to support them, we call that support *substantia*, which, according to the true import of the word, is in plain English, *standing under or upholding.*”\(^{60}\)

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\(^{58}\) This and the following quotes from Aristotle are from Barnes’ translation in Aristotle and Barnes (1984).

\(^{59}\) From Cottingham (1985) p. 196.

\(^{60}\) From Locke (1979).
The bundle theorist, in contrast, holds that there is no substrate for properties. David Hume and George Berkeley are classical bundle theorists. Hume argues in the *Treatise of Human Nature*, Book I, Part IV, Section II that we can have no notion of substance, writing, “As no beings are ever present to the mind but perceptions; it follows that we may observe a conjunction or a relation of cause and effect between different perceptions but can never observe it between perceptions and objects. ‘Tis impossible, therefore, from the existence of any qualities of the former we can ever form any conclusion concerning the existence of the latter.” Hume’s skeptical conclusion is that we cannot know whether there is a substrate underlying the bundle of perceived properties. Thus, on Hume’s skeptical version of the bundle theory, properties, or perceptions of them, are prior to objects because the concept of an object is formed from the conjunction of the properties that are said to constitute it.

Berkeley also held that objects are mere bundles of properties, because all objects are simply perceptions in the mind of some percipient. In the first section of *The Principles of Human Knowledge*, he writes:

By touch I perceive, for example, hard and soft, heat and cold, motion and resistance, and of all these more and less either as to quantity or degree. Smelling furnishes me with odours; the palate with tastes, and hearing conveys sounds to the mind in all their variety of tone and composition. And as several of these are observed to accompany each other, they come to be marked by one name, and so to be reputed as one thing. Thus, for example, a certain colour, taste, smell, figure and consisteny having been observed to go together, are accounted one distinct thing, signified by the name apple.\(^6\)

Van Cleve writes that more recent bundle theories hold that objects just are properties in a certain relationship to one another, e.g., co-instantiation, while eliminating

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the instantiation relationship that would hold between a property and a substance. Thus, the more recent bundle theorist eliminates the notion of substrate, relying only on properties and their relationship to one another.\textsuperscript{62}

The trouble with reading HF as a substrate or bundle theory is that it seems to fit neither way of thinking about objects. Socrates’ describes objects on HF by saying, “… no one of them [any perceived object] is anything in itself, all things of all kinds are coming to be in association with one another… and there is nothing (ouden)… which is in itself just one thing (en auto kath’ auto)…”\textsuperscript{63} The passage itself is ambiguous; we have to decide how to read “there is nothing which is in itself just one thing”. Consider these two alternate readings:

**Substrate Reading of 157a:** No object \( x \) is F in itself because \( x \)’s F property only exists when there is a perceiver currently perceiving \( x \) as F.

**Bundle Reading of 157a:** No object \( x \) exists unless it is being perceived as F by some perceiver.

The substrate reading captures the fact that there is an active \( \text{kinēsis} \) prior to perception. This ontological priority is consistent with what Locke, Descartes and Aristotle have to say about substrates. For there to be a perceived property on HF it is a necessary condition that a perceiver encounter an active motion that exists in the world independently of a perceiver. It would not do, however, to overemphasize the analogy between Heraclitean motions and substances. Aristotle claims that substance is “that of which everything else is predicated, while it is itself not predicated of anything else.”\textsuperscript{64} He refers to them as “\textit{tode ti}” particular things, certain somethings. But \( \text{kinēseis} \) on HF are

\textsuperscript{62} Van Cleve (1985).
\textsuperscript{63} Tht. 157a. My translation.
\textsuperscript{64} Meta. VII.1028b36, trans. Smith.
not bearers of perceptual properties, but rather co-creators of both properties and perceptions.\textsuperscript{65}

\textit{Kinēseis} do not look like Lockean substances either. Locke is explicit that substances have dispositional primary and secondary qualities. The primary qualities produce in us ideas that resemble their source, the secondary qualities produce in us ideas that do not resemble their source. Of substances, Locke writes:

\begin{quote}
\ldots every \textit{Substance}, being as apt, by the Powers we observe in it, to change some sensible Qualities in other Subjects, as it is to produce in us those simple \textit{Ideas} which we receive immediately from it, does, by those new sensible Qualities introduced into other Subjects, discover to us those Powers which do thereby mediately affect our Senses, as regularly as its sensible Qualities do it immediately: v.g. we immediately by our Senses perceive in Fire its Heat and colour; which are, if rightly considered, nothing but Powers in it, to produce those \textit{Ideas} in us…
\end{quote}

He also writes:

\begin{quote}
The \textit{Ideas} that make our complex ones of corporeal \textit{Substances}, are of these three sorts. First, the \textit{Ideas} of the primary Qualities of things, which are discovered by our Senses, and are in them even when we perceive them not; such are the Bulk, Figure, Number, Situation, and Motion of the parts of bodies; which are really in them, whether we take notice of them
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{65} Further, Aristotle has an account of \textit{kinēsis} that is very different from HF’s notion of \textit{kinēsis}; he argues that it is the actuality of a potentiality within a subject. He writes, “The fulfillment of what exists potentially, in so far as it exists potentially, is motion - namely, of what is alterable qua alterable, alteration: of what can be increased and its opposite what can be decreased (there is no common name), increase and decrease: of what can come to be and can pass away, coming to be and passing away: of what can be carried along, locomotion.” Further, discussing the principle of non-contradiction and law of the excluded middle, Aristotle argues that on the Heraclitean account of the world, “…if all things are in motion, nothing will be true; everything therefore will be false.” The principles that establish this are that, “… it must be that which is that changes. For change is from something to something… for there is something that always moves the things that are in motion.” (\textit{Meta.} IV.8. trans. Smith) According to Aristotle all \textit{kinēsis} requires a subject of change moving from potentiality to actuality; but on HF, \textit{there are no more basic subjects} than \textit{kinēseis}. \textit{Kinēseis} themselves are ontologically fundamental; i.e., motions themselves are the most ontologically fundamental category. As such there is nothing of which HF’s \textit{kinēseis} are predicated. HF’s \textit{kinēseis} cannot be the fulfillment of potentiality, and are not a “something” that changes into another “something”. Finally, in \textit{Metaphysics} VII.2 Aristotle’s list of potential candidates for substance does not include \textit{kinēseis} themselves, but rather, Platonic Forms, geometrical objects (like lines and points) and individual perceived bodies. We should thus conclude that HF’s \textit{kinēseis} should not be read as Aristotelian substance, because they are not what Aristotle, following his contemporaries and progenitors, would have thought as even a candidate for substance.

\textsuperscript{66} Essays II.XXXIII.7 in Locke (1979). Italics original.
or not. Secondly, the sensible secondary Qualities, which, depending on these, are nothing but the Powers those Substances have to produce several Ideas in us by our Senses; which Ideas are not in the things themselves, otherwise than as anything is in its Cause. Thirdly, the aptness we consider in any Substance, to give or receive such alterations of primary Qualities, as that the Substance so altered should produce in us different Ideas from what it did before; these are called active and passive Powers: All which Powers, as far as we have any Notice or Notion of them, terminate only in sensible simple Ideas.”

There are two important differences between Locke’s notion of substance and HF’s kinēseis. First, Locke is clear that our ideas of primary qualities are about qualities that are in substances even when those substances are not perceived. This is not so for any perceived property on HF, not even size, which is the quintessential Lockean primary quality. When he refutes the idea that qualities are in things, Socrates starts by supposing that that they are in things: “Supposing such things as size or warmth or whiteness really belonged to the object we measure ourselves against…” So it is clear that all HF’s properties come into existence at the time of perception and are not “in” kinēseis prior to being perceived. Second, while we might think that the Lockean description of secondary qualities is consistent with HF’s properties, because they are not “in” the objects as Locke describes them, Locke’s secondary qualities are still quite different from HF’s properties. Locke describes secondary qualities as “powers those substances have to produce several ideas in us by our senses.” For Locke, secondary qualities are dispositional but not relational. As I have already argued, it is best to understand HF’s properties as relational, not dispositional. Thus, HF’s kinēseis are very different from Locke’s notion of substance. Given that HF’s kinēseis are not consistent with either

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68 *Thet.* 154a.
Locke or Aristotle’s notion of substance, we ought to conclude that HF’s *kinēseis* should not be read as substances, as philosophers usually understand the term.

How then does the bundle theory reading of HF fare? At 157b4-c1 Socrates says that on HF no one can speak of anything as “being” but only “becoming,” and that, “[t]his applies to speaking both of the individual case and of many aggregated together - such an aggregate (athroisma) as people call ‘man’ or ‘stone’, or to which they give the names of the different animals…” 69 It seems that reading 157a-159 as a bundle theory makes some sense: all objects are merely momentary “aggregates” or bundles of properties: bundles whose constituent properties are in a special kind of relationship with one another and an observer. 70

But the bundle-theory reading of HF has some problems too. First, Socrates is explicit that *only properties* have no particular place when not perceived: recall *Theaetetus* 159e, where Socrates says that according to HF, when Socrates drinks some wine, and experiences a bitter taste, “…that pair - Socrates qualified in that way and the draught of wine - have generated different products: a perception of bitterness around the tongue and a bitterness which comes into being and moves around the wine.” According to HF, the bitterness of the wine comes into being, or “becomes” when an agent drinks it. If the bundle reading is correct, then the wine itself, as a collection of bundled properties, also comes into existence at the time of perception. But this is not how Socrates describes things on both HF and PMM. Socrates is explicit from his first comments expanding KnP to his last that it is *properties* and not *the things themselves* that “appear” differently to different observers, or to the same observer at different times. At 152a,

69 *Tht.* 157b-c.
70 This is the reading offered by Sedley, see Sedley (2004) ch. 2. For another case against, See Denyer (1991), pp. 85-90, and Burnyeat 2012(b).
Socrates states that according to Protagoras, “as each thing appears to me, so it is for me, and as it appears to you, so it is for you.” As he elaborates on this he asks, “Are we going to say that the wind, itself by itself, is cold or not cold (auto eph’ eauto)? Or will we be persuaded by Protagoras and say it is cold for the one who feels cold, and for the other, not cold?” Theaetetus agrees with the latter. Socrates’ assertions here are quite clear: the wind’s existence, itself by itself, is not relative to the two observers. Only ‘cold’ and ‘warm’ are so relative; the wind itself is independent. Later, at 153d-e, he says, “…what you would naturally call a white color is not itself a distinct entity, either outside your eyes or in your eyes. You must not assign it any particular place.” Socrates is talking about ‘white’ here, and not the stone itself: ‘white’ has no particular place. So, in all of Socrates’ examples it is only the property that is relative to the observer, not the entire object. In itself, the object is a motion of some kind, but it is still there independently of being observed.

But how should we read HF generally, and 157a specifically? Given that both the substrate and bundle readings have elements that correctly characterized some features of HF, we ought to see if we can interpret HF in a manner that preserves some of the advantages of the substrate and bundle readings. The advantage of the substrate reading is that it captures that HF’s kinēseis are ontologically prior to their perceived properties, and this is something that the bundle reading of HF did not have. The advantage of the bundle reading is that it captures the sense that objects appear to be temporary aggregates.

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71 Emphasis mine.
72 The exact nature of the motions is a bit mysterious. Is the agent’s motion a psychic motion, or does it relate to the eye as visual apparatus? What is the motion in the object? Is it an effluvium from pores, as Theophrastus and Aristotle claim that Empedocles believed (for the testimonia see McKirihan 1994, pp. 282-284), or is it a Form? The text of the Theaetetus is not clear on this. But, for my interpretation it is not necessary to determine the nature of the agent’s and object’s respective motions. All I need to establish is that on HF the object and agent both supply a motion.
of properties (athroismata). If we read kinēseis as real and independent of perceivers, but
devoid of perceptual properties until perceived, then we preserve their ontological
priority. The motions themselves are never objects of perception on the theory because
properties are produced by the interaction of an agent’s motions and the motions of the
object. Further, by reading HF as relational about all properties, we can explain how
objects appear to be, for a particular observer at a particular time, a temporary aggregate
of properties. HF’s ontology, then, is such that properties are relational and objects, as
motions, are real. 73 Recall 157a: “… no one of them [any perceived object] is anything in
itself, all things of all kinds are coming to be in association with one another… and there
is nothing (ouden)… which is in itself just one thing (en auto kath’ auto)…” . When
Socrates says that all things come to be in association, on my reading, we can take him to
mean that objects, as motions, exist independently of our perceptions of them, but that
they have no properties themselves in themselves (beyond fast or swift), because their
aggregate of properties exists only relationally between them and some observing agent. 74

Let us now turn to the third and final stage of my argument concerning the
ontology of HF. I have already argued that according to HF (1) all properties are
relational and none are intrinsic, and (2) objects are not mere phenomenal bundles. I
shall now establish that the eristic theory and HF have a consistent metaphysics. Before I

73 I make no claim that this is a satisfying metaphysical picture, nor one that has any plausibility. Clearly,
neither does Plato, or he would not refute the theory out of hand. An ontology of relational properties
coupled with real objects as kinēseis does not recur, as far as I know, in the history of philosophy. We
cannot even say that Socrates’ representation of it, as Plato writes it, is accurate to the historical Heraclitus
or relevant to Protagoras’ book Truth. I can only claim that this is the best reading of the ontology of HF as
the character Socrates presents it in Plato’s Theaetetus.

74 Again, for the modern reader, as for the ancient, this is not a plausible sounding theory. That motions
exist as ontologically fundamental means that motion is not a feature of some objects. It is conceptually
difficult to even picture this, let alone philosophically challenging to try and defend it. But its
implausibility is appropriate in this context - it is Plato’s attempt to give the best theoretical support to the
kind of relativism that he sees inherent in the practice of sophistic eristic. We might justifiably accuse
Plato of creating a straw man, or we might have to accept that he is using the endoxa at his disposal to craft
the best theoretical framework he can.
begin my argument, recall this passage from *Euthydemus* 285e9: “There are *logoi* to
describe each of the things that exists.”

In §§2.5-6 I referred to this as the Eristic Metaphysical Thesis: Each being has for itself some distinct descriptive content (a *logos*) and no other content. Recall also the following passage, describing HF, from *Theaetetus* 157a8-b1: “There is nothing that is itself in itself (*hen auto kath’ auto*) but everything becomes relative to something.” These passages seem inconsistent, and I shall explain why they seem that way; but I shall argue that they are in fact not inconsistent, and in the process we shall see that the metaphysical commitments of the eristic theory are consistent with HF.

The *Euthydemus* passage occurs during the argument that contradictions are impossible, and it does more than just deny that there is anything ineffable in the universe: it asserts that there is a propositional content for everything. The two claims thus rely on seemingly different metaphysical suppositions - the *Euthydemus’* supposition is that objects have definitive, potentially finite, contents. The *Theaetetus’* principle is that they have no such contents until someone perceives them as having such a content.

But the contradiction is merely seeming. We must keep in mind that the Eristic Metaphysical Thesis merely says that the content of a thing is only uniquely fixed for that thing *in such a way that it is not possible for there to be contradictory statements about that object from two different people*. HF is the metaphysics that explains how that could be the case. How could it be the case that two assessments of the temperature of the wind are both true? It can be so, if “cold” as A reports it is a relational property, holding between the wind and A, a property that B cannot even have access to. Simultaneously,

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75 This is Dionysodorus speaking, and eliciting a concurrence from Socrates.
76 The passage is variously translated. It could also mean that there is nothing that is just one thing (Burnyeat’s translation).
“warm,” as B reports it, is a relational property, holding between the wind and B, that A
cannot have access to. Further, those contents, cold for B and warm for A, still come
directly from the wind itself—the underlying kinēseis—on HF. Thus, making all
properties relational is sufficient to give a full account of how it is that (1) “There is
nothing that is itself in itself (hen auto kath’ auto) but everything becomes relative to
something” and (2) those relative properties exhaust the “distinct descriptive content
(logos)” of the perceived objects. If we keep in mind that all properties are relational it is
clear that there is nothing perceptible to the wind but its relational properties, and thus
seeming contradiction between the Euthydemus and Theaetetus passages is seen to be no
contradiction at all. HF’s metaphysical picture is consistent with the metaphysics of the
sophistic eristic theory.

I have stayed focused here in §4.2.1 on the ontology of perceptual properties,
arguing that on HF every property is relational - HF does not admit of any intrinsic, or
non-relational, properties at all. I further argued that HF cannot be a phenomenal bundle
theory of objects. The phenomenalist says that all objects are mere bundles of
properties, but on HF something is there, motions themselves, which, together with the
motions of the percipient, create both a perception and a property. The ontology of HF
and sophistic eristic are consistent; but what of PMM and the epistemology of sophistic
eristic?

§4.2.2 Protagorean Epistemology

I argued in §2.6 that the sophists in the Euthydemus make an assumed epistemic
commitment to a form of infallibilism. I shall now argue that Protagoras’ measure
doctrine, as elaborated by Socrates in the *Theaetetus*, is also infallibilist, in the same manner that the earlier sophistic theory was. I shall argue that the infallibilist reading of PMM makes the best sense of the epistemic results of the metaphysics of HF. Finally, we shall see that PMM, as infallibilist, is consistent with the sophistic eristic theory.

The interpretation of PMM is controversial. Some scholars interpret it as relativizing truth, and some assert that all beliefs and appearances are true *simpliciter*; this last is the infallibilist reading of PMM. Truth relativism is the view that all beliefs are true for the person who holds them but that there are no absolute truths, except perhaps for the statement of relativism itself. Infallibilism, by contrast, is the view that “believed by *x*” is synonymous with “true for *x*.” Gail Fine’s synonymy view entails what she calls “private absolutism”, the view that all beliefs or appearances in one’s private world are *absolutely true*, i.e., *not* merely relatively true. As Fine has already made the argument that PMM is infallibilist, my argument shall be primarily an attempt to show that (1) her reading is stronger than Burnyeat’s; (2) her reading is open to an objection, but can be defended against it and (3) PMM’s epistemology is consistent with the epistemology of the eristic theory in the *Euthydemus*. I shall rely upon my interpretation of HF, from the previous section of this chapter. Let us begin with the difference between truth relative and infallibilist readings of PMM.

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77 In this view I follow Gail Fine, against Myles Burnyeat. Fine (repr. in Gentzler 1998) takes PMM, as Socrates presents it in the *Theaetetus*, to be infallibilistic rather than relativistic.

78 There is one important difference between Fine’s reading and mine: I am more committed to reading HF and PMM as holding that only properties are “private” in the sense that it is absolutely true that they are relational properties that hold between an observer and an object. The objects, as unobserved *kinēseis*, are publically accessible and not on my view private.
The dispute between the infallibilist and relativist readings of PMM has focused on the famous “peritrope” or “table-turning” argument. The peritrope argument, offered by Socrates, is as follows:

Socrates: Protagoras agrees that everyone has in his judgements the things which are. In doing that, he’s surely conceding that the opinion of those who make opposing judgements about his own position - that is their opinion that what he thinks is false - is true.

Theodorus: Certainly.

Socrates: So if he admits that their opinion is true - that is, the opinion of those who believe that what he thinks is false - he would seem to be conceding that his own opinion is false.

Theodorus: He must be.

Socrates: But the others don’t concede that what they think is false?

Theodorus: No.

Socrates: And Protagoras, again, admits that that judgment of theirs is true, too, according to what he has written.

Theodorus: Evidently.

Socrates: So his theory will be disputed by everyone, beginning with Protagoras himself; or rather, Protagoras himself will agree that it’s wrong. When he concedes that someone who contradicts him is making a true judgement, he will himself be conceding that a dog, or an ordinary man, isn’t the measure of so much as one thing that he has not come to know. Isn’t that so?

Theodorus: Yes.

Socrates: Well then, since it’s disputed by everyone, it would seem Protagoras’ Truth isn’t true for anyone: not for anyone else, and not for Protagoras himself.79

The dispute over this passage concerns not just the argument’s structure, but also what is getting refuted, i.e., PMM itself. What precisely is the measure doctrine, as it is presented here? Burnyeat writes, “It suffices that Protagoras' position, according to Plato, is that, quite generally, the way a man takes things to be is the way they are for him, so

79 Tht. 171a5-171c7. Burnyeat (1976a, 1976b), Sedley (2004), Denyer (1991), all reconstruct the argument to interpret it as valid. The reader ought to take note that, when describing Protagoras’ position, Socrates does not include the relativizing qualifier “for him”. E.g., he says, “their opinion that what he thinks is false is true” instead of “their opinion that what he thinks is false is true for them”. Bostock (1988), Fine (repr. in Gentzler 2001) and McDowell (1973) all read the argument as failing to show what Plato hopes, i.e., that the Protagorean measure, understood as truth relativism, is self-defeating. I shall not decide one way or the other whether the peritrope succeeds, as I am only concerned with connecting the epistemology of the measure doctrine, as a component of KnP, with the eristic epistemology of the Euthydemos.
that every judgment whatsoever is true for the person whose judgment it is.”

Burnyeat’s Protagoras is, “… a [truth] relativist, who maintained that every judgment is true for (in relation to) the person whose judgment it is; that is what the doctrine that man is the measure of all things originally stood for…”.

There are two components to this understanding of Protagorean truth-relativism. First, all beliefs are true for the person who holds them, and second there are no absolute truths.

On Burnyeat’s reading of PMM no claim is ever true simpliciter but true only relative to an agent who makes the claim.

Fine agrees with the component of Burnyeat’s interpretation, but disagrees about absolute truths:

“[Relativism] is the thesis that no beliefs are true simpliciter (except, perhaps, for the belief in relativism itself). According to the second view [her view, contra Burnyeat], by contrast, whatever anyone believes is true simpliciter - we just have to understand that all beliefs are about momentary, private objects. Indeed the second view not only differs from relativism… but it also contradicts it. For, again, relativism… denies that any beliefs (aside, perhaps, from the belief in relativism) are absolutely true (though they are all about private momentary objects).

So, the real difference between the two readings concerns whether there are absolute, non-relative truths. Absolute, or simpliciter truths require no qualification or conditions; they are not indexed to individuals, but rather to the world. On the infallibilist reading, according to PMM, there are absolute truths: each and every belief that an agent has is

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80 Burnyeat (1976a) p. 46.
81 Burnyeat (1976a) p. 172.
82 For the rest of this section, when I say “relativism” I mean specifically Burnyeat’s notion of truth-relativism.
83 Burnyeat (1976a), p. 46.
84 Fine (repr. in Gentzler 1998) p. 156, 157 n. 45. It should be noted that she mentions “private objects,” I think this is a misreading on her part of the ontology of HF. See §4.2.1. On my reading, the properties are private because they are relational, but the objects themselves are not private; they are metaphysically real and part of the world independent of any agent. Such objects are also experienced by more than one percipient. However, the qualities that are said to hold of them are “private” because they are relational.
true absolutely. On the truth-relativist reading, according to PMM, there are no such absolute truths; all beliefs require the relativizing truth qualifier “for A” where “A” is an agent. But what is the evidence for their alternate interpretations?

Burnyeat reads the *peritropē* as a successful refutation of Protagoras because he finds that Protagoras’ truth relativism requires an admission of absolute truth - this is, of course, self-refuting. As Burnyeat puts it, “The solution that I want to propose is that Plato takes it that, if relativism is not true for someone, it does not hold of that person’s judgment and beliefs.” He supports his reading by claiming that it is a requirement on all assertion that it be absolutely true that an assertion is relatively true for the speaker. He offers this as a biconditional, dubbing it the “Principle of Translation”: the proposition that ‘*x* is *F*’ is relatively true for *a* if, and only if, ‘*x* is *F* for *a*’ is true absolutely. He concludes that, “No amount of maneuvering with his relativizing qualifiers will extricate Protagoras from from the commitment to truth absolute which is bound up with the very act of assertion.” Burnyeat thus sees the *peritropē* as Plato expressing an awareness, of a sort, of the Principle of Translation, and using this successfully to show that Protagoras refutes himself. The results for his understanding of PMM are clear: if we are to read the *peritropē* as a successful argument, we should read PMM as an expression of truth relativism.

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85 To illustrate the difference between truth relativism and infallibilism we should lean back on the dice analogy from *Tht.* 154c1-155c. I discussed the puzzle below in §4.2.2, arguing that Socrates presents it as an analogy to make relational properties clear to the reader. The fact that 6 is more than 4 by half is not relatively true—true relative to 6 or 4—but absolutely true of 6 and 4. It is also true of 10 and 15, but is not true of 12 and 14. The relational property that holds between 6 and 4 is true of them *simplicitur.* We are enjoined by Socrates, in an attempt to give the strongest defense of KnP, to think that all perceptible properties are relational in the same sense.

86 There may be an exception made for this with regard to the statement of relativism itself. This is, however, part of the controversy that we are about to look at.

87 Burnyeat (1976b), p. 179.


We should now turn to Fine’s alternate reading of PMM. She finds several faults in his argument, but I shall be concerned with her argument that relies on the details of HF. Fine states that any interpretation ought to show how it might conceivably be implied by HF, because the doctrine of radical kinesis is said to be the way that the world has to be if PMM and KnP are true. That is, the doctrine of radical kinesis is the necessary condition for Protagoras’ dictum and for the identity of knowledge and perception. As Fine claims, our way of reading PMM ought to be such that it is genuinely implied by the doctrine of kinesis, but Burnyeat’s truth relativist reading of PMM is in no way connected to HF. Truth relativism, as an epistemic claim, does not require HF. It is consistent with it, but equally consistent with its denial.

As a further point against Burnyeat, Fine argues that to read the Protagorean doctrine as truth relativism, we have to think that Plato makes a mistake in the peritropē argument; for if Plato means relativism by the measure doctrine then in all instances, including the refutation of Protagoras, we would expect all belief claims to include the qualifier “for so-and-so”. But Plato fails to offer such a qualification in the peritropē argument. In the peritropē, recall, Socrates contrasts Protagoras’ opinion with conflicting opinions held by other people. If Socrates were genuinely representing truth-relativism, as Burnyeat understands it, he would say that Protagoras’ beliefs are true for him, while the conflicting beliefs of others are true for them. But, Socrates does not use the qualifiers, he simply says “true” and “false”. Thus, either Plato radically misunderstands his own presentation of Protagoras’ measure doctrine, or KnP is not truth-relativistic.
A strength of the infallibilist reading of PMM is that it does not need the missing qualifier because on the infallibilist reading of the measure doctrine all truths are true *simply*. Thus, the infallibilist reading makes sense of Socrates’ explicit use of HF to ground PMM, and of the *peritropē* argument’s seemingly inconsistent use of the qualifier “for A”. As Fine puts it, “Relativism [by contrast to infallibilism] does not need to appeal to any ontology in order to resolve the problem of conflicting appearances. It resolves the problem, not by introducing a special ontology, but by interpreting the truth predicate in a novel way, or by denying that any propositions are flat-out true.” In other words the truth-relativist interpretation of KnP is inadequate because it makes the Herclitean metaphysics of radical *kinēsis* a mere appendage rather than a crucial part of KnP. While Fine does not claim that all properties are relational on KnP, I shall now argue that my reading of KnP’s ontology is consistent with Fine’s epistemological infallibilism reading of PMM.

But Fine’s reading, while superior to Burnyeat’s because she need not posit that the *peritropē* is successful by assuming the relativistic qualifier when it is not there, is still open to a substantive objection. I shall, however, defend her infallibilistic reading of PMM from the standpoint of my interpretation of the metaphysics of HF, but first we should consider the error that Fine makes. On Fine’s interpretation, PMM requires that “true for x” be synonymous with “believed by x”. On this synonymy view, according to her, we each inhabit a *private world of absolute truths*, to which no others can possibly have access. She refers to this as “private absolutism”. This notion of private worlds is a bit mysterious and also does not accord with the text. As I have already pointed out,

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Socrates, in his exposition of PMM and HF claims that different observers have epistemic access to the same wind, though they might consistently ascribe different perceptual properties to it. Recall that I have argued in §4.2.1 that the best reading of the ontology of *kinēsis* is that there are real objects, as motions, that have only purely relational properties and that there is no diachronic identity for either agents or the properties that objects bear. Fine, then, overstates her case: the world is not private; it is composed of *publicly accessible objects*, understood as active or passive motions. On my reading, this radical metaphysics has an equally radical epistemic result - because each interaction between an active and passive motion creates both a perception and a purely relational property, no one other than the perceiving agent can have epistemic access to that agent’s perception or belief. As Socrates puts it:

…whatever anyone judges by means of perception is true for him; no man is better at discriminating someone else’s experience than he is, or more authoritative in investigating whether someone else’s judgment is correct or false… each person is the only one who can judge (*doxazein*) the things he does judge, and they’re all correct and true. 

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On my reading, Socrates says this, not because there are no absolute truths, but because the properties of public objects exist only for a single observer at the time of perception. Thus, I agree with Fine’s argument that PMM ought to be read as infallibilist, rather than as truth relativist, but I do not accept her claim that each subject has a private world. My relational reading of PMM is nonetheless broadly consistent with Fine’s infallibilist reading: although she overstates the privacy of objects, she is essentially correct about the privacy of the properties that perceivers ascribe to objects. To recap my argument, I have

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92 *Tht.* 161d.
argued that Fine’s criticism of Burnyeat, with some refinement added, is essentially correct: PMM is not truth relativist.

I shall conclude by bringing us back to my thesis about the *Theaetetus*. In the previous section I argued that HF is consistent with the epistemological claims of the eristic theory. My intention in this section was to argue that PMM is also consistent with the eristic theory. This itself suggests that Plato has in mind, in the *Theaetetus*, to return to—and reject—the eristic method of debate by refuting its epistemic underpinnings. That is to say, the rejection of KnP, HF and PMM will be a rejection of the epistemological and metaphysical underpinnings of the eristic debating method. However, as we shall see next, there is an even stronger reason to take Plato to be revisiting the sophistic theory in the *Theaetetus*.

§4.2.3 Reevaluating Old Strategies

In this section I shall argue that Plato recognizes that the Socratic arguments from the *Euthydemus* are inadequate to refute sophistic eristic, now understood as KnP, HF and PMM. My evidence for the claim that Plato recognizes that the strategy from the *Euthydemus* is a failure is that the argumentative strategy employed at *Theaetetus* 161b-165e, where Socrates launches his first attempt to refute PMM, is substantially the same as that employed by Socrates in the *Euthydemus*; and it is then explicitly acknowledged as a failure by Socrates (while speaking for Protagoras at 165e-168d). On my reading of the *Theaetetus*, the dialogue does not offer any new argument against the sophistic

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93 Socrates is explicit about the fact that his initial arguments against KnP are not good enough. He refers to them childish, frivolous and in the manner of mere conversationalists. See *Euthd.* 168b10-e4.
eristic theory until after Socrates speaks for Protagoras and defends PMM, i.e., after 169d3. Up to this point, we have only seen a theory that Plato intends to refute.

I will begin by reminding the reader of Socrates’ five initial criticisms of KnP, understood as PMM and HF. I will then argue that Socrates-as-Protagoras’ rejection of the five criticisms of KnP show us that the five criticisms are not only poor arguments, but poor arguments that we have already seen in the *Euthydemus*; though in the earlier dialogue, they are in the mouth of the eristic debaters Euthydemus and Dionysodorus instead of Socrates. Why does Socrates employ them in his initial failed refutation of KnP? I shall argue that he does so because Plato needs to clear the ground for a new, more principled argument that will refute the eristic theory on its own grounds.\(^{94}\)

Part of the evidence that I shall present for this claim is that KnP, understood as HF and PMM, is consistent with the eristic standard for the legitimacy of a teacher, and not consistent with the common sense standard for the legitimacy of a teacher.\(^{95}\)

By *Theaetetus* 160e Socrates has finished unpacking KnP; he then states that they must test the theory, just as the midwife checks a baby to see if it is well or ought to be abandoned. He offers five quick criticisms of the theory in rapid succession and then, pretending to be Protagoras, refutes them. The criticisms are as follows:

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\(^{94}\) Waterlow (1977) argues against those who claim that PMM is self-refuting, because they do so on the grounds that such a position is a “dialectical nothing” (p. 36), a non-starter. However, Waterlow fails to take notice of the fact that this is what Socrates explicitly says about PMM in what I have called the quietude argument in both the *Euthydemus* and the *Theaetetus*. In the *Theaetetus*, Socrates sees the quietude response as a failure. It is unlikely that Plato would have Socrates adopt a strategy in an early dialogue, then explicitly call it a failure in a later dialogue, if he thought that strategy was a success. My reading, we shall see, offers us a better way to understand the Protagorean self-refutation passage at Th. 170c-171c. On this issue, my view is closest to Chappell (2006) p. 109, who argues that “the point of the [peritropē] argument [at 170c-171c] is, very roughly, that Protagoras is committed to equating truth and truth-for, and so, further, to their intersubstitutability.”

\(^{95}\) Recall the argument from §2.3 that Dionysodorus and Euthydemus, on the one hand, and Socrates, on the other hand, have conflicting pedagogical principles. The brothers’ principle is that a teacher is someone who can refute another. Socrates’ is that a teacher is someone who is wiser than the pupil, in some sense. I discuss the relationship between the principles in §2.6.
First Criticism: If KnP, especially PMM, is true, then pigs, baboons and tadpoles have no less of a claim to the truth than people.96

Second Criticism: KnP’s epistemology, PMM, has the consequence that there are no real experts anymore. Thus Protagoras has no right to charge anyone money for his expertise.97

Third Criticism: Socrates says that if KnP is true then when we hear spoken language, or read written language, we should know what is said or read. But, we do not, if we do not know the language. Thus, knowledge cannot be the same as perception.98

Fourth Criticism: Socrates argues that if knowledge is perception, then when one is not perceiving something, he no longer knows it. But that means that when he remembers something that he knows, but is not perceiving it, he both knows and does not know it.99

Fifth Criticism: If you see a cloak before you, but cover one eye, it follows that you both see and do not see the cloak, and thus, on KnP, that you both know and do not know the cloak.100

Before we get to Socrates-as-Protagoras’ answer to the five criticisms, let us see how they connect to the Euthydemus.

The first and second criticisms of KnP have the same thrust: they assert that there can be no person, nor any animal, that has any more expertise compared to any other, if KnP is true. Recall also that Socrates’ only direct refutation of the brothers’ arguments in the Euthydemus that falsity is impossible, is what I termed the Socratic quietude argument.101 In this argument, Socrates claims that without falsity there can be no expertise; and without expertise, the brothers must remain quiet. Socrates takes the same approach in the second criticism at Theaetetus 161d1-e3, where he says that each person is his own judge of correctness; he states, “If all that’s to be so, then how on earth can it be the case that Protagoras is wise… whereas we’re more ignorant and have to get his

96 Tht. 161c.
97 Tht. 161d-162b.
98 Tht. 163b.
99 Tht. 163d. This criticism is essentially a reductio ad absurdum about memory
100 Tht. 165b-c.
101 Both arguments are discussed in §2.4, above.
lessons…” Socrates further states that the measure doctrine must apply to the gods, and that this entails that humans are as wise as the gods.\textsuperscript{102} Not only, according to the first and second criticisms of KnP, is there no epistemic difference between experts and laypersons, there is no epistemic difference between gods, beasts and humans. This is evidently assumed to be an unacceptable result. The key point in Socrates’ rhetorical question here is: how can it be, on an infallibilist epistemology, that Protagoras has anything to offer? The implied answer is that he does not and thus should not speak. Thus, Socrates’ first two criticisms of KnP in the beginning of the \textit{Theaetetus} employ the quietude strategy against KnP, which is the same strategy employed in the \textit{Euthydemus}.

But this argument is not good enough. Socrates-as-Protagoras rejects this criticism by suggesting that an expert is a person who changes others for the better. This is so in education as well as gardening, medicine and politics.\textsuperscript{103} So, Protagoras’ measure doctrine allows expertise of a certain kind: not the common-sense notion of one who knows more true things and understands objective first principles, but instead one who is capable of making others “change from one state to the other because the other state is better.”\textsuperscript{104} This defense of KnP contradicts the common sense standard for the legitimacy of a teacher: \(x\) is a legitimate teacher of \(y\), if \(x\) has more knowledge of a certain subject than \(y\).\textsuperscript{105} A teacher on the common sense view is someone who might have expertise, one who has \textit{more} knowledge of the world than his pupils. But, the Protagorean teacher need merely be able to change others so that their beliefs are different from what they

\textsuperscript{102} \textit{Tht.} 162b-c.

\textsuperscript{103} See \textit{Tht.} 167a., 167b., 166e-167a and 167c, respectively.

\textsuperscript{104} \textit{Tht.} 167a5.

\textsuperscript{105} “More knowledge” is left intentionally vague here. "More" could be quantitative in the sense of more true beliefs and less false beliefs with respect to \(S\), or it could be qualitative - experts in \(S\) can be able to do things with respect to \(S\), like produce dissertations, houses that are square, or mathematical proofs, etc... See §§2.3 and 2.6 for my discussion of these standards in the \textit{Euthydemus}. 

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were previously and in a way that is beneficial to those pupils. The pupil, after receiving
Protagoras’ education, is now in possession of new beliefs, says Socrates-as-Protagoras,
that are “…better than the other, but in no way truer.” He indeed explicitly states at
167a1-4 that contests of interpretation are not about showing others to be more ignorant
or wise, but simply about change for the better. This approach is consistent with the
eristic teaching standard, which is not about finding the truth, but about successfully
refuting or persuading opponents. The eristic teaching standard is about making other
people believe what you do, and Protagoras’ response to the first and second criticisms of
KnP is consistent with this idea that objective truth is not the point of expertise; rather
merely making others believe something is the point. Thus the quietude argument from
the Euthydemus, retooled for the Theaetetus, is refuted by Socrates-as-Protagoras - a clear
indication that Plato recognizes that the Socratic quietude argument is inadequate and that
he needs another approach to deal with sophistic eristic than what he has offered before.
There are three further criticisms of KnP left for Socrates-as-Protagoras to respond to,
which also show a connection between the Theaetetus and Euthydemus.

The third refutation, based on language, comes in two parts, one part about spoken
language and another about written language:

1. Knowledge is identical to perception of all kinds.
2. We hear the sound of someone’s voice when they speak a foreign language.
3. We therefore know what the foreigners are saying.¹⁰⁷

The implication of the argument is that, on KnP, hearing, a kind of perception, ought to
be knowing. The argument from reading is almost identical:

¹⁰⁶ Tht. 167b8.
¹⁰⁷ This is implied by Socrates. He asks several rhetorical questions in a row that challenge the idea that
perception and knowledge are identical.
1. Knowledge is identical to perception of all kinds.
2. We see words when we see them written.
3. We therefore always know what the words say.\textsuperscript{108}

Later, speaking as Protagoras, Socrates claims that he and Theaetetus, in the initial five criticisms of KnP, have been “adopting the methods of disputationalists (antilogikoi)” by merely “making an argument aimed at getting words to agree consistently.”\textsuperscript{109} They have not been behaving like true philosophers, but rather like those who merely contend for victory (agōnistai). Thus Socrates accepts that his arguments against KnP are like those given by practitioners of sophistic eristic. And of course, they are. Consider the argument about reading: that the person who sees letters but cannot read both knows and does not know what he sees. There is an obvious fallacy of equivocation in it: to claim that every time we hear a language spoken we also know that language is to waffle between two sense of “I heard what was said”. We say that we hear or see in the sense of understanding or recognizing, not merely in the sense of having had an auditory or visual experience.

Euthydemus offers substantially the same fallacious argument: (1) Assume a learner knows (epistasthai) all his letters. (2) If a teacher dictates, he dictates letters. (3) Therefore, if a learner knows his letters, he learns (manthanein) what he knows.\textsuperscript{110}

Euthydemus’ argument in the \textit{Euthydemus} and Socrates’ third criticism of KnP in the \textit{Theae}tetus are very similar instances of the same type of fallacious argument. Because the argument of the third criticism is substantially the same as Euthydemus’ argument, we can conclude that both arguments of the third criticism of KnP are familiar to Plato and

\textsuperscript{108} Tht. 163a-c.
\textsuperscript{109} Tht. 164c. My translation.
\textsuperscript{110} Euthd 276d6-277b10. See §§2.4-2.5 for my analysis.
acknowledged by Plato as inadequate. Again we see that the Socratic strategy employed in the *Euthydemus* needs to be replaced, and Plato seems to be aware of this fact.

Socrates’ fourth and fifth initial criticisms of KnP concern the relationship between perception and memory. Socrates argues that if knowledge is perception, then when one is not perceiving something, he no longer knows it. But, that means that when he remembers something that he knows, but is not perceiving, he both knows and does not know it.\(^{111}\) The fifth is that when one covers one eye he both sees and does not see a cloak, one thus knows and does not know the cloak. According to the fourth and fifth criticisms, on KnP, if a person sees something he then knows it. When he stops seeing the thing, he no longer knows it because he no longer perceives it. Thus, when he remembers what he saw, he does not know it.\(^{112}\) Thus KnP conflicts with the common experience of memory - that we can remember what we know.

Socrates-as-Protagoras’ strategy in defending KnP against the fourth criticism is to repeat three of KnP’s (understood as HF and PMM) most distinctive commitments: (1) non-diachronic identity of individual perceptions, (2) the non-diachronic identity of agents and (3) the fact that, because each perception is the result of a perceiver and a perceptible interacting, all perceptions are private to the perceiver at the moment of perception. As Socrates-as-Protagoras says, “... do you think that anyone is going to concede to you that when one is no longer experiencing something, one can have present in one a memory of that thing which is itself an experience of the same sort as the original one?”\(^{113}\) Thus, the original perception of the cloak is not even the same as the memory of it. And further, he asks if anyone would grant that after an alteration the

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\(^{111}\) *Tht*. 163d.

\(^{112}\) *Tht*. 163d-e

\(^{113}\) *Tht*. 166b2.
person is the same as before the alteration. The implied answer is that, on the non-diachronic theory of personal identity, he is not. Thus there is no concern that our previous perceptions do not match to memories, for the person who had the original perception is not even the same as the person who has the memory of it! From there, Socrates-as-Protagoras asks if anyone would grant that “one is a person at all, and not people, coming into being in unlimited numbers, too, as long as alteration goes on?”

So the problem with the fourth and fifth criticisms of KnP, according to Socrates-as-Protagoras, is that they assume non-diachronic identity and fallibilist epistemology, which KnP denies, in refuting KnP’s epistemology.

So, in summary, there are three important upshots to my interpretation of Theaetetus 161b-165e. The first is that we notice that the strategies employed by Socrates in arguing against the brothers in the Euthydemus are repeated at Theaetetus 161b-165e as an argument against KnP. This is indirect evidence that KnP and the underpinnings of sophistic eristic are the same. The second is that Plato has seen that his old defenses are worthless - Socrates-as-Protagoras has refuted Socrates’ previous attempts, in the earlier dialogue, to criticize KnP. Third, and the most important for the rest of my reading of the Theaetetus, is that Socrates accepts Socrates-as-Protagoras’ defense of KnP, HF and PMM and has told us what is required to actually refute his theory: “Behave a bit more like a gentleman. Attack what I actually say, and refute it, if you can, by showing that perceptions don’t come into being peculiar to each of us, or

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114 Tht. 166b5-c1.
115 Bostock (1988), p. 86, writes that Socrates could consistently claim that memory is a kind of perception, but does not do so. In a way, this is exactly what Socrates-as-Protagoras does claim: he claims that the memory of perception is different from the initial perception because while they are both experiences (pathoi), they occur at different times. Further, the person experiencing the memory is not the same as the person who saw initially. Bostock misses these points.
that, even if they do, it doesn’t follow that what appears comes to be, or, if we must use the word, is, only for the person to whom it appears.\footnote{116 Tht. 166c2-7. Socrates also states that he accepts Socrates-as-Protagoras’ arguments at 168d stating that he and Theodorus will take seriously their attempt to refute Protagoras’ philosophy.} The ground is cleared of old failed arguments against sophistic eristic, now understood as KnP, HF and PMM, and we readers are prepared for a careful and systematic assault on the idea that each person’s appearances are absolutely and infallibly true.

§4.3 Doxa and Aisthēsis as Cognitive Powers in Theaetetus 187b-200d

After the defense of KnP by Socrates-as-Protagoras, Socrates quickly refutes the theory. In the final refutation of KnP Socrates and Theaetetus agree that if epistēmē is identical with aisthēsis then they cannot account for three things: (1) language, (2) reasoning, and (3) the phenomenological experience whereby “common” predicates like sameness, oneness and being are revealed to us by different types of perceptual experiences.\footnote{117 This occurs at Tht. 183c4-187a8. An example of a common concept is “one” as applied to a single sound and a single color: the same number concept is applied to sense experiences from different organs; thus it is “common” to them both. For ease of reference I shall refer to this below as the "unified psūchē argument."}

These several failures of KnP lead Theaetetus to define epistēmē as alēthē doxa, true belief or true judgment.\footnote{118 Tht. 187b. For convenience I shall refer to “knowledge is true belief” as KnTB.} Socrates initially admires the thesis that knowledge is true belief. Eventually, he will refute it by arguing that there are some instances of true belief that do not count as knowledge.\footnote{119 This is the famous jury passage at Tht. 200d5-201c7.} Finally, Theaetetus defines knowledge as true belief with an account, alēthē doxa with a logos.\footnote{120 Tht. 201d.} Socrates attempts to unpack this definition by describing a dream of his about knowable complexes and unknowable simples; an
“account,” he offers, would be related to this metaphysical distinction. After failing to define “account” in a satisfactory way, the dialogue ends in apparent aporia.

In this final section of my project I shall examine several key moments of the arguments at *Theaetetus* 184b3-202d8. Ultimately, I will show that in the closing pages of the *Theaetetus* the old eristic theory of knowledge is refuted one thesis at a time. The ground is then cleared for a positive account of knowledge. In support of this overall claim, I shall argue in §4.3.1 that the unified psuchē argument of *Theaetetus* 184-187 concludes that perception and belief are distinct cognitive functions. This directly refutes the eristic claim that knowledge and perception are identical cognitive functions. I shall argue in §4.3.2 that the puzzle of false belief, occurring as a digression at *Theaetetus* 187e5-200d4, assumes several of the eristic cognitive, linguistic, and metaphysical theses of the *Euthydemus*. This is not surprising, for we might expect that a later formulation of the puzzle of false belief in the *Theaetetus* would be consistent with the earlier formulation of it in the *Euthydemus*. I shall also argue in §§4.3.2-4 that the eristic theses also undergird Socrates’ attempted solutions to the falsity puzzle: that is, the eristic metaphysical, linguistic and cognitive picture are built into the three attempted solutions to the falsity puzzle: “other judging”, the wax block, and the aviary. I shall then argue that the failure of the models to satisfactorily solve the falsity puzzle is a tacit argument against the eristic theses. Finally, in section 4.3.5 I will argue that the dream of Socrates is a first step toward a new compositional theory of belief content. We will see that by the end of the *Theaetetus* the eristic theory, in its entirety, has been refuted.

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121 *Th. 201d8-202d7.*
§4.3.1 Expanding Cognitive Powers: Koinai

Let us turn now to the final refutations of KnP. Recall that according to HF a perception is simply the result of grasping a content and is the immediate result of an interaction between a real external object and a perceiver’s organ of perception. On this account, all properties are relational and are created at the moment of perception. Socrates recognizes with perfect clarity what is required to refute such a theory; while speaking as Protagoras he says that in order to refute KnP he must “show that not every person’s belief (doxa) is true.”

Further, he recognizes the central difficulty in this task: “But concerning each person’s experience (pathos), from which there come to be his perceptions (aisthēseis) and the judgments (doxai) he makes from them - it’s more difficult to refute these latter and show they are not true.”

Socrates has to construct an argument that assumes neither the fallibility of perception nor the existence of non-relational properties. Such is the challenge presented by KnP.

Socrates’ first argument against KnP, in conversation with Theodorus, concerns HF:

Soc: And what shall we say of a perception of any given kind, for instance that of seeing or hearing? Shall we say it ever stays constant in just that guise, namely, seeing or hearing?
Theod: No, we mustn’t, if everything changes.
Soc: So we shouldn’t speak of anything as a case of seeing, any more than as not a case of seeing … but what has what has in fact become clear is, apparently, that if all things do change, then every answer, whatever it’s about, is equally correct… One oughtn’t even to use this word ‘so’ [or] ‘not

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122 Th. 179c3. Speaking as Protagoras, he bids Socrates, Theaetetus and Theodorus to refute the claim that each person’s experiences are private and his own.
123 Th. 179c3-5. My translation. This difficulty is noticed by Modrak (1981), p. 40. She writes, “If the commonsense conception of false perceptions is unintelligible on the phenomenalist theory of perception [HF], Plato needs an argument against the thesis that knowledge is perception that does not turn on the fallibility of perception.”
so… [T]hose who state that theory must establish some other language, because as things are they haven’t got expressions for their hypothesis…  

He argues that if HF is right, no property can be named, nor can any argument be made. Thus HF precludes reasoning. All of this stays within the parameters set by Socrates at 179c-d: without assuming the fallibility of perception or non-relational properties, we find ourselves in a paradox. For each of us has had the experience of naming properties and of reasoning, and yet such naming and reasoning is impossible on HF.  

This first argument may be a direct attack on HF’s relationalism and non-diachronic view of personal identity, but, as HF is the way the world has to be for PMM to be true, there is an important epistemological point too. It is suggested that there is something more to knowing then perceiving; the capacity to reason with language goes beyond merely grasping perceived contents. But the point is not yet made forcefully enough.

The second portion of Socrates’ final refutation of KnP is an argument for two things: a unified perceiving psūchē, and a non-perceptual cognitive faculty of the psūchē. Interpretations about the exact nature of the argument differ, including about what the conclusion of the argument is, but I shall refer to it as “the unified psūchē argument”.

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124 Th. 182d-183b. It should be noted that “so” and “not so” at 1839-10 is a translation of houtō and ouch houtō. Burnyeat (1990) translates it as “thus.” We should keep in mind the word is used to indicate a conclusion. Socrates is thus drawing our attention to the fact that KnP, as HF, precludes entailment.

125 Th. 182c-d. The problem for HF seems to be that any name pins the property down, fixing it by a term. But the issue is not that the property changes too quickly for that on HF. McDowell (1973), p. 181, writes of this argument that Socrates first focusses on differentiating alteration from locational movement. Each property is said to flow on HF, in the sense of altering, but the supposition that the color property itself changes color completely undercuts the very notion of having distinct identifiable color concepts. But, even considered from within our own personal conceptual schemes, we do have such stable color concepts. Thus, on McDowell’s reading, 182d1-7 asserts that radical flux is contrary to our understanding of the way that we phenomenologically experience the ascription of color concepts. Cornford (1935), p. 97, writes more simply that all discourse is impossible, according 182d1-7, because we have nothing stable for our discourse to be about. Further, at Th. 183a9-10 Socrates expresses that on KnP we do not even have recourse to reasoning by saying that Theodorus cannot say “thus” (houtō). It is telling that the common concept that we cannot do without is the central concept of logic: entailment.

126 Burnyeat refers to it as an argument for a unified consciousness. I shall prefer psūchē to consciousness, as the term is Plato’s and is less loaded. See Burnyeat (1976c), esp. p. 46. Lorenz (2006) argues that this
The total text that I shall be concerned with runs from 184b3-186e, but I shall consider it in pieces.

The first part of the unified *psûchê* argument runs from 184b3-184d3:

Soc. You answered that knowledge is perception, didn’t you?
Theaet. Yes.
Soc. Now suppose someone put this question to you: “With what does a man see things which are white and black, and with what does he hear things which are high and low in pitch?” I suppose you’d say “With eyes and ears [respectively]”.
Theaet. Yes.
Soc. … which answer is more correct: that the eyes are what we see with, or what we see by means of? And that ears are what we hear with, or what we hear by means of?
Theaet. It seems to me, Socrates, that they’re what we perceive each set of things by means of, rather than what we perceive them with.
Soc. Yes, because it would surely be strange (deinos) if we had several senses sitting in us, as if in wooden horses, and it wasn’t the case that all those things converged on one kind of thing (ideon), a mind (psûchê) or whatever one ought to call it: something with which we perceive all the perceived things by means of the senses, as if by means of instruments.

argument in the *Theaetetus* is about showing that perception is a kind of capacity beneath the capacity to reason that allows for non-belief awareness. See esp. ch. 6. I shall largely agree with Lorenz in my argument, who writes, “*Theaetetus* 184-7… distinguishes between belief formation and perception as two distinct capacities of the soul.” (p. 76) Unlike Lorenz, I shall not argue that perception is non-predicative. It is difficult to see how this kind of awareness can be an awareness of features of objects without predication.

127 This passage contrasts, on the one hand, a pronoun in the dative of means, and on the other, a construction that uses the preposition *dia* with the accusative.

128 We may wonder what this “whatever one ought to call it” might be. But there are several candidates in Greek literature for the locus of thinking, be it cognitive, emotional, perceptual or volitional. The *thumos* is one possibility. For a brief outline of the series of possibilities, see chapter 1 of this project. “idea” at *Tht.* 184d5 may seem provocative, as this is Plato’s word for “Form” in his middle period. We should keep in mind, however, that not every use of the word “idea” indicates that Plato is referring to an abstract, non-physical, noetic archetype. The word just means a ‘kind’ or ‘type’ outside of Plato’s metaphysics, and Plato has to use some word for “kind” at this portion of the *Theaetetus.* Socrates here draws our attention to the fact that the soul must be a distinct type of thing, not that it must be an immaterial Form.

129 We should be careful reading this passage. A very similar argument occurs at *Rep.* VII, 523e7-524e. There, Socrates argues that the soul through acts of calculation determines whether things are one or two, and that the faculty of sight sees the big and small as mixed up together. This fact that the big and small, and one and two, can be objects of thought while not differentiated by sense is part of his argument for an intelligible realm. Also, at *Rep.* V, 475e-477d Socrates argues that, “…someone who…believes in the beautiful itself, can see it and the things that participate in it and doesn’t believe that the participants are it or that it is the participants… We’d be right to call his thought knowledge (epistêmê), but we should call the other [those that don’t believe in the beautiful itself] person’s thought opinion (doxa).” (Rep. 476c)
This might lead us to think that here at *Tht.* 184b3-184d3 Socrates is relying on, or arguing for, his theory of Forms. But, the knowledge/belief distinction of *Rep.* V-VII does not map neatly onto the distinction...
Of course, at this point KnP is not quite refuted. Socrates asks, in essence, is it an I who has these perceptual experiences, or a we? The answer is that it *seems* upon reflection to be an I; “seems” because Socrates has concluded only that it would be *strange* if there were a fragmented consciousness, composed of isolated perceptual experiences contained in the *psūchē* like people in a giant Trojan Horse. It *seems* that there is one thing that does all the perceiving by means of the sense organs.

Importantly, Socrates begins by staying within the framework set out by Socrates-as-Protagoras: he appeals only to Theaetetus’ phenomenological experience of his own perceptive faculties to establish that it would be strange if there were not a unified *psūchē* that is the subject of perceptions. As Burnyeat argues,

> Socrates proposes a single perceiving subject in place of, not in addition to, the seeing eyes and tasting tongue of the earlier discussion. The unity [of the *psūchē*] thesis is not, therefore, a mere supplement to the Heraclitean theory of perception… the Heraclitean theory does not simply omit to provide for a central mind; it excludes the possibility of such a thing by reducing the perceiving subject to that which is here and now perceiving a momentary object such as this sweet wine.\(^{130}\)

At the end of this first stage of the unified *psūchē* argument we have some reason to think that the picture of the non-diachronic mind is too fragmented to account for our own experiences of ourselves.

But the “strangeness” of the mind on HF is not the full argument. They continue:

> Theat. Yes, I think the second alternative [that the *psūchē* uses the organs of sense as instruments] is better than the first.

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\(^{130}\) Burnyeat (1976c), p. 36.
Soc. … I want to know if there’s something in us with which we get at not only white and black things, by means of the eyes, but also other things by means of the sense organs - doing it with the same thing in each case. If the question is put to you, will you be able to refer everything of that sort to the body? … Tell me this. Take the things by means of which you perceive things which are hot, hard, light and sweet. You classify each of them as belonging to the body, don’t you? Or do you think they belong to something else?

Theaet. No, they belong to the body.

Soc. And will you be also willing to agree that if you perceive something by means of one power, it’s impossible to perceive that same thing by means of another? For instance you can’t perceive by means of sight what you perceive by means of hearing, or perceive by means of hearing what you perceive by means of sight?

Theaet: Of course.

Soc. So if there’s something which you think (dianoeō) about both of them, it can’t be something which you’re perceiving (aisthanomai) about both, either by means of one of the two instruments or by means of the other.

Theaet. No.

Soc. Now take a sound and a colour. First of all, you think just this about them: that they both are?

Theaet. Yes.

Soc. And each is different from the other and the same as itself?

Theaet. Of course.

Soc. And that both together are two and that each is one?

Theaet. Yes, that too.

Soc. Well now, by means of what do you think all those things about them? Because it’s impossible to get hold of what they have in common either by means of hearing or by means of sight. Besides, here’s another proof of the point we’re talking about. If it were possible to raise the question whether both are salty or not, of course you’ll be able to say what you’d investigate it with: it would clearly be neither sight nor hearing, but something else.

Theaet. Yes, of course: the power that’s exercised by means of the tongue.

Soc. Good. But what about the power that makes clear to you that which is common to everything, including these things: that to which you apply the words ‘is’, ‘is not,’ and the others we used in our questions just now? … What sort of instruments are you going to assign to all those things, by means of which the perceiving element in each of us perceives each of them?

Theaet. You mean being and not being, likeness and unlikeness, the same and different, also one and any other number applied to them. And it’s clear that your question is also about odd and even, and everything else that goes with those. What you’re asking is by what means of the body we perceive them with our minds.
Socrates assumes an important psychological principle in this part of the argument: each perceptual function is (at least in part) individuated by its unique type of object. Again, we proceed without the assumption of fallibility and without the assumption that there are non-relational properties. Socrates has asked Theaetetus (and by extension us, the readers) to think about our own experiences in order to get us to realize two things: first, certain types of property are delivered to our awareness exclusively by one particular sense organ; and second, some properties of objects are not revealed to us exclusively through one organ. These claims are vital for the refutation of KnP, as they directly establish that some knowledge is not simply perception.

I believe that the following is a plausible reconstruction of the argument for the second claim:

1. The instruments with which you perceive perceptible properties belong to the body.
2. Assume that you are having two experiences, one from each of two distinct perceptual organs, for example sight and sound.
3. Assume further that you apply the same property to experiences from both, e.g., “one”.
4. If “one” was applied by the power of sight, it could only be applied to color experiences and if “one” was only applied by the power of hearing it would only apply to sounds.
5. But “one” can be applied to colors and sounds.
6. Therefore, there is a single mental power, distinct from hearing and sight, that applies koina.
7. The soul itself, without bodily organs, applies koina.

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131 Tht. 184d3-185e2.
What is unique about these operations is brought out even more in the arguments following. Socrates says explicitly that what follows is that: “Knowledge is to be found not in experiences (pathos) but in the process of reasoning about them (sullogismos); it seems to be in this, not in the experiences, that it is possible to grasp being and truth”.132

Reasoning, as a cognitive capacity, is functionally distinct from perception. Recall that KnP, understood as HF and PMM, as I argued, is consistent with the eristic theory from the Euthydemus. In §2.5 I argued that the brothers assume what I called the Second Eristic Cognitive Thesis, that perception and belief are identical cognitive functions. But the unified psuchē argument refutes that assertion; the undergirding of sophistic eristic is thus being dismantled by Socrates’ arguments here in the Theaetetus.

However, apart from the assertion that the soul reasons “itself, by means of itself”, and that its operations result in revealing that things have properties like similarity and oneness, there is no positive assertion made here about the nature of such cognitive powers. In order to think about what happens in reasoning Socrates offers some models for explaining the occurrence of false belief, and in doing so, offers some models of belief as opposed to mere perception.

§4.3.2 The Assumptions of the Falsity Puzzle

Immediately after the final refutation of KnP, Theaetetus offers a new definition of knowledge as true judgement (alēthēs doxa). The reasons for this are quite clear: knowledge, as has just been shown in the final refutation of KnP, is not identical with perception. The soul does more than just perceive; it has the capacity to have revealed to

it certain common predicates of things that are not the result of sense perception. These predicates are some of the most important for epistêmē: sameness, difference, numerical predicates and, most crucially, being and truth. So, Theaetetus identifies knowledge with the very faculty that they have just established performs the kinds of cognitive acts required for revealing being and truth: knowledge is to be found in “whatever one calls what the mind is doing when it’s busying itself, by itself, about the things which are.”

Epistêmē is thus identified with alêthê doxa, true belief.

Rather than unpack or refute KnTB right away, Socrates says that they should first “go back to an old point about judgement.” The old point is the familiar puzzle about false belief. Socrates and Theaetetus spend some time, at Theaetetus 187e5-200d4, trying, and ultimately failing, to explain how false belief is possible. At 200d5-201c7 Socrates then tersely refutes KnTB. The digression into the puzzle of falsity, sandwiched between Theaetetus’ expression of KnTB and KnTB’s final refutation, at first glance is mysterious. Why is it here? Is it part of the refutation or a mere digression? These questions are made all the more pressing to the interpreter of Plato because, while the refutation of KnTB does not depend upon the false belief discussion, it is clear that the puzzle of false belief is directly connected to the new definition of knowledge, KnTB.

The problem with KnP was that it made everyone infallible. The value of KnTB is that it offers a theory on which some beliefs are true, others false. But if false belief is not possible after all then KnTB is no step in the right direction at all. Thus, the digression into false belief is no mere digression; rather it is directly germane to the discussion in the dialogue. However, as I argued in sections 2.4-5, it is difficult to see what motivates it,

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133 Tht. 187a.
134 Tht. 187c8.
in part because it is so counter-intuitive. One assumes that some dubious assumptions must be at play for the puzzle to even get off the ground. In chapter 2 I supplied those dubious assumptions in the form of the eristic theory.

In this section I shall argue that the Theaetetus’ version of the falsity puzzle, presented in more detail and with more precision and care at 188a-c than the version in the Euthydemus, also assumes the following three theses of the eristic theory: (1) Eristic Linguistic Thesis: an entire sentence (logos) gets its meaning and truth-value in virtue of the fact that it refers to a being (to on). (2) Eristic Metaphysical Principle: each thing has for itself some distinct descriptive content (a logos) and no other content. (3) First Eristic Cognitive Principle: if one has object x in mind (mimnēshein), then one must do so by speaking (legein) or thinking (doxazein) one of x’s unique logoi. Taken all together the three eristic theses make the claim that we cannot form a belief, or make a judgment without using a whole content derived from a real being as that being is.135 In §§4.3.3-4, I shall argue that the reason why Socrates’ proposed models of cognition, the wax block and aviary, fail to account for falsity is that they also assume these features of the eristic theory. For now, I shall consider the initial puzzle. My argument that these theses are assumed in the Theaetetus’ version of the falsity puzzle will depend upon an argument by Barton, who argues that the falsity puzzle assumes that all thinking is mere “grasping.”136 I shall compare Barton’s reading to some initially plausible, but ultimately problematic, diagnoses of the falsity puzzle. We will see that Barton’s proposal is stronger than those other ones. But we should begin with the relevant text.

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135 See §§2.4-6 for my argument that the falsity puzzles of the Euthydemus assume this picture. It is, as I argued, an assumption that all beliefs are non-compositional: one cannot think about x without getting the whole content of one’s thought from x. We should be careful to distinguish this claim from the stronger claim that we always know everything about an object we are speaking or thinking about.

136 Barton (1999).
Before attempting to refute KnTB, Socrates asks Theaetetus to affirm that there are also false beliefs. What these are is surprisingly elusive to the interlocutors. In explaining how false beliefs occur, Socrates begins by establishing certain conditions for the possibility of false belief. He then enumerates what he takes to be the only four possibilities for false belief to occur.

Initial Falsity Puzzle of the *Theaetetus*

1. For anything one must either know (*eidenai*) it or not.
2. If a person forms a belief (*doxazein*), he forms a belief about either one of the things he knows (*eidenai*) or one of the things he does not know (*eidenai*).
3. It is impossible for someone to know \(x\) and not know \(x\).
4. If one has a false belief, then one either: (a) thinks those things he knows are other things that he knows, (b) thinks the things he doesn’t know are other things that he does not know, (c) thinks the things he knows are things that he does not know, or (d) thinks the things he doesn’t know are things he does know.\(^{137}\)

Socrates and Theaetetus both agree that, given 1-3, false belief cannot happen on any of the four possibilities in 4a-d. This is because, I shall now argue, this argument assumes the eristic metaphysical principle, first eristic cognitive principle, and the eristic linguistic thesis.

Consider that on the falsity puzzle there is one, and only one, kind of cognitive access to an object. We either know (*eidenai*) it or we do not. (Socrates uses the verb *eidenai* in this context, avoiding *epistēmē* and its verbal equivalent, *epistasthai*.) Whatever kind of cognitive connection between a knower and an object is meant by *eidenai* here, in order for the argument to go through this connection must be infallible: if one knows (*eidenai*) an object, one cannot be wrong about it when one makes honest

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\(^{137}\) *Tht.* 188a-c. This argument against the possibility of falsity is structurally more complicated than the one given at *Euthydmdus* 284b3-c9. See §2.4, above. The *Theaetetus*’ version begins with a constructive dilemma that enumerates possible cases.
assertions about it. There is one way that one can be cognitively related to a potential object of knowledge in this puzzle: having a content from the object (knowing it in the eidenai sense from premise 1 and 3). Without content from the object, you cannot even have a belief about the object (premises 2 and 3). But with the content from the object, you must be correct in your belief about the object. Thus the Theaetetus’ initial falsity puzzle assumes that each object has for itself some unique descriptive content and no other content and that if one has an object in mind then one must do so by speaking or thinking of that object’s unique descriptive content.

Socrates recognizes that the puzzle in this initial formulation relies heavily on a very loaded sense of “eidenai” and so tries, in response, to account for falsity “not by way of knowing and not knowing, but by way of being and not being (einaĩ kai mē einaĩ).”138 He states that a false judgment might occur under the following conditions:

First Solution to Problem of Falsity: If someone has “the things that are not” (mē onta) in his belief about anything, he makes a false judgment. The solution is that a “non-being” has supplied the content to the false judgement.

Socrates states that people have “in their belief that which is not, either about one of the things which are, or just by itself.”139 Socrates thus assumes that all thoughts must have a content (a reasonable assumption) and he asserts that in the case of false judgments the content comes from a non-being, from something that is not. For Socrates, the difficulty with this proposal is that non-beings cannot lend contents because they are causally inert:

Second Argument Against the Possibility of Falsity: Being and not Being

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138 Th. 188c9-d1.
139 Th. 188d6-e2
1. It is not possible for someone to see something when there is nothing there that he sees.
2. [For example] if someone sees something, he sees a being, and not a non-being.
3. [As another example], if someone hears something, he hears a being, and not a non-being.
4. [As a final example] if someone touches something, he touches a being, and not a non-being.
5. Likewise, if someone forms a belief about something, it is about a being, and not a non-being.
6. If one has nothing in one’s belief, one is not judging at all.
7. Therefore, having a false belief is something other than having a belief about the things which are not.\(^\text{140}\)

Notice that in each of the cases in premises 1-5 there has to be a real being supplying a content for every thought. In premise 6, belief is treated by analogy to perception: if there is nothing supplying the content, then no belief can exist. *It is never considered that we might have the cognitive power to construct our beliefs* with contents other than what we receive in their entirety from an object. Thus, even in this attempted solution to the falsity problem assumptions are made that are consistent with the three eristic theses.

There is another point to consider, other than the three eristic theses. Notice that belief is treated as needing an object in a manner analogous to perception. I have argued that the unified *psūchē* argument concludes that belief and perception are distinct cognitive functions.\(^\text{141}\) Why then the analogy? Are Socrates and Theaetetus proceeding as if perception and belief are actually the same kind of function without heeding their own argument? They are not. The unified *psūchē* argument established only that certain kinds of properties, like being, similarity, etc., are revealed to be the properties of objects by a different function from that of the sense organs. It does not, however, follow from

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\(^{140}\) *Tht.* 188d-189b. On the face of it, this argument seems to assume that cognition and perception are identical functions, but it only assumes that they have to have some kind of object which provides the content for either the perception of the thought.

\(^{141}\) See §4.3.1.
the unified *psūchē* argument that belief can occur without an object, nor that the mind can form contents compositionally.

We should, however, pause for a moment to consider the secondary literature on this issue, and some prominent readings of the falsity puzzle in the *Theaetetus* that run counter to mine. Commentators have found several flaws in both the initial statement of the falsity puzzle and the ‘non-being solution’ in the second argument. One flaw is that Plato apparently fails to distinguish between sense and reference. We could take the verb used to talk about “forming a belief” in the argument, *doxazein*, to be something akin to Frege’s notion of having a thought.142 We can thus see how both arguments fail to distinguish between the denoted object and the mode of presentation of said object.143

But this is unsatisfactory for several reasons.144 First, as Rudebusch points out, in the initial puzzle the issue for Plato is mistaking one thought for another, not a thought for an object.145 Later, when trying to solve the falsity problem at 190d4-5, Socrates diagnoses the issue saying, “It is impossible for someone who has both thoughts to think that one is the other.” And again at 190d7-8, “Surely he who has only one of the beliefs

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142 See Frege’s, *Sense and Reference* and *The Thought*.
143 Several commenters accuse Plato of failing to distinguish between sense and reference, see McDowell (1973) pp. 196-97, Cornford (1957) p. 113, and Runciman (1962) pp. 29-30. Frege’s distinction is that the reference of an expression is that to which it refers, while the sense of an expression is the mode of presentation of it. Both sense and reference are distinct from the thought that occurs when one thinks of the object. The diagnosis is that falsity might be possible when one has the thought of a flying person when thinking about Theaetetus. Thus, according to this line of interpretation “Theaetetus flies” and “Theaetetus was a mathematician” both have the same reference, but different senses. The difference in senses allows us to understand how it is that falsity is possible. Thus, we can diagnose and cure Plato’s problem by applying Frege’s distinction.
144 For an argument that Plato both understood *and* rejected a Fregean solution to the falsity problem, see Rudebusch (1985). Rudebusch finds that most commenters who find Plato at fault for not seeing the Fregean solution hold that every kind of contact with an object is sufficient for full knowledge of that object. On my account, this is not the case. Given the linguistic and cognitive theses of the eristic theory, it is not “full knowledge” of the object that makes falsity impossible. Rather, falsity is made impossible by the fact that all contents for thoughts about the object must come from the object as it really is.
145 The difficulty, mistaking a thought for a thought, is brought more clearly to the surface in the aviary model. We shall see that in a moment.
and not the other at all, will never think that one is the other.” As Rudebusch points out, if we substitute Fregean senses for “beliefs” in these passages then the puzzle is one for Frege as well. Rudebusch is rightly concerned that we fail to understand Plato’s dialogue by simply deflating the puzzle with an appeal to the sense/reference distinction.\(^{146}\)

Another approach to the falsity puzzle attempts to deflate it by noting that Plato fails to distinguish between knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by description.\(^{147}\) Russell describes knowledge by acquaintance thusly: “We shall say that we have acquaintance with anything of which we are directly aware, without the intermediary of any process of inference or any knowledge of this.\(^{148}\) By contrast, knowledge by description results from inference and occurs when the object is not presented to one. If Plato had applied this distinction, goes this attempt at deflation, he could see that it is possible to have a variety of beliefs about \(x\) that result from inference about \(x\), but that do

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\(^{146}\) Rudebusch brings our attention to *Tht.* 197e3-4. In this passage Socrates describes the aviary model, which is put forth as a failed attempt to account for false belief. Socrates there says, “Whatever [bird] someone acquires and shuts up in their cage, we say he has learned or discovered the thing [reference] of which this [the bird or sense] is the knowledge, and that just this is knowing” (Rudebusch’s translation). Fine (1979) thinks that the distinction could solve the puzzle, but that Plato had his own solution. I agree with Rudebusch that the puzzle is not solved by appeal to Frege’s sense/reference distinction. The mere distinction between sense and reference, as established in the aviary puzzle, does not, according to Socrates, solve the problem, for as we shall see below, Socrates would still need to account for how our Fregean senses, derived from an object, can be wrong about that object. The solution, I shall argue in §4.3.4-5, is for Socrates to assert that it is not the case that we are required to have a content *in toto* from an object in order to talk or think about it.

\(^{147}\) McDowell (1973) 116-17. The distinction is from Bertrand Russell, of course. See “Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description”, reprinted in *Mysticism and Logic* (1918), 204, 220-1. See also *The Problems of Philosophy* (New York, 1912), 46-7. Fine (1979) makes a stronger case that Plato assume a pure acquaintance model of thinking; however, she finds that Plato only assumes a strong acquaintance view of knowledge in the initial puzzle at 188a-c. She writes, “[Plato] uses [the acquaintance model] to buttress Theaetetus’ suggestion, presented just before the discussion of false belief (at 187b), that knowledge is true belief. When, at the end of the discussion, Socrates rejects Theaetetus’ suggestion (20la-c), he also rejects the acquaintance model that had made Theaetetus’ suggestion look plausible and that also precludes a satisfactory explanation of false belief.” (p. 70) On Fine’s reading of the false belief passages Plato connects the acquaintance model with the puzzle intentionally I shall read the false belief discussion in a similar way - Plato wants to show the deep inadequacy of a certain set of theses about the mind-world connection.

\(^{148}\) Russell (1912) p. 78.
not result from direct acceptance of a content from \( x \). A pure inference will result in believing the wrong things about \( x \).

One serious problem with thinking that the initial puzzle assumes a pure acquaintance model of thinking is that, as David Barton has pointed out, “…Russell never thought that, as Fine claims, acquaintance with a thing confers knowledge of everything about that thing. For Russell, knowledge by acquaintance is a kind of direct mode of cognitive access to an object, to be contrasted to an indirect mode of access, knowledge by description”.

Barton argues that Plato’s real problem is that he assumes that thinking is “grasping”; he reconfigures the first step of the initial puzzle, “for everything we must know \((eidēnai)\) it or not”, as “There’s no alternative, in the case of each thing, besides mentally grasping it or not mentally grasping it.” On this assumption, we either have a hold of it or not. I find this reading quite compelling, but why hold that all thought is grasping? Barton’s grasping metaphor works well with my argument that the puzzle assumes the eristic theses; this is what I shall now argue.

First, we should consider what an interpretation of Plato’s falsity puzzle should do. Any interpretation of the puzzle should ideally satisfy two criteria: First, we shall need a theory of the mind’s connection to the world that makes every connection to an object an “all or nothing affair” such that when I grasp a content from it, I cannot be wrong in assertions with that content. We want it to be the case that for each thing in the world, we have this kind of connection with it or we don’t. Second, the interpretation should be

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150 Another problem with reading the falsity argument as assuming the acquaintance model is that Plato applies the distinction between mere content acceptance and inferential knowledge of an object as part of his final argument against KnP. Recall that he argues that it is through sullogismos that we apply “one” to both objects of seeing and hearing. This is evidence that he has Russell’s distinction, in some form or another.
such that all putative mistakes have the look of identity errors, as this is precisely how the initial puzzle proceeds. Interpreting the falsity puzzle in the *Theaetetus* as assuming the eristic theory satisfies these criteria.\footnote{And of course, we might expect this. After all, several of these principles were required to argue for omniscience and against the possibility of false belief in the *Euthydemus*. In connecting these assumptions here, I am not making, I think, a controversial nor even very surprising claim. We shall see, however, that the principles are assumed in the models of thought that follow. This is, perhaps, more surprising and more important for answering why it is that Plato brings up falsity puzzles while attempting to define knowledge as true belief.}

Recall that on the eristic theory the following three principles obtain, (1) Eristic Linguistic Thesis: An entire sentence (*logos*) gets its meaning and truth-value in virtue of the fact that it refers to a being (*to on*); (2) Eristic Metaphysical Principle: each thing has for itself some distinct descriptive content (*a logos*) and no other content; and (3) First Eristic Cognitive Principle: if one has object $x$ in mind (*mimnēskein*), then one must do so by speaking (*legein*) or thinking (*doxazein*) one of $x$’s unique *logoi*.

So, reading the initial puzzle as assuming the eristic theory satisfies the first criteria for interpreting the falsity puzzle by supplying the “all or nothing” connection between mind and world. For, imagine that someone speaks falsely about $x$. Where did they get the content of the thought from? By the first cognitive principle, he must be thinking one of $x$’s unique *logoi*. But, by the linguistic and metaphysical principles, this is not possible; because the sentence gets its meaning and truth value from the real object $x$ and any thought-content must be from the unique descriptive *logos* from $x$. The three principles preclude falsity and they make it the case that knowing $x$ is a matter of an “all or nothing” cognitive grasp of the object $x$. Thus, Barton’s grasping metaphor is consistent with argument that the initial falsity puzzle and first two attempted solutions assume the eristic theses.
We have thus seen in this section that, while Socrates and Theaetetus established with the unified ἑρυθή argument that knowledge and perception are distinct capacities, they have not freed themselves from the baggage of the eristic theory. As we shall see, however, these theses are about to come under fire.

§4.3.3 The Implicit Argument of the Wax Block

We turn now to some further proposed solutions to the initial falsity puzzle. Socrates offers that when we mistake one belief for another, “…it is possible to put something down (τιθέσαι) in one’s thought (dianoia) as being something else and not itself.”\(^{152}\) Call this the “other-judging” account of false beliefs. The idea is that we overcome the problems of holding non-beings in thought if we propose that we are holding two beings in thought, but somehow forming a belief about one with the content from the other.

Socrates argues that this this other-judging account of falsity is insufficient. He begins his criticism of the other-judging solution by defining judging or believing, \(\delta\)οξαζεῖν, as three things: silent questions, silent assertions and silent denials made in the mind to oneself.\(^{153}\) Thinking (\(\delta\)ιανοιεῖσθαι) is just silent speech. He argues:

1. We never say to ourselves, in silent thought, that [for example] beauty is ugliness, or just is unjust, the odd is even, a cow is a horse or two is one.\(^{154}\)
2. If making silent statements in the soul is what \(\delta\)οξαζεῖν is, then no one can make a statement about two things without getting hold (\(\epsilon\)φάπτειν) of both with his soul.\(^{155}\)

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\(^{152}\) \(Tht.\) 189d7-8.

\(^{153}\) \(Tht.\) 190a.

\(^{154}\) \(Tht.\) 190b-c.

\(^{155}\) \(Tht.\) 190c.
3. Someone with both things before his mind cannot judge that one is the other.156
4. Someone with only one thing before his mind cannot judge that it is another thing.157

Notice that the previous solution to the falsity puzzle, proceeding by way of being and not being, assumed that all thought requires a content. In this argument, at 190b-e, we have either one or two such grasped contents. While we might be able to have both contents grasped in thought, the argument assumes that the only way we can think about each object is if we have that object’s unique descriptive content currently grasped in thought. Thus, the criticism of the other-judging account of falsity assumes that every cognitive grasp of an object is sufficient for being correct about what one says or believes about that object. Therefore, even the other-judging account of falsity assumes the eristic linguistic and cognitive principles.

But of course, Socrates thinks that he can supply an analogy for thinking that might help explain how other-judging is, in fact, possible:

Soc. Well then, let me ask you to suppose, for the sake of argument, that there’s an imprint-receiving piece of wax in our minds: bigger in some, smaller in others; of cleaner wax in some, of dirtier in others; of harder wax in some, of softer in others, but in some made of wax of a proper consistency.
Theat. All right.
Soc. And let’s say it’s the gift of Memory, the mother of the Muses; and that if there’s anything we want to remember, among the things we see, hear, or ourselves conceive (ennoein), we hold it under the perceptions and conceptions (ennoiai) and imprint them on it, as if we were taking the impressions of signet rings. Whatever is imprinted we remember (mnēmoneuein) and know (episasthai), as long as its image (eidōlon) is present; but whatever is smudged out or proves unable to be imprinted, we’ve forgotten and don’t know.158

156 Th. 190c-d.
157 Th. 190d-e.
158 Th. 191c-e.
Socrates then enumerates a great many possibilities for explaining false judgments. With the analogy, he is now able to appeal to two distinct cognitive objects: memory images (eidōla) as imprints in wax, and current perceptions. This is the first discussion of memory in the *Theaetetus*. The wax block offers more than just a single grasp of a content; it allows one to compare a current grasping of a content to the imagistic residue of a past grasping. While he enumerates many cases of comparisons between cases, he gives the following concise case to explain false judgments via the wax block model:

Well then, we’re left with the possibility of judging what’s false in the following case. I know you [Theaetetus] and Theodorus, and have imprints of the two of you on that piece of wax, like those of signet rings. I see you both, some way off and not properly, and I’m eager to assign the imprint which belongs to each to the seeing which belongs to each, and to insert and fit the seeing into its own trace, so that recognition may take place. But, missing that aim, and making a transposition, I attach the seeing of each one to the imprint which belongs to the other, like people who put their shoes on the wrong feet; or alternatively my going wrong is because the same sort of thing happens to me as happens to sight in mirrors, when it flows in such a way as to transpose left and right. It’s then that different-judging and the making of false judgements occurs.\(^{159}\)

Socrates concludes by saying that, “It’s precisely in the case of things we both know and perceive that judgement is twisted and turned about, coming to be false as well as true…”\(^{160}\) And again, “You’ve found that [false belief] is located not in our perceptions in relation to one another, and not in our thoughts in relation to one another, but in the connecting of perception with a thought.”\(^{161}\) Ultimately, Socrates will conclude that the wax block provides a solution to false *perceptual* identity judgments, but not to other

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\(^{159}\) *Tht.* 193b-d.  
\(^{160}\) *Tht.* 194b  
\(^{161}\) *Tht.* 195c-d.
kinds of non-perceptual judgments. But we must pause for a moment to see what is happening in this model.

Notice that on Socrates’ analogy while perceptions make imprints in memory, *so do thoughts* (*ennoiai*). The real advantage to the wax block as a model of cognition is that it complicates the interlocutors’ working model of the mind: not only does the mind grasp thought contents, but now there is a process by which it matches an occurrent thought or perception to a stamped thought or perception. This process is new to the discussion, but what takes place in thinking and perceiving is still largely the same: it is simply the grasping of a particular content. We must ask ourselves, does this addition of a “matching function” to the stock of mental processes make other-judging possible? If so, how? Does it directly refute the eristic principles that seem to have been assumed in the initial puzzle? We should consider each question in turn.

How does the wax block model purport to solve the falsity puzzle? We might think that the error arrives due to poor imprinting, but this is only part of the story. The wax block in some people, Socrates tells us, is not capable of taking a correct imprint. He says of people with soft, hard, filthy or small souls that they, “… are of the right kind to make false judgments. Because when they see, hear, or conceive something, they’re unable to allot each set quickly to their imprints; they’re slow, and by allotting things where they don’t belong, they mis-see, mis-hear, and misconceive most things. These people, for their part, are said to have gotten into a state of falsehood about the things which are…” Thus, perhaps surprisingly, Socrates does not find that false beliefs occur because of partial impressions where we receive a content poorly. Rather they occur

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162 *Tht.* 195c5-196d1.
163 *Tht.* 194e-195a.
164 *Tht.* 195a.
because of a failure to match an occurrent with a past perception or thought - the false belief resides not in the initial imprinting experience but rather in the act of failing to match an occurrent experience to a past impression. Thus the wax block model of thinking still requires that each object has for itself some unique descriptive content to supply in the imprint. On this model it is still not possible to have any object in mind without successfully grasping some unique content from it and having that content correctly imprinted on the wax block of the soul. The distinction between memory (an imprint) and current perception is a valuable step forward in making an adequate theory of the mind, because it permits us to explain how some kinds of errors are made: some people have poor wax and thus do not have the capacity to remember. But there is still no possibility of talking about an object without a content from that object. Thus the wax block, as a model of cognition, does not entirely shed the eristic cognitive assumptions.

Finally, it is quite mysterious how one compares thoughts to one another. The aviary model is intended to clear that up.

§4.3.4 The Implicit Argument of the Aviary

The aviary model of thought is proposed by Socrates as a better model of cognition than the wax block. The wax block only allows an occurrent sensory input to be matched to an impressed memory. But Socrates points out that this is not the only kind of error that we make; we also make mathematical errors. Further as Socrates says, we make errors not just when we miscount things that we see (which could be attributed to a perceptual confusion) but also when we miscalculate when performing an abstract mathematical operation like addition, or as Socrates puts it, when we have “set before us
five and seven *themselves*. Theaetetus concurs stating, “And if one considers a problem involving a larger number there are even more mistakes.” This kind of error occurs because of two features of abstract mathematical calculations. First, Socrates says that we are thinking about the numbers, as he puts it we have the two numbers “set before us” (*protithēnai*) in the abstract. We know them both because they are “…memory traces on the imprint-receiving tablet, among which we say it isn’t possible to make false judgements.” Second, we are wrong in calculating that 7+5 is 11. The agent mistakes the sum of 7 and 5, which is 12, for 11. Socrates concludes: in this case the agent “thinks something he knows (*eidenai*) is something else he knows (*eidenai*). The problem, as Socrates describes it, is that the agent knows both 11 and 12, and yet has them mistaken in thought.

Socrates’ solution to the problem of abstract misidentifications is to offer a new metaphor, to replace the wax block: that the mind is like an aviary filled with birds. The birds represent pieces of knowledge. In this section I shall consider this metaphor. I argued in §§4.3.1 - 4.3.3 that by this point in the discussion Plato has already begun the process of demarcating distinct cognitive capacities. In the refutation of KnP, he has already shown us that perception as a cognitive function is distinct from reasoning or calculating: perception involves the grasping of an external content, while applying the *koina* requires that the mind perform a calculative function, described as thinking itself by itself. This is presented as a fundamentally different kind of cognitive act.

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165 *Tht.* 195e10-196a1, emphasis mine.
166 *Tht.* 196b1-2.
167 *Tht.* 196a3-4.
168 *Tht.* 196b9-10
In this section I shall argue two important and related theses: (1) that the interlocutors still assume three of the eristic theses that were assumed in the initial falsity puzzle, and (2) that the interlocutors assume a broad perceptual model of introspection. Finally, I shall argue that the three eristic theses are implicitly refuted by the failure of the wax block and aviary models.

Socrates begins by drawing a distinction between having knowledge (hexis epistēmēs) and possessing knowledge (ktēsis epistēmēs). To help Theaetetus understand the distinction Socrates offers an analogy with a cloak: one might own a cloak, while not actively wearing it. In such a case, one possesses (ktēsasthai) the cloak, and has control over it (enkratein), though one does not have it (echein). He then asks Theaetetus to consider whether:

...knowledge, too, is something which it’s possible, in that way, to possess (ktēsasthai), but not have (echein); just as if someone has caught some wild birds... and constructed an aviary at his house, where he looks after them, we’d say that in one sense he has (echein) them all the time, because he possesses them... but that in another sense he doesn’t have (echein) any of them, but what he has acquired (paragignasthai), with respect to them, now that he has made them subject to him in an enclosure of his own, is power (dunamis): power to get hold of them and have them whenever he likes, by catching whichever one he wants, and to let them go again; and it’s open to him to do that as often as he thinks fit.

And further,

... when we’re children this receptacle is empty, and in place of the birds, we must think of pieces of knowledge. Whatever piece of knowledge someone comes to possess and shuts up in his enclosure, we must say he has come to know or discovered the thing of which that’s the knowledge; and that that’s what knowing is.

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169 Th. 197b. The noun also means to acquire or procure.
170 Th. 197b8-9.
171 Th. 197c-d.
172 Th. 197e.
Let us begin by unpacking the claims about the mental acts that are taking place in the metaphor. First, there is acquisition. At this stage the mind receives something from somewhere else; Socrates describes this as “learning”. The mind is assumed to be blank prior to any learning, in keeping with the description of the wax tablet: “…when we are children, this enclosure is empty.”\(^{173}\) When the agent thus acquires some learning, he has learned or discovered some piece of knowledge. Socrates then says that the agent “hunts” for pieces of knowledge; I shall refer to this as retrieval. Next, comes the actual use of some piece of possessed knowledge. This is called “having” it; the metaphor suggests “having it in hand”, as one might a bird from the aviary.\(^ {174}\) When we actively grasp, or “have” the 7+5 piece of knowledge, but incorrectly match it to the 11 piece of knowledge, we then have a false belief.\(^ {175}\) So, the picture that is presented, divested of its metaphorical presentation, is that there are four cognitive functions involved in knowing: (1) learning, (2) possessing, (3) retrieving and (4) having.

It is fairly clear from the text that birds are non-compositional. Notice that the ‘7+5’ bird is a single piece of knowledge grasped all at once. Cornford suggests that Plato simply missed that the ‘7+5’ piece of knowledge has constituents, and thus that 12 is a piece of knowledge put together by 7 and 5. But Chappell rightly points out that it seems explicitly worked into the aviary account of knowledge that we cannot take the

\(^ {173}\) Tht. 197d6. Chappell (2005), p. 186 aptly points out that we cannot read the aviary with the recollection theory of the *Meno* in mind. The recollection theory requires that we be supplied with a complete stock of knowledge that we recollect through dialectic. The theory of learning in the aviary begins with a genuine *tabula rasa*. We are best served, then, to read the aviary on its own terms, in relation to the *Theaetetus* discussion so far and not in reference to the middle period theory of knowledge.

\(^ {174}\) The distinction between possessing and having is often compared to Aristotle’s distinction between potentiality, first actuality and second actuality. We might, as newborns, have the potential to learn some piece of knowledge. We then learn it and possess it; this is first actuality. Actively thinking about it is second actuality. This is a helpful way to understand the distinction Plato is making. See Burnyeat (1990), pp. 112-116.

\(^ {175}\) This account is, of course, seen as inadequate because it allows falsity to be explained in terms of grasped pieces of knowledge, an apparent paradox.
pieces of knowledge apart.\textsuperscript{176} Chappell argues that we could see the piece of knowledge as a content, grasped in thought about some object.\textsuperscript{177} I would like to develop and defend this reading and suggest further that the reason the aviary runs into trouble is that it is still assumed that to think about $x$ at all requires that we have a content drawn straight from $x$.

The first piece of evidence that Socrates assumes that to think about $x$ at all requires that we have a content drawn straight from $x$ comes from the fact that all thinking is referred to as “grasping” a bird (i.e., a piece of knowledge). The mind does not assemble or take apart the contents of knowledge-birds in any way: at each of the five phases of cognition there is a simple holding of a full and complete content, a piece of knowledge. At the beginning stage, learning, we are merely given a content: "If someone passes them on, we call it teaching, and if someone receives them, we call it learning."\textsuperscript{178} At the second stage we simply possess that content as given; it is neither altered nor analyzed—it is simply accepted.\textsuperscript{179} When a person possesses knowledge of arithmetic "... he knows all numbers... because there are pieces of knowledge of all numbers in his mind."\textsuperscript{180} At the third stage we retrieve that content which we possess and, if successful, we have that entire content actively in thought. Finally, when we possess piece of knowledge it, in its entirety as it is, is simply the content of our thought about its object. Recall the Eristic Linguistic Thesis: an entire sentence (logos) gets its meaning and truth-value in virtue of the fact that it refers to a being (to on). Recall also the First Eristic Cognitive Thesis: if one has object $x$ in mind (mimnēskein), then one must do so by

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{176} Cornford (1957) p. 137 and Chappell (2005) p. 190.
\item \textsuperscript{177} Chappell (2005) p. 191.
\item \textsuperscript{178} \textit{Tht.} 198b4-7.
\item \textsuperscript{179} It is possible that it can be contextualized; Socrates suggests that it might be grouped with other birds of a type. But he never suggests that each bird can be broken down into constituent pieces.
\item \textsuperscript{180} \textit{Tht.} 198b8-11.
\end{itemize}
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speaking (*legein*) or thinking (*doxazein*) one of x’s unique *logoi*. The aviary model assumes them both, and thus, on the aviary model, all thinking just is a grasping of a whole content from an object.

But the aviary model makes another assumption about the mind familiar from the *Charmides*. The descriptions of mental processes are such that learning storage and retrieval are all about simply *looking inward* for the right piece of information, as if the mind were a space to be "hunted" through.\(^1\) Thus, as a model of introspection, the aviary assumes the broad perceptual model of introspection.\(^2\)

I have argued that the aviary assumes that (1) all thought is the grasp of content from an object (the Eristic Linguistic and First Cognitive theses) and that (2) introspection is perceptual. But recall that my project is an attempt to show that Plato explicitly or implicitly refutes the eristic theory in the *Theaetetus*. The aviary’s failure, I will now show, is the result of the eristic theses and the broad perceptual model.

Recall that the aviary was supposed to allow for the comparison of abstract objects, but because it only allows a total grasp of a complete content, discovered through a perception-like searching, Socrates and Theaetetus, unable to account for how one can have 11 and 12 in thought and yet confuse one for the other, are forced to posit ignorance-birds.\(^3\) The idea is that, rather than grasping a piece of knowledge, the person who has an ignorance bird has hold of a piece of falsity. These birds are problematic because they must, on the assumption that the birds are contents grasped *in*...
toto, be derived from non-beings. As Chappell points out, “there is no such thing as the object of an item of ignorance [so that it can be the object to which an ignorance bird corresponds].”\(^{184}\) Chappell suggests that the ignorance birds are intended to be mere *resemblances* of objects, giving them some room to get what they represent wrong. He falls short of robustly developing this account, and it is likely because it is not a defensible interpretation of the aviary. The aviary makes no suggestion that we might have an '11'-bird that fails to resemble the actual 11. It is merely suggested that we had the wrong bird in hand: we had grasped '11' when we meant to grasp '12.' What Chappell misses, I suggest, is that the entire point of the aviary is to impugn the idea that we must only grasp contents in toto, like birds in our hands as the result of inward searching. They are unable to account for falsity in abstract mathematical calculations because they assume that thinking about such things (1) is the result of hunting through our inner space and (2) grasping in toto the non-composite contents of objects (even abstract ones).

If I am right in this suggestion, the reason for the aviary’s inability to account for error comes from the fact that the two eristic linguistic and cognitive theses are still assumed at this late point in the *Theaetetus*. We are thus in a dilemma: either we grasp contents in toto, and there can be no error, or we can grasp contents in toto received from non-objects, and there is error. The left hand disjunct leads to the impossibility of falsity, while the righthand disjunct to an ontology of wholly unreal objects. Plato's implicit solution is to call the dilemma false. There is a third possibility: that we understand the world as constructed out of basic elements, and that our judgements use contents from

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those basic elements to assemble thoughts about the objects of the world. When our
“knowledge birds” are composed out of their elements like the world's objects, we are
right about those objects. This seems a simple enough solution, but it is fraught with
difficulties, which we shall turn to in a moment. Let us first conclude what we have
found in the refutation of KnTB.

In the *Theaetetus* we have reached a point where old models of cognition have
been either explicitly or implicitly refuted. By the final refutation of KnP, perception and
knowledge are distinct cognitive faculties. The failure of the wax block and aviary
suggest that the broad perceptual model of introspection and the eristic thesis that we can
only think about \( x \) if we have a unique content *in toto* from \( x \) grasped in thought are either
dubious, or to be rejected outright. Further, the picture of the purely cognitive aspects of
thinking and knowing have been complicated: learning, memory, retrieval and rational
thought, or calculation, are all now separate functions of the rational part of a unified
*psûchê*. And yet, though so much progress has been made in understanding the nature of
human cognition, the dialogue will still end in aporia: Socrates, Theodorus and
Theaetetus will agree at the end of the dialogue that they have failed to define knowledge.
Let us now consider the closing of the dialogue, as Socrates examines a definition of
knowledge unencumbered by the refuted faulty models of cognition.

§4.3.5 Toward a Compositional Theory of Content: Socrates' Dream

After the failure of the aviary, Socrates and Theaetetus stop trying to account for
false belief and instead return to discussing KnTB. Socrates offers a terse refutation of
KnTB in the form of a counterexample about a jury, saying that the speech-makers and litigants in a court:

…persuade others by means of their art, not teaching them, but making them believe whatever they want them to believe… There are [no] people so clever as teachers that in the short time allowed by the clock, they can teach the truth, about what happened, to people who were not there when some others were being robbed of money, or in some other way violently treated… So when jurymen have been persuaded, in accordance with justice, about things which it’s possible to know only if one has seen them and not otherwise, then in deciding those matters by hearsay, and getting hold of a true belief, they have decided without knowledge; though they have been persuaded of what is correct, given that they have reached a good verdict.185

The force of the counterexample is that while the jury arrives at the correct verdict (they “get hold of a true belief” and “in accordance with justice”), they do not have knowledge. This refutation is swift and decisive; Socrates holds that persuasion is sufficient for mere true belief but insufficient for knowledge and that actually being an eyewitness is necessary for genuine knowledge of an event of the kind disputed in court cases.186

The final definition of epistēmē considered in the dialogue will attempt to fill the need left by the jury counterexample: if mere true belief is not enough for knowledge, because mere true belief offers no distinction between persuasion and genuine learning, then we need some method of so distinguishing. So Theaetetus says that he has heard someone say, but previously he had forgotten, that knowledge is true belief with the addition of an account, a logos (call this final definition “KnTBA”). Socrates immediately tries to flesh out the claim by saying that he had a “dream” about a theory

185 Tht. 201a8-c3. The translation is McDowell’s except that I have chosen to render the verb doxazein as “believe” instead of McDowell’s “judge”.
186 Nawar (2013) provides a virtue epistemology reading of the passage indentifying the normative cognitive virtues implicit in the counterexample. However, there are many interpretive difficulties with the jury counterexample and considering them is not essential to my project. See McDowell (1973) p. 228, ff., Burnyeat (1990), Chappell (2005) pp. 195-7, Bostock (1988) p. 200, Stramel (2008), Cornford (1957) p. 2.
like that.\textsuperscript{187} Socrates expounds his dream theory to unpack KnTBA. After unpacking it, he criticizes it and offers three possible definitions of “account”, none of which is satisfactory. The dialogue then ends in aporia; the interlocutors find that no definition is satisfactory.

I shall argue that the dream theory, and the discussion following, proceed as if two of the three eristic theses, which I argued in §4.3.4 were tacitly impugned in the falsity puzzle, wax block and aviary, are refuted. That is, my intent is to show that the following two theses, so central to the eristic theory, are no longer assumed in the dream theory and the discussion following it:

- **Eristic Linguistic Thesis**: An entire sentence gets its meaning and truth-value in virtue of the fact that it refers to a being (\textit{to on}).

- **First Eristic Cognitive Thesis**: If one has object $x$ in mind (\textit{mimnēskein}), then one must do so by speaking (\textit{legein}) or thinking (\textit{doxazein}) one of $x$’s unique contents.

In order for me to show that the dream theory and the following discussion proceed as if the above two theses are false I will point to specific parts of the dream theory that run counter to these eristic theses.

The dream theory is largely a metaphysical mereological theory: a theory about the structure of the world, about parts and wholes and their relationship to one another.\textsuperscript{188}

\textsuperscript{187} It is a matter of controversy what to make of the fact that this is a “dream”. The passage is often linked to a theory by Antishenes. See McDowell (1973), pp. 234-7. I shall not be concerned with the original author of the theory, nor why it is a “dream” for the interlocutors. Its obscure origin is not relevant to my argument.

\textsuperscript{188} How to interpret the mereological theory is disputed. See Harte (2002), who argues that one goal of the end of the \textit{Theaetetus} is to show that for any object composition is identity. However Cornford (1957), pp. 151-3, argues that Plato wants to show that as long as we are confining our talk to knowledge of perceivable objects, there is no whole above and beyond the sum of parts. Cornford sees the absence of the Forms as the key to understanding these arguments. Harte sees in the arguments a genuine concern for a good theory of the mereology of objects independent of the theory of Forms. My view is closer to Harte’s, as I think that there is a philosophical point to be made here that does not concern Forms.
I shall concern myself not with the exact nature of the theory of part-whole relations, except as is essential for my purposes; rather I shall focus on the cognitive and linguistic issues raised by the theory.¹⁸⁹

Let us begin with the relevant text. Immediately upon Theaetetus’ statement of KnTBA Socrates says:

… the primary elements, as it were, of which we and everything else are composed, have no account. Each of them itself, by itself, can only be named, and one can’t go on to say anything else, neither that it is nor that it isn’t; because in that case one would be attaching being or not being to it; whereas one oughtn’t to add anything if one is going to express in an account that thing, itself, alone. In fact one shouldn’t even add itself, or that, or each, or alone, or this, or any other of several other things of this kind; because those things run about and get added to everything, being different from the things they’re attached to, whereas if the thing itself could be expressed in an account and had an account proper to itself, it would have to be expressed apart from everything else. As things are, it’s impossible that any of the primary things should be expressed in an account; because the only thing that’s possible for it is to be named, because a name is the only thing it has. But as for the things composed of them, just as the things themselves are woven together, so their names, woven together, come to be an account; because a weaving together of names is the being of an account. In that way, the elements have no account and are unknowable, but they’re perceivable; and the complexes are knowable and expressible in an account and judgeable in a true judgment. Now when someone gets hold of the true judgment of something without an account, his mind is in a state of truth about it but doesn’t know it; because someone who can’t give and receive an account of something isn’t knowledgeable about that thing. But if he gets hold of an account as well, then it’s possible not only for all that to happen, but also for him to be in a perfect condition in respect of knowledge.¹⁹⁰

We must be careful in how we interpret this passage. It seems clear that Socrates is talking about objects, not propositions: the world is composed of simple and complex

¹⁸⁹ This is not uncontroversial. Bostock (1998), pp. 206-7, argues that the dream theory is about how to give an account of an object, but not of a proposition. However, he misses that the dream theory, with its parts/whole distinction in objects, offers us a parallel cognitive picture in which the mind can grasp parts and assemble whole thoughts out of them. This, I argue, is critical to understanding the non-aporetic positive contribution of the Theaetetus.

¹⁹⁰ Th. 201d9-202c5.
objects. But I am concerned with the compositional nature of beliefs or propositions in
the dream theory, and it is certainly not expressly stated that all beliefs or propositions
involve weaving together basic names. Socrates specifically says that it is only logoi, in
the sense of “accounts,” that are woven together of merely-named elements. However,
if we look closely we can see that Socrates does proceed as if the eristic theses are not
ture, or that is what I shall now argue.

It is clear that on the dream theory, the universe is composed of two kinds of
things: elements and complexes. But it is also clear that there is an asymmetrical
cognitive relationship holding between agents, on the one hand, and elements and
complex objects on the other hand. We cannot give an account of the elements, but can
only name them. This kind of linguistic task is the result of the fact that elements have
no parts, and so no part of it can be mentally grasped; the element can only be mentally
grasped in toto. However, Socrates says, with respect to all objects, “But as for the
things composed of them, just as the things themselves are woven together, so their
names, woven together, come to be an account.” So Socrates is explicit: we “weave
together” contents from basic elements to form mental complexes analogous to the way
that objects themselves are woven together. But the eristic theses, if true, would preclude
this kind of cognitive task, this mental “weaving together,” because according to the
eristic theses our thoughts are restricted to whole contents, which can only be derived
from the object. But now, in the dream theory, we can mentally construct thoughts out of

191 The fact that the weaving together is only of accounts is a significant argument in favor of reading
knowledge here as objectual, rather than propositional. The propositional interpretation is offered by Ryle
(1990). See also a defense by Bostock (1988), pp. 185-203. For an argument that the dream theory is
essentially the same as Russell and Wittgenstein’s logical atomism see Chappell (2005), pp. 206-211.
The epistemic point of the dream theory, that it might offer an explanation for why true beliefs are not sufficient for knowledge, also is evidence that the eristic theses are assumed to be false in the dream theory. While it is clear from my argument so far that the mind, according to the dream theory, can synthesize complexes from basic parts, it is also clear that the mind can analyse from wholes into parts. Recall that Socrates says, at the end of the dream theory, “Now when someone gets hold of a true judgment of something without an account, his mind is in a state of truth about it but doesn’t know it; because someone who can’t give and receive an account of something isn’t knowledgeable about that thing.” Socrates’ confidence that we can perform this act of analysis assumes that we can take apart a complex thought and think about its parts and their relationship to one another. Thus, the dream theory offers us a more complicated picture of the mind than we have seen so far, one on which the mind can synthesize complex thought from grasped elements as well as analyze the parts of complex thoughts.

As I am arguing that the eristic theory is successfully refuted in the course of the Theaetetus, it would be disastrous for my reading if the refutations of the dream theory assume that the eristic theses are true. So I shall argue now that the refutations of the dream theory are aimed solely at the asymmetry that the theory posits between grasping complexes and grasping elements, i.e., that complexes are knowable but elements are not because they are only nameable and perceivable.

The first refutation of the dream theory comes in the form of an extended analogy between, on the one hand, letters as elements of syllables, and on the other hand the perceived elements of objects. Socrates argues that, “If it is necessary to know each one [letter] in order to know the [syllable composed of the] two of them, then it’s absolutely
necessary that anyone who is ever going to know a syllable should first know its letters. And on those lines our admirable theory will take to its heels and disappear.” Of course, the criticism is quite clear: Socrates presents a counterexample to the dream theory in the form of letters, because we know the basic elements in order to know the complexes. The dream theory requires that we know the complexes, but not know the elements. We might question the analogy between, on the one hand, syllables and letters, and on the other hand complexes and elements of objects or states of affairs; but regardless of how successful the refutation of the dream theory is, it does not deny the compositional component of the Platonic theses. It only denies that knowability is asymmetrical in the way the dream theory claims: it denies that we might know complexes but not simples.

The next criticism concerns the central question of mereology: whether an object is the sum of its parts, or rather is something over and above the sum of its parts. Socrates presents a dilemma:

1. Either a thing is identical to the sum of its parts, or it is not.
2. If it is identical with the sum of its parts then, “complexes and elements are knowable and expressible in accounts to just the same extent, since it has turned out that all the parts are the same thing as the whole.”
3. If it is not identical with the sum of its parts then a similar consequent results: “…if, on the other hand, it’s a single thing without parts, then a complex and an element lack an account and are unknowable to just the same extent; because the same reason will make them so.”
4. Thus, either elements are knowable, or complexes are not knowable.

Either disjunct in the conclusion amounts to a refutation of the conjunction that “the elements are unknowable and the complexes are not,” which is Socrates’ unpacking of

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192 Tht. 203d6-11.
193 Tht. 205d.
194 Tht. 205e.
KnTBA. But we should look carefully at the conclusion; it does not conclude that the compositional nature of objects or beliefs is false. Rather, the only thesis refuted is that either complexes are unknowable or elements are not. Both disjuncts are about the knowability of complexes and elements, but not about the existence of compositional beliefs or objects. Thus, the compositionality of mental constructs survives this refutation of the dream theory.

But of course, KnTBA is in trouble: two plausible refutations have been offered. Not willing to abandon their promising theory yet, they try to avoid the objections by giving an account of the “account” portion of KnTBA in more detail. They offer three attempts. The first attempt is to call an account (logos) any speech or statement. This is clearly insufficient, “because it’s something than anyone can do more or less quickly.”195 The refutation of this sense of account has no bearing at all on the Platonic theses that I can see.

The second attempt to define “account” is that it is an enumeration of the elements of a thing. Socrates says: “When asked what anything is [one gives an account when one provides] an answer in terms of its elements.”196 This might look, on the face of it, like a refutation of compositionality and the Platonic theses, but I shall argue that it is not. Socrates points out that this will not work for letters, syllables and names: one cannot just enumerate the letters in the name “Theaetetus” and think that one has offered an account of the name. Further, we cannot enumerate the elements of a wagon and think that we have an account of what a wagon is: there is something over and above just the

195 Tht. 206d6.
196 Tht. 206e5-7.
enumeration, just the listing, of a thing’s components to being what that thing is.\textsuperscript{197} Finally Socrates argues that a person prone to spelling errors might be able to write out a name successfully once but not be said to have knowledge of that name.\textsuperscript{198}

Again, what is important for my purposes is not the degree to which these criticisms work. There is no defense of the eristic theses, but merely a refutation of the notion of “account” as \textit{merely} the enumeration of elements. Further, the criticism of the dream theory does not say that that enumeration is not necessary. Rather, the refutation makes clear that such enumeration itself is not sufficient to turn a mere true belief into knowledge. This leaves open the possibility that enumeration of elements is a necessary, but insufficient, component of giving an account.

The third and final attempt to define “account” is that to give an account of an object is to offer the \textit{sēmeion} or \textit{diaphora} of that object, that is, its differentiating mark that uniquely indicates its type.\textsuperscript{199} The example given is of Theaetetus: he has certain features, snub-nose and protruding eyes. But this does not distinguish him from Socrates. What is needed are the memorable differences that mark Theaetetus as unique so that Socrates will remember him when he sees him the next day.\textsuperscript{200}

Socrates’ problem with this third and final attempt to define “account” is twofold. First, Socrates says that mere true belief about any object will also require that the knower already have the distinguishing mark that identifies that object; otherwise reference to the object is not possible:

\textsuperscript{197} Thtl. 207c-d.  
\textsuperscript{198} \textit{Th.} 207d-208b.  
\textsuperscript{199} \textit{Th.} 208b.  
\textsuperscript{200} \textit{Th.} 209c.
Well then, when I was merely judging (*doxazein*), wasn’t it the case that I had no grasp in my thought of any of the things by which you’re different from everything else? … So I had in my thought one of the common things, none of which you have to any greater extent than anyone else… [But] in such conditions how on earth could it be you I had in my judgement (*doxazein*) any more than anyone else?²⁰¹

Socrates extends this criticism, saying that there is a vicious circularity in requiring that a mark of differentiation be the “account” of KnTBA. If, as has been stated at 209a-b, a differentiating mark is already required for mere true belief of an object, then making that mark, along with true belief, sufficient for knowledge “… tell[s] us [in order to get knowledge] to add a correct judgement as to how that same thing differs from everything else [and this tells] us to add something we already have in order to get to know what we have in our judgements…”²⁰² While Socrates has identified a vicious circularity, he certainly has not suggested that the vicious circularity is the result of the compositional nature of beliefs or objects. Thus the criticism of the ‘distinguishing mark’ definition of “account” does not reinstate the eristic theses.²⁰³ It only points to a need for a more detailed account of that compositional structure.

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²⁰¹ Tht. 209a-b.
²⁰² Tht. 209d.
²⁰³ Interpretations of this refutation of the third definition of “account” differ. Chappell (2005) writes, “One way of preventing this regress is to argue that the regress is caused by the attempt to work up a definition of knowledge exclusively out of empiricist materials. Hence there is no way of avoiding such a vicious regress if you are determined to try to define knowledge on an exclusively empiricist basis. The right response is to abandon that attempt. Knowledge is indeed indefinable in empiricist terms. In *those* terms, it has no logos. In *those* terms, therefore, knowledge itself is unknowable.” Cornford (1957), p. 142 ff. is even stronger, claiming that the attempt to offer a definition of “account” for KnTB fails because it does not include discussion of Forms. However, how imparting Forms, or allowing for non-empirical knowing, would solve the problem is completely mysterious: it seems that the problem would be maintained, because all knowledge of Forms is also going to require some kind of belief as well, which it seems is either accompanied by a differentiating mark or is not. No one argues, that I am aware, that compositionality itself is refuted.
§4.4 Conclusion of the *Theaetetus*

The *Theaetetus* thus ends in apparent aporia. While it is true that no definition of knowledge is found acceptable in the end, the ground has been cleared of unacceptable cognitive and linguistic theories. The entire text of the *Theaetetus*, if my argument has been successful, has been an attempt to refute the theoretical underpinnings of sophistic eristic. Let us briefly review each stage of my argument in turn.

In chapters 2 and 3 I argued that the interlocutors in two early Socratic dialogues rely on some implicit assumptions in their arguments. Euthydemus and Dionysodorus’ assumptions in the *Euthydemus* constitute what I have called “the eristic theory.” I also claimed that this background theory undergirds the method of sophistic eristic as Plato presents it. With respect to the *Charmides* I argued that all of the interlocutors assume both a broad perceptual model of introspection and the functional identity of all cognitive processes. We have seen how the *Theaetetus* both explicitly and implicitly challenges the eristic theory of the *Euthydemus* and the perceptual/cognitive model of the *Charmides*.

In §4.2 I considered KnP, the first offered definition of knowledge, that knowledge is perception. I argued that the ontology of KnP, expanded into HF and PMM, is consistent with the ontology of the eristic theory in the *Euthydemus*. On HF all objects are real, but all properties are relational, i.e., there can be no intrinsic properties. HF, we saw, was Plato’s attempt to offer the strongest philosophical support possible for the practice of sophistic eristic. I argued that the best reading of PMM is that it is infallibilist, rather than truth-relativist. We also saw that PMM was consistent with the sophistic eristic of the *Euthydemus*. Finally, I established that the discussion of
knowledge as perception in the *Theaetetus* is an explicit attempt to undermine sophistic eristic as a practice, by refuting some of its theoretical assumptions.

In I §4.3 I considered the second and third attempts to define knowledge. I first interpreted the unity of the psuchē argument, arguing that we should read this final refutation of KnP as specifically designed to refute the second eristic cognitive Principle: that perception and belief are identical cognitive functions, as well as the the identification of knowledge with perception.

I then argued that that the refutation of sophistic eristic is not rejected just because KnP, understood as HF and PMM, have been rejected; for *implicit in HF and PMM is a deficient picture of cognition that inhibits any attempt to define knowledge, and that picture survives the demise of those theories*. On my reading, the models of cognition that Socrates set forth to explain false belief, the wax block and aviary, implicitly rely on the eristic cognitive thesis, which I identified in the *Euthydemus*, and on the broad perceptual model of introspection, which I identified in the *Charmides*. The models fail because of this reliance; and I argued that the failure of the models is Plato’s implicit rejection of those assumptions.

In §4.3.4 I considered Theaetetus’ final definition of knowledge: that knowledge is true belief with an account. I argued that in Socrates’ dream, the non-compositional eristic linguistic thesis, that an entire sentence (*logos*) gets its meaning and truth-value in virtue of the fact that it refers to a being (*to on*), has been replaced by a compositional account of content. Pulling chapter 4 together, we see that over the course of the *Theaetetus* Plato has refuted every sophistic thesis as well as the broad perceptual model
of introspection. The ground is finally cleared for Plato’s late metaphysics, epistemology and philosophy of language.

This account is continued in the *Sophist*. The puzzle of falsity, abandoned in the *Theaetetus*, resurfaces again at *Sophist* 237a. Propaedeutic to a final answer, the unnamed visitor must discuss the relationship among a number of abstract concepts like sameness and difference, and consider the ways in which these concepts are woven together to create new concepts. Finally at *Sophist* 259d-264b the visitor offers a compositional theory for beliefs. He says:

Names that indicate something when you say them one after another fit together, and names that don’t signify anything when you put them in a row don’t fit… there are two ways to use your voice to indicate something about being… one kind is called names, and the other is called verbs… A verb is the sort of indication that’s applied to an action… And a name is a kind of spoken sign that’s applied to things that perform actions. So no speech is formed just from names spoken in a row, and also not from verbs that are spoken without names… [When a man learns] he doesn’t just name but accomplishes something, by weaving verbs with names.

The visitor then considers two phrases, “Theaetetus sits,” which is true, and “Theaetetus flies,” which is false. He notes that both the phrases are “woven together” of a name, and thus both refer to a real being. However, “Theaetetus sits” weaves together with that name a property that holds of the object referred to, while “Theaetetus flies” does not. False speech is thus explained without a concern for reference to a non-being.

This account of falsity would not be possible were it not for an account of mental

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204 The *Sophist* is explicitly a continuation of the discussion of the *Theaetetus*. In the very first line of the dialogue, Theodorus states that he and Theaetetus have returned, with some others, as they said they would do at the end of the *Theaetetus* (210d).

205 Fine (1979) connects the dream theory of the *Theaetetus* with the *Sophist* arguing that both elements and complexes of things are knowable, but in different ways. In the *Sophist* elements are knowable because they can be individuated holistically against other elements; complexes are knowable because they are analyzable in terms of their elements.

206 *Sophist* 261d10-262d6, tr. by White in *Plato: Complete Works* (emphasis in original).
capacities that allows for a mental grasp of the elements of a belief and the capacity to “weave together” that belief from those elements. Thus Plato’s late metaphysics, epistemology and philosophy of language would not be possible without the positive contribution of the *Theaetetus*. 
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