

Characterisation and Interpretation: The Importance of Drama in Plato's *Sophist*

ὄψεις γὰρ τῶν ἀδήλων τὰ φαινόμενα
(Appearances are the look of unclear things)
Anaxagoras¹

Eugenio Benitez

Plato's *Sophist* is complex. Its themes are many and ambiguous. The early grammarians gave it the subtitle περὶ τοῦ ὄντος ('on being') and assigned it to Plato's logical investigations. The Neoplatonists prized it for a theory of ontological categories they preferred to Aristotle's. Modern scholars sometimes court paradox and refer to the *Sophist* as Plato's dialogue on not-being (because the question of the possibility of not-being occupies much of the dialogue). Whitehead took the *Sophist* to be primarily about δύναμις ('power') and found in it many of the central ideas of process theology.² Heidegger thought it articulated the 'average concept of being in general'.³ In Cornford's view the *Sophist* is mainly about truth and falsehood. Ackrill, Frede and most analytic philosophers think it is about predication.⁴ Stanley Rosen treats it as a metaphysico-aesthetic dialogue: in his view it is about the relation of images to originals.⁵ As far as the title of the dialogue goes, however, opinion is almost universal. Do not be misled: 'the definition of the sophist' observed Archer-Hind 'is simply a piece of pungent satire'⁶ and he added that 'we may be sure that [Plato] cared little about defining the sophist, but very much about the metaphysical questions to which the process of definition was to give rise'.⁷ The most spectacular case of agreement with this judgment can be found in Cornford, who omits to translate the sections on the definition of the sophist because, as he says 'the modern reader ... might be wearied'.⁸

Opinion is nearly unanimous on another point as well. Although Plato wrote all of his philosophy in dramatic form, there is really nothing important about the drama of the *Sophist*. 'The dialogues cease to be conversations' in Plato's later period.⁹ The 'main speaker' of the dialogue, the Eleatic ξένος (the word means both 'guest' and 'stranger') simply speaks for Plato. Where Socrates had been 'Plato's

mouthpiece' in the early dialogues, the Stranger, as he is customarily called, now has that role. Never mind that Socrates appears in the *Sophist* as well.

I confess that I would not recommend the *Sophist* to anyone as a work of literature. But I deny that the dramatic form is ever unimportant in Plato. In my own work on Plato I have found that the drama and the philosophy are not separable.¹⁰ At the very least, the drama complements, supplements, and augments the philosophy. Let me cite what should be an uncontroversial example from the *Sophist*. Theodorus innocently uses the word γένος ('kind') in his first speech: the Stranger, he says, belongs to the γένος of Elea (i.e. he is Eleatic by birth). Socrates, who has a nose for ambiguity, picks up the term in his second speech, claiming that the kind called 'philosopher' is scarcely easier to discern than the kind 'god'. The discussion then turns to a consideration of three γένη ('kinds')—sophist, statesman and philosopher [216c3, 217a7]—but ultimately even this topic yields to discussion of the five μέγιστα γένη ('greatest kinds'), namely being, sameness, difference, motion and rest. An innocent remark leads to the most extraordinary inquiry. This progression is the dramatic complement of the Stranger's own remark that: 'one must practise first on small and easy things before progressing to the very greatest' [218d1–2].

I worry that the connection runs deeper; that the drama may on occasion qualify and reshape the philosophy. As Chaucer observed, following a principle explicitly stated in the *Laches*, 'Eek Plato seith, whoso can hym rede, the wordes moote be cosyn to the dede'.¹¹ From this point of view the drama is fundamental, the philosophy complementary. I do not want to accept that. All the same, a consideration of the dramatic context of the *Sophist* invites the view that it is so. In particular, it invites us to deny that the Eleatic Stranger is Plato's mouthpiece and it invites us to consider that the theme of sophistry is *the* important theme of the dialogue.

My reason for saying this is that the dialogue appears to be an image of the creature it is named for. René Magritte said, 'An object encounters its image, an object encounters its name. It can happen that the object's name and its image encounter each other'.¹² In the drama of the *Sophist* the encounter of image and name comes first. The Stranger says to Theaetetus (218c): 'as of now you and I have only a name in common about him [viz. the sophist] but we might perhaps have by ourselves in private the work for which we severally call him'.¹³ The image of the sophist and the name 'Sophist' then

encounter each other in ποικιλία ('complexity', *Sophist* 223c), for they are mated to each other in six different definitions. But where in all this is the complex object, the sophist himself? Consider this: the Eleatic Stranger's image of the sophist is, as he says, a λόγος παμμήκης, (217e4) an 'altogether long speech.' Yet he insists later [236a-b] that all those who paint or otherwise fashion large works dismiss what is true and produce images that merely look right from a point of view that is not right. The sophist, he says, is a maker of such images in speech. If we were to view the Stranger's speech ἐκ καλοῦ (236b4) 'from [a] beautiful [vantage point]' what would we see? Would we see a distorted image of not-being?

The view that the Eleatic Stranger is the object: sophist, is a dreadful hypothesis, but the drama of the dialogue may warrant it. To persuade you to take it seriously, if only for the purpose of refuting it, I ask you to examine the drama of the dialogue's first pages. Look at the speeches not as so much banter, but as coming from specific persons, acquainted with and disposed toward one another in specific ways, meeting on specific terms, and so on. Then see whether it is possible any longer to say that the Eleatic Stranger is simply the philosopher Plato in disguise.

Let me begin by reminding you that as a dramatic work the *Sophist* does not stand alone; it is part of the tetralogy: *Theaetetus*, *Sophist*, *Statesman*, *Philosopher*. The first three of these dialogues we have, the fourth one Plato never wrote. The characters of the dialogues are: Socrates, Theodorus (an eminent mathematician from Cyrene), Theaetetus and his friend, a young Socrates (both students of Theodorus), and the Eleatic Stranger, who does not appear in the *Theaetetus*.¹⁴ At the end of the *Theaetetus* Socrates arranges a meeting on the next day, upon which the *Sophist* begins. The *Statesman* is temporally continuous with the *Sophist*. The point of all this is that we cannot make sense of the drama of the *Sophist* apart from these other dialogues. We must think who Socrates and Theodorus are, for example, and *how* they are, if the opening conversation of the *Sophist* is to make any sense. With that in mind let us turn to the dialogues.

The first several speeches of the *Sophist* come from Socrates and Theodorus. Theodorus' first words point back to their conversation of the previous day: 'According to yesterday's agreement', he says. Going back to the previous day we note that the relationship between Socrates and Theodorus is antagonistic. In the *Theaetetus* Socrates met Theodorus with rudeness: 'If I cared more for those in Cyrene'

he begins, 'I would be asking you about the young people there ... but *as it is*, I like them less' [*Theaetetus* 143d]. Socrates wants to know only whether any *Athenian* boys might prove virtuous.

Theodorus returns the discourtesy: 'As a matter of fact, Socrates, I can tell you about an Athenian boy who meets this description. And if he were beautiful, I'd be afraid to speak of him in such strong terms, lest anyone think I'm in love with him, but *as it is* (he echoes Socrates) ... he resembles *you*.' On other occasions, Theodorus appears not just discourteous, but vengeful. When, at the beginning of the *Statesman*, Socrates catches him making a mistake in calculation, Theodorus says 'I'll get you for it later'.

In the *Statesman* Socrates challenges Theodorus' special competence. Throughout the *Theaetetus*, he challenges Theodorus' general competence, outside the field of mathematics. Theodorus, he says, is 'hardly worth paying attention to' as a judge of physical resemblance; is he as bad a judge of character? That must be investigated. Speaking fearlessly, he heaped incomparable praise on Theaetetus for intelligence, gentleness and bravery. Was he only joking? 'That is not Theodorus' way' (145c2), says Socrates soberly. How, then, are we to understand—how does Theodorus understand—the results of Socrates' examination of Theaetetus? That examination showed that Theaetetus, who embraced the view of Theodorus' friend Protagoras, had nothing wise in him about knowledge. By revealing that, Socrates claims to have made Theaetetus 'less hard', 'tamer', and more 'moderate'. What had Theaetetus become in Theodorus' hands?

Theodorus similarly challenges Socrates' competence in the field of philosophy. He thinks of Socrates as a sort of 'sack of speeches' (λόγων θύλακον, 161a7), or worse, as an aficionado of 'empty speeches' (ψίλοι λόγοι, 165a2). Socrates runs down Protagoras too hard, ostensibly because Socrates is of the same stamp. In his most severe criticism Theodorus compares Socrates to the villains Sciron and Antaeus.¹⁵

'It is no easy matter to escape questioning in your company, Socrates', says Theodorus. 'I was deluded when I said you would leave me in peace and not force me into the ring like the Spartans; you seem to be as unrelenting as Sciron. The Spartans tell you to go away if you will not wrestle, but Antaeus is more in your line; you will let no one who comes near you go until you have stripped him by force for a trial of strength' (169a-b).¹⁶

Socrates only incites Theodorus further: 'Your comparisons exactly

fit what is wrong with me, Theodorus, but my capacity for endurance is even greater. I have encountered many heroes in debate and times without number a Hercules or a Theseus has broken my head, but I have so deep a passion for exercise of this sort that I stick to it all the same' (169b-c).

Perhaps it would take a god to break Socrates' endurance. Perhaps it would only take a philosopher. On the one occasion when Socrates was defeated in argument, it was a philosopher from Elea who defeated him (viz. Parmenides). Theodorus knows this, having noted that when Socrates set about to refute the whole Presocratic tradition he carefully set the Eleatics to one side. 'A feeling of respect,' he said, 'keeps me from treating in an unworthy spirit Melissus and the others who say the universe is one and at rest; but there is one being whom I respect above all: Parmenides himself is in my eyes, as Homer says, "a reverend and awful figure".'¹⁷ Theodorus himself is willing to praise philosophers when they are described in a way that excludes Socrates from their kind: Theodorus' philosopher (ὄν δὴ φιλόσοφω καλεῖς, 175e1-2) is the stereotypical abstract thinker who cannot find his way to the agora, who does not know whether his next door neighbour is a human being, and who is not even aware that he knows nothing of this. He is a mathematician who 'measures the plains' (τά ἐπίπεδα γεωμετρούσα, 173e6).

This is enough to show the antagonism between Theodorus and Socrates. We note, then, that the *Theaetetus* ends, not in mere agreement to meet the next day, but with Socrates abruptly turning to Theodorus with an imperative: 'But at Dawn, Theodorus, let us meet here again' (210d3-4). So, here comes Theodorus the next day, κοσμίως, 'obediently'; he is not necessarily promising to be well-behaved. In fact, he is bringing some Stranger with him, an Eleatic, a friend of the circle of Parmenides and Zeno, and a philosopher. Ambiguity cloaks this stranger from the start: What is he, *primarily*? An Eleatic? A philosopher? A friend of Parmenides, or perhaps a friend of Zeno?

The mention of Zeno is provocative. Zeno was not named at all in the *Theaetetus*, yet Plato thinks it important to have Theodorus name him here. For Plato, it should be pointed out, the duo of 'Parmenides and Zeno' is not altogether harmonious. In the *Phaedrus*, Zeno is called the 'Eleatic Palamedes' a description more appropriate to a sophist than to a philosopher.¹⁸ The portrait of Zeno in the *Parmenides* is no more flattering: in the fashion of a sophist Zeno simply reads

his treatise out at Pythodorus' house. Parmenides is perhaps more of a philosopher since he does not attend the display, but arrives, like Socrates in the *Gorgias*, 'late for the feast'. When Zeno is finished Socrates criticises him for ingratiating himself to Parmenides by saying the same things in a disguised way. Zeno admits that Socrates' description was not far off, but his defence is that he wrote the book 'in a spirit of controversy' when he was young. So it appears Socrates has misjudged him. 'You imagine,' says Zeno, 'it [sc. the book] was inspired, not by a youthful eagerness for controversy, but by the more dispassionate aims of an older man.'¹⁹ Zeno is now older and more dispassionate, but he has not bothered to revise his treatise.

Is the stranger more like Parmenides or Zeno? Socrates' ears seem to have pricked up at the mention of Zeno. Whatever the stranger is, might his aim not be the same as Zeno's: namely refutation? 'That is not the Stranger's way', says Theodorus, echoing Socrates' remark of the previous day. (Theodorus will not jest, but he will mock.) The stranger is not like the young Zeno: 'he is more measured (*μετριώτερος*) than those with a zeal for controversy' (216b8). But he is like the older Zeno, whose aim is still to refute, only more dispassionately. Yesterday, Socrates had spoken of his lust for argument. But he will not get to wrestle with the stranger; he will not be refuted passionately. The stranger will, however, in the process of defining the sophist, identify Socrates as one of them by a definite description:

They [i.e. the Sophists] question thoroughly about whatever anyone believes he's saying while saying nothing. And then, because those questioned wander, they examine their opinions with ease, and once they bring the opinions together into the same place by their speeches, they put them side by side one another, and in so putting them they show that the opinions are simultaneously contrary to themselves about the same things in regard to the same things in the same respects. ... The reason is, my dear boy, that those who purify them hold the view, just as physicians of bodies ... so it's just the same that they thought about the soul, that it will not have the benefit of the learnings to be applied before one puts, by way of refutation, the one examined into a state of shame, takes out the opinions that are impediments to the learnings, and shows him forth pure and believing he knows just the things he does know and no more. (230b-d)

Socrates is not alone. The Stranger will also find it necessary to refute Parmenides: 'It will be necessary for us,' he says, 'in defending ourselves, to put the speech of our father Parmenides to the torture

and force it to say “that which is not” is in some respect’ (241d).²⁰

The dispassionate refutation of the mature Zeno takes the form of monologue, it amounts to reading his book. The Stranger would prefer to speak in a monologue—he has a rehearsed speech, committed to memory (217b7-8)—but Socrates deftly suggests that he may wish to proceed instead after the fashion of Parmenides, by means of questions put to an interlocutor. The Stranger acquiesces out of a sense of shame (217d8), but he sets rigid conditions: the respondent must be obedient (ἐὸν νίως, 217d1). The Stranger’s first two responses to Theaetetus show that he means to enforce the rules: he tells Theaetetus not to say any more at present, since the speech is directed *at* him; and he urges Theaetetus to keep his thoughts to himself (218a, b).

Theodorus had said that the stranger was ‘more measured’. Perhaps he means ‘more mathematical’. This would explain why Theodorus thinks of him as ‘very much a philosopher’ (μάλα φιλόσοφον, 216a4). To the extent that the stranger is more measured he resembles Zeno more than Parmenides.

Thus, by the end of the dialogue’s first pages we are wondering what sort of person the Eleatic Stranger is. Socrates’ first speech complicates the matter. It has the force of suggesting that the Stranger is not what he appears to be. Theodorus does not notice much, he claims, for he has not brought any stranger with him but some God, at least if Homer is to be trusted. Socrates has two passages in the *Odyssey* in mind.

The first occurs at *Odyssey* IX, when Odysseus reaches the island of the Cyclopes. Odysseus tells the majority of his men ‘wait here while I with my own ship and companions that are in it go and find out about these people, and learn what they are, whether they are savage and violent, and without justice, or *hospitable to strangers* and with minds that are godly’.¹ Later, when he has reason to believe that they are not, he nevertheless addresses Polyphemous: ‘Respect the gods, O best of men, We are your suppliants, and Zeus the guest god, who stands behind all strangers with honours due them, avenges any wrong toward strangers and suppliants’.²

The second passage occurs at *Odyssey* XVII, where Odysseus appears as a beggar in his own court. After he is spurned and struck by Antinoos, one of the suitors speaks up: ‘Antinoos, you did badly to hit the unhappy vagabond: a curse on you if he turns out to be some god from heaven, for the gods do take on all sorts of transformations, appearing as strangers from elsewhere, and thus

they range at large through the cities watching to see which keep the laws and which are violent'.³

What are we to make of Socrates' references to these passages? We should note that he is encouraging Theodorus' characterisation of him from the previous day as a villain or a giant. For Antaeus, now read Polyphemous; for Sciron, read Antinoos. Socrates is jockeying for a chance to test and be tested. If the stranger is a god, that can only be a boon to Socrates, for as he had said the previous day, 'no god is ill-disposed towards man' (*Theaetetus* 151d1); Should the stranger refute him, we could suppose he would 'consider that a greater good, inasmuch as it is a greater good for oneself to be relieved from the worst of evils than to relieve another' (*Gorgias* 458a).

But it is clear that Socrates does not think the Stranger is a god. We know from the *Republic* that Socrates thinks it is impossible for a God to alter himself; he always remains simply in his own form. 'Therefore,' he says, 'let none of the poets tell us that "the gods take on all sorts of likenesses and frequent the cities, appearing as strangers of all sorts" ' (381-2). Moreover, there is in fact no god-stranger in either of the passages referred to; in both of the Homeric passages the stranger is crafty Odysseus, who has taken on a disguise of anonymity.

In fact, none of the characters in Plato's *Sophist* really thinks that the stranger is a god. After the pattern of Zeus and Cronus, the stranger is a sort of parricide (241d), but he is not a god. For the gods 'look down on the crimes and law abiding behaviour of mortals' and the mightier of them punish those they find wanting (216b3-5). The Stranger, even if he is able as philosopher to 'look down on the life of those below', and even if he is able to discern between 'noble and base', is unable to prefer one to the other, and therefore he is unable to punish:

the dialectic art never considers whether the benefit to be derived from the purge is greater or less than that to be derived from the sponge, and has not more interest in the one than in the other. Her endeavour is to know what is and is not kindred in all arts with a view to the acquisition of intelligence, and having this in view she honours them all alike. And when she makes comparisons, she counts one of them not a whit more ridiculous than another, nor does she esteem him who adduces as his example of hunting, the general's art, at all more decorous than another who cites that of the lice-catcher, but only as the greater pretender of the two. (227a-b)⁴

As practitioner of the dialectic art the stranger is true to his word. His

first divisions seek the nature of the fisherman, who, though trivial, 'has a definition inferior to none of the greater things' (218e3). Or again when he discovers a kind of sophistry that can distinguish better from worse and refute the worse (that was the definition that picked out Socrates), he must class it alongside all the other definitions of sophistry (231b). He must treat the sophists and Socrates as belonging to the same species, though they are as wolves to the dog, the most savage to the most tame. Should he finally seize the authentic sophist he must hand him over to 'the royal speech' (236c), he is not authorised to punish.

Theodorus is emphatic that the stranger is 'in no way a god' (216b9); he is, however, divine, in virtue of being a philosopher. What can this mean? That philosophers look like gods even though they are not? The divinity of the stranger is a sham.

Is it possible then, that the stranger is not a philosopher either? Socrates' next speech raises this question. At all events, the genus of the philosopher is scarcely any easier to discern than that of a god. For not only is it the case that, due to the ignorance of others, philosophers sometimes have the looks of statesmen, sophists or even madmen, it is also the case that there are sham as well as real philosophers (216c6).

The means of telling the difference between the sham and the real are not provided by the stranger's dialectical art. Is the fisherman that he captures in his paradigmatic division a real fisherman or, perhaps, an actor playing a fisherman? Does he use real flies on his line or, to use a nicely ambiguous phrase of Norman McLean's, 'counter flies' (i.e. 'flies that in a drugstore counter look to you like the insect they are named after')?⁵ Are the sophists that the stranger ensnares in his speech real sophists, or are they philosophers who look like sophists? And finally are the greatest kinds really the greatest kinds, or are they imposters of the Good, the Beautiful the True and the Just? There is an art that can distinguish between the sham and the real, but it is not the Stranger's dialectical art; it is Socrates' art of intellectual midwifery: 'But this is the greatest thing in my art,' he says, 'to be capable of assaying in every way whether the thought of the young is giving birth to an image and a lie or something fruitful and true' (150c *Theaetetus*).⁶

Faithful to his uncertainty about the γένοϋς of the Stranger, Socrates asks him a very carefully worded question: 'What did those in that place think and name these things?' (217a1). No one asks who Socrates

means by 'those' (Gods?, Philosophers?, Eleatics?), nor does anyone ask where he means by 'that place' (does he mean Elea, or that Place on high from which gods and philosophers alike look down?). The ambiguity is not settled because Theodorus diverts the issue. 'What sort of things?' he asks.

Socrates was indirectly asking the Stranger what his γένος is and where he comes from. He will have to be content with the account the stranger makes of himself in defining the sophist. In the *Sophist* the stranger ends up by looking like a sophist. His last definition of the sophist answers Socrates request:

The art of contradiction making, descended from an insincere [ironic] kind of conceited mimicry, of the semblance making breed, derived from image making, distinguished as a portion of human and not divine production, that presents a shadow play of words, such are the 'blood and lineage', which can, in perfect truth, be assigned to the authentic sophist. (268c-d)⁷

There is not space for a thorough comparison of the Stranger and the sophist on each of these points, but an example or two in each case may suffice.

1. Contradiction making: The Stranger says that what characterises the art of contradiction making is 'a sufficient ability to dispute about everything' (232e). This is precisely what his dialectical art enables him to do (227a-b quoted above).
2. Irony: irony may suggest Socrates in your minds more than the Stranger. Yet Campbell argues that it shows in 'almost every line' of the Stranger's speech. He writes: 'This was the motive for the choice of the angler as an example, this prompts the inclusion of war and tyranny, pleading and argument, under θηρευτική [the art of hunting], and that of poetry and learning amongst the merchant's wares, and the definition of higgling in the marketplace as an inartistic kind of controversy. A deeper irony underlies the admission of the Sophist's claim to be a purifier of the soul.'⁸
3. Mimicry: the sophist is a hunter, but the Stranger must hunt him down.
4. Semblance making: this is just the making of images (whether in speech or otherwise) that don't have the true proportions. As I remarked earlier, on his own account of the 'really big works' the Stranger's speech is a semblance.
5. Human production: the Stranger is not a god, nor is he really even divine.

6. 'Blood and lineage': this is a most important phrase. By ring composition, a favourite device of Plato's, the end of the dialogue returns to its beginning. There have been no quotations from Homer since Socrates' first speech. Now the Stranger returns *Iliad* for *Odyssey*. The passage is illuminating:

DIOMEDES (to Glaucus): Who are you, my fine friend? ... if you are an immortal come from the blue, I'm not the man to fight the gods of heaven. ... No, my friend, I have no desire to fight the blithe immortals. But if you're a man who eats the crops of the earth, a mortal born for death—here, come closer ...

GLAUCUS: High-hearted son of Tydeus, why ask you about my birth (γενεήν)? Like the generations of leaves, the lives of men. ... But about my birth (γενεήν), if you'd like to learn it well, first to last—though many people know it—here's my story ... (the lineage follows) ... *Such are my blood and lineage* (ταύτης τῆς γενεᾶς τε καὶ αἵματος]

DIOMEDES: Splendid! You are my friend, my guest (ξένοσ) from the days of our grandfathers long ago!

Iliad VI.124-283⁹

It appears as though the Eleatic ξένοσ is a sophist. If he is Plato's mouthpiece, then Plato is a sophist. If he is not Plato's mouthpiece, we cannot presently speak as though we know what the *Sophist* is about.

Notes

- 1 See H. Diels and W. Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 6th edn Berlin, 1952, Anaxagoras, B21a.
- 2 See A. N. Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, Cambridge, 1933, p.165.
- 3 Martin Heidegger *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, 1927, tr. with introduction and lexicon by Albert Hofstadter, Bloomington, 1988, p.22.
- 4 See John Ackrill, 'ΣΥΜΠΛΟΚΗ ΕΙΔΩΝ', and 'Plato and the Copula: *Sophist* 251-259', in Gregory Vlastos, *Plato: A Collection of Critical Essays*, vol. 1: *Metaphysics and Epistemology*, New York, 1971. See also Michael Frede, *Prädikation und Existenzaussage (Hypomnemata 18)*, Göttingen, 1967.
- 5 Stanley Rosen, *Plato's Sophist: The Drama of Original and Image*, New Haven, 1983.
- 6 See R. D. Archer-Hind, ed., *The Phaedo of Plato*, London, 1883, p.1.
- 7 Archer-Hind, p.2
- 8 Francis M. Cornford, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge (The Theaetetus and the Sophist of Plato)*, Indianapolis, 1957, p.170.
- 9 Edith Hamilton, in her preface to the *Sophist* in E. Hamilton and H. Cairns, *Plato: The Collected Dialogues*, Princeton, 1963, p.957.

- 10 For a discussion of the importance of the dialogue form see E. Benitez, 'Argument, Rhetoric and Philosophic Method: Plato's *Protagoras*', *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 25 (1992): 222-252.
- 11 Geoffrey Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*, General Prologue, 741-2. I have taken this couplet from the edition by A. C. Cawley, London, 1958.
- 12 See Harry Torczyner, ed., *Magritte: Ideas and Images*, tr. Richard Miller, New York, 1977, p.88 (translation p.260). The comment is appended to an illustration of a forest accompanied by the word 'forest'.
- 13 The translation here is taken from Seth Benardete, *The Being of the Beautiful*, Chicago, 1984. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.
- 14 There is a symmetry of questioner and respondent across the projected tetralogy. In the *Theaetetus*, Socrates questions Theaetetus. In the *Sophist*, the Stranger questions Theaetetus. In the *Statesman*, Socrates proposes that his namesake should answer the Stranger, and himself 'on another occasion' (258a), i.e. in the *Philosopher*. I say this to dispel any thoughts that Socrates is simply eclipsed by the Eleatic Stranger.
- 15 The translation here is Benardete's.
- 16 Sciron was the Isthmian outlaw who waylaid travellers passing the Scaironian Rocks. He forced them to wash his feet and while they were doing so he kicked them over the cliff into the sea. He was killed by Theseus. Antaeus was a giant who derived his enormous strength through contact with the earth. Antaeus forced those he met to wrestle him. He invariably won, and would use his victims skulls for roof tiles. Heracles killed him by first lifting him from the ground and then crushing him. See Edward Tripp, *Handbook of Classical Mythology*, New York, 1970, p.522 (Sciron), pp.52-3 (Antaeus).
- 17 Cornford translation.
- 18 Cornford translation.
- 19 The translation is Cornford's. The reference to Homer is *Iliad* III.172 (said by Helen, of Priam).
- 20 Palamedes was a hero who was framed by Odysseus, convicted of treason and executed. But it is not the Palamedes of legend that Socrates refers to in the *Phaedrus*, but rather the speaker in Gorgias' *Defence of Palamedes*, a rhetorically elaborate piece. See Rosamond Sprague, *The Older Sophists*, Columbia, 1972, pp.54-63. Gorgias and Zenon were closely associated in the antique accounts of Presocratic philosophy: they are treated as the inventors of eristic argument. Gorgias' treatise *On Nature* is written in the style of Zenon's dialectic.
- 21 Cornford translation, in Hamilton and Cairns, *Plato: The Collected Dialogues*.
- 22 Benardete translation.
- 23 Benardete translation, my italics.
- 24 Homer, *Odyssey* IX.172-76, from the translation by Richmond Lattimore, New York, 1965.
- 25 Homer, *Odyssey* IX.269-71, Lattimore translation.
- 26 Homer, *Odyssey* XVII.483-87, Lattimore translation. For the context and its similarity to the context of Plato's *Sophist*, see lines 435-87.
- 27 Benardete translation.

- 28 See Norman McLean, *A River Runs Through It*, Chicago, 1976, p.61. The fish of course would know the difference. The point here is that deception only fools an ignorant audience or onlooker. Plato makes this point repeatedly (e.g. *Gorgias* 517d-e, *Symposium* 194a-d).
- 29 Benardete translation.
- 30 Cornford translation, my insertion and quotation marks.
- 31 Lewis Campbell, *The Sophistes and Politicus of Plato*. Oxford, 1867, note p.25. For other examples of irony see: the stranger's remark about himself as a parricide (241d), the assortment of birds into two genera—swimming animals and pedestrian animals (220b), the discussion of people who can make all things—including you and me, the gods, earth and sky—quickly and for a very small price (233d ff.). See also 224d-e, 231d, 238d, 239b.
- 32 From the translation by Robert Fagles, New York, 1990.